9

Świat
obywatele polityka
decyzje republikanin prezydencja społeczeństwo
lewica prawica debata behavior Europa
government sondaże wyzwania media zagrożenia
sprawiedliwość demokracja
internet wyborca kampania wyborcza
interactions rząd komunikacja polityczna
prawo tactics konstytucja
**e-Politikon** international korupcja
pokój wojna publiczne
politologia parlamentaryzm retoryka
liberalism politycy
instytucje demos Polska rządzenie
integracja ustawy wybory
ministerstwo

# POLITICAL COMMUNICATION ON THE INTERNET

# e-Politikon

# Contents

# Spis treści

# Introduction

Dear Readers,

we are pleased to present the 9th issue of Political Science Quarterly "e-Politikon" published by the Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw. For the first time in our short history, we are publishing an issue entirely in English and entirely on one topic – political communication on the Internet. Couple of months ago we invited a group of scientist to focus on this particular phenomenon of the modern political communication and encouraged them to start their researches. Due to their engagement we have managed to gather a set of interesting articles that describe political communication on the Internet from many angles and perspectives.

We open this issue with an article of one of the editors and Antoni Morawski who have run a quantitative research project on political communication in social media in Central Europe. Its aim was to determine the extent to which politicians used the most popular social media to communicate with Internet users. Authors have proposed a set of factors to describe this phenomenon, among them created Social Media Political Index – a political index of social media use that allows for comparing the phenomenon of political communication on the Internet within Central Europe.

Barbara Brodzińska-Mirowska starts her article *Unfulfilled Expectations(?): Political Communication on the Internet in the Era of Professionalization* with a remark that almost everyone expected new technologies to bring the potential that would increase the involvement in political issues among citizens. Reading the paper you will find out whether they were right. Tomasz Wierzbica shows characteristics of the Internet communication, seen not only

from the perspective of political actors, but also from voters' perspective and states that this channel of political communication creates new dimension of political rivalry.

After abovementioned – rather general texts – we present you the world of Twitter. This social media channel, very popular in the USA, is expanding also in Central Europe. Bartłomiej Machnik places Twitter in the process of political communication, Małgorzata Adamik-Szysiak uses examples of leaders of the Polish political parties to show how they managed to align Twitter with their communication strategies and Tomasz Gackowski, searching for a communication revolution, started a reconnaissance research by examining activity on Twitter of ten Polish political leaders.

One of the most popular social medium is of course Facebook and Kamil Giemza researched how Members of the European Parliament elected in Warsaw used this channel in their political communication. Wojciech Cwalina and Milena Drzewiecka conducted another research; in their article they have described results of an experiment whose purpose was to evaluate the effect of a negative political banner on the image and support for the attacked party.

It has also been underlined that in terms of political communication on the Internet the phenomenon of memes arises. Two authors devote their articles to this issue: Marek Górka has treated memes as an example of carnivalized Internet communication and Michał Marcin Kobierecki has shown us how Poles use memes to express their political dissatisfaction.

In one of the last two articles, Katarzyna Maksymowicz describes the significant impact social media has on politics and on handling political emergencies. After analysing the key characteristics of social media, the author takes a closer look at the notion of crisis as a social phenomenon and explores what use can be made of social media in the face of critical situations.

Last article is written from different a perspective – Aleksandra Bagieńska-Masiota and Joanna Jaroszyk-Pawlukiewicz explore the issue of politicians' right to privacy online from a legal viewpoint. The article concerns legal status of the Internet, considerations concerning the definition of a politician, definitions regarding the right to privacy, international privacy protection regulations and privacy of a public person in the jurisprudence of Polish courts.

We hope that you will find this "e-Politikon" a valuable source of knowledge and observations.

Olgierd Annusewicz, PhD
Bartłomiej Biskup, PhD

**Olgierd Annusewicz, Antoni Morawski**

# SOCIAL MEDIA IN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN CENTRAL EUROPE – QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS. SOCIAL MEDIA POLITICAL INDEX 2014

## Introduction

It seems to be unnecessary to prove the thesis that the Internet plays a significant role in contemporary political communication. If one takes a closer look at all election campaigns in democratic countries, one can notice an increasing importance of this particular channel of communication. The channel is very rich in various forms of media (newspapers, radios or televisions broadcasting exclusively online as well as Internet versions of traditional mass media). One can find space for unhindered communication by means of one's own websites and blogs, it is possible to use email and mechanisms of direct marketing and last but not least to use social media that have recently been gaining popularity.

It is worth advancing a thesis that the basic difference between classic, non-virtual forms of political communication and the communication on the Internet consists in providing mass communication with a feature so far reserved for rather small meetings with voters – two-directionness[1]. Politicians

---

[1] Cf. O. Annusewicz, *Funkcje komunikowania politycznego w Internecie*, [in:] "Studia Politologiczne" vol. 14, Warszawa 2009, p. 275.

become not only senders of information meticulously prepared by campaign teams, but also participants of communicative interactions. The change is, however, significant for the voter, who may transform from a passive receiver into an active participant of the dialogue – he may publicly ask a politician to provide answers to questions, he may comment on them and challenge them.

It should be also emphasized that social media are developing so quickly that many editorial teams of traditional media "open" their social media accounts and use them to interact with viewers, listeners and readers. Politicians are also trying to colonise this space – however, the question arises – to what extent?

The question has become a starting point for the research carried out by the Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw entitled Social Media in Political Communication in Central Europe. Its aim was to determine the extent to which politicians used the most popular social media to communicate with Internet users. Creating Social Media Political Index – a political index of social media use that would allow for comparing the phenomenon within Central Europe and for watching changes in the future was another objective. The question concerning political popularity of particular social network services was also raised, i.e. which one – in particular countries – was the most popular among politicians.

It is important to note that so far several attempts have been made to study the phenomenon of social media in political communication. Some of them were theoretical or focused on functionality of certain social media[2],

---

[2] Among polish authors worth mentioning are: I. Grzywińska, *Zastosowanie nowych mediów w procesie komunikacji politycznej na przykładzie kampanii prezydenckiej w Stanach Zjednoczonych w 2008 r.,* [in:] J. Garlicki (ed.), "Studia Politologiczne" vol. 16, J. Garlicki, D. Mider, *Wykorzystanie Internetu w komunikowaniu politycznym elit z wyborcami*, [in:] E. Marciniak (ed.), "Studia Politologiczne" 2010, vol. 25 , J. Zieliński *Komunikacja polityczna na Facebooku,* http://demopol.net/publikacje.html, 01.04.2014.

others described case studies of political campaigns in social media[3]. Also some reports concerning politicians' activity in certain social media can be found – they are mostly about number of posts/tweets, "retweets" and "shares", followers, likes or favourites[4]. However, neither quantitative and comparative research on the use of social media as a set of communication tools have been found, nor comparative studies between countries in one region. Consequently, the authors of this study had to propose a new and original approach to the analysis of the data gathered in the research.

**Methodology**

From January, 1 to January, 31 2014 research was conducted by means of which it was examined which politicians and public authorities communicate in social media. The group whose activity in social media was measured included all MPs (of all chambers) and Members of the European Parliament as well as heads of states, prime ministers and ministers (or ministries) of Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. In total, it was 3173 individuals and institutions. It was examined if they had user accounts in four most popular social network services: Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and YouTube. The subject of the analysis was also the activity of the accounts, i.e. if within four weeks prior to account verification anything had been posted there.

---

[3] See: J. Aaker and V. Chang, *Obama and the Power of Social Media and Technology*, http://www.europeanbusinessreview.com/?p=1627, 15.03.2014, I. Grzywińska, *Analiza komunikacji w serwisach społecznościowych (NK.pl i Facebook.com) podczas prezydenckiej kampanii wyborczej w 2010 roku*, J. Garlicki (ed.)"Studia Politologiczne" 2011 vol.21, M. Górnicka, *Social Media Superstar - raport Obama 2012*, http://studiumprzypadku.com/social-media-superstar--raport--obama-2012/ , 15.03.2014.
[4] See: http://mojepanstwo.pl/media_spolecznosciowe , 16.03.2014, L. Vesnic-Alujevic, *Members of the European Parliament Online: The use of social media in political marketing*, http://martenscentre.eu/sites/default/files/publication-files/ces_mep_web.pdf, 15.03.2014.

Data gathered within the research was juxtaposed with statistical data from EUROSTAT[5] – the percentage of individuals aged 16-74 who regularly use the Internet and with the percentage of individuals who use the Internet to interact with politicians and civil service representatives[6].

A separate analysis was conducted for each country, it comprised:

- Determining the index of political representation of a social network service in particular social media expressed by the ratio of politicians' or government administration bodies' registered accounts to the total number of such entities.

- Determining the maximal probability of politicians reaching their potential voters with a given service. It constitutes the index of "critical" political potential of a particular social network service which illustrates the maximal probability of politicians using a given social tool (both in an active and inactive manner) to reach potential voters in general population. When determining the index critical value, it has been assumed that: firstly – each Internet user has an equal chance to use the service (i.e. each Internet user is or can be a user of a given service), secondly – political representation of a social service can include/cover by communicative activity the whole Internet user population. The index is expressed by the product of political representation index of a given social network service and the percentage of citizens aged 16-74 who regularly use the Internet.

- Determining the active presence index for a given social network service by comparing the number of registered accounts in a given social

[5] Source: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu , 10.03.2014.
[6] Org. *Individuals using the Internet for interaction with public authorities*, http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu, data for 2013, 10.03.2014.

network service to the number of active accounts (understood as the ones on which something had been posted at least once within 30 days prior to the research).

- Determining the active political potential index of social network service in particular social media by establishing the ratio of politicians' and government administration bodies' registered active accounts to total number of such entities that had been examined.

- Determining the active potential index of a social network service which would show the maximal probability of politicians active in social network services to reach their potential voters who regularly use the Internet. As in the case of the maximal probability of reaching, it has been assumed that each Internet user has an equal chance to use a given service and political representation of the service can cover with its communicative activity the whole Internet user population. The index is established by the product of active political representation index of a social network service and the percentage of citizens aged 16-74 who regularly use the Internet and thus.

The aim of determining the abovementioned components is an attempt to create a complex look on the presence of politicians and public authorities in particular social media. The index of political representation of a given service shows the percentage of politicians that made an attempt to communicate politically in social media, whereas the index of active presence and the index of active political representation show how many of them really communicate online.

Determining the maximal probability of politicians reaching their potential voters with a given service and the maximal probability of politicians

13

active in a social network service to reach their potential voters allows for assessing the significance of communication in a given social medium. The higher they are, the more important the role of a social network service, which should encourage both potential voters to become its users and politicians to use this channel of communication.

However, an additional justification is necessary to explain the reasons for using such given data, as the percentage of citizens aged 16-74 who regularly use the Internet and the individuals who had actively used Internet to interact with politicians and public authorities in methodological construction of the research. The choice of the data was a compromise between the problem of statistical data availability and the original methodological plan of the researchers. The accuracy of an index is decided by the precise range of reality to which the measurement of a given phenomenon refers[7]. In this case an appropriate component would be the user number of a given social network service. Gaining the data, however, turned out to be impossible. Its owners either did not respond to the research team request or responded negatively, denying access to it. At the same time, there is no reliable alternative source of the data for all services in question and for all countries. There are some media studies available (in Poland e.g. Megapanel conducted by PBI/Gemius) that estimate the user number of particular services, the results, however, are not comparable with similar studies carried out in other countries. For this reason it has been decided to choose alternative data that yet still reflect the examined social reality and are comparable for all examined countries due to a single methodology used to measure all observation units.

All abovementioned indexes are additionally standardised and take continuous values within a range from 0 to 1. Due to keeping this methodolog-

---

[7] Cf. E. Babbie, *Badania społeczne w praktyce*, Warszawa 2004, p. 166-167.

ical premise, the obtained index values can be compared both in a relative (between each other) and in an absolute perspective (with setting the boundary of the so-called "absolute zero").

As it has already been mentioned, the aim of the research was first and foremost to compare the extent to which social media are used in particular countries of Central Europe that belong to the European Union and to create a new index – Social Media Political Index (SMPI). In order to ensure its comparability for particular counties, apart from data obtained in the research, also previously mentioned indexes from data provided by EUROSTAT concerning the percentage of individuals aged 16-74 who regularly use the Internet and percentage of individuals who use Internet to interact with politicians and public administration representatives were taken into consideration.

It has been decided that the SMPI should include four elements:

- Activity Factor (AF) – calculated separately for each country by comparing the total number of political accounts in social media and the number of active accounts (whose owners at least once posted anything within a month prior to the research).

- Saturation Factor (SF) – created by comparison of the total number of active accounts in all services in question and the total maximal number of political accounts in social media (calculated as four oldness – since in the research four services were examined – of the analysed number of politicians and public authorities).

- Reaching Factor (RF) – created by comparison of the Saturation Factor and the percentage of citizens who regularly use the Internet (according to the Eurostat data).

- Auxiliary Reaching Factor (ARF) – calculated by comparison of the Saturation Factor and the percentage of citizens using Internet to interact with politicians and public authorities (according to the Eurostat data).

Each of the abovementioned factors is important if one wants to determine the level of maturity of social media use for political communication. Activity Factor illustrates a relation of declaration (account registration) to the real use of the channel of communication (activity). Saturation Factor shows the potential for development of political communication in social media. Reaching Factor, in turn, indicates the importance of this communication channel – it collates active senders and potential receivers. And similarly Auxiliary Reaching Factor, which refers to individuals using the Internet and interacting with politicians and public administration representatives. The indexes, however, do not bear the same significance. To calculate Social Media Political Index the following formula was applied, taking into consideration the importance of particular factors to determine the level of social media use in political communication:

$$SMPI = 0.3*AF + 0.2*SF + 0.4*RF + 0.1*ARF$$

The above formula is based on the conviction that the maturity of social media use by politicians of a given country is manifested, on the one hand, by their real activity in services in which they have created user accounts and by the ratio of politicians who have undertaken any activities in this communication channel to the total number of political actors. On the other hand, the data should be a subject to objectivization by means of comparing it with the real number of potential receivers and partners of communication, hence high importance of the Reaching Factor. While working on the method of calculating the SMPI, it has been decided that the total activity weight (Activity Factor and

Saturation Factor) has the same value as a potential reaching group (Reaching Factor and Auxiliary Factor altogether). The authors think that between the Activity Factor and Saturation Factor, the former is more important since it concerns real actions: setting-up an account and its actual use. Saturation Factor shows the relation of reality (the number of active accounts) and potentiality (the maximum number of accounts). Also SF has its impact on Reaching Factor and Auxiliary Reaching Factor so it has been decided to put more weight on AF than on SF. At the same time a decision has been made to vary the weight of Reaching Factor and Auxiliary Reaching Factor. Again, it has been assessed that since every Internet user could be a target group for political campaigns, and interacting with public authorities is an important but additional data for setting the SMPI formula.

## SELECTED SOCIAL MEDIA IN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN CENTRAL EUROPE COUNTRIES

### Bulgaria

In Bulgaria 32% of politicians and public authorities have registered an account on Facebook (FB) (Table 1). For comparison, 8% of the surveyed respondents have an account on Twitter (TT), 6% on Google+ (G+), and 8% on YouTube (YT). One can venture a statement that on the one hand the most important social network service in this country is FB but the probability of reaching potential voters even in this case amounts to merely 17%, which results first of all from a low factor of political representation but also from one

of the lowest (among the examined countries) percentage of citizens using the Internet regularly – 51% of Bulgarians use the Internet on a regular basis[8].

**Tab. 1. Politicians in social media in Bulgaria.**

| BULGARIA | Facebook | Twitter | Google+ | YouTube |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Political representation factor** | 32% | 8% | 6% | 8% |
| **Maximal probability of reaching potential voters** | 17% | 4% | 3% | 4% |
| **Active presence factor** | 55% | 61% | 18% | 18% |
| **Active political representation factor** | 18% | 5% | 1% | 1% |
| **Active political potential factor** | 9% | 3% | 1% | 1% |

Source: **Own work based on the data collected during the research carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014 by Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw.**

An interesting phenomenon – repeated also in the case of other countries – is quite a big group of individuals and public authorities who having registered an account in social network service do not use it in an active manner, i.e. they do not communicate[9]. 55% of "political" users of Facebook and 61% of Twitter users actively used the services during the research. The data looks much worse in the case of Google+ and YouTube – each had 18% of active "political" users. If we compare active users of a given service with the total number of politicians and public authorities, it turns out the active representation factor in Bulgaria amounts to 18% for Facebook, 5% for Twitter and 1% each for YouTube and Google+. As a result, the probability for political communication of active politicians and public authorities to be effective at the stage of

---

[8] Individuals regularly using the Internet – % of individuals aged 16-74, data for 2013. http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu , 15.03.2014.

[9] As it has been mentioned, the activity criterion was met if a given user had posted anything in the examined services within 30 days prior to the research.

reaching receivers who use the Internet to interact with authorities' representatives is scarce. Active political potential factor for Facebook amounts to 9%, for Twitter 3% and for YouTube and Google+ 1%.

### Croatia

Politicians and public authorities in Croatia (Table 2) also prefer Facebook as a tool of Internet communication with voters, 63% of them have an account in this social network service. Users of Twitter and Google+ constitute 21% each of the examined group, whereas 16% have YouTube channels. Since 63% of Croatians aged 16-74 regularly use the Internet, the maximal probability of political message reaching potential voters amounts to 40% for FB, 13% for TT, also 13% for G+, and 10% for YT.

Tab. 2. Politicians in social media in Croatia.

| Croatia | Facebook | Twitter | Google | YouTube |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Political representation factor | 63% | 21% | 21% | 16% |
| Maximal probability of reaching potential voters | 40% | 13% | 13% | 10% |
| Active presence factor | 51% | 50% | 11% | 48% |
| Active political representation factor | 32% | 10% | 2% | 8% |
| Active political potential factor | 20% | 6% | 1% | 5% |

Source: Own work based on the data collected during the research carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014 by Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw.

The ratio of active presence for Facebook, Twitter and YouTube fluctuates at a level of 50%, Croatian politicians have the fewest accounts on Google+. Yet again one can notice the lack of consequence in communicating

on the Internet and a low real active political representation on the Internet, which in the case of Facebook totals 32% and for the other analysed portals does not exceed 10%.It means that the active political potential factor totals 20% for FB, 6% for TT, 1% for G+ and 5% for YT.

### *Czech Republic*

72% of Czech politicians and public authorities have an account on Facebook, but among them there are 57% active accounts (Table 3). The other portals come out worse – a profile on Twitter have 28% (out of which 43 % are active accounts), 19% of the politicians have registered their account and 7% actively run them on Google+, whereas in the case of YouTube it is 14% and 5% accordingly. The ratio of active political representation for the given services in the Czech Republic amounts to 41% for FB, 12% for TT, 1% for G+ and 1% for YT.

**Tab. 3. Politicians in social media in the Czech Republic.**

| Czech Republic | Facebook | Twitter | Google+ | YouTube |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Political representation factor** | 72% | 28% | 19% | 14% |
| **Maximal probability of reaching potential voters** | 51% | 20% | 13% | 10% |
| **Active presence factor** | 57% | 43% | 7% | 5% |
| **Active political representation factor** | 41% | 12% | 1% | 1% |
| **Active political potential factor** | 29% | 9% | 1% | 0% |

**Source: Own work based on the data collected during the research carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014 by Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw.**

Since 70% of Czechs regularly use the Internet[10], the maximal probability of reaching potential voters and the active political potential factor are significant only in the case of Facebook and total 51% and 29% accordingly. For Twitter the factors amount to 20% and 9%, whereas for Google+ and YouTube accordingly 13% and 1%, and 10% and 0%.

### Estonia

The country is famous for being very modern and for using the majority of newest telecommunications technologies connected with the Internet. It is shown e.g. by the percentage of individuals regularly using the Internet[11], which is the highest among the examined countries. Interestingly enough, the opinion is only partially reflected in the extent to which particular social network services are used by politicians and public authorities. Indeed, 70% of them have an account on Facebook, out of whom 57% are active, which gives the active political representation factor in this service at a level of 39%. However, in the case of other tools, the data is not as impressive (Table 4).

---

[10] Individuals regularly using the Internet - % of individuals aged 16-74, data for 2013, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu, 15.03.2014.

[11] Individuals regularly using the Internet - % of individuals aged 16-74, data for 2013, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu, 15.03.2014.

**Tab. 4. Politicians in social media in Estonia.**

| Estonia | Facebook | Twitter | Google+ | YouTube |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Political representation factor | 70% | 28% | 16% | 16% |
| Maximal probability of reaching potential voters | 54% | 21% | 12% | 12% |
| Active presence factor | 57% | 39% | 0% | 21% |
| Active political representation factor | 39% | 11% | 0% | 3% |
| Active political potential factor | 30% | 8% | 0% | 3% |

Source: Own work based on the data collected during the research carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014 by Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw.

Especially striking is low interest in Google+ and YouTube – only 16% of the surveyed respondents have an account in the services and the vast majority do not use them actively at all – the political active representation factor for Google+ totals 0% and for YouTube – 3%. In the case of Twitter, 28% of the surveyed respondents have an account, 39% of which are active; the active political representation factor amounts to 11%.

Maximal probability of reaching potential voters and active political potential factors in Estonia in the case of Facebook total accordingly 54% and 30%. For Twitterthe factors amount to 21% and 8%, whereas for Google+ and YouTube accordingly 12% and 0%, and 12% and 3%.

### Hungary

The last analysed research group were politicians and public authorities in Hungary. Once again the most popular social medium is Facebook – 54% of the surveyed have registered accounts, which is two or even three times more

than on the other services (Twitter – 18%, Google+ – 14%, YouTube – 12%) (Table 5).

**Tab. 5. Politicians in social media in Hungary.**

| Hungary | Facebook | Twitter | Google+ | YouTube |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Political representation factor | 54% | 18% | 14% | 12% |
| Maximal probability of reaching potential voters | 39% | 12% | 10% | 9% |
| Active presence factor | 86% | 36% | 9% | 46% |
| Active political representation factor | 47% | 6% | 1% | 6% |
| Active political potential factor | 33% | 4% | 1% | 4% |

Source: **Own work based on the data collected during the research carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014 by Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw.**

The highest registered active presence factor in the service is worth noticing – 86% (for Twitter the factor equals 36%, for Google+ 9% and for YouTube 46%). As a result, the active political representation factor for Facebook in Hungary amounts to 47% (for TT – 6%, G+ – 1%, YT – 6%). With 71% Hungary citizens regularly using the Internet[12],the maximal probability of reaching potential voters by means of Facebook totals 39% but due to the high active presence factor, the active political potential factor comes to 33%.

**Latvia**

Even though 59% of the surveyed politicians and public authorities have an account on Facebook, yet only 42% actively use the service, which gives 19% of the active political representation factor. However, it is Twitter

---

[12]Individuals regularly using the Internet – % of individuals aged 16-74, data for 2013, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu , March 2014.

that is more popular– among 56% of the surveyed respondents as many as 69% use it actively, which results in a high, 39% active political representation factor (Table 6). On Google+ and YouTube accordingly 27% and 12% of the respondents run their accounts, yet only 9% and 7% constitute active users and the active political representation factor equals 2% and 1%.

Tab. 6. Politicians in social media in Latvia.

| Latvia | Facebook | Twitter | Google+ | YouTube |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Political representation factor | 59% | 56% | 27% | 12% |
| Maximal probability of reaching potential voters | 42% | 40% | 19% | 9% |
| Active presence factor | 32% | 69% | 9% | 7% |
| Active political representation factor | 19% | 39% | 2% | 1% |
| Active political potential factor | 13% | 27% | 2% | 1% |

**Source: Own work based on the data collected during the research carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014 by Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw.**

Since 71% of Latvians regularly use the Internet[13], the maximal probability of reaching potential voters and active political representation factors for Facebook and Twitter amount to 42% and 13%, 40% and 27% accordingly. Whereas for Google+ and YouTube the factors total accordingly 19% and 2%, 9% and 1%.

---

[13]Individuals regularly using the Internet – % of individuals aged 16-74, data for 2013, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu, 15.03.2014.

*Lithuania*

Politicians and public authorities in Lithuania also use Facebook to the largest extent – 77% of the surveyed respondents have an account in this social network service, 44% of whom are active individuals and public authorities, which makes the active political representation factor amount to 34% (Table 7). The other services are not that popular, it is worth mentioning, however, that as many as 32% of the surveyed respondents have an account on Google+, yet only 18% are active, which translates into 6% of the active political representation factor. Fewer have an account on Twitter – 22% of the surveyed respondents, yet 42% of them are active and the active political representation factor amounts to 9%. Accounts on YouTube have 23% respondents, 19% of them are active accounts, the active political representation factor totals 4%.

Tab. 7. Politicians in social media in Lithuania.

| Lithuania | Facebook | Twitter | Google+ | YouTube |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Political representation factor | 77% | 22% | 32% | 23% |
| Maximal probability of reaching potential voters | 50% | 15% | 21% | 15% |
| Active presence factor | 44% | 42% | 18% | 19% |
| Active political representation factor | 34% | 9% | 6% | 4% |
| Active political potential factor | 22% | 6% | 4% | 3% |

Source: Own work based on the data collected during the research carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014 by Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw.

Since 65% of Lithuania inhabitants use Internet[14] regularly, the maximal probability of reaching potential voters and the active political potential factors in Lithuania in the case of Facebook come to 50% and 34% accordingly. For Google+ the factors total 21% and 4%, whereas for Twitter and YouTube 15% and 6%, 15% and 3% accordingly.

### Poland

In comparison with the other examined countries of Central Europe, Polish politicians and public authorities seems to use social media most eagerly – as many as 84% of them have an account on Facebook, 48% on Twitter, 40% on YouTube and 27% on Google+ (Table 8). What is more, in the case of the first two services, the active presence factor totals 68% and 61% (for G+ it equals 11% and for YT – 17%). As a result, the active political representation factor amounted to 57% and 30% (11% and 17% for G+ and YT).

**Tab. 8. Politicians in social media in Poland.**

| Poland | Facebook | Twitter | Google+ | YouTube |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Political representation factor** | 84% | 48% | 27% | 40% |
| **Maximal probability of reaching potential voters** | 50% | 29% | 16% | 24% |
| **Active presence factor** | 68% | 61% | 11% | 17% |
| **Active political representation factor** | 57% | 30% | 3% | 7% |
| **Active political potential factor** | 34% | 18% | 2% | 4% |

**Source: Own work based on the data collected during the research carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014 by Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw.**

---

[14] Individuals regularly using the Internet – % of individuals aged 16-74, data for 2013, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu , 15.03.2014.

Simultaneously – in comparison with other countries in the region – Poland has a comparably small number of citizens regularly using the Internet, which constitutes 60% of individuals aged 16-74 (a smaller percentage was registered only in Bulgaria – 51% and Romania – 45%)[15]. As a result, the maximal probability of reaching potential voters for the examined social media amounts to 50% for FB, 29% for TT, 16% for G+ and 19% for YT. Active political potential factors for the above services equal 34%, 18%, 2% and 4% accordingly.

### Romania

In the case of Romania only Facebook is of importance for political communication, since 72% of the surveyed politicians and public authorities are its users. In the other services, the political representation factor does not exceed 20% (Table 9).

**Tab. 9. Politicians in social media in Romania.**

| Romania | Facebook | Twitter | Google+ | YouTube |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Political representation factor** | 72% | 17% | 20% | 17% |
| **Maximal probability of reaching potential voters** | 32% | 7% | 9% | 8% |
| **Active presence factor** | 56% | 41% | 11% | 21% |
| **Active political representation factor** | 40% | 7% | 2% | 4% |
| **Active political potential factor** | 18% | 3% | 1% | 2% |

**Source: Own work based on the data collected during the research carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014 by Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw.**

---

[15] Individuals regularly using the Internet – % of individuals aged 16-74, data for 2013, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu , 15.03.2014.

With active presence factors at a  level of 56% for FB, 41% for TT, 11% for G+ and 21% for YT, the services – with an exception of Facebook (40%) –have the active political representation factor below 10%.

Juxtaposing the data with the fact that only 45% of Romania's citizens regularly use the Internet (which is the lowest result among the examined countries)[16] allows fora conclusion that the maximal probability of reaching potential voters by active politicians is scarce – in the case of Facebook it amounts to 32% and 18% accordingly, whereas for the other media, the factors fluctuate from 1% to 9%.

*Slovakia*

Round 75% Slovak politicians and public authorities have an account on Facebook, 24% on Twitter, 39% on Google+ and 25% on YouTube. In comparison with the other countries in the region, it is worth noticing the biggest popularity of Google+ (39%) and the smallest of Twitter (24%) (Table 10). The active presence factor for the analysed social media in Slovakia amounted to 43% for Facebook, 22% for Twitter, merely 3% for Google+ and 19% for YouTube. The consequence of such a situation are active political representation factors that equal accordingly 33%, 5%, 1% and 5%. The question should arise why – with as many as 75% citizens regularly using the Internet[17] – the factors are so low.

---

[16] Individuals regularly using the Internet – % of individuals aged 16-74, data for 2013, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu , 15.03.2014.
[17] Individuals regularly using the Internet – % of individuals aged 16-74, data for 2013, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu , 15.03.2014.

**Tab. 10. Politicians in social media in Slovakia.**

| Slovakia | Facebook | Twitter | Google+ | YouTube |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Political representation factor** | 75% | 24% | 39% | 25% |
| **Maximal probability of reaching potential voters** | 56% | 18% | 29% | 18% |
| **Active presence factor** | 43% | 22% | 3% | 19% |
| **Active political representation factor** | 33% | 5% | 1% | 5% |
| **Active political potential factor** | 24% | 4% | 1% | 3% |

**Source: Own work based on the data collected during the research carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014 by Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw.**

As a result, despite the fact the maximal probability of reaching potential voters for particular services is at an average level when compared with the other countries in the region (accordingly 56%, 18%, 29%, 18%), yet with the low active political representation factors, the active political potential factors for particular social media are small (24%, 4%, 1% and 3%).

*Slovenia*

71% of Slovenian politicians and public authorities have registered an account on Facebook, 49% on Twitter, 40% on Google+ and 16% on YouTube. Interesting is the fact that out of 102 individuals and public authorities whose activity was verified, 40 users run their accounts actively on Facebook and 40 on Twitter, these are, however, not the same subjects, even though they overlap to a large extent (Table 11). Hence, the active presence factor in Slovenia is the highest (56%) for Twitter, with 39% active political users of Facebook, 5% of Google+ and 30% of YouTube. As a result, the active political representation factor equals 28% both for Facebook and Twitter and accordingly 2% and 5% for Google+ and YouTube.

The percentage of individuals regularly using the Internet in Slovenia totals 69%[18] – which gives the maximal probability of reaching potential voters and active political potential factors of particular services at a level of 49% and 19% for FB, 34% and 19% for TT, 28% and 1% for Google+ and 11% and 3% for YT. It is worth noticing that the difference in factors for Google+ results from the fact that despite many registered political accounts, only 5% are active.

**Tab. 11. Politicians in social media in Slovenia.**

| Slovenia | Facebook | Twitter | Google+ | YouTube |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Political representation factor** | 71% | 49% | 40% | 16% |
| **Maximal probability of reaching potential voters** | 49% | 34% | 28% | 11% |
| **Active presence factor** | 39% | 56% | 5% | 30% |
| **Active political representation factor** | 28% | 28% | 2% | 5% |
| **Active political potential factor** | 19% | 19% | 1% | 3% |

**Source: Own work based on the data collected during the research carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014 by Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw.**

### SOCIAL MEDIA POLITICAL INDEX 2014

As it has already been mentioned in the introduction, the main aim of the research was to compare the extent to which social media is used in political communication in the countries of Central Europe that belong to the European Union. To underline once again – the researchers' objects of interest were:

---

[18]Individuals regularly using the Internet – % of individuals aged 16-74, data for 2013. http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu , March 2014.

- Real activity of politicians in social media understood as the relation of the total registered accounts to the number of users who actively communicate by means of the media.
- Using the social media potential analysed by determining the Saturation Factor calculated by comparison of the active account number to the maximal potential account number in social network services for each country.
- Analysis of the reaching extent of politicians and public authorities with their political message using the Saturation Factor and the data concerning individuals who regularly use the Internet and individuals who use the Internet to interact with political actors and institutions.

The highest Activity Factor is registered in Hungary – Hungarian politicians in comparison with representatives of the other countries in the region are the most consequent in using social media – 61% out of all accounts registered by Hungarian politicians and public authorities are active. Poland takes the second place (48%), Bulgaria the third (46%). The lowest Activity Factor is registered in Slovakia (27%) and in Slovenia and Lithuania (35%) (Fig. 1).

While Hungary is the leader of consequence in political communication by means of social media, Poland is a country with the highest Saturation Factor. For 2520 accounts possible to register in the four examined services (the research was carried out on 630 Polish politicians and public authorities, which makes the maximal account number in social media in a given country this number multiplied by four), there are in total 609 active accounts, which gives the Saturation Factor at a level of 24%. For the other countries, the factor fluctuates from 11% (Slovakia) to 16% (Slovenia).

**Fig. 1. Activity Factor in the research Social Media Political Index 2014.**
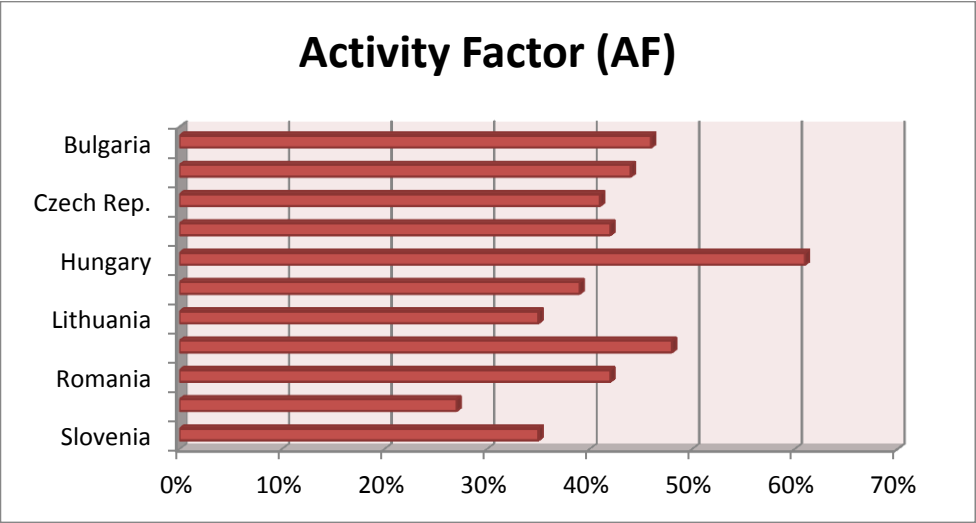
A negative case, however, is Bulgaria – its Saturation Factor amounts to 6% (Fig. 2).

**Fig. 2. Saturation Factor in the research Social Media Political Index 2014.**
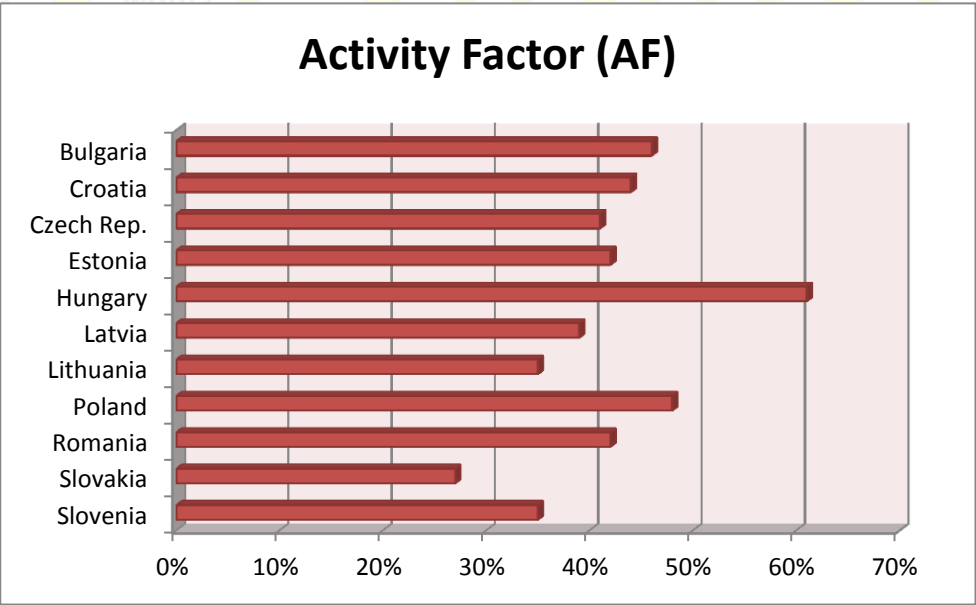
The Reaching Factor (Fig. 3) which is calculated by comparing the Saturation Factor with the percentage of individuals who regularly use the Internet. It comes out best also in the case of Poland (15%) even though only 60% of Poles regularly make use of an access to the Internet. The second place take Latvia, Slovenia and Hungary (11%). The worst Reaching Factor has Bulgaria (3%), which directly results not only from a limited communication activity of its politicians, but also from the fact that only 51% of the country citizens regularly use the Internet.

**Tab. 12: Use of the Internet by the citizens of the countries in Central Europe that belong to the European Union.**

|  | BG | CZ | EE | HR | HU | LT | LV | PL | RO | SK | SI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **% of individuals regularly using the Internet** | 51 | 70 | 77 | 63 | 71 | 65 | 71 | 60 | 45 | 74 | 69 |
| **% of individuals using the Internet for interaction with public authorities** | 23 | 29 | 48 | 25 | 37 | 34 | 35 | 23 | 5 | 33 | 52 |

Source: Eurostat, http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu, 15.03.2014.

The Auxiliary Reaching Factor uses an additional variable, which is a percentage of citizens who use the Internet to interact with public authorities. It is the group of individuals who may to the largest extent be interested not only in receiving political communication but also participating in its two-directional aspect.

**Fig. 3. Reaching Factor in the research Social Media Political Index 2014.**
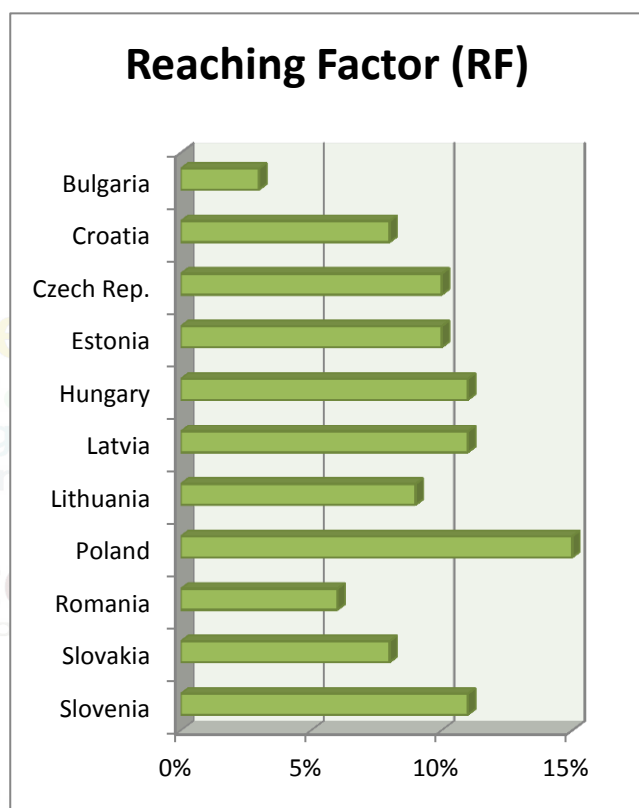


**Reaching Factor (RF)**

The value of ARF in the case of all examined countries does not exceed 10% (Fig. 4) – it is the highest in Slovenia (8%, which is a result of 52% of individuals interacting with politicians and public authorities on the Internet and 16% Saturation Factor) followed by Estonia, Poland and Hungary (6%). The lowest ARF value is registered in Bulgaria and Romania (1%).

**Fig. 4. Auxiliary Reaching Factor in the research Social Media Political Index 2014.**
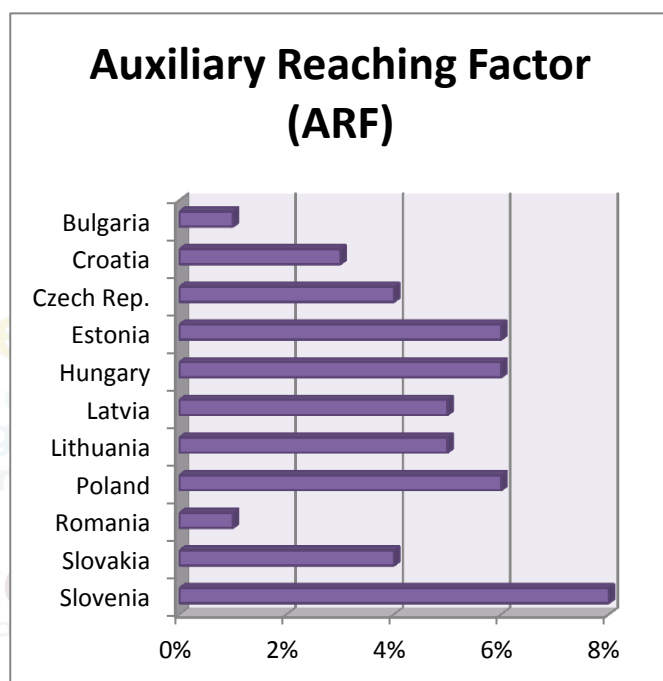


## Auxiliary Reaching Factor (ARF)

| Country | ARF |
|---|---|
| Bulgaria | ~1% |
| Croatia | ~3% |
| Czech Rep. | ~4% |
| Estonia | ~6% |
| Hungary | ~6% |
| Latvia | ~5% |
| Lithuania | ~5% |
| Poland | ~6% |
| Romania | ~1% |
| Slovakia | ~4% |
| Slovenia | ~8% |

0%   2%   4%   6%   8%

The four above factors have been designed as constituents of the original index created for the purpose of this research – Social Media Political Index (SMPI), whose aim is to compare the extent to which social media are used in political communication. As it has been shown at the beginning, the SMPI consists of two components, each of which is described by means of two factors. On the one hand, the activity on the side of senders in communication process is taken into consideration, on the other hand – conditions in which the communication takes place, i.e. the readiness of recipients to partake in the process, understood as the outcome of the percentage of individuals regularly using the Internet and the ones using the Internet to interact with politicians and public authorities.

It is worth repeating the formula used to calculate SMPI for the examined countries:

$$SMPI= 0.3*AF+0.2*SF+0.4*RF+0.1*ARF$$

(where AF stands for Activity Factor, SF – Saturation Factor, RF – Reaching Factor and ARF – Auxiliary Reaching Factor).

Social Media Political Index 2014 (Fig. 5) for the particular countries examined in the research looks as follows:

1. Poland – 26%

1. Hungary – 26%

3. Estonia – 20%

3. Latvia – 20%

5. Croatia – 19%

5. Czech Republic – 19%

5. Slovenia – 19%

8. Romania – 18%

9. Bulgaria – 17%

9. Lithuania – 17%

11. Slovakia – 14%

**Fig. 5. Social Media Political Index 2014.**
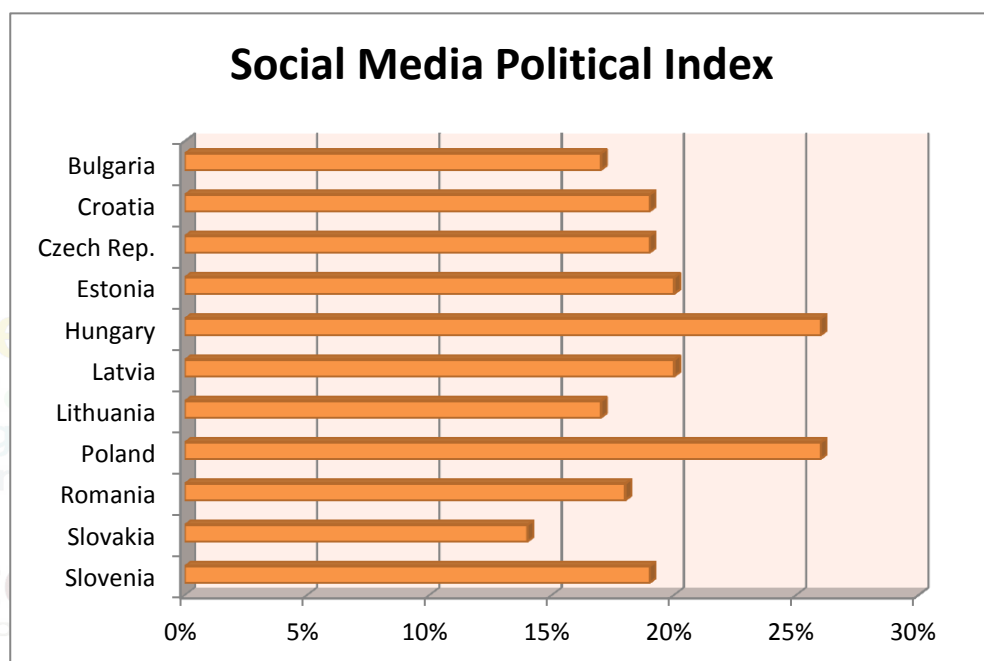
## Social Media Political Index



Source: Own work based on the data collected during the research carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014 by Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw.

Poland's high classification in the ranking is first and foremost influenced by the highest saturation and Reaching Factors, whereas in the case of Hungary, on the one hand, the high Activity Factor is of much importance, on the other hand, a comparably high percentage of individuals using the Internet regularly. The last position of Slovakia results from the fact that politicians and public authorities in the country do not make use of an outstanding number of active Internet users and have one of the lowest activity and Saturation Factors.

It should be also noticed, however, that with an exception of Poland, Hungary and the last Slovakia, the index values of the other countries are similar, which may show a certain regularity that necessitates further inquiries.

**Conclusions:**

1. The most popular social network service among politicians and public authorities in Central Europe is Facebook. The second place most often takes Twitter, whereas the positions of Google+ and YouTube change and are country-dependent.

2. No service can be considered dominating. Even though FB plays the biggest role in all countries, other communication channels in social media should also have their place.

3. Politicians in all examined countries are not consequent, many accounts are inactive. It means, on the one hand, ignoring an important communication channel, on the other hand ignoring one of the principles of election campaigns – cohesion – also between all used communication channels. In the end, such a lack of consequence leads to a situation when a receiver on the other side of the screen cannot easily establish an interaction with a politician and having found that the politician's profile is hardly ever (if at all) updated, he stops visiting it. So even if a politician posts something, it may turn out that it will be seen or read by very few. On the other hand a possible reason for quite a  small Activity Factor in almost all countries is that politicians tend to be active in social media only during electoral campaigns. If this explanation is true we could say that they treat social media users instrumentally and do not understand the idea of permanent campaign.

4. In general it needs to be stated that there are many perspectives for the use of social media for political communication in the countries of Central Europe – both when it comes to the number of active politicians and public authorities and the extent to which the potential of numerous services of this kind give. At the same time politicians should

be interested in taking action aimed at progressive informatization of the society, understood not only as improving the Internet access, but also encouraging citizens to politically interact in the virtual world of the Internet.

\*\*\*

The undertaken research, whose results are presented in this article, is a quantitative introduction to a qualitative study of how politicians use social media and what functions such media can perform, why some services are more popular than others among politicians, finally what and how politicians communicate. It seems that its biggest asset – the possibility to have real interactions with voters, which is a realization of two-directional function of communication – will make other politicians and public authorities not only register accounts in social network services, but also actively use them both as senders and interlocutors. Also new social media should be expected to appear and they can replace the ones considered most significant today. Even now, apart from the portals discussed in the article – Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and YouTube,  there are new ones that are developing intensively – Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn and Ask, and politicians are also starting to mark their presence there.

**Comments**

The research of the Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw entitled Social Media in Political Communication in Central Europe – Quantitative Analysis. Social Media Political Index 2014 was carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014. Chief scientist of the research project: Olgierd Annsewicz, PhD; research coordinator: Antoni Morawski, MA; verification of the analytic formulas: Aneta Marcinkowska, MA. Team responsible for gather-

ing data: Aleksandra Beczek, Elżbieta Borowska, Grzegorz Burtan, Patrycja Bytner, Joanna Dziuba, Dominik Héjj, Monika Kaczmarek, Anna Kęsicka, Antoni Kolek, Stefan Kołucki, Adam Kowalczyk, Aleksandra Kozaczuk, Katarzyna Kozioł, Katarzyna Kropiak, Bartłomiej Machnik, Marta Michalska, Piotr Michalski, Norbert Nowakowski, Iwona Nowicka, Karolina Olszewska, Patrycja Operacz, Rafał Orzechowski, Aleksandra Osuch, Yuliya Panko, Magdalena Papierz, Beata Piotrowicz, Katarzyna Puchta, Marta Sienkiewicz, Michał Szczegielniak, Tomasz Wiesław Szklarski, Katarzyna Tołoczko, Klaudia Wolniewicz.

Olgierd Annusewicz – PhD, Assistant Professor, Institute of Political Science, Faculty of Journalism and Political Science, University of, specializes in political communication, rhetoric and eristic and conflict management

Antoni Morawski – PhD student, Institute of Political Science, Faculty of Journalism and Political Science, University of Warsaw

## Abstract

Authors of the article present results of the research entitled Social Media in Political Communication in Central Europe – Quantitative Analysis. Social Media Political Index 2014. Its aim was to determine the extent to which politicians used the most popular social media to communicate with Internet users. Creating Social Media Political Index – a political index of social media use that would allow for comparing the phenomenon within Central Europe and for watching changes in the future was another objective. The question concerning political popularity of particular social network services was also raised, i.e. which one – in particular countries – was the most popular among politicians.

Main conclusions from the research are as follows: although the most popular social network service among politicians and public authorities in Central Europe is Facebook, no service can be considered dominating. Politicians in all examined countries are not consequent, many accounts are inactive. In general it needs to be stated that there are many perspectives for the use of social media for political communication in the countries of Central Europe – both when it comes to the number of active politicians and public authorities and the extent to which the potential of numerous services of this kind give.

## MEDIA SPOŁECZNOŚCIOWE W KOMUNIKACJI POLITYCZNEJ W EUROPIE ŚRODKOWEJ – ANALIZA ILOŚCIOWA. SOCIAL MEDIA POLITICAL INDEX 2014

### Abstrakt

Autorzy artykułu prezentują w nim wyniki badań zatytułowane *Media społecznościowe w komunikacji politycznej w Europie Środkowej – ujęcie ilościowe. Social Media Political Index 2014*. Jego celem była odpowiedź na pytanie o stopień wykorzystania przez polityków najbardziej popularnych mediów społecznościowych do utrzymywania komunikacji z internautami. Chodziło także o stworzenie Social Media Political Index – wskaźnika politycznego wykorzystania mediów społecznościowych, który pozwalałby na porównanie występowania tego zjawiska w regionie Europy Środkowej oraz umożliwiał śledzenie zmian w przyszłości. Postawiono także pytanie o polityczną popularność poszczególnych serwisów społecznościowych, tj. który z nich – w poszczególnych krajach – jest najbardziej popularny wśród polityków. Główne wniosku płynące z uzyskanych wyników przedstawiają się następująco: najpopularniejszym serwisem społecznościowym wśród polityków i instytucji politycznych Europy Środkowej jest Facebook. Żaden serwis nie może być traktowany jako jedyny, dominujący. Politycy we wszystkich badanych krajach nie są konsekwentni,

wiele kont jest nieaktywnych. Generalnie należy stwierdzić, że wykorzystanie mediów społecznościowych do komunikacji politycznej w państwach Europy Środkowej ma duże pole do rozwoju – zarówno jeśli chodzi liczbę aktywnych komunikacyjnie polityków i instytucji, jak i stopień wykorzystania potencjału, który daje liczba serwisów tego typu.

**Barbara Brodzińska-Mirowska**

## UNFULFILLED EXPECTATIONS (?): POLITICAL COMMUNICATION ON THE INTERNET IN THE ERA OF PROFESSIONALIZATION

### Introduction

The implementation of modern technologies in communication into political discourse has been broadly discussed in recent years. The Polish literature on this field focuses mostly on the scope in which the Internet is used within the actions of communication carried during electoral campaigns. Yet currently the process of political communication is being shaped in challenging conditions characterized by low level of social trust, negative effects of mediatization of political message and difficulties of managing communication in multi-channel environment. The further assessment of the process requires broader analyses[1].

In the undertaken discussion I would like to analyze two following issues. First, the peculiarity of political communication in the 21th century, which manifests in a paradox between two coexisting phenomena: (a) a very dynamic development of communication techniques, which are to some extent implemented in the political sphere, (b) a decrease in trust of the government,

---

[1] See: K.Brants, K.Voltmer, *Political Communication in Postmodern Democracy. Challenging the Primacy of Politics,* London 2011; P.Norris, *Democratic Deficit, Critical Citizens Revisited,* New York 2011.

political parties and state institutions[2]. Hence in the first part of the article I will concentrate on discussing two questions: professionalization and a crisis. Second, this paper will explain both the modification of political communication and its characteristics. As such this paper, aims to provide answers to the following questions: given the present social and political conditions, where are the opportunities for the improvement of effectiveness of online communication. Further what are the biggest challenges to such improvements?

## Political communication in the 21th century: professionalization in the era of crisis

The core of political communication remains the same despite the significant development of new technologies to seize and maintain power. From the latter half of the 20th century politicians, media and society have consistantly played key roles in this process. It means that Richard Perloff's category of the "golden triangle" still applies[3]. The changes of political communication are visible in the roles played by particular subjects in this process. The Internet has slightly changed the scope of influence of the three actors. Yet traditional media play a very significant role in this triangle. All in all, they still constitute the most important element in the process of seizing and maintaining power[4]. A lot of authors pay much attention to media and the role it plays

---

[2]The second phenomenon, which is indicated in this paper, manifests itself in many researches. Those conducted in the European Union show that the problem is definitely becoming more profound. Fewer and fewer people trust their governments (23%) and parliaments (25%), Eurobarometr 80, *Public Opinion in The European Union,* Brussels 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb80/eb80_first_en.pdf, 13.01.2014.

[3] *Richard Perloff points out three main actors of political communications process, which are media, society and politicians,* R. Perloff, *Political Communication. Politics, Press and Public in America*, New Jersey 1998, p. 8-13.

[4] Tomasz Gackowski performed some very interesting research on the way in which the media refer to political promises made by politicians, *Władza na dywaniku. Jak polskie media rozliczają polityków,* Warsaw 2013.

within the process of political communication[5]. The fact that the arrival of television as the most important medium has brought changes of a revolutionary significance, is undeniable. Thus the media has been the driving force of the development of this sector of social communication. Of course mass media significantly changed the means and scope of conducting an electoral campaign[6] but it also provoked the centralization of the acts of communication. The Internet gave hope for further professionalization of political communication and as Sara Bentivegna indicates: *ICT's the power to destabilize the control of production and circulation of information held by traditional media*[7]. That particular component seems to be least suitable for political communication but this issue will be covered later. However, two features that best describe political communication in the 21st century are: (1) professionalization (2) crisis.

---

[5] See: J. Blumler, M. Gurevitch, *The Crisis of Public Communication,* London 1995, 11-25. The mediocentral tendency can also be observed e.g. in Dominiq Wolton (see: *Political Communication: The Construction of a Model,* "European Journal if Communication", 1990 vol. 5, p. 9-28), B. McNair (see: *Wprowadzenia do komunikowania politycznego,* Poznań 1998) or R. Denton and G. Woodward (see: *Jak zdefiniować komunikację polityczną?* [in:] J. Szczupaczyński (ed.) *Władza i Społeczeństwo,* Warsaw 1998, p.193-205).

[6] It is especially in the USA where the market of specialists in media communication, marketing, market research and survey of public opinion etc. has dynamically developed. The process of professionalization of political communication is very often related to intense involvement of political consultants in the process of electoral campaign. However, it should be taken into account that the best developed market in this field so far is the American one. See: L. Sabato, *The Rise of Political Consultants: New Ways of Winning Elections*. New York 1981. F.Plasser, *Party Dimishing Relevance for Campaign Professionals*, "The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics", 2001, vol. 6, p. 44-59, B.Biskup, *Rozwój doradztwa politycznego w Polsce*, [in] K. Churska-Nowak, S. Drobczyński (ed.), *Profesjonalizacja i mediatyzacja kampanii politycznych w Polsce,* Poznań 2011, p. 91-106.

[7] S. Bentivegna*, Rethinking Politics in the World ICT's,* "European Journal of Communication", 2006, vol. 21(3), p. 335.

**Professionalization**

The term of professionalization refers to all the changes that have occurred in political communication from the latter part of the previous century. This term is sometimes simplified and identified with the implementation of new solutions in communication into the political sphere. In particular it refers to the support that politicians and parties receive from political consultants and specialists in communication, the media and research on public opinion. Among many approaches, professionalization is presented as the process which concerns increasingly advanced communication tools. That's especially the case with political marketing in the context of electoral campaigns[8]. It is worth remembering that this is a very complex process, which exceeds the aspect of electoral campaigns. As Christina Holtz-Bacha emphasizes, the process of professionalization is strongly related to two parallel phenomena such as modernization and globalization. Thus, professionalization is an integral part of social development[9]. The approach of Christina Holtz-Bach and Ralph Negrine is to present the process of professionalization in a broader way[10]. A broader look on professionalization as a process of a long-term change consists of several stages, analyzed on several levels: (1) organizational, (2) media, (3) technological, (4) marketing, and (5) human resources[11]. Characterizing the

---

[8] See: K. Churska-Nowak, S. Drobczyński (eds.), *Profesjonalizacja i mediatyzacja kampanii politycznych w Polsce,* Poznań 2011, B. Dobek-Ostrowska, R. Wiszniowski, *Teoria komunikowania publicznego i politycznego,* Wrocław 2007, p. 135-166.

[9] See: Ch. Holtz-Bacha*, Professionalization of Political Communication: the Case of the 1998 SPD Campaign,* "Journal of Political Marketing", 2002, vol. 1(4), p. 23-37, after: D. Lilleker*, Key Concepts of Political Communication*, London 2006, p. 32, Ch. Holtz-Bacha, *Professionalization on Germany* [in:] R.Negrine P.Mancini Ch.Holtz-Bacha, S.Papathanassopoulos, *The Professionalization of Political Communication,* Bristol 2007, p. 63-79.

[10] R. Negrine, *The Transformation of Political Communication. Continuities and Changes in Media and Politics,* New York 2008, p. 1-14, R.Negrine P.Mancini Ch Holtz-Bacha., S.Papathanassopoulos, *The Professionalization of Political Communication,* Bristol 2007.

[11] More: B. Brodzińska-Mirowska, *Marketing międzywyborczy w teorii i praktyce. Przypadek Platformy Obywatelskiej,* Toruń 2013, p. 73-75.

process of professionalization by only focusing on new communications techniques and efficiency might lead to contradictory conclusions, especially if we take the following trends into account:

- The phenomenon of dynamic development of knowledge and communication skills is accompanied by a simultaneous decrease in trust towards politics and involvement in politics[12].

- Look at the professionalization of political communication from the perspective of a political campaign. I wanted to emphasize that we might get the impression of professionalization of the process of political communication by measuring it only from the perspective of electoral campaigns. It is much more precise to speak of professionalization of electoral campaigns[13] than of professionalization of political communication, as this complex process is not only limited to campaigns. A significant part of communication takes place in the interelectoral period. Professionalization of political communication (or rather the necessity of professionalization) has been attributed a new significance, which exceeds greatly the issues of electoral campaigns.

- Reactivating communication actions in the field of direct communication[14]. The increased interest in direct communication does not contradict the idea of professionalization. In contrast, a long-term implementation of communication, which is based upon this form,

---

[12] Sara Bentivegna emphasizes that we can also consider it a certain paradox in the context of democracy, because as the author indicates, the development of democracy is accompanied by negative phenomena such as the constantly increasing discouragement of citizens towards politics, see: S. Bentivegna, *Rethinking Politics in the World ICT's*, "European Journal of Communication", 2006 vol. 21(3), p. 333-336.

[13] See more: R. Gibson, A. Römmele, *Measuring the Professionalization of Political Campaing*, "Party Politics" 2009 vol. 15(3), p. 265-293.

[14] E. Marciniak, *Relacyjna teoria komunikacji, a marketing relacji w polityce*, „Studia Politologiczne" 2012 vol. 24, p. 92. See also: B. Brodzinska-Mirowska, *Marketing międzywyborczy…*, p. 132-152.

seems to be a very reasonable solution. Online communication tools may support this process to a significant extent.

Now, a question arises: to what degree has the Internet increased the professionalization of political communication? The answer to this question is not so obvious since it depends on the approach taken. There are three possible answers to this question: (1) if we analyze the problem narrowly, we will conclude that professionalization proceeds because political parties and politicians are supported by specialists in new technologies (2) if we perceive it from the perspective of technological possibilities, we will provide a positive answer as well, (3) however, if we take into account the necessity of multi-dimensional assessment of the transformations in the field of political communication as well as the effectiveness of long-term action, then some new doubts appear as to the scope and degree of professionalization of political communication. That is not to claim that political communication in the 21st century is unprofessional. It is only suggested that a more detailed analysis of this incredibly complex process encompasses a very specific type of communication.

**The crisis of political communication**

Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch in *The Crisis of Public Communication*, wrote about the crisis in political (and public) communication[15]. Recently, researchers have been more frequently and precisely referring to political marketing as one of the main means of political communication[16]. There are two factors which encourage the theses of the crisis: (1) a difficult and com-

---

[15] See: J. Blumler, M. Gurevitch, *The Crisis of Public Communication,* London 1995.
[16] See: A. Kasińska-Metryka, R. Wiszniowski (eds.), *Kryzys marketingu politycznego*, Toruń 2013.

plex environment, which under many views is not beneficial for political subjects (e.g. tabloidization of politics, scandalisation) (2) taking into consideration the decrease in the interest in politics among citizens, a reduced faith in the efficiency of these communication means is inevitable.

It is assumed that we should not so much speak of a crisis of political marketing as such (I find the word 'crisis' too serious in comparison to the extent of the phenomenon which we observe) but rather of some deficit in the awareness of the purpose of marketing means as well as the lack of ideas (and possibilities), or simply the lack of needs to use the available means[17]. As Marek Jeziński argues, the crisis of political marketing results from *the excess of some goods, which cannot be effectively processed and which function according to the rules of market and – as a result – cannot be understood by the target group*[18]. The difficulties indicated by Jeziński are particularly severe if take account of the necessity to implement marketing actions into the periods between campaigns, by making use of modern communication technologies.

The concept of means of communication has not been fully explored, rather we are running out of ideas as to how to make use of them. Additionally, some new requirements have appeared as a consequence of the means of communication being implemented automatically after 1989, with no reflection upon their nature. This has led to a very pragmatic and over-simplified attitude in a political communication field[19]. As a result, the nature of political

---

[17] The crisis of political marketing as the main means of political communication has been described in detail by: L. Sobkowiak, *Marketing polityczny: kryzys czy pragmatyka?,* p. 9-20, R.Wiszniowski, *Deficyt e-marketingu rządowego w Polsce,* p. 86-95, T. Goban-Klas, *Kryzys marketingu politycznego, czy kryzys mediów?,* p. 96-102 [in:] A. Kasińska-Metryka, R. Wiszniowski, *Kryzys marketingu politycznego,* Toruń 2013.

[18] M. Jeziński, *Kryzys marketingu polityczne i jego kontekstowe uwarunkowania* [in:] A. Kasińska-Metryka, R. Wiszniowski, *Kryzys marketingu politycznego*, Toruń 2013, p. 26.

[19] Hence I find it fair that Mariusz Kolczyński speaks of 'propagandization of political marketing' M. Kolczyński, *Komunikacyjny >>efekt jojo<< propagandyzacja polskiego marketingu politycz-*

communication has warped, especially in such aspects as political marketing which aims *to create the ground for a two-directional flow of information*, as emphasized by Agnieszka Kasińska-Metryka and Robert Wiszniowski[20]. The central issue here, is the crisis. It is therefore a consequence of the so-called 'trap of instrumentalisation of marketing and communication'. Although, it is rather more proper to speak of a crisis in relations between political parties, politicians and society resulting from incompetently created communication. Or are these the costs of the centralization of communication? Increasingly reduced participation in politics and trust towards politicians constitutes measurable indices of the crisis of these relations. The following part of the article I will refer to the question of whether it is possible to work upon these relations by means of modern technologies and if so, how this could be pursued.

**Hopes and expectations of the 'new era'**

Over 2 billion people from all over the world use the Internet[21]. According to 'Diagnoza Społeczna' around 64% of Polish society are part of this movement[22]. It is of no surprise that these new channels of communication have raised so great hopes among both practitioners and theorists who deal with political communication.

In the beginning of the 21st century the Internet and its potential influence upon the improvement of the quality of political communication was the object of enormous optimism. Today television continues to dominate as a medium, especially when it comes to obtaining information on politics. How-

---

*nego* [in:] M. Kolczyński, M.Mazur, M. Michalczyk (eds.) *Mediatyzacja kampanii politycznych*, Katowice 2009., p.347-360.

[20] A. Kasińska-Metryka, R. Wiszniowski, *Kryzys marketingu politycznego,* Toruń 2013, p. 6.

[21] Data from 2012 http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats9.htm, 20.02.2014

[22] The Report *Diagnoza Społeczna* 2013, p. 325.

ever, it is worth paying attention to the research in 'Diagnoza Społeczna': most of the users of the Internet in Poland are young people. Two very important issues appear at this point: (1) it is the group least interested in politics and they use the Internet the most; (2), the Internet is not a substitute for television, which confirms the statement about a dominant role of traditional media[23]. As Ralph Negrine argues, political communication in the times of modern technologies, indicates that:

- *Mainstream news media are still dominant as sources of news*,
- *Although elites can create and control their own media space (…) these are of little use unless they are accessed. However, the potential for interactivity exposes elites to interrogation and contradiction*,
- *Websites compete with, and link with, other websites so creating a  network of information*,
- *With many sites on the Internet providing tools for interactivity, individuals can not only feed back comments but create their own network of information*,
- *Lastly, the networks of information can open up discussions beyond what is made available through elites or traditional media outlets*[24].

Therefore the characteristics of the Internet can be subsumed under two basic categories: (1) those broadening communication opportunities and managing this very process (2) those constituting the potential of generating socially valuable activities. The details are gathered in the table below:

---

[23] The Report *Diagnoza Społeczna* 2013, p.321-329.
[24] R. Negrine, *The Transformation of Political Communication. Continuities and Changes in Media and Politics* New York 2008, p. 175.

**Tab. 1. Communication and social potential of online communication means.**

| 1.  Those broadening the communication potential | 2. Those increasing the social potential |
|---|---|
| ▪ Various channels addressing the diverse sociodemographic groups of addressees (precise targeting of the message) <br> ▪ Significant reduction of communication time (lack of barriers related to space and time) <br> ▪ The possibility of permanent communication (without the necessity of involving traditional media) <br> ▪ The possibility of increasing the attractiveness of messages <br> ▪  The medium is very interactive <br> ▪ Possibilities of quick and easy acquisition of information on the addressees <br> ▪ It is a source of communication that provides various information | ▪ The possibility of rapid interaction <br> ▪ Many possibilities to encourage activities <br> ▪ Democratic nature of the medium (diversity of information, sources, the possibilities of co-creating the announcements)[25] <br> ▪ The possibility of building communities through particular actions or projects <br> ▪ Making a connection with one of the most difficult groups of electorate, i.e. with young people |

**Source: own elaboration.**

The Internet has significantly broadened the opportunities in terms of communication in politics. Some of the features of this medium, which are enumerated in Table 1, pose the following questions:

5. How can communication actions conducted online and undertaken by Polish political parties and politicians electoral campaign be characterized?

6. What might be the role of online communication means in the process of building a long-term connection with the electorate?

---

[25] Jakub Nowak represents a similar attitude that *digital information technologies have been perceived from their beginnings as potentially very democratic*, see: J. Nowak, *Zrób to sam – Web 2.0 jako sfera politycznej aktywności Internautów* [in:] M. Jeziński (ed.), *Nowe Media i  polityka: Internet, demokracja, kampanie wyborcze*, Toruń 2009, p. 165.

**Planning and conducting electoral campaigns**

The high expectations about the application of the Internet in political campaigns have been intensified in the course of the American presidential campaign in 2008. As Colin Delany points out, the success of Obama's staff lies in consequence of consistent and integrated communication activities, setting precise and easily measurable goals, mobilizing online users to actively engage in the campaign, developing precisely targeted massage to segmented groups of voters and facilitating communication with those groups by using diverse communications tools. Obama's 2008 campaign was also a breakthrough in collecting funds by massive usage of online tools[26]. During the election cycle in 2008, according to Pew Internet & American Life Project, more than half of the people entitled to vote used the Internet in order to take part in or gather information about the campaign[27].

There is no doubt that the Internet has facilitated the process of carrying electoral campaigns via the organization of the team, distribution of tasks and internal communication, analysis of data and their transfer, monitoring the course of a campaign etc. As far as the process of external communication is concerned, which aims to appeal to a selected group of electorate and to mobilize their activity, online means bring many possibilities. To what extent do Polish politicians and political parties make use of online communication means in electoral campaigns?

The application of new communication techniques depends on many factors. These are the types of elections, financial means, the size of electoral

---

[26] C. Delany, *Learning from Obama: Lessons for Online Communicators in 2009 and Beyond*, 2009, www.epolitics.com, s. 5-10, 30.03.2014, see also: T.Towner, D. Dulio, *An Experiment of Campaign Effects During the YouTube Election,* "New Society&Society" vol. 13(4), s. 626-644, L. Sabato, *The Year of Obama: How Barack Obama Won the White House,* New York 2010.
[27] *A. Smith, The Internet's Role in Campaign 2008,*
 http://www.pewinternet.org/2009/04/15/the-internets-role-in-campaign-2008/29.03.2014.

district, party affiliation, political objectives, position in the political hierarchy, possibilities of cooperation with specialists in creating this type of communication, as well as the attitude of a candidate towards this kind of communication. My point of reference for these analyses is the results of selected reports and studies which concern the recent council and presidential campaigns in 2010 as well as the parliamentary campaign in 2011. Nevertheless, the analysis of the present results of the research leads to some general conclusions as to the scope of the use of online means within electoral campaigns:

The arguments above agree with the work of Dominik Batorski and Jan Zając, who together indicate that the campaign of Obama from 2008 should still be treated as an example[28]. Iwona Grzywińska argues that *no phenomenon of professionalization of electoral campaigns as far as social media are concerned in this field*[29]. There is no doubt that both parties and politicians choose the Internet as an information medium (for unidirectional communication). Yet, is this typical only for Polish parties and politicians? The research conducted on various political parties proves that it is quite a universal tendency. The informative nature of the Internet is most frequently used by political parties[30].

---

[28] D.Batorski, J. Zając, *Kampania w sieci*, Warszawa 2011, p. 19.

[29] I. Grzywińska, *Analiza komunikacji politycznej w serwisach społecznościowych (*NK.pl, Facebook.com) *podczas prezydenckiej kampanii wyborczej* 2010, "Studia Politologiczne" 2011 vol.21, p.161.

[30] See: A.Cardenal, *Why Mobilize Support Online? The Paradox of Party Behavior Online,* "Party Politics", 2011, vol. 19(1), p. 83-103, see also: A. Römmele, *Political Parties, Party Communication and New Information and Communication Technologies,* "Party Politics" 2003 vol. 9(1), p. 7-20.

**Tab. 2. Usage of the Internet communications potential during political campaign in Poland – observed trends.**

| Type of Campaign | Usage of the Internet communications potential – observed trends |
|---|---|
| Local Government Campaign 2010 | - one-sided communication (websites and online profiles are treated as additional advertising space, almost half of candidates running for the seat of mayor, did not provide any contact for direct communication with voters)<br>- small range of interaction activities focused on voters engagement<br>- candidates showed interest in using social media, however researchers observed striking lack of consistent communications strategy in online messages<br>- websites and social media profiles were often established only for the purpose of campaign |
| Presidential Campaign 2010 | - small range of interaction activities focused on voters engagement<br>- proactive communication activities in social media were only conducted during the campaign and only for that sole purpose<br>- incoherence between candidates' online and offline image<br>- few campaigns decided to develop message accordingly with the needs of targeted groups of voters (for example held 3 different websites) |
| General Elections Campaign 2011 | - lack of coherent online activities<br>- striking inconsistency between partisan and individual candidates message<br>- more candidates listed on the first position of a party ballot tend to use websites (however many candidates resigned from posting websites, ex. Women, most frequently websites were held by the candidates of Civic Platform)<br>- Facebook and YouTube was the most popular social media channels among candidates<br>- small range of interaction activities focused on voters engagement (online tools served usually as information tools )<br>- Internet was not the main source of political information for voters |

**Sources: own elaboration based on: D. Batorski, J. Zając, *Kampania w sieci*, Warsaw 2011, s. 8-12, D. Batorski, M. Nagraba, J. Zając, J. Zbieranek, *Internet w kampanii wyborczej 2011*, Warsaw 2012, p. 9-14, J. Garlicki, *Komunikacja w Internecie a kultura polityczna Polaków – komentarz po pierwszej fali badań*, "Studia Politologiczne" 2011 vol. 21, p. 297-303, P. Wesołowski, *Analiza komunikacji politycznej w serwisach internetowych kandydatów na prezydenta Polski w trakcie kampanii wyborczej* 2010 *roku*, "Studia Politologiczne" 2011 vol. 21, p. 89-130, I. Grzywińska, *Analiza komunikacji politycznej w serwisach społecznościowych* (NK.pl, Facebook.com) *podczas prezydenckiej kampanii wyborczej* 2010, "Studia Politologiczne" 2011 vol.21, p.131-164.**

The common feature of online communication is that it does not manifest any long-term nor strategic activity. The researchers refer to that feature very often. What is more, the negligence of online activity after the elections,

suggests two facts: (1) there is an instrumental treatment of the Internet, (2) the reason why politicians tend to neglect the necessity of regular update of their online profiles is a shortage of detailed analyses on facilitating the choice of the most efficient political online tools addressing different targeted groups of voters, used in the both partisan and individual campaigns.

The basis of the efficient usage of the available means are: (1) exhaustive analysis of the needs of candidates/politicians, or of parties with reference to the objectives they have, (2) deciding which means might help to implement these objectives to the highest degree (it can as well equal ignoring certain activities e.g. on a web portal) and (3) identification of the expectations of the target group – the electorate. Point three is particularly interesting because it is important to be aware of the needs and habits of those who use online communication, namely in this case the electorate[31]. If there is any reason politicians do not make use of the potential of the Internet, one can ask why. There are two probable obstacles: (1) the fear of interaction – online discussions over politics very often provoke strong, negative emotions and what follows is the problem of control of the messages (2) interactive activities have to be strategic and both politicians and parties seem to find it troublesome. It results from the instrumental approach to this medium as well as from some organizational barriers (especially in a long-term perspective). These remarks produce further questions: is this interaction really needed? It seems to be a good question if we analyze the data: Przemysław Wesołowski indicates that only 17% of the surveyed net surfers search for information on politics on the Internet, because *in the case of some more difficult domain, such as politics, there is a tendency to choose a medium which is easy to understand and which*

---

[31] P. Bickerton, M. Bickerton, U. Pardesi, *Marketing w Internecie,* Gdańsk 2006, p. 13-14.

*usually presents an interpretation of events*[32]. It might be that the require-ments for interaction between the politicians and the electorate result from the fact that the Internet brought hopes and expectations regarding the inten-sification of democratic processes. It was expected that the involvement of the citizens would rise along with the access to information. Internet gives the opportunity of expanding and deepening the public sphere and thus, of reviv-ing public debate[33]. However, today we know that most of these expectations were exaggerated because, as Leszek Porębski explains: *ITC transforms and will transform the world of politics to no less an extent than it happens in the case of other aspects of social life.* He also adds that *there is no new quality in here* (…)[34]. Moreover, no relation has been confirmed between the increased access to information and e.g. the participation in political life[35]. In addition, a strongly determining factor is the so-called digital exclusion (generally un-derstood as no access to any network or incompetence in using it)[36]. Can we say that the Internet influenced the quality of the political debate? Zizi Papa-charissi emphasizes that *the fact that the Internet provides additional space for political discussion, it is still plagued by the inadequacies of our political sys-tem. It provides public space, but does not constitute a public sphere*[37]. On the other hand, let us remember that along with the Internet an excellent oppor-tunity appeared for smaller social movements or minor parties, for which the

---

[32] P. Wesołowski, *Analiza komunikacji politycznej…,* p. 126.

[33] R. K. Polat, *The Internet and Political Participation. Explornig the Explanatory Links* "Europe-an Journal of Communication", 2005 vol. 20(4), p. 435-459, see: L. Porębski, *Elektroniczne oblicze polityki. Demokracja i państwo, instytucje polityczne w okresie rewolucji informacyjnej,* Cracow 2001, p. 73-108.

[34] L. Porębski, *Elektroniczne oblicze…,* p. 34, 39.

[35] R.K. Polat, *The Internet and Political…,* p. 440-441.

[36] See: H. Bonfadelli, *The Internet Knowledge Gaps: A Theoretical and Empirical Investigation,* "European Journal of Communication", 2002 vol. 17(1), p. 65-84.

[37] See: Z. Papacharissi, *The Virtual Sphere: The Internet as a Public Sphere,* "New Media and Society" 2002 vol. 4(1), p.13.

Internet forms the only ground for functioning[38]. An exceptionally crucial issue appears in the discussion: is it true that only the most professional communication actions have the power to increase the involvement and interest in politics? There is no answer to this question only hypotheses. In this way we have reached another issue to discuss: is it possible at all to make use of modern technologies in the process of building relations with the electorate in long-term communication? And how to do this?

**Long-term communication with the voters in the era of modern technologies**

All the characteristics of the Internet enumerated earlier seem to justify the expectations to use this potential in order to establish long-term communication with the electorate. As it was already mentioned it is particularly important in critical moments of these relations. According, it is necessary to increase the long-term activity which is concentrated on building an interaction with the electorate[39]. It can be achieved by means of a constructive dialogue, encouraging the voters to participate in, discuss and even to actively pursue certain decision-making processes. Online means could be particularly useful because of their interactive nature. Such approach seems to be particularly reasonable in the era of mediatization of politics and particularly of its negative effects[40]. Therefore, the assumptions of relationship marketing are

---

[38] The already cited Ana Cardenal, *Why mobilize…*p.83-103, discusses a very interesting thread of smaller political parties and their functioning on the Internet. In Poland it is perfectly illustrated by the figure of Janusz Korwin-Mikke, see: P. Wesołowski, *Analiza komunikacji…* p.126. His example confirms that the Internet has become an excellent communication platform for smaller and even marginal parties which do not function in the mainstream media, see also: M. Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope. Social Movements in the Internet Age,* Cambridge 2012, p.218-244.

[39] Political communication based on mutual relations: see: E. Marciniak, *Relacyjna teoria komunikacji a marketing relacji w polityce*, "Studia Politologiczne" vol. 24, Warszawa 2012, p. 87-103, as well as B. Brodzińska-*Mirowska, Marketing międzywyborczy …*p. 129-180.

[40] M. Castells, *Communication Power,* [Polish Edition]*,* Warsaw 2013, p. 244-257.

worth paying attention to in this context[41] and so are the possibilities of implementation between elections. A key element of communication based interaction is authenticity, trust and, moreover, a coherent, consistent dialogue on equal terms. The quality of this communication is increasingly important for citizens and is significant for quality of governing[42].

At this point a significant problem occurs: the research so far proves that (1) political parties (including politicians) use the Internet above all as an informative channel; (2) some serious difficulties can be observed in the long-term, strategic inter-electoral activities. It means that despite all the advantages it brings, it still remains a difficult objective to accomplish. So what are the barriers? In this situation Ana Cardenal's statement seems to be acceptable: *if parties are not fully exploiting the Internet in order to mobilize political support, it is probably because it is not clear what they will gain from it. In fact, one of the main arguments is that exploiting new technologies for political mobilization has uncertain benefits for parties while it has very certain costs, both communicational and organizational*[43]. Parties make use of their organizational resources mainly during electoral campaigns. This is due to the centralization of political communication. This is reasonable if we take into account the role of television in the process of electoral communication. Communication from the central level might, however, fail in a long-time perspective. In a long term political parties should also focus on grassroots activi-

---

[41] The assumptions about relationship marketing are broadly covered by J. Otto, *Marketing relacji. Koncepcja i stosowanie*, Warsaw 2004, see also: A. Drapińska, *Marketing relacji – istota i czynniki sukcesu,* "Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego", Ekonomiczne Problemy Usług" nr 41, 2009, p. 39-45.

[42] See: T. Sasińska-Klas, *Kryzys marketingu politycznego a zarządzanie jakością*, [in:] A. Kasińska-Metryka, R. Wiszniowski, *Kryzys marketingu politycznego*, Toruń 2013, p. 78-85, see also: J. Wilkin (ed.), *Jakość rządzenia w Polsce. Jak ją badać, monitorować i poprawiać?,* Warsaw 2013.

[43] A. S. Cardenal, *Why mobilize support online? The Paradox of Party Behavior Online,* "Party Politics" 2011 vol. 19(1), p. 84.

ties. This also triggers the necessity of low-level partisan structure reactivation and engaging them in the process of party-voter relations building[44]. Online tools may facilitate local community building through leveraging the issues of natural interest for local communities. It is hard to accomplish that goal by shaping the message in the central level. Low-level partisan structure can turn out to be helpful in the process of creating relations between electorate, politicians and parties. The ITC tools enable a coordination of work, so the transfer of some of the communication tasks to smaller units is much easier[45]. Long-term, inter-electoral communication actions are not a trend but necessity and at the same time, the greatest challenge for political parties and politicians who are used to centralized communication[46].

Yet the key factor, which determines the interaction and activity, is the motivation and willingness of the electorate. The new media has the communication potential to create long term relations with voters and party members and followers. This potential may be developed by undertaking the following activities:

- shaping the communication by using diverse tools, often in more attractive and accessible form,
- conducting activities aimed to inform and educate about the decisions made by the government,
- building communities around meaningful issues,
- creating additional and more diverse content targeted to different groups of voters,

---

[44] See: B.Brodzińska-Mirowska, M.Wincławska, *Organizacja, funkcjonowanie i komunikacja w polskich partiach politycznych w oczach członków. Wstępne wyniki badań* [in] M. Wincławska, A. Pacześniak, *Partie polityczne w Polsce i Europie,* Wrocław-Toruń 2013, s. 197-220.
[45] A. Römmele*, Political Parties...*p. 10.
[46] Decentralization of information and communication is a consequence of using the Internet. This phenomenon is noticeable but not so dynamic, yet. See: J. Garlicki, *Komunikacja w Internecie*...p. 298.

- building communication apart from mainstream media.

The instrumentalisation of the Internet as another medium of political communication will not provide the desired effect of the restoration of relations between the politicians and citizens. According to Blumler and Coleman, *citizens of democracy do not want to be asked their opinion only to allow their government to say it has asked them their opinion. They want to see an authentic relationship between speaking and being heard*[47]. Every act of communication, which violates trust mentioned by Coleman and Blumler, provokes scepticism. The restoration of these relations and trust constitutes another challenge faced by politicians. The usage of modern technologies can only support this process but in no way does it guarantee any success.

**Summary**

The implementation of new technologies into politics has broadened the extent of communication acts of politicians. It has displayed a certain idiosyncrasy but has also uncovered many drawbacks. This idiosyncrasy consists in the fact that the fragmentary professionalization occurs along with the crisis of trust and attitude towards politicians (and politics). The parties and politicians prefer to implement online means of communication technically. They appreciate their informative potential. However, they are more reserved when it comes to direct interaction with the electorate.

On the other hand, a rapid development of communication means has exposed drawbacks and challenges:

---

[47] J. Blumler, S. Coleman, *The Internet and Democratic Citizenship. Theory, Practice and Policy*, New York 2009, p. 166.

- the long-term and multi-channel communication acts within party organization (both external and internal) lack structure,

- disintegration of communication acts on many levels,

- there are some financial and organizational barriers, which aggravate or even make it impossible to organize communication acts and which aggravate efficient, complex managing of the communication with the electorate,

- a trivial approach towards communication; its means are treated instrumentally and their organizational resources are not exploited enough,

- making attempts to mobilize young voters, who regardless of being the biggest online-users group, are the least engaged in political issues[48].

The demands and requirements towards online means of communication applied into politics are far too excessive. They result in disappointment and dissatisfaction, which is observed while estimating the changes that occur over time along with the progress of the Internet use in political communication. The source of these requirements lays in a comparison between the efficiency of online actions on the commercial market and conclusions from American political campaigns. Unfortunately, I doubt whether it is justifiable to refer to the same indexes for so disparate types of communication, especially if we take into account the differences between commercial and political communication as well as legal, formal and organizational conditions that stand behind it.

---

[48] T. Bakker, C. De Vreese, *Good News for the Future? Young People, Internet Use and Political Participation*, "Communication Research" 2011, vol. 38(04), s. 451-470.

Therefore, neither the politicians, nor the parties and electorate have met the expectations enumerated in the title. However, as of today the greatest challenge for the former group is the necessity for a wise application and integration of the available communication means (both the traditional and online ones) in order to be able to carry out a long-term and complex communication.

Barbara Brodzińska-Mirowska – PhD, Assistant at the Chair of Journalism and Social Communication at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun

## Abstract

Implementation of new technologies into political field has raised great hopes. Expectations were mainly focused on boosting the efficiency of political communication. Researchers also expected new technologies to bring the potential that would increase the involvement in political issues among citizens. Now we know that most of these expectations were not exaggerated.

As the recent research shows it would be risky to describe all the changes in political communication as revolutionary. While discussing political communication in the era of new technologies two issues should be taken into account: (1) professionalization, and (2) a crisis of political communication. Due to the contradictory importance of both of them, this seems to be a paradox of our times. Thus both the political parties and politicians as individuals are currently facing a challenge of rebuilding relations with voters, especially in a long-term perspective. The difficulties in accomplishing that goal might, however, be overcome through the possibilities offered by the application of new technologies. And yet the question remains: would they be able to use it properly.

**NIESPEŁNIONE OCZEKIWANIA (?): KOMUNIKACJA POLITYCZNA W INTERNECIE W DOBIE PROFESJONALIZACJI**

**Abstrakt**

Implementacja nowych technologii w obszar komunikacji politycznej zrodziła wiele nadziei. Najwięcej oczekiwań pojawiło się w zakresie zwiększenia efektywności działań komunikacyjnych. Wielu badaczy wyrażało nadzieję, że nowe technologie spowodują zwiększenie poziomu zaangażowania obywateli w sprawy polityczne. Dziś wiemy, że wiele z tych oczekiwań formułowano znacznie na wyrost.

Wyniki wielu badań pokazują, że trudno zmiany w obszarze komunikacji politycznej określić mianem rewolucyjnych. Podejmowanie dyskusji na temat komunikacji politycznej w dobie nowych technologii wymaga uwzględnienia dwóch, ważnych kwestii związanych z: (1) profesjonalizacją oraz (2) kryzysem komunikacji politycznej. Współwystępowanie dwóch tych zjawisk jednocześnie jest jednym z interesujących paradoksów. Tymczasem największym wyzwaniem dla partii politycznych i polityków jest odbudowanie relacji z wyborcami w perspektywie długoterminowej. Rodzi to jednak duże trudności, które mogłyby zostać przezwyciężone m.in. dzięki wykorzystaniu potencjału nowych technologii komunikacyjnych. Wciąż jednak pojawia się pytanie, czy politycy i partie polityczne będą chcieli i potrafili z niego skorzystać?

**Tomasz Wierzbica**

# POLITICAL COMMUNICATION ON THE INTERNET AS A NEW DIMENSION OF POLITICAL RIVARLY

## Introduction

In this article an author wanted to expose that the Internet become a new dimension of political rivalry. To defend this thesis the author described role of the Internet in modern politics. Almost every notion was defended by appropriate statistics not only nowadays but also from the past. Facts used in the publication were aggregated to emphasize progressing transfer political rivalry to the Internet. The main hypothesis of this article was to answer for the question: Is, or whether can be, the Internet a leading medium in political rivalry and how it can affect on the democracy? The analysis was based on modern and available studies and surveys.

## Political communication yesterday and today

Political communication as an object of systematic researches has started to exist in the early twenties of the twentieth century. The most important reasons which decided about the growing importance of this realm were: (a) experiences associated with the usage of propaganda during the First World War; (b) practice of functioning of propaganda in totalitarian states; (c) belief that another armed conflict is inevitable, and thus it was necessary to

develop effective methods to influence potential opponents[1]. Almost immediately political scientists began to expose mass media character of political communication. This features were also characterized by Umberto Eco who argued that film is applicable in the modern society because: (a) type of an industrial society is apparently quite uniform, but in fact it is full of differences and contrasts; (b) there are channels of communication, which allow communiqué to get not only to certain groups, but also to an unlimited mass of consumers from different points in social structure; (c) there are groups of producers, creating and broadcasting a specific communiqué by industrial means[2].

In conclusion, it must be noted that with the development of modern organizations direct communication is being replaced by different forms of indirect communication, including television. The setup:

broadcaster→ communiqué→ recipient→ effect

was substituted by the following:

broadcaster→ communiqué→ channel→ recipient→ effect[3].

Up till now, the described mechanism of functioning was the most complete in the situation of usage of resources and possibilities offered by TV. Currently also the Internet begins to incorporate it. The Internet's position has evolved since the late nineties. To demonstrate the growing potential of the new medium, it is essential to indicate its evolutionary involvement in politics. The Internet, as a new medium, appeared quite recently, at the end of the 20th century. In the beginning, however, politicians did not detect advantages which can flow from this new dimension of political rivalry. Some good impe-

---

[1] M. Kolczyński, *Strategie komunikowania politycznego,* Katowice 2008, p.16.
[2] U. Eco, *The Absent Structure (polish edition),* Warsaw 1996, p. 399.
[3] M. Kolczyński, J. Sztumski, *Zarys socjologii organizacji,* Katowice 2003, p. 87.

tus was given by A. Gore. P. Hallam- Baker, a former member of the CERN Web development, said that the vice president was the person who transferred all American administration to the Internet[4]. In 2000, in the primaries of the Democratic Party of Arizona, voters could cast their votes also on the Internet. The effect seems to be clear – as compared to the primaries in '96, the voter turnout increased by 600%. On the election day in the United States in '96, the CBS website was visited by about 10 million Internet users. In the U.S. presidential election in 2008, the Internet was one of the most important media. C. Delany even said that without the Internet, B. Obama would still be a young Senator of Illinois, who would almost certainly lose, not only with his Republican opponent, but also would be crushed by the ability of an experienced candidate, like H. Clinton, who could raise money from big donors and lock up endorsements from elected officials and party activists[5]. One of the clearest evidences that global influence of the Internet in politics is on the rise was presidential elections in South Korea in December 2002, where service OhmyNews (whose founder created, as the first, the term "citizen journalist") influenced the election result contributing to the electoral victory of R. M. Hyun. He rewarded the web portal by granting it the first interview after his election[6]. The words of V. Creft, Founder of the Internet Society, seem to be a  good conclusion: *If you want to know how the world would look in the 21st century, you should ask a member of the Internet community. He has already*

---

[4] S. Rosenberg, *Did Gore invent the Internet?,*
 http://www.salon.com/2000/10/05/gore_internet/, 5.10.2000.

[5] The numbers speak for themselves: at Obama's own socknet, MyBO, 2 m profiles were created, 200.000 offline events were planned, 400.000 blog posts were written, 35.000 volunteer groups were created, people raised also 30 m $ for election purposes. Vide etiam, C. Delany, *Learning from Obama: Lessons for Online Communicators in 2009 and Beyond*, http://www.epolitics.com/learning-from-obama/, 8.08.2009.

[6] The leitmotif of the Ohmy News is: "Each citizen is a journalist". Currently only 20% of the articles is created by the editorial team amounting to 55 people. The biggest number is created by "citizen- journalists". The Ohmy News claims that the overall number of them is 41 thousand. Authors of the best articles are rewarded 50 USD.

*been living in these times*[7]. Popularity of this medium seems to be steadily growing. It is advisable to interpret the results of researches carried out in '98 by E. C. Kamarck from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in a similar way. The researcher conducted a comprehensive analysis of the websites of candidates for governors and senators. The analysis included 34 electioneering to the Senate and governor elections in 36 states. The following data were obtained:

- 44% competing for the office of governor were active on the Internet, including 92% pretenders;
- among competing in the primaries for the office of governor, 35% of the candidates were active on the Internet;
- among independent and minority candidates in the election for governor 37% had websites.

E. C. Kamarck argued that due to fierce competition, a potential candidate cannot ignore any medium in the communication process between him and the voters. The scientist suggests that a low rate of private websites among the politicians was linked with the fact that those politicians had governor's and senator's official websites[8].

Similar studies conducted M. Cornfield from George Washington University's Graduate School of Political Management. After reviewing 907 electioneering, the researcher gave the following conclusions:

- in 81% cases of acute rivalry (two candidates) in gubernatorial and senatorial elections, both competitors had their own websites;
- in the gubernatorial elections, 94% of candidates had private websites;

---

[7] [after:] K. Głomb, J. Supel, G. Wiatr, *Internet w gminie. Poradnik dla wójta i burmistrza*, Warszawa 1998, p. 5.

[8] T. Zasępa, *Internet. Fenomen społeczeństwa informacyjnego*, Częstochowa 2001, p. 423.

• in the elections to the Senate 82% of candidates had their websites[9].

In this moment it is important to show that the Internet and web 2.0[10] sites are treated as a new dimension of political rivalry. It is said that web2.0 has changed the paradigm of interaction it the Internet. Currently users are creating contents what means that in politics voters can construct political ideas and transfer them to their representatives. Researchers were analyzing electoral web production practices in cross-national perspective. They said that the political actors in various countries are more likely to model their sites on those produced by similar political actors from other countries rather than modelling them on sites produced by other types of political actors within their own country[11]. It clearly shows that politicians in different countries treat Internet as a new dimension of political rivalry. They understand that they can't be similar to their opponents that why they are looking for some new patterns abroad. They also see advantages of using this medium in political rivalry, that's why they try to find other possibilities to contact with voters. It is important, however, to emphasize that the Internet communication can be a new dimension majorly among young people. Pew Research showed that B. Obama won 60% of the vote among those younger than 30[12].

---

[9] Ibidem, p. 423.

[10] T. O'Reilly coined 7 the most important features of web 2.0: 1. free classification of information; 2. rich user experience; 3. user as a contributor; 4. long tail (what means lasting relationship between supplier, which can be e.g. deputy, and customer; 5. user participation; 6. basic trust (contents are available to reuse and share); 7.dispersion. See more, T O'Reilly, *7 key features of web 2.0,* http://webapprater.com/general/7-key-features-of-web-2-0.html, 29.06.2010.

[11] K. Foot, M. Xenos, S. Schneider, R. Kluvet, N. Jankowski, *Electoral web production practices in cross-national perspective: relative influence of national development, political culture, and web genre* [in:] A. Chadwick, P. Howard, *Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics,* Abingdon 2009, p. 53.

[12] http://www.people-press.org/2012/11/26/young-voters-supported-obama-less-but-may-have-mattered-more/, 15.03.2014.

It is reasonable to ask about the phenomenon of a new communication channel and indicate its most important features. The most important features which decided that the Internet has gained its importance are:

1. Popularization – a tool available only to a small social groups is not able to cause a mass effect and thereby have an influence on policy making processes. The Internet has become a tool widely available;

2. Attractiveness – development of socknets, blogs, websites attracting attention of Internet users made mass access, as mentioned in point 1., concentrated in certain areas, which later evolved into a kind of opinion formers;

3. Effectiveness – Internet development made it attractive also for corporations. New communication channel enables creating websites, which is crucial in fast and comfortable familiarizing with the offer and making purchases, often at more favourable prices. An additional aspect is the possibility of buying advertising space in the most popular places on the Internet[13];

4. Speed and elimination of barriers – the development of the Internet in different places of the world modified existing classic concepts of borders and distance. Currently, an official statement in Poland can be quickly interpreted and transferred for example not only by a foreign correspondent to his country, but also to every country in the world. Quoting B. Barber, today's methods of communication have been changing our planet into a city connected to a common network, inhabited by potential neighbours[14].

---

[13] P. Kotler, *Marketing Management (polish edition),* Poznan 2005, p. 35.

[14] A. Tomaszczyk, *Internet – nowa jakość komunikowania* [in:] I. Hofman, D. Kępa-Figura (ed.), *Współczesne media. Status, aksjologia, funkcjonowanie,* Lublin 2009, Volume II, p. 317.

The Internet, as a tool for communication, is a perfect picture of a new media. Its fairly strong point is the possibility of wide use of multimedia techniques, i.e. technical utensils affecting human senses. By means of involving different human senses, process of communication is greatly simplified. What is more, an influence of this process on the recipient is much more multiplied[15]. In addition, the Internet provides interactive communication, which is impossible in classic mass media. It gives an opportunity to establish contacts between a voter and a politician. Moreover, a variety of technical possibilities give the citizen an opportunity not only to express their own views, but also to do it in the most appropriate and convenient way, using for example text, graphics, animation, sound[16]. Additionally, Internet users are able to participate in a public debate from freely selected place, without any necessity to adjust to stressful etiquette associated with presence in a recording studio. The Internet also allows to ignore some linguistic correctness, which can be required by a particular broadcaster in case of television or radio. In addition, social media allow potential users to group themselves around some idea, ignoring traditionally perceived borders and barriers, which can support, in some cases, creation of a group which would be capable of lobbying for an idea. These features indicate that on the Internet each user is able to create his own image.

The Internet features, which were pointed out above, construct a new dimension of a political competition, which seems to correspond, in the author's view, with a liberal democracy paradigm of J. Habermas who perceived the public sphere as a space of mediation between state and society. He regarded it as a basic condition of existence of a liberal democracy. The phe-

---

[15] J. Adamczyk, M. Gębarowski, M. Kandefer, *Internet na usługach marketingu,* Rzeszów 2004, p. 144.

[16] J. Biniewicz, *Nowa (?) Przestrzeń dyskursu politycznego (pragmatyka, struktura, język)* [in:] M. Jeziński (ed.), *Nowe media w systemie komunikowania: polityka*, Toruń 2011, p. 6-7.

nomenon of a public opinion is possible when individuals gather for a conversation, creating an audience and negotiating in public issues in an unaffected manner[17]. At first a place of such meetings were cafés and salons of Paris and London. However, later it was necessary to institute mass media. It seems that the Internet, with its technological capabilities, gives humanity an opportunity to return to the idea of J. Habermas, maybe not entirely, but to a large extent[18]. It will be possible only through free will of individuals and their communicating awareness. In a similar way L. Zacher's notion can be understood, who said that cyberspace is an opportunity for people to empower, organize and inform. Moreover, this space seems to be uncontrolled by political or business actors, which means that the space is autonomous. It is derivative of universality, cheapness, speed and availability that distinguishes the Internet[19]. The most important advantage of the Internet is principles of communicating strategies and possibility of fast response – impossible for TV or radio and unavailable for an ordinary citizen. R. Maćkowska indicates that it is an excellent tool in emergencies because it reduces the response time. In addition, it is possible to construct a precise, tightly targeted message, which prevents its reinterpretation[20]. Another advantage, associated with attributes which were

---

[17] J. Jastrzębski, *Media i sfera publiczna* [in:] M. du Vall, A. Walecka-Rynduch (ed.), *>>Stare<< i >>nowe<< media w kontekście kampanii politycznych i sprawowania władzy*, Kraków 2010, p.13.

[18] It seems important that media's critique is on the rise. Butsch, basing on numerous researches, claimed that nowadays media are as dangerous for public opinion as the state is. They perceive an anonymous citizen in a commercial way. The most important goal for them is profit. Such an approach makes public discussion impossible. Vide etiam, R. Butsch, *Media and public spheres*,
 http://www.rider.edu/files/butsch_media_public_spheres.pdf, *13.11.2006.*

[19] L. Zacher, *Ideologia, polityka, władza a współczesna technika (wzajemne uwarunkowania i oddziaływania).* [in:] J. Golinowski, A. Laska (ed.), *Odsłony współczesnej polityki*, Bydgoszcz 2012, p. 18.

[20][after:] B. Brodzińska-Mirowska, *Internet w komunikowaniu politycznym* [in:] M. Jeziński, A. Seklecka, Ł. Wojtkowski (ed.), *Nowe media we współczesnym społeczeństwie*, Toruń 2011, p. 208.

mentioned above, is the possibility of conducting permanent promotional campaign combined with a constant interaction with the constituency. The possibility of creating up-to-date communicating process supports politicians in building relationships between them and their potential voters based on dialogue and trust[21]. It is associated with the process of creating interactive political message, the purpose of which is: (a) building relationships with voters based on dialogue; (b) mobilizing and encouraging political commitment; (c) systematic and reliable informing about undertaking political activities; (d) facilitating debate on the most important social and political issues through the Internet (chats, blogs, forums, interviews) and enlargement of the sense of participating in important discussions; (e) thoughtful usage of information technology (Facebook, Tweeter, newsletters, e-mails, designed web pages)[22]. An author's analysis of Ukrainian conflict shows that communication "over borders" is gaining more and more followers and supporters. At a bolg "War In Images", which authors have been publishing their films at YouTube, everyone can see material called "Ukraine-Kiev Maidan square the heart of the revolution" which was visited by 272 121 people[23]. Another, very drastic, film collected 56 192 people[24]. As it is shown currently, all of them are commenting and demanding some steps against the aggression. What is important, in author's opinion, this wide open communicating channel helped to change power elites at Ukraine[25]. As research shows, as well as the previously cited Obama's casus, the Internet becomes a tool which enables absorption of funds

---

[21] This rule is widespread in free market relationships. See also: A. Mac, *E-przyjaciele. Zobacz, co media społecznościowe mogą zrobić dla Twojej firmy*, Gliwice 2010, p. 9-10.

[22] B. Brodzińska- Mirowska, *op. cit.,* p. 213-214.

[23] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmDqqZZceX0, 15.03.2014.

[24] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZUBbL-E184, 15.03.2014.

[25] The Arab spring had the same sources as well. In the document *How FaceBook Changed The World The Arab Spring,* everyone can see a unique photos and meet real people, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lnPR90dJ3Gk, 15.03.2014.

for political purposes. The Pew Research Agency shows that in the American campaign of 2008, 9% of the Internet users supported materially, using an online method, one or more candidates, while 6% of total amount of users declared themselves as volunteers during the election campaign[26]. To conclude this part of the discussion, the Internet is characterized by ubiquity, multi-faceted deconcentration and flexibility[27]. Synonymous qualities are attributable to the political communication on the Internet with a very important assumption: a potential user must have the appropriate knowledge and skills to use all these possibilities. Who will be able to use the Internet more effectively, should in consequence gain greater social legitimacy or greater possibilities for action, e.g. in the form of raised funds or the multitude of willing collaborators. The Internet seems to have another advantage in comparison to the radio and TV. These two, up till recently the most popular tools, seem to be one-dimensional. The message, which was constructed, even though it was changing in conjunction with overall needs of the electorate, was based on a similar template. For example, in a newspaper every reader could find photographs documenting an event and various types of description of reality, such as essay or report etc. Television, in addition to these types, opened opportunities for creators of election spots, political ads, or information services. The Internet as a medium contains all of those possibilities additionally extending the offer with the possibility of individual participation of each person in the process of creating and sharing messages. It is an unprecedented multidimensionality. Except for encompassing in a single tool all mentioned above available instru-

---

[26] A. Smith, *The Internet's Role in Campaign 2008*,
April 2009, s. 39,
http://web.pewinternet.org/~/media/Files/Reports/2009/The_Internets_Role_in_Campaign_2008.pdf, 15.03.2014.
[27] M. Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society:The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Vol. I* [Polish Edition], Warsaw 2008, p. 361.

ments, the Internet, because of its availability for users, creates possibility to change the typical arrangement of forces which traditional media classified as the "fourth power". In this context, a blog[28] seems to be an interesting communication channel. It can be assumed that a journalist and a blogger have many features in common, but among them there are some fundamental differences. The first of these is the fact that the blogger does not need to accept a rigid framework for the creation of new materials – he can weekly write e.g. fives articles or nothing. Freedom in creativity can affect the quality of his products, because there is no time pressure. The second one is that the blogger is not constrained by specific theme frames – he can write about freely selected issues. It does not, however, necessarily translate into objectivity. It is important, however, to emphasize that the pattern, which was already sketched, was more suitable to the end of XX century. Nowadays, the blog's sphere is much more professionalized. For example The Huffington Post.

H. Kurtz presented in his article fact and figures associated with the portal. This group blog started in 2005, after only two years it had 3,5 million visitors per month[29]. Amount impossible to reach for many professional newspapers. A. Huffington, founder of the portal, said that she recruited over 1 000 volunteers for a related blog. The Huffington Post runs 70 to 80 posts a day, most of the authors are not famous journalists[30]. The blog has become a "road map" of what works on the Web. To underline that Internet and it's possibilities are new dimension in policy the author want to emphasize that in 2009 Forbes

---

[28] It's important to emphasize that blog is not only some kind of an Internet diary. It is a wrap in which user can place various materials. See also: P. Kołodziejczyk, *Blog jako instrument komunikowania politycznego, czyli raport z sejmowej blogosfery.* [in:] M. Kolczyński, M. Mazur, S. Michalczyk, *Mediatyzacja kampanii politycznych*, Katowice 2009, p. 267-268.
[29] H. Kurtz,
http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/07/08/AR2007070801213_2.html, 15.03.2014.
[30] Ibidem, p.2.

Magazine described A. Huffington as 12 the most influential women in media, what can be possibly true because of hostile attitude to her flowing from some politicians. Such a powerful tool can't be ignored by politicians. What is more, the most creative of them can try not only to write some kind of Internet's diary but also to construct more compound device which can be used to conducting permanent campaign, building ideological front and even initiating some local ideas for example creating football club, cooperative for socially excluded. Some good example can be Great Britain ability to mix "old" and "new" media tools. D. Cameron created his own video blog, Webcameron. The predominance of television and old-style direct marketing, and its benefits for targeting undecided voters in key marginals, are shaping the adoption of the Internet campaigning[31]. This example clearly shows that the Internet engrosses bigger influence in politics, however "old" media, especially TV, have still an hegemonic position. A. Chadwick, who was analyzing British communicating patterns, showed that the Internet don't have dominant position but it has been influencing on traditional mass media[32].

The increasing role and importance of blogs also notes K. Wolny-Zmorzyński. He indicates that "the citizen journalism" is being developed by amateur journalists in the public interest[33]. The advantage of that kind is an ability to co-create interactive content by each user, mass distribution and virtual collaboration of journalists from around the world. D. Gillmor, an American journalist and supporter of blogging, described information websites cre-

---

[31] A. Chadwick, N. Anstead, *Parties, election campaigning and the internet: toward a comparative institutional approach,* [in:] A. Chadwick, P. Howard, *Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics,* Abingdon 2009, p. 71.

[32] A. Chadwick, *The Political Information in a hybrid News System: The British Prime Minister and the "Bullygate" Affair, "*International Journal of Press/Politics", No. 1, vol. 16, January 2011.

[33] K. Wolny-Zmorzyński, *Gatunki dziennikarskie na przełomie XX i XXI wieku – próba charakterystyki* [in:] I. Hofman, D. Kępa-Figura (ed.), *Współczesne media. Status, aksjologia, funkcjonowanie*, Lublin 2009, Volume I, p. 357.

ated by amateurs as the "fifth power", which is able to control not only state authorities but also the traditional "fourth power", when it entangles in informal arrangements with the world of politics or business[34]. An interesting example is a digital platform, which is a hybrid of TV and the Internet, where the second one is a stimulus. It is possible, for example, to create political debates in which users are active participants on the Internet, or construct information programs, in which materials and information are contributed by the audience. The role of a moderator plays in both cases a professional journalist who selects participants of the debate and chooses information. The above remark shows that not only politicians, but also media recognize the potential benefits of the usage of the Internet.

All these qualities are undeniable advantages, but it is also essential to consider a possibility of implementation of those features. So far, very important cultural context was ignored. The described cases were mostly connected with the United States. This country is, however, a vanguard of communication in the world. Some commonly used solutions may be impossible to implement in other countries, or may require more time for their introduction. It is confirmed by M. Castells who stated that the rest of the world lagged behind North America and developed countries. Significant is the issue who and what had earlier access to the Internet, because consumers of contents are also producers. It means that an unequal time to enter the constellation of the Internet of different societies will have lasting consequences for the future of the world model of communication and culture[35]. M. Faracik-Nowak rightly said that in the Polish reality the potential of social media is not used due to

---

[34] L. Olszański, *Dziennikarstwo internetowe*, Warszawa 2006, p. 51. J. Zieliński said that on the Internet politicians, journalists and ordinarily users have the same chances. It creates new motivations of participation in a public life. See also: J. Zieliński, *Marketing polityczny w Internecie*, Toruń 2013, p. 26.
[35] M. Castells, *op. cit.* p. 353-359.

the lack of knowledge, a low degree of socio-political consciousness of Poles, and a general aversion to the politics[36]. It is also inappropriate to overlook lobbying for the Internet technologies by large corporations in the U.S. which probably also had its impact on the popularity of this medium among the public[37]. All these observations seem to indicate that the advantages of political communication are relative and depend on the circumstances.

All those points do not exhaust possibilities that entail the use of the Internet or reasons for the fact that its popularity has increased dramatically within a few years. The author described only the most essential components, which caused that the innovative technology could not stay in a political emptiness. It should be noted that the Internet exposes its greatest potential in democratic countries. Such a point of view seems to fully correspond with an opinion of A. Bogdał-Brzezińska: *The idea of a global network is inextricably linked with the concepts of democracy. The idea was to create a place of free exchange of ideas, research results, non-commercial promotion of development*[38]. In this context, it is advisable to consider whether technological solutions, associated with the Internet, and all described characteristics of political communication on the Internet can be transferred into an environment system, for example by putting into practice the postulate of the direct democracy, and whether they are necessary and appropriate.

## Teledemocracy - a renaissance of democracy?

[36] M. Faracik-Nowak, *Kampanie wyborcze w dobie mediów społecznościowych.* [in:] M. Kolczyński (ed.), *Współczesne kampanie wyborcze w Polsce: koncepcje, dylematy i praktyka komunikowania politycznego*, Katowice 2013, p.20.

[37] In 1998 Microsoft Corporation spent on it 574 099 dollars. Other lobbyists: Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers – about 320 thousand dollars, EDS and Oracle – 280 thousand dollars. What is more, real investments in IT technologies (without telecommunication) between 1995- were doubled from 243 to 510 milliard dollars. See also: T. Zasępa, *op. cit.* p. 410., T. Zasępa, *Internet i nowe technologie – ku społeczeństwu przyszłości*, Częstochowa 2003, p. 421.

[38] P. Maj, *Internet i demokracja. Ewolucja systemu politycznego,* Rzeszów 2009, p. 25.

The most popular theoretical assumptions that relate to the concept of teledemocracy were created by M. Hagen. He pointed out that new technologies can combine time and space and be an impetus for creation of forms of political participation on an unimaginable scale. He added, moreover, that traditional forms of democracy seem not to be good enough in the age of information, so new technologies can be useful for local governments to cater for the needs of individuals[39]. This example is of course optimistic, however, is it possible not only to cater for the needs of citizens, but also to give them more authority?

In classical option, a traditional instrument of direct democracy is the institution of referendum. In the twenty-first century such a form of participation cannot exist due to a large surface area of modern countries. The exception on the political map is Switzerland[40]. However, it seems, that the present form, combined with IT technologies could exist on a mass scale leading to a full civic participation.

The common practice shows a skeptical refer to such demands. The main problem is the shortage of so-called "cognitive proficiency". J. A. Schumpeter pointed out that citizens do not recognize their incompetence in terms of knowledge on public issues, which results in stereotypical and associative decision-making process[41]. It should also be noted that the practice of Swiss model of democracy is not a remedy for all evils, but a concept that also has its weaknesses. W. Linder points out three main drawbacks: first, the possibility of buying voting results. Propaganda, preceding election, leads directly to the

---

[39] M. Hagen, *A typology of Electronic Democracy*, http://www.martin-hagen.net/pub/typology.html, March 1997.

[40] See also: M. Musiał- Karg, *Instytucje demokracji bezpośredniej i partycypacja wyborcza w Szwajcarii.* [in:] A. Stlemach (ed.), *Czy upadek demokracji? Wymiar praktyczny*, Poznań 2007, p. 12-13.

[41] J.A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy,* New York 1950, p. 262.

imbalance "one person=one vote" by the introduction of uneven distribution of the power of money. Secondly, the general lack of public interest in an overall spectrum of public affairs seems to mean that an unlimited broadening of the scope of issues covered in the referendum makes no sense. Thirdly, globalization has systematically led to the exacerbation of political contrasts, such as between the city and rural areas or between employers and employees. It suggest a return to Maddison's concept, according to which the power elite must take responsibility of political process and lead it to unification of society and resist political populism from which electing people are often not free. At this point, it is important to emphasize the role of political parties. R. Herbut indicates that political parties act as an effective organizer of collective action[42]. It is a way of relieving citizens of too big amount of public affairs, which need to be sorted out by the state, as well as a specific mechanism which transforms a wide stream of different preferences into one decision.

It is also essential to raise A. Giddens' opinion who stated that the nature of modern institutions is closely related to mechanisms of trust in abstract systems, and especially trust in expert systems. The researcher indicates that the majority of people trust practices and social mechanisms, however the same people do not have any knowledge about it. Confidence in the system adopts form of anonymous commitments that sustain faith in knowledge largely inaccessible to a layman[43]. It creates a real threat of manipulation. Full anastomosis methods and techniques from sphere of political communication, with possibilities offered by the Internet, as well as replacing the representative democracy by direct participation, may pave a path of evolution difficult to determine, which also entails effects of impact on the system policy that are difficult to predict as a whole. It is due to the fact that both the Internet and

---

[42] R. Herbut, *Teoria i praktyka funkcjonowania partii politycznych*, Wrocław 2002, p. 56.

[43] A. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity (polish edition)*, Cracow 2008, p. 57-63.

political communication are developing very rapidly, and what is the most important, they have a high potential for progression. For this reason, it is difficult to indicate in which way this marriage will go and whether or not it will be a threat to democracy. Dangerous vision, which is currently indicated, is the development of the concept of virtual reality. This concept was defined for purposes of the social sciences by J. Steurer, who indicated that it is a real or simulated environment in which the viewer experiences telepresence, it means the presence of medium, mediated and simulated by the communication, which he uses[44]. Referring to L. Zacher's statement that since the beginning of human civilization the strength belonged to people who had the most powerful technique available[45], it is advisable to go back to G. Orwell's novel "1984" and, slightly extending and reinterpreting the vision of the English writer, demonstrate that the Internet after its subjugation by a specific group of people can become an instrument to control and enslave minds, making its great advantage, which is the possibility of constructing a separate announcement, the biggest threat consisting in alienation of individuals and their mental enslavement. The author of this publication is aware of the far-sightedness of his vision. He wants to emphasize that the development of specific communication tools is a kind of double-edged weapon. On the one hand, it is a convenient way of interaction between the electorate and politicians, on the other hand an opportunity for demagogues and populists to gain support and make losses in the system of political, economic and social state. The classic maxim of Cicero, *Historiam nescire hoc est semper esse puerum* is relevant at any time. J. Goebbels skillfully steered the image of both Adolf Hitler and the en-

---

[44] See also: D. Mider, *Partycypacja polityczna w Internecie. Studium politologiczne,* Warszawa 2008, p. 348. See also: in a similar context, schedule of a game "Second Life", A. Mokrysz-Olszyńska, B. Targański, *Uwarunkowania prawne marketingu w społeczeństwie informacyjnym. Zagadnienia wybrane*, Warszawa 2012, p. 25-26.

[45] L. Zacher, *op. cit.*, s. 13.

tire state apparatus. Indirectly it contributed to the tragedy on a global scale. The imbalance of knowledge and means of communication at the same time creates danger and temptation to exploit the political system for one's own benefit. The sum up, all these characteristics of political communication on the Internet, along with big differentiation of knowledge and resources can lead to chaos and violation of stabilization of a parliamentary system, power state or in the extreme case - of transnational organizations. As A. Toffler said, *advantage of information or advantage in knowledge in the field can determine the fate of the war*[46]. A good example was a Dutch hacker's attack on the U.S. Department of Defense. Data from 34 computers were stolen. They contained information about Patriot missile capabilities, movements of the U.S. warships in the Persian Gulf region, as well as the movements of the U.S. military units. Hackers tried to sell those information to S. Hussein for million dollars. The dictator, however, treated the offer as a CIA trap and rejected it[47].

It is no wonder that M. McLuhan sees the process of introducing multimedia media as *powerful collective surgery carried out on the body of society without microbicides*[48]. W. Gogołek states that physical and information security will be a major part of the price to be paid by "networked" civilization[49].

The Internet seems to be an alternate reality. In the era of global turbulences, when an uncertainty about the future is a normality, prospects for personal development are more and more unstable and longing for self-realization and success seems to be even greater. The ability to create one's own image, or even an alternate reality, not corresponding with hard realities,

---

[46] A. Toffler, H. Toffler, *War & Anti-War In 21St Century: Survival at the Dawn of the 21st Century*? [Polish Ediotion], Poznan 2006, p. 184.

[47] A. Bógdał-Brzezińska, M. Gawrycki, *Cyberterroryzm i problemy bezpieczeństwa informacyjnego we współczesnym świecie*, Warszawa 2003, p. 78-79.

[48] W. Gogołek, *Technologie informacyjne mediów,* Warszawa 2006, p. 298.

[49] *Ibidem*, p. 298.

becomes very desirable. A. Augustynek points at the analogy that exists between the addiction to psychoactive substances, and addiction to the Internet. Furthermore, the researcher cites studies, whose conclusions are not optimistic. Particularly vulnerable to the Internet addiction are people affected by the syndrome of "reward deficiency". It concerns up to 25% of the human population. People suffering from this disease do not experience pleasure in everyday life. The reality seems cruel and unjust to them. Therefore, they try to escape to another, better world, such as a virtual one, or to the sphere of dreams[50]. C. Stoll appropriately shows that the Internet creates special freedom: "freedom to". Although, releasing of the computer the Internet user experiences different kind of freedom: "freedom from"[51]. Is it possible to spot it when a man is deeply immersed in a cyber reality?

Today at online auctions everyone can buy virtual points necessary to improve one's own figure in an online game. Of course, the transaction is executed in a currency from a real world. It seems that there is hidden the biggest threat of an online political communication. Would, in the extreme version, a vast number of people not be willing to replace their political rights for a better virtual reality?

**Summary**

The Internet is quite new dimension of political rivalry. Based on previously mentioned facts and figures the author thinks that this medium can be very profitable and tempting for politicians. They are able to gain electoral support using microblogs, creating new initiatives using social media channels,

---

[50] A. Augustynek, *Uzależnienia komputerowe. Diagnoza, rozpowszechnienie, terapia*, Warszawa 2010, p. 59-62. Vide etiam, A. Andrzejewska, J. Bednarek, *Cyber świat. Możliwości i zagrożenia*, Warszawa 2009, p. 189-195.

[51] C. Stoll, *Silicon Snake Oil (polish edition)*, Poznan 2000, p. 172.

trying to raise funds (especially in the U.S.), conducting permanent interactive campaign. However they should remember that the Internet can not only build up their position but also destroy it.

The IT technologies has come to politics' world. This change can't be returned. The political party crisis and democracy crisis can be put back because of the web2.0 and other possibilities. Although, there must be a full co-operative between voters and politicians to build up a better tomorrow.  All in all, even if the Internet is constantly less popular than TV, it would be irresponsible to ignore this medium.

Tomasz Wierzbica – PhD student at the Silesian University, majoring in political science

**Abstract**

In the article the most important characteristics of the Internet communication were exposed, seen not only from perspective of political actors, but also from voters' perspective. Emerging possibilities of the new medium were exposed in comparison to the radio, television and press. It helped to emphasize a new dimension of political competition. This procedure allowed to indicate an increasing role of the Internet in politics. Everything was supported by appropriate empirical data, conclusions of research and practical examples. The author of the article, at the same time, made an attempt to identify the impact that the communication channel could have on the democratic system. Special attention was paid to classic issue, focusing on the possibility and the need for implementation of the ideals of direct democracy. In this context, the author exposed some potential dangers that the Internet, considered as a  tool, can carry.

# KOMUNIKOWANIE POLITYCZNE W INTERNECIE JAKO NOWY WYMIAR RYWALIZACJI POLITYCZNEJ

## Abstrakt

W artykule wyeksponowane zostały najistotniejsze, zdaniem autora, cechy komunikacyjne Internetu, widziane zarówno z perspektywy aktorów sceny politycznej, jak również wyborców. Powstające możliwości nowego medium przedstawiono na tle radia, telewizji i prasy, dzięki czemu podkreślony również został nowy wymiar rywalizacji politycznej. Taki zabieg umożliwił wskazanie, poparte praktycznymi przykładami, wzrastającej roli Internetu w świecie polityki, co zostało dodatkowo podbudowane stosownymi danymi empirycznymi i wnioskami badaczy. Autor publikacji podjął jednocześnie próbę wskazania wpływu, jaki omawiany środek komunikacyjny może mieć na system demokratyczny. Szczególną uwagą objęta została klasyczna problematyka, koncentrująca się tak na możliwościach, jak i potrzebie coraz pełniejszego wprowadzania w życie ideałów demokracji bezpośredniej. W tym kontekście nie zabrakło również rozważań mających na celu ukazanie potencjalnych zagrożeń, które Internet, traktowany jako narzędzie, może nieść w stosunku do jednostki.

**Bartłomiej Machnik**

# THE PLACE OF TWITTER IN THE PROCESS OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

## Introduction

Recently, it was possible to observe permanent changes in the sphere of interpersonal communication. They occur mainly due to the constant development of the Internet, the emergence of new means of communication and their implementation into more and more spheres of human life. Cyclically published reports clearly show that the Internet is becoming one of the principal arenas of human existence (providing a venue for communication, education, shopping, or self-presentation). It is possible to notice visible changes also in the sphere of political communication and the functioning of politicians in the external environment. It is possible to say that there is a slow redefinition of political activity, which is heading towards the best possible adaptation of the public to the surrounding reality.

Engagement of the political environment in using modern means of communication is already an undeniable fact. Manuel Castells refers to that fact, writing: *Since the Internet is becoming an essential medium of communication and organization in all realms of activity, it is obvious that social movements and the political process use and will increasingly use the Internet as*

*well, making it a privileged tool for acting, informing, recruiting, organizing, dominating and counter-dominating*[1].

This quotation from the publication of a Spanish sociologist in an excellent way portrays a situation which can be observed today. Castells's hypothesis on the growing importance of the Internet in the process of political communication, turned out to be accurate. Communication via the Internet (particularly of the social media) necessitated a change in the way a politician communicates with the voter. In such circumstances, the role of the media rose to prominence as they became an inherent element of the functioning of politicians and politics.

Among the tools that allow political communication on the Internet, the Twitter microblog arouses the most interest. This is confirmed e.g. by the statements of Polish politicians. Paweł Graś, the Government's Press Spokesman in the years 2008-2013 wrote in the "Nowe Media" quarterly: *I value this tool. I value it for the speed and because it is possible to reach thousands of people with one entry. Also for the fact that it is a place where everyone, the great and the ordinary (…) are actually equal and have the same capability to exert influence over others*[2].

The more and more frequent use of Twitter by politicians forces the researchers to look for an answer to the question: what is the place of social media in political communication. The most important question in this issue is whether social media and traditional media (television, radio, and press) are currently separate elements in the process of political communication or whether these two types of media complement each other.

---

[1] M. Castells, *The Internet galaxy: reflections on the Internet, business and society* [Polish Edition], Poznań 2003, p. 157.

[2] P. Graś, *Sto czterdzieści ważnych znaków* [in:] "Nowe media" 2013, No. 3, p. 65.

This article puts forward a hypothesis that at present new media (of which Twitter is an example) and traditional channels of communication complement each other in the context of the process of political communication. The complementary character of these media results from their characteristics and popularity in the society.

The article uses an analysis of the content posted on Twitter. As an example, served tweets of Prime Minister Donald Tusk, during his visit to the Brussels. It was a time of EU budget negotiations for 2014-2020. This example confirms the hypothesis that the traditional media and new media are complementary.

The article will also mention such phenomena as politics 2.0. These are elements closely connected with the main subject matter, allowing to explain more precisely the phenomena that are being observed at present.

**Political communication. Deepening mediatization of politics**

In the beginning one should systematize the knowledge concerning the issues connected with political communication and indicate a few important aspects which will help to direct the flow of the ideas presented in the text. Broadly understood communication constitutes the basis for establishing and maintaining human relations. It is difficult to find one – universal definition of this process on the account of its interdisciplinary character[3].

The case of political communication is similar. As Stanisław Michalczyk writes: (…) *political communication is defined very differently by researchers coming from different political and cultural traditions*[4]. He also adds that defining the process also largely depends on the specific historical developments,

---

[3] Mass communication was and still is researched in such fields as: psychology, political science, social science, history, semiotics, cybernetics, and economy.

[4] S. Michalczyk, *Komunikowanie polityczne. Teoretyczne aspekty procesu*, Katowice 2005, p. 17.

social and political relations, political culture, and processes realized by politics[5]. Political communication is a process of mutual interaction on the level of information between political entities, connected by relations of power, competition, and cooperation. One should understand communication as a space where groups that present their opinion on political issues are able to meet. One of the first definitions of political communication was formulated by H. Eulau, S. Eldersveld, and M. Janowitz. During their research, the authors were interested in three issues[6]:

- political leadership and group structure,
- media intervention in the area of social mobilization and transfer of political influence between governing institutions and citizens,
- political communication, which the researchers understand as the process of mediating in relations between the governing institutions and voters.

At first, political communication (the beginning of the 1950's.) was understood as an one-sided process of transmission of political messages from the government to the electorate. With the passing of years and with the development of different communication techniques, as well as the Internet (particularly the idea of Web 2.0[7]) the process gradually became perceived as bidirectional. It included political elites, the media, citizens, as well as techniques supporting communication (political marketing, advertisement, opinion polls, and a recent addition in the form of social media, etc.). Today, political communication, apart from traditional "face to face" meetings, is also a conversation of a politician

---

[5] Ibidem.

[6] B. Dobek-Ostrowska, *Komunikowanie polityczne i publiczne*, Warszawa 2006, p. 134.

[7] See: A. Adamski, *Media w analogowym i cyfrowym świecie. Wpływ cyfrowej rewolucji na rekonfigurację komunikacji społecznej*, Warszawa 2012, pp. 101-110.

with the society via modern means of communication. They perform the role of an intermediary between the sender and the recipient[8].

**Tab. 1. Research approaches in the study of political communication.**

| Name | Characteristics | Researchers |
|------|-----------------|-------------|
| Behavioural approach | Attention is paid to the effect of communication, i.e. changes in attitudes and behaviour of the recipient. | • H. Lasswell<br>• C. Shannon<br>• W. Weaver |
| Structural – functional approach | The main element is the process of interaction, which occurs between the elements of a political system and its surroundings. | • K.W. Deutsch<br>• G.A. Almond<br>• J. Coleman<br>• R. Perloff |
| Interactive approach | The approach characterizes political communication as a strategic action in which there is a confrontation of the actor with his opponent. | • E. Goffman<br>• M. Edelman<br>• E.G. Borman |
| Dialogue approach | The approach is based on the idea of a consensus which is hammered out during a public debate. | • J. Habermas |
| Market approach | Political actors are a product which should be produced (created) as cheaply as possible and then sold (win support). In this approach a politician, or political parties are the sellers and voters are purchasers. | • R. Denton<br>• G. Woodward<br>• B. McNair |

**Source: B. Dobek-Ostrowska, *Komunikowanie polityczne i publiczne*, Warszawa 2006, pp. 135-142.**

---

[8] P. Szumlewicz, *Egalitarna polityka w dobie Internetu* [in:] Ł. Jonak, P. Mazurek, M. Olcoń, A. Przybylska, A. Tarkowski, J.M. Zając (eds.), *Re: polityka. Internet, a reforma instytucji demokratycznych: nadzieje, wyzwania, porażki*, Warszawa 2006, p. 242.

The political communication nowadays aims at maximising personalization in the context of the dialogue between a politician and a voter. Gradually formulating addresses to a  wide audience becomes less and less popular.

As part of the research on political communication it is possible to present a few attempts made at defining this process. Researchers in the results of their analyses paid attention to various aspects characterizing political communication. The following table presents a comparison of different approaches:

At present (largely due to Twitter), we are dealing with a combination of structural-functional approach and market approach. The existence of politicians in the social media requires a broadly understood conversation (interaction) and an exchange of views. A lack of an answer or a reaction is to the disadvantage of the image of a politician. One should also remember about the continuously progressing process of mediatization[9] and actions aimed at the possibly most effective way of adapting oneself to the convention and expectations of mass media, which still remain the primary source of information about politics.

Therefore, in order to correctly design the direction of deliberations and argumentation of the present article, a more thorough analysis of several models of the process of political communication is required. These are the concepts of Brian McNair and Richard Perloff. In both cases, the role of mass media is the most important element of political communication. In the con-

---

[9] Walery Pisarek describes mediatization as: *The process of mediation of media in learning about the world, media influencing the perception of the reality unavailable to direct cognition with all of the consequences of said mediation*, see: W. Pisarek, *Słownik terminologii medialnej*, Kraków 2006, p. 118.; B. Dobek-Ostrowska clarifies the definition of mediatization in politics, writing: (…) *mediatization of political life consists of a  transformation and modernization of the public sphere and change of behaviour of the participants of political communication under the influence of two types of media – the traditional media, radio and television, and the new virtual media – cable, telematic, and satellite networks*, see: B. Dobek-Ostrowska, *Komunikowanie polityczne i publiczne*, Warszawa 2006, p. 159.

text of policy, the selected concepts require permanent updating due to the development of the Internet.

The first of the chosen examples is the "three-element concept of political communication" by Brian McNair's, introduced in 1995. The researcher thinks that political communication has intentional character, defining it as intentional communication about politics. The author in his model singles out three basic participants of the process of political communication: politicians (and party organizations), citizens, and the mass media. The model proposed by McNair is presented below:

**Fig. 2. B. McNair's three-element model of political communication.**
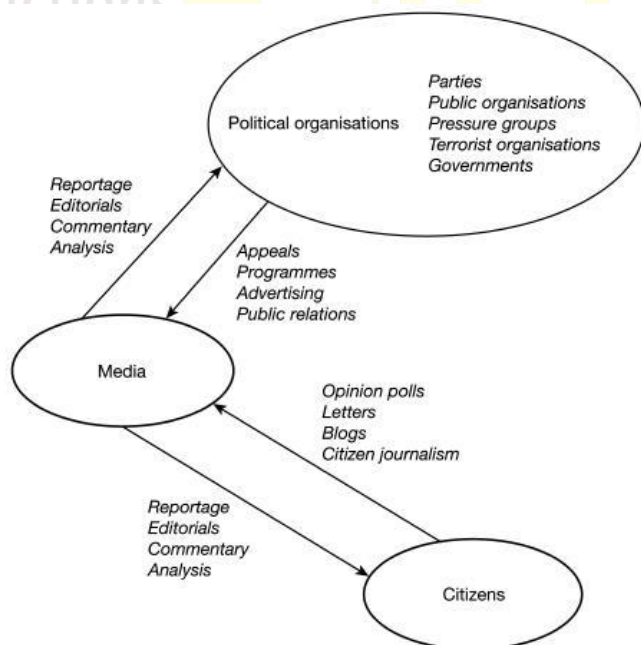


**Source: B. McNair, *Introduction to Political Communication*, London 2011, p. 6.**

In McNair's model the first participants are political actors in the narrow and general sense. In the narrow sense, an individual (politician) is a political actor, when he wants to influence decision making through organizational

and institutional channels. In the broad meaning, political parties, govern-ments, public organizations, pressure groups, etc. are all political actors[10]. All of the abovementioned categories of political actors in communication use similar techniques such as: using the mass media, applying the principles of political marketing, political advertisement, and public relations.

Citizens (potential voters) are the second element in the process of political communication. They are simultaneously an audience of the media broadcast. From a theoretical point of view, it is the citizens (recipients of me-dia broadcasting), who are the major object of persuasion used in political communication. Most of all, the main goal is to influence political behaviour and shape public opinion[11].

The third element are mass media understood as the press, radio, and television. The author assigns two roles to them: secondary and primary. The secondary role of the media consists in transmitting messages, which stay out-side of the media structure (e.g. political parties are their authors). The prima-ry role of the media consists in transmitting political massages constructed by media professionals (journalists)[12]. For McNair, the mass media are a kind of a transmission belt between the citizens and politicians (and vice versa). They are also a place for a public debate and a chance for particular social groups to express their opinions. The researcher clearly locates mass media in the centre of the process of social communication, constituting an element essential to achieve the intended goals, both on the part of political actors as well as citi-zens.

Brian McNair also noticed the growing role of the Internet, stating that the appearance and development of the Internet created new opportunities

---

[10] B. McNair, *Introduction to Political Communication*, London 2011, p. 5.
[11] B. Dobek-Ostrowska, *Komunikowanie polityczne…*, p. 150.
[12] Ibidem.

for citizens in the context of participation in the public debate[13]. Here he pays particular attention to the emergence of civil journalism, blogs, and independent services (e.g. Wikileaks), which allow to comment on political issues. The researcher also notices that the development of social media (Twitter, among others) allowed fast sharing of information on the events that take place at any particular moment.

Another approach to the research on the process of political communication is the concept of Richard Perloff called the "golden triangle" (1998). The researcher in his deliberations treats political communication as the process of exchanging and interpreting political messages between three elements: national leaders, the mass media, and citizens[14] as illustrated in the figure below:

**Fig. 3. Perloff's golden triangle**



**Source: own study on the basis of B. Dobek-Ostrowska,** *Komunikowanie polityczne i publiczne***, Warszawa 2006, p. 134.**

Following Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska, it is possible to divide Perloff's definition into four parts[15]:

---

[13] B. McNair, *Introduction*…, pp. 11-13.

[14] B. Dobek-Ostrowska, *Media masowe i aktorzy polityczni w świetle studiów nad komunikowaniem politycznym*, Wrocław 2004, p. 58.

[15] B. Dobek-Ostrowska, *Komunikowanie polityczne*…., p. 153.

94

1. Political communication is a process – it consists of an integrated and dynamic activity of all participants, who exert mutual influence on one another. Here there is a cooperation on the line politician–the media[16]. Perloff (similarly to McNair) locates the media in the centre of the process, as an institution constituting an essential element of the process of communication. Moreover, the model does not include feedback between the citizens and leaders.

2. Three chief actors are placed on the public arena – the researcher notices a distinct internal diversity amongst the participants of communication, which is significant to the process of communication itself.

3. Political communication is an exchange and interpretation of messages – the researcher pays attention to the fact that each participant in political communication interprets the messages differently. It results, in most cases, from their different roles in the political system. The researcher noticed that today the knowledge about political leaders does not come from direct contact, but rather from the media (television, press, radio, and, increasingly, from the Internet).

4. Messages concerning the government or ways of conducting public affairs – political communication is not exclusively limited to the period of the election campaign. In general, it is a permanent dialogue on the subject of public affairs, the interest of the citizens, as well as decisions and actions of the political elites.

To sum up, it is possible to single out a few permanent elements, which emerge in each of the discussed approaches to the process of political communication. Firstly, the authors indicate three basic participants: politicians

---

[16] See: B. Machnik, *Partyjne media? Analiza relacji na linii media-polityka*, Racibórz 2013, pp. 100-101.

(and political organizations), the mass media, and citizens. Secondly, mass media are treated as a central and strategic element that conditions the success of transferring messages from a politician to citizens. Thirdly, the correct functioning of the process of the political communication requires various methods of communication that enhance the power of persuasion and the message (cooperation with the media – delivering materials, applying public relations, elements of political marketing, and using the Internet).

Undoubtedly, a very important component, which at present is critical to the process of political communication, is the Internet and, in particular, the new possibilities opened by the new media[17]. Studying academic literature on this topic it is possible to notice the differences in the approaches as to which places are occupied or should be occupied by the new media (the social media) in the process of political communication. Admittedly, the abovementioned authors paid attention to the growing role of the Internet in political communication; however, they failed to unambiguously set it in the context of their theories.

## Politics 2.0

A statement that without the media there is no politics does not arouse doubts or controversy today. However, in the period of the rapid development of the new media and an increasing role of the Internet in daily life, the aforementioned statement gains a new meaning. Nowadays, it is possible to say that without the new media there is no politics. Castells agrees with such a statement, writing: *But whoever the political actors and whatever their orientations,*

---

[17] More on the new media and their characteristics see: A. Adamski, *Media w analogowym I cyfrowym świecie. Wpływ cyfrowej rewolucji na rekonfigurację komunikacji społecznej*, Warszawa 2012, pp. 92-100.; P. Levinson, *Nowe nowe media*, Kraków 2010, pp. 11-21.; M. Lakomy, *Demokracja 2.0 Interakcja polityczna w nowych mediach*, Kraków 2013, pp. 66-76.

*they exist in the power game through and by the media, in the whole variety of the increasingly diverse media system that includes computer-mediated communication networks. The fact that politics has to be framed in the language of electronically based media has profound consequences on the characteristics, organization, and goals of political processes, political actors and political institutions*[18].

For politicians, the new media (the social media) are becoming one of the most important fields of activity. Most of all, communication via the new media means reaching particular social groups. This equals a greater ability to influence traditional media, which treat the new media as one of the primary sources of information (as it is the case with Twitter nowadays). Essentially, the new media are perfectly adaptable for communication with voters. Sara Bentivegn paid attention to this aspect, showing six features, which in her view influence the attractiveness of such a form of communication[19]:

- interactivity as opposed to one-way flow,
- co-occurrence of the vertical and horizontal communication,
- avoiding mediation, which is connected with a decrease of the role of journalist as a mediator in relations between citizens and politicians,
- lower costs for senders and recipients alike,
- faster than traditional media,
- lack of borders.

Moreover, Steven Mcnutt and John Hick presented four reasons (motives), why political organizations should become involved in the virtual space for constructing their own image[20]:

---

[18] M. Castells, *Społeczeństwo sieci*, Warszawa 2007, p. 473.
[19] B. Brodzińska-Mirowska, *Internet w komunikowaniu politycznym* [in:] M. Jeziński (ed.), *Nowe media we współczesnym społeczeństwie*, Toruń 2011, pp. 207-208.
[20] *Ibidem*, p. 208.

1. Economic motive – cutting the cost of political activities connected with coordinating. The Internet, in many respects, is cheaper and more efficient.

2. Motive associated with distance and the possibility of decentralization – it is possible to hand over the power of autonomy to lower-ranking authorities; due to a reduction of distance voters can organize themselves to act with regard to matters important to them, as well as exchange experience and ideas.

3. New opportunities not only in the scope of organization of particular public actions but also in the field of educating and obtaining necessary information.

4. Moreover, netizens are potential voters; therefore, it is worthwhile to manage this space.

The Internet became also another arena of fighting for political issues[21]. Przemysław Maj enumerates five ways of using the Internet in order to meet political objectives[22]:

- the Internet becomes a tool in the fight for the electorate, it is used for polarization of supporters and opponents;

- tool of political rivalry, which occurs as a result of the so-called "band wagon effect";

- using the Internet for axiological and programme rivalry;

- tool of propaganda and "semantic struggle";

- it serves to "destroy the opponent" (due to negative campaigning).

---

[21] It joined the catalogue of previously existing arenas: electoral, parliamentary, governmental, administrative, and industrial. See M. Lakomy, *Demokracja 2.0 Interakcja polityczna w nowych mediach*, Kraków 2013, p. 189.

[22] P. Maj, *Internet jako narzędzie walki w polskiej polityce* [in:] M. Jeziński (ed.) *Nowe media w systemie komunikowania: polityka,* Toruń 2011, p. 58.

Thus emerges the definition of politics 2.0 emerges which is the instance of utilizing new media and the Internet for political communication by politicians. The current level of political rivalry and struggle for influence in the media system reached such a state that the absence of politicians in the new media space can significantly influence their image and their place in the political debate (which is amplified mainly by the mass media, which more and more often rely on the new media).

**The place of Twitter in the process of political communication**

One of the most popular tools of politics 2.0, both for Polish and foreign decision-makers is the Twitter microblog. The first time Twitter rose to prominence during the presidential election in Iran in June 2009. With its help the Iranian opposition informed the world of electoral frauds[23]. Twitter came into being in 2006 and was the result of work of Jack Dorsey, Noah Glass, Evan Williams, and Biz Stone[24]. It provides a service for microblogging – reading and sending so-called *tweets*, brief messages up to 140 signs. The message is shown on the user's site (the so-called *timeline*).

From the point of view of the process of political communication, there is one important aspect that Paul Levinson noticed. Twitter is a connection of interpersonal communication with mass communication, which interlock with each other. The essence of interpersonal communication is that one person sends a message to another person, who can then easily change his/her role from the recipient to the sender. An example of this can be a face-to-face conversation, written correspondence, or a phone call[25]. In mass communication, one person sends the message to many recipients simultaneously. The recipi-

---

[23] M. Lakomy, *Demokracja 2.0…*, p. 209.
[24] Ibidem.
[25] P. Levinson, *Nowe nowe…*, p. 210.

ents have a limited possibility to reply (cannot assume the role of the sender). An example of this may be radio, television, newspapers, etc. It is possible to say that interpersonal communication works both ways and is precise, while mass communication has a far reach and is characterized by one-sidedness. Twitter connects interpersonal communication, making it mass, with the possibility of feedback from the recipient to the sender (however, one should emphasize that in case of interaction of the new media with the traditional media this rule does not always work).

It can be assumed that Twitter is a synthesis of the world. Twitter has the task of tidying up the influx of information and presenting them in the simplest way possible. The advantage that Twitter has over other means of communication is its instantaneousness. The microblog format necessitates maximal shortening of thoughts written down and minimizing the message for the recipient. It is a revolutionary element that allows to reach the recipient in a most efficient way via Twitter. Thus, it is important to give some thought to what is the place of the popular new media in the process of political communication.

Using the abovementioned models of political communication, which indicate the important role of the mass media, we can refer to the book by Jakub Nowak, entitled *Aktywność obywateli online. Teorie a praktyka* [Online Activity of Citizens. Theories and Practice]. In this publication, the author, paying attention to the major role of the Internet (and the social media) in the contemporary reality, tries to find the answer to a question concerning the relations between the participants of the process of political communication (politicians, citizens, and, particularly, the media). Therefore, he proposes to alter B. McNair's three-element model of political communication with the addition of the new media:

**Fig. 4. Three-element model of political communication with the addition of the new media**
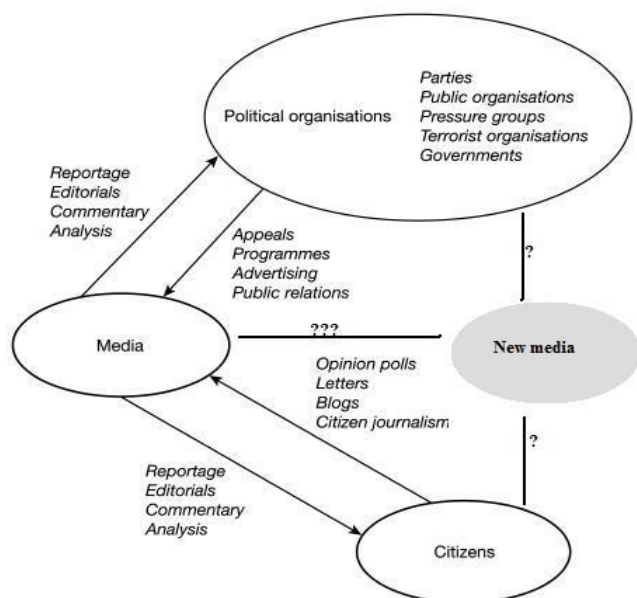


Source: J. Nowak, *Aktywność obywateli online. Teorie a praktyka*, Lublin 2011, p. 47.

Analysing the above figure, one should clarify two basic issues. Firstly, what are the relations between traditional media and the new media? Do these channels complement each other, or are they perhaps separate communication channels? Secondly, what does the communication between politicians and citizens look like with the new media?

The number of Twitter users in Poland – in comparison with other countries – is relatively small[26], therefore Twitter needs an intermediary in the form of the traditional media (mainly television, more and more often radio, rarely press). The majority of Polish society learns about the content of particular tweets of politicians via the traditional media. Thus, it is necessary to

---

[26] It is estimated that the number of Polish Twitter users in 2013 was about 2.5 mln, see: *Twitter i Pinterest rekordowo popularne w Polsce, traci Instagram*, http://www.wirtualnemedia.pl/artykul/twitter-i-pinterest-rekordowo-popularne-w-polsce-traci-instagram, 10.02.2014.

clarify and modify the model of political communication with the use of Twitter:

**Fig. 5. The process of political communication with the use of Twitter**
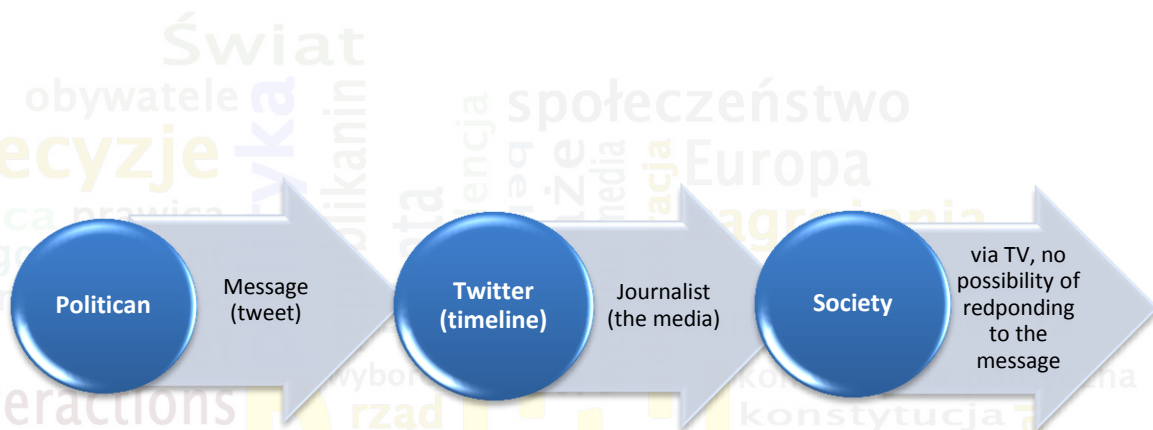


**Source: own study.**

In this model, a politician (sender of the message) begins the process of political communication via an entry on his profile with a particular message. Next, the generated content is displayed on the timeline, where the followers of the politician can read it. The next stage of communication occurs when a journalist (a user of the service) acts as an intermediary in presenting this information to society. In the end the message is shown on news channels and main news bulletins on TV. Thus, a large number of citizens can learn about a statement made by a politician.

Suggesting such a model is justified on the account that politicians more and more often initially make important announcements via Twitter. In such cases traditional media journalists are the only group that is able to spread the information. Such a model works with the abovementioned theories of McNair

and Perloff. One should also emphasize that this model works exclusively in relations between the traditional media and the new media. The situation looks differently in the case of communication in the virtual environment.

On February 8, 2013 negotiations on the new budget of the European Union for the years 2014-2020 were held in Brussels. It is a subject very important from every citizen's point of view and due to its significance it was prominently covered during the television broadcast. Directly before his departure, Prime Minister Donald Tusk made an entry on Twitter, which was later widely commented and presented by the mass media:

**Fig. 6. Tweet of Prime Minister Donald Tusk before his departure for the EU summit in Brussels.**



**Donald Tusk** @premiertusk

Before us are the three days that are crucial for the entire decade. The most important task that I've ever faced. Keep your fingers crossed!

**Source: Official profile of Prime Minister Donald Tusk on Twitter, https://twitter.com/premiertusk, 10.02.2013.**

Later the public opinion received subsequent messages from the Prime Minister on the progress of the negotiations via television news bulletins[27]. After some time, the Twitter profile of the Prime Minister started to draw more and more attention of the traditional media. As it turned out, it was not press conferences, or brief statements in front of cameras, but the brief tweets on the microblog that have been the sources of information.

---

[27] The Prime Minister wrote in one of his tweets: *To już 27 godzina spotkań i negocjacji non stop. Porozumienie wciąż niepewne* [It is the 27th hour of meetings and non-stop negotiations. Agreement is still uncertain], https://twitter.com/premiertusk/status/299821750710042624 10.02.2014.

Public opinion learned about the success of the negotiations via the Government's Press Spokesman Paweł Graś (also via Twitter)[28].

To sum up, the example above can be construed as a confirmation of the earlier suggested model and the thesis. During the negotiations in Brussels, the primary source of information for the mass media (most of all television news bulletins) was Twitter. The mass media were dominated by the information available on the microblog[29]. Even the correspondents in Brussels in the overwhelming majority based their information on the sources available on Twitter.

Undoubtedly, the presented statements require further, deepened examinations. The results will bring political communication researchers closer to answering the question about the place of the Internet in this process. A visible element here is the gradual blurring of the lines between the traditional media and the new media (a deepening convergence of the media). The traditional media have some time ago noticed that their presence and close cooperation with the new media (in particular with the social media) is essential for their further functioning. The same is true for political communication.

**Summary**

The development of the Internet and the establishment of the new media, without a doubt exerted and is still exerting significant influence on the process of political communication. The growing role of this kind of

---

[28] The Government's Press Spokesman wrote on Twitter: *SMS właśnie otrzymany od premiera: Załatwione!!!* [*SMS just received from the Prime Minister: It is done!!!*]*,* https://twitter.com/pawelgras/status/299902906730176512 , 10.02.2014.
[29] See: EU summit in Brussels live, https://www.premier.gov.pl/wydarzenia/aktualnosci/szczyt-ue-w-brukseli-relacja-na-zywo.html , 11.02.2014.

communication makes it necessary for the participants in this process to be present in their structures. Adam Bielan noticed it, saying: *in the present-day politics quotability is more and more essential. Politicians who are absent from Twitter (…) have this quotability on a far smaller level (…). Journalists have a facilitated task. As we can observe, they more often call politicians that are present on Twitter. These politicians are able to come up with a good sound bite in 140 signs in a crucial moment, which later resonates in the public sphere*[30].

It is possible to suppose that Twitter (and wider, the social media) amplified the actions for everyone involved. On the one hand, politicians have tools for rapid communication and expressing their own views; on the other hand, they also have a place for exerting influence and shaping media transmissions. The media have a possibility of obtaining information in a swift manner and present it to the public. Politicians accommodate themselves to the principles of cooperation with the media, which results in an increased coverage of their public image [the interest among recipients – author's note]. Today such a situation brings benefits to both sides. The media can receive "cheap" information via Twitter and politicians, who "sell" information (not necessarily concerning the essential facts) can have a certainty that it will be passed to a wider public. Such a cooperation is also justified for this reason that current surveys demonstrate a distant dominance of television over the Internet as the main channel of entertainment and a source of information[31]. Also, the citizens themselves benefit. They are

---

[30] A. Bielan, *Nowe media wymuszają w polityce zmianę generacyjną*, "Nowe Media" 2013, No. 6, p. 124.

[31] J. Sosnowska, *Co jest ważniejsze – Internet czy telewizja? Najważniejsze wnioski z badania World Internet Project: Polska 2013*, http://technologie.gazeta.pl/internet/1,104530,14894700,Co_jest_wazniejsze__internet_czy _telewizja__Najwazniejsze.html , 11.02.2014.

given tools (in the form of the Twitter application) to establish a level of interaction with politicians and the media.

In the course of these deliberations, the hypothesis presented in the introduction to the article proved to be true. The presented example confirmed that, at present, the new media and the traditional media in the context of the process of political communication complement each other. Such a situation is a confirmation of a "moderate" scenario of mediatization proposed by W. Schulz. He thought that the integration of diverse conventional media technologies with multimedia applications and digitization of media signals leads to the convergence of the media – where the "old" and the "new" media become alike[32].

I would like to end these deliberations with an issue of the place of the new media and their role in political communication (in the context of proposed models). The answer to that question may remain ambiguous for some time. It is due to the fact that virtual space continues to grow and new – more innovative – solutions emerge. However, it seems that in the case of the new media and their place in the process of political communication the scenario created by Walery Pisarek will be fulfilled. In developing the definition of the new media, this researcher wrote that every medium at the beginning of its existence had the status of a "new medium": *whenever in history a new medium emerged, it stood in opposition to the old*[33].

In conclusion, I would like to state that the rumours about the looming demise of the traditional media in the process of political communication seem to be greatly exaggerated and the idea that they can be replaced with the new media (the social media) is absurd. Many things indicate that the

---

[32] W. Schulz, *Reconstructing Mediatization as an Analytical Concept*,
 http://ejc.sagepub.com/content/19/1/87 , 11.02.2014.
[33] W. Pisarek, *Wstęp do nauki o komunikowaniu*, Warszawa 2008, p. 147.

new media of today (with Twitter as an example), given time and development of new technologies, will be absorbed and shall become one of the elements of the broadly understood mass media.

Bartłomiej Machnik – PhD student, Opole University

**Abstract**

The article discusses the issues connected with the role of the Twitter microblog in the process of political communication. The author makes an analysis of the models of the process of political communication, pointing at the strategic role of the media, while simultaneously trying to situate new forms of communication (via the Internet). In his deliberations, the author portrays the relations between traditional media and new media in the context of the process of political communication.

**MIEJSCE TWITTERA W PROCESIE KOMUNIKACJI POLITYCZNEJ**

**Abstrakt**

Artykuł porusza tematykę związaną z rolą mikrobloga Twitter w procesie komunikacji politycznej. Autor dokonuje analizy schematów procesu komunikacji politycznej, wskazujących na strategiczną rolę środków masowego przekazu, próbując jednocześnie usytuować nowe formy komunikacji (za pośrednictwem przestrzeni internetowej). Autor w swoich rozważaniach ukazuje relacje łączące media tradycyjne i nowe media w kontekście procesu komunikacji politycznej.
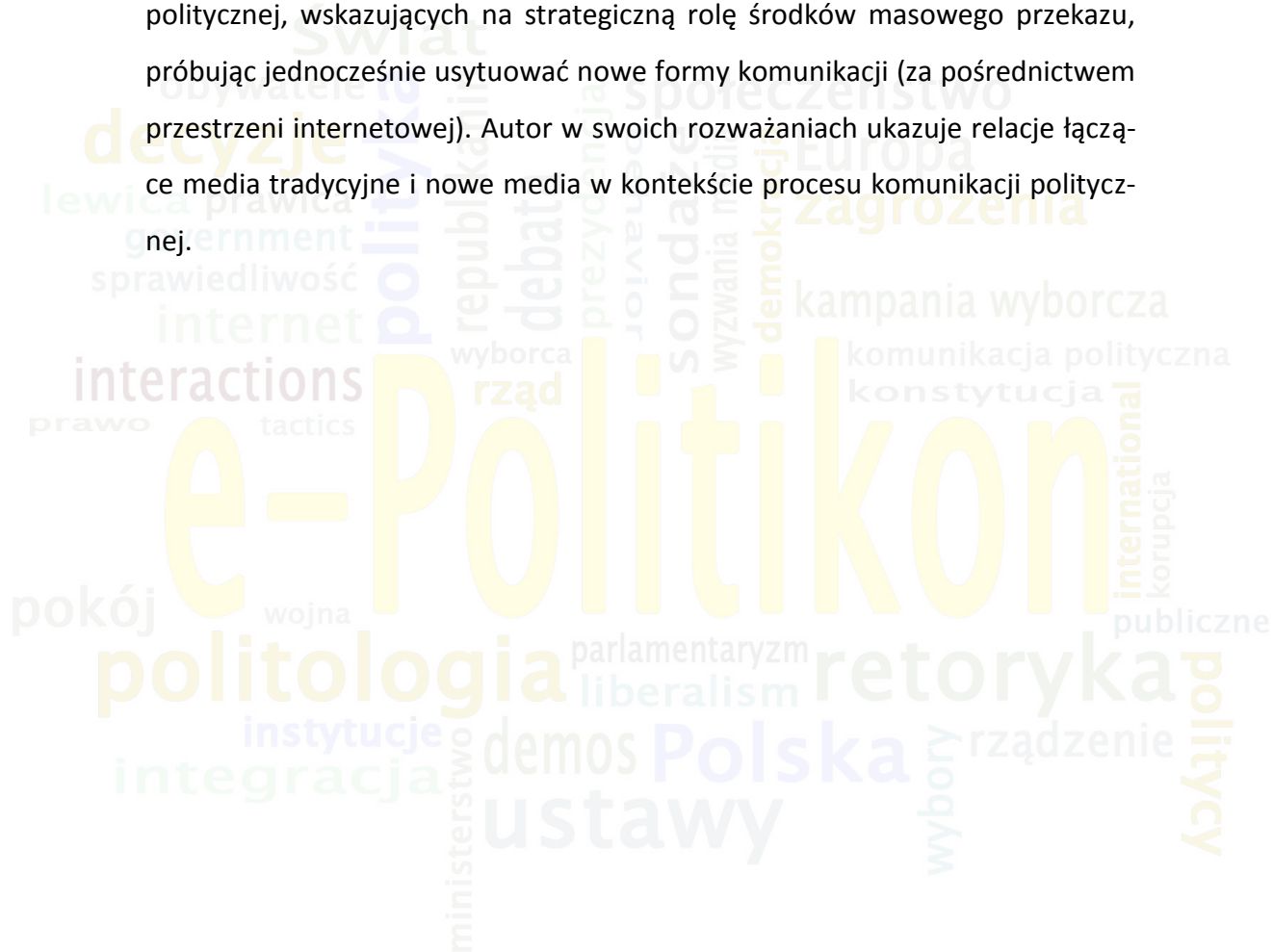
**Małgorzata Adamik-Szysiak**

# TWITTER IN COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES OF THE LEADERS OF THE POLISH POLITICAL PARTIES

Keywords:

*social media, Twitter, communication strategy, Polish political parties, content analysis*

## Introduction

The dynamically increasing number of Internet users, including potential voters, especially of the young generation, is undoubtedly an important factor influencing the decisions of the politicians about the use of the Internet potential in communicative marketing strategies. In Poland, according to data from the mid-2013, the Internet is regularly used by 60% of adult citizens (although in 2002 it was only 17%), of which 60% declares that they have an account on the social networking site. The largest group of the network users systematically using the Internet includes people in the age range of 18-45, however in the case of owners of the accounts on social networking sites the age limit is slightly lowered (18-35), which may be caused by the fact that the *network is a natural environment of young people, who have digital skills almost independent of the level of their education or economical status*[1]. However, it should be stressed, which is not only the Polish specificity[2], that the

---

[1] More: CBOS, *Internauci 2013*, BS/75/2013, Warszawa, June 2013.
[2] J. Nielsen, *Participation Inequality: Encouraging More Users to Contribute*, http://www.useit.com/alertbox/participation_inequality.html 15.09.2013.

vast majority of Internet users uses the network in a passive way, while people publishing their own contents are still a relatively small group[3].

Among the main goals of using the social networking sites Internet users most often indicate keeping in touch with friends/groups of friends (50%), restoring old acquaintances (41%), listening to music, watching films/looking at photos, reading texts (39%), conducting discussions (27%)[4]. The latter of the listed goals seems to be especially important from the point of view of seeing the sphere of politics, in which social networking sites are often perceived in the category of a new discussion platform. The Internet allows the politicians to initiate and spread the specific messages without journalists. As a result, the use of the politicians in the communication strategies of the social networking sites creates possibilities to build interactions with the potential electorate, in order to gain its favour[5].

The participation of the politicians in the social and political debate in the form of a virtual agora is becoming a way to interest especially young voters – the group characterised by the highest ratio of the electoral absence[6] not only in the current social, political matters, but also through the auto-creation of the positive image, its privatisation, also in the politician's personality. Observing the diversity of the contents offered by the network, it is difficult to talk about the similarity of Internet users' interests, hence the recipient of the contents posted by the political actors in the pages of social media, blogs or

---

[3] In mid-2013 only 5% of the Polish Internet users had a blog or own Internet website, a much greater activity was observed on the Internet forums and social networking sites – 32% of the respondents admitted that they made regular entries; see: CBOS, *Internauci 2013…*

[4] Ibidem.

[5] More: D. d'Alessio, M. Allen, *Media bias in presidential elections: a meta-analysis*, "Journal of Communication" 50/2000, pp. 133-156.

[6] See: *Wyborca 2*.0, D. Batorski et al. (ed.), Warszawa 2012.

micro blogs seems to include the interested people and also people engaged to a various degree and at various levels in the political life[7].

Social networking sites (including Twitter) were considered by Paul Levinson as an exemplification of "new new media", creating for Internet users almost unlimited communication tools adequate to their liking[8]. In this context, Christine Rosen formulates a concept of egocasting[9]. Among the features distinguishing the social networking sites, most often there is indicated not only their functionality, the possibility to interact, but also the initiation of conversation (among others thanks to the function of blogging or micro blogging), so the swapping of roles of the sender and recipient in the communication process[10].

The bottom-up desire of Internet users to create the virtual communities on one hand can be (and often is) "a threat" exposing the image created by the politician, but on the other – a chance to design and accomplish the *de facto* more effective political campaigns. The sharing of the latest information or thoughts of the politicians with Internet users, undertaking the attempts for social consultation, initiating and joining the conversations serves the creation of relationships. Thanks to the functionality of social media, the voter can see not only the communication efforts undertaken by the political entity, but also the real interests of the politician in the daily problems of the citizens.

The activity undertaken by the politicians within social media marketing is aimed not only at the interest of Internet users with the specific subjects and their activation thorough the inclusion and/or initiation of conversation, but

[7] More: P. Dahlgren, *The Transformation of Democracy?*, [in:] B. Axford, R. Huggins (eds.), *New Media and Politics*, London 2001, pp. 73-83.
[8] See: P. Levinson, *New new media* [Polish Edition], Kraków 2010, pp. 12-13.
[9] See: Ch. Rosen, *The Age of Egocasting*, "The New Atlantis" 2004/2005, No. 7, pp. 51-72.
[10] More: P. Levinson, "Nowe…, pp. 7-13 and iab. Social Media Ad Metrics, http://www.iab.net/media/file/SocialMediaMetricsDefinitionsFinal.pdf, 25.01.2014.

also (and perhaps most of all) the external promotion of the political entity. It is worth noting that the important part of Internet users following or commenting the actions of the politicians on the Internet is constituted by the political rivals and journalists, for whom social media are also becoming the source of quick acquisition of the direct information and opinions.

The co-creation in the virtual space of the community in order to maintain the impression of the permanent dialogue with potential voters seems, thus, in the era of new media, the key element of the communication strategies of the politicians. The effectiveness of this type of actions is proven even by the results of the presidential campaigns in the USA[11].

The purpose of the article is an attempt to capture the ways to use the potential of the social media in communication strategies of the leaders of the political parties. Due to the breadth of the research in this scope, the article presents the research results concerning only the micro blog Twitter.

The main research questions concentrate around the answers to the questions of whether and how the leaders of the Polish political parties use the official accounts on Twitter to communicate with potential voters. The detailed research questions concerned the activity (frequency of entries) of the politicians within the examined accounts and the contents of these accounts, and so the type and subject of the posted tweets. In the research the attention was also paid to the degree of involvement of both the Internet users and the politicians into the emerging discussions within the given tweet/account.

The effect of the preliminary analysis of the research material are two research hypotheses. According to the first hypothesis, the leaders of Polish political parties are still discovering the potential of Twitter, treating it similarly

---

[11] See for example: *Social Media and Democracy: Innovations in Participatory Politics*, B. D. Loader, D. Mercea (eds.), London-New York 2012.

to the existing mass media (press, radio, television), which can be evidenced even by the dominance of the one-way communication. The second hypothesis suggests that Twitter plays an important role in the communication strategies of the leaders of parties enjoying the lowest social support, this way seeking new ways to reach and interest the youngest voters in their offer.

The detailed empirical study included the randomly selected one month – January 2014. It is worth adding that it was the period preceding the official electoral campaign to the European Parliament planned for the end of May 2014[12]. In the study of the collected material, the method of the content analysis, both quantitative and qualitative was used. This method seems justified, especially with regard to the communication field, in which the analysis includes the most significant elements shaping its content and form[13].

**Twitter as a platform of information and exchange of opinions**

In Poland, Twitter, despite the growing interest of Internet users should still be counted as the niche medium in terms of registered users. Research of the media monitoring show, however, that this niche medium has an oddly significant influence on the media, and thus the public opinion.

The greatest popularity in the Polish society among the social networking sites is enjoyed by Facebook (about 11 million users), however, the rapidly growing number of Twitter users (in November 2013 it amounted to 2.5 million of Polish users, including about 500 000 active ones)[14] places it in the top

---

[12] Official dates of the elections to the EP (25 May 2014) were announced by the President of the Republic of Poland on 19 February 2014.

[13] More: J. H. Parmelle, S. L. Bichard, *Politics and the Twitter Revolution. How Tweets Influence the Relationship between Political Leaders and the Public*, Lanham, MD, 2012, p. 29.

[14] Still in 2012 the research showed that the number of the real users of Twitter was approx. 1.2 million; see: A. Kawik, *Pierwszy raport o polskich użytkownikach Twittera*, http://socialpress.pl/2013/05/pierwszy-raport-o-polskich-uzytkownikach-twittera-zobacz-o-czym-cwierkamy/ 25.01.2014 and Socialpress.pl, *Polacy w Internecie, dłużej, intensywniej,*

ten of the most often quoted media in Poland. Interestingly, studies show that the politicians most often are the authors of quotations in the media[15]. In this situation it is not surprising that Twitter is used by the politicians for the public relations purposes. Functionality and specificity of Twitter makes it a source of a variety of current information (relations from the current events, comments on the given topic) coming both from the politicians, voters or journalists.

According to the study of the public relations agency Hill + Knowlton Strategies conducted in November 2013, despite the relatively small popularity among the Polish society of the micro blog Twitter, almost half of the Polish parliament members have official accounts on this site. The most numerous on Twitter, among the members of the political parties, are the representatives of Your Movement (TR) –72% of them has established individual official accounts, then the politicians of the Civic Platform (PO) – 41%, Polish People's Party (PSL) – 39%, Law and Justice (PiS) – 38% and the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) – 35%. It is noteworthy that in the ranking of 20 most active politicians, 19 of them publishes tweets at least once a week, while 15 –use all options offered by Twitter in the communication (e.g. @, hashtags)[16].

Tweets are perceived by the politicians in the category of a tool of al-most direct and immediate communication with the environment (both with journalists, public opinion, as well as other politicians). As it turns out, the ac-counts most frequently observed by the politicians include the accounts of other politicians (especially those most active and/or being the part of the

---

*mobilnie*, http://socialpress.pl/2012/12/polacy-w-internecie-dluzej-intensywniej-mobilnie/# 25.01.2014 and Hill+Konwlton Strategies, *Najpopularniejsze konta na Twitterze obserwowane przez polskich parlamentarzystów: raport Hill+Konwlton Strategies*, http://hkstrategies.pl/raport-politycy-twitter-2013, 25.01.2014.
[15] See: Instytut Monitorowania Mediów, *Najbardziej opiniotwórcze… social media w Polsce*, http://www.instytut.com.pl/IMM/o_firmie/raport_cytaty_social_media_06.2012.pdf, 25.01.2014.
[16] Hill+Konwlton Strategies, *Najpopularniejsze konta na Twitterze…*

Council of Ministers, including the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland) and the accounts of journalists of the main opinion forming media. In the fore-front of the observed media are the around-the-clock information televisions stations (commercial – TVN24 and public – TVP Info), opinion weeklies ("Newsweek Polska", "Wprost", "Polityka"), Internet opinion websites ("300 Polityka", "Gazeta.pl"), information radio station (TOK FM) and the largest opinion dailies ("Gazeta Wyborcza", "Rzeczpospolita")[17].

The preliminary analysis of the empirical material showed that four (Civic Platform – PO, Law and Justice – PiS, Your Movement – TR, Democratic Left Alliance – SLD) out of five governing parties on the Polish political stage[18] have accounts on Twitter[19]. The greatest number of followers is enjoyed by two biggest political parties on the Polish scene, competing with each other, PO and PiS (see Table 1).

Assessing the activity of the Polish parties on Twitter (bearing in mind the date of creating the account), it should be noted that two parties are dom-inating in this respect (TR and SLD). The clear disparity in the activity in the studied month was noticeable on the account of PiS (only 76 tweets).

Given the sender of the tweets posted on the accounts of the parties, it can be clearly seen that there is an advantage of the "anonymous" entries marked only by the party's logo. In the context of the personalisation of poli-tics, it is worth noting that in the case of almost all analysed accounts, the

---

[17] *Ibidem*.

[18] As a result of the parliamentary elections on 9 October 2011, the greatest number of votes went to the parties: Civic Platform (PO), Law and Justice (PiS), Palikot's Movement (RP) (from 6.10.2013 as Your Movement - TR), Polish People's Party (PSL) and Democratic Left Alliance (SLD). See: PKW, *Wybory 2011 do Sejmu i Senatu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej,* http://wybory2011.pkw.gov.pl/wsw/pl/000000.html 15.09.2013.

[19] PO, https://twitter.com/Platforma_org; PiS, https://twitter.com/kppis; TR, https://twitter.com/TwojRuch_; SLD, https://twitter.com/sldpoland, 10.02.2014.

tweets were posted also by the selected politicians of the party including, (with an exception of the account of PiS), leaders of the parties.

**Tab. 1. Activity of the Polish political parties on Twitter as of 31 January 2014.**

| Political party/ Tweets | PO | PiS | TR | PSL | SLD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Date of the first tweet on the account | 1 June 2010 | 15 December 2010 | 6 October 2013[20] | absence | 18 March 2011 |
| Total tweets | 3 600 | 3 582 | 2 156 | - - | 3 167 |
| Number of tweets in January 2014 | 402 | 76 | 545 | - | 464 |
| Following | 416 | 1 091 | 140 | - | 287 |
| Followers | 19 000 | 13 500 | 2 005 | - | 4 308 |

Source: Twitter and own study.

The voice was taken (in the studied period) by not more than 3-5 politicians of the given party. SLD was dominating against the actions of the political rivals, whose total of 11 members headed by the leader Leszek Miller posted at least one tweet. The parties systematically publishing tweets were TR and SLD. In tactics, especially of PO, the asymmetry of actions in stream was clearly visible, which in consequence could cause in the recipients the sensation of the rapid "flow" of various information and opinion every now and then (see Figure 1). Examining the subject of tweets numerously published by PO, especially in the period of 7-8 and 10 January (respectively: 30, 68 and 61 tweets), it is impossible to resist the impression of the opportunistic use of Twitter by the politicians. The contents of tweets in the mentioned period were almost exclusively the quotations speaking for the Prime Minister and minister during the ongoing press conference of the government on the plans of the development of Poland for the incoming years.

---

[20] The party Palikot's Movement (RP) in October 2013 (6.10.2013) changed its name to Your Movement (TR) and opened a new account on the Twitter. The old account has been blocked.

**Fig. 1. Activity of the Polish political parties on Twitter in January 2014.**
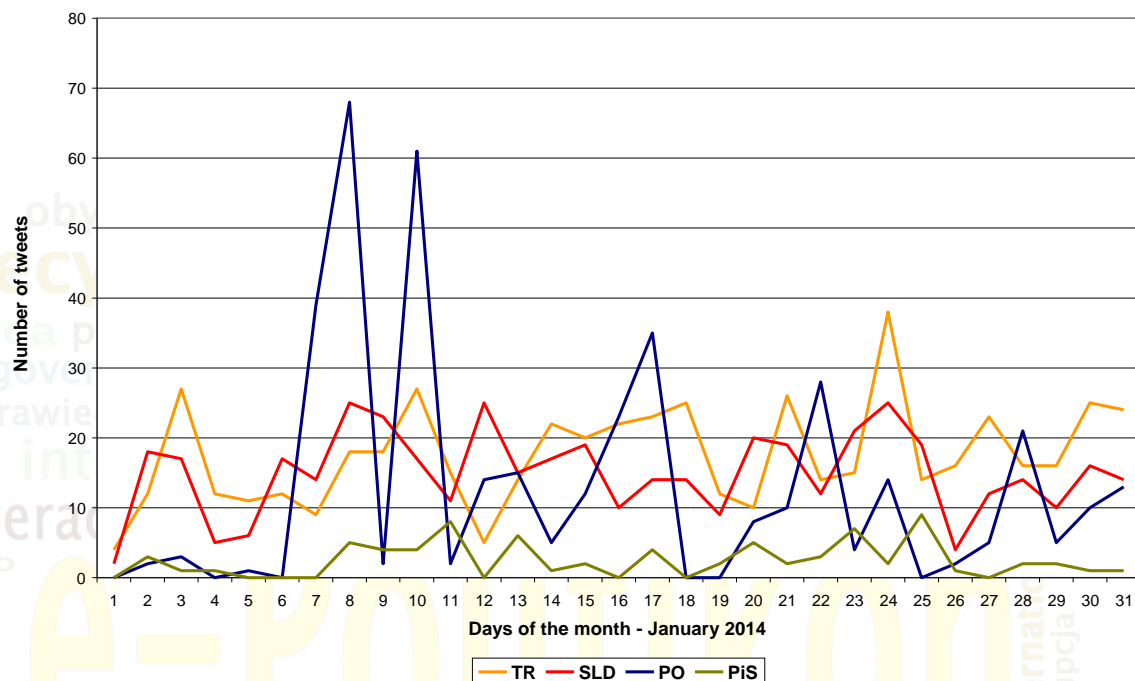
A slightly different situation is in the case of accounts of the leaders of the po-
litical parties – officially, the accounts are also run by four leaders of the par-
ties, who are: Donald Tusk (PO), Janusz Palikot (TR), Janusz Piechociński (PSL)
and Leszek Miller (SLD)[21]. The only leader who does not have an account on
Twitter is Jarosław Kaczyński (PiS). However, the mere quantitative analysis of
the politicians in terms of data concerning the number of the posted tweets (in
this studied month) showed that the study will de facto include three leaders:
Janusz Palikot (TR), Janusz Piechociński (PSL) and Leszek Miller (SLD). Donald
Tusk (PO) at the same time exercising the function of the Prime Minister of the

---

[21] Donald Tusk, https://twitter.com/premiertusk; Janusz Palikot,
 https://twitter.com/Palikot_Janusz; Janusz Piechociński, https://twitter.com/Piechocinski;
Leszek Miller https://twitter.com/LeszekMiller, 10.02.2014.

Republic of Poland on his official account, from the beginning of its establishment, has posted 216 tweets, including only 1 tweet in the studied month[22]. Tweet on the account of D. Tusk saying: *We support the Ukrainian democrats in their efforts to achieve a fair and wise agreement. The conflict and repressions are the road to disaster*[23] was published on 26 January in relation to the turbulent political events in Ukraine and was commented only by 3 people (including the former Prime Minister in the government of Donald Tusk), but it was liked by 93 people, and forwarded – 100 (see Table 2), which indicated that the activity of the politician on Twitter is not always consistent with the popularity of his account.

Tab. 2. Activity of the leaders of the Polish political parties on Twitter. As of 31 January 2014.

| Leader (party)/ Tweets | Donald Tusk (PO) | Jarosław Kaczyński (PiS) | Janusz Palikot (TR) | Janusz Piechociński (PSL) | Leszek Miller (SLD) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Date of the first tweet on the account** | 10 December 2012 | Absence | 21 January 2010 | 28 January 2013 | 23 October 2012 |
| **Total tweets** | 216 | - | 2 485 | 5 137 | 1 243 |
| **Number of tweets in January 2014** | 1 | - | 183 | 294 | 74 |
| **Following** | 96 | - | 156 | 118 | 143 |
| **Followers** | 114 000 | - | 193 000 | 16 500 | 33 500 |

Source: Twitter and own study.

The quantitative study of the accounts of the mentioned leaders of the political parties shows that the most active politician is J. Piechociński, however, the

---

[22] The analysis of the account of D. Tusk from the moment of its establishment indicates the disproportion in the prime minister's activity, e.g. in December 2013 he posted 19 tweets, while 15 – on one day (on Christmas Eve – 24 December).
[23] Donald Tusk@premiertusk, Twitter, https://twitter.com/premiertusk, 25.01.2014.

qualitative analysis of the published tweets provides the ground for somewhat different conclusions. It turns out that almost every tweet of J. Piechociński was published twice (!), which made Internet users draw attention of the politician in the comments several times (in various time intervals). Their remarks, just like all comments to the tweets of J. Piechociński, were notoriously ignored by the politician. J. Palikot regularly posted tweets on his account (see Figure 2).

**Fig. 2. Activity of the leaders of the Polish political parties on Twitter in January 2014.**
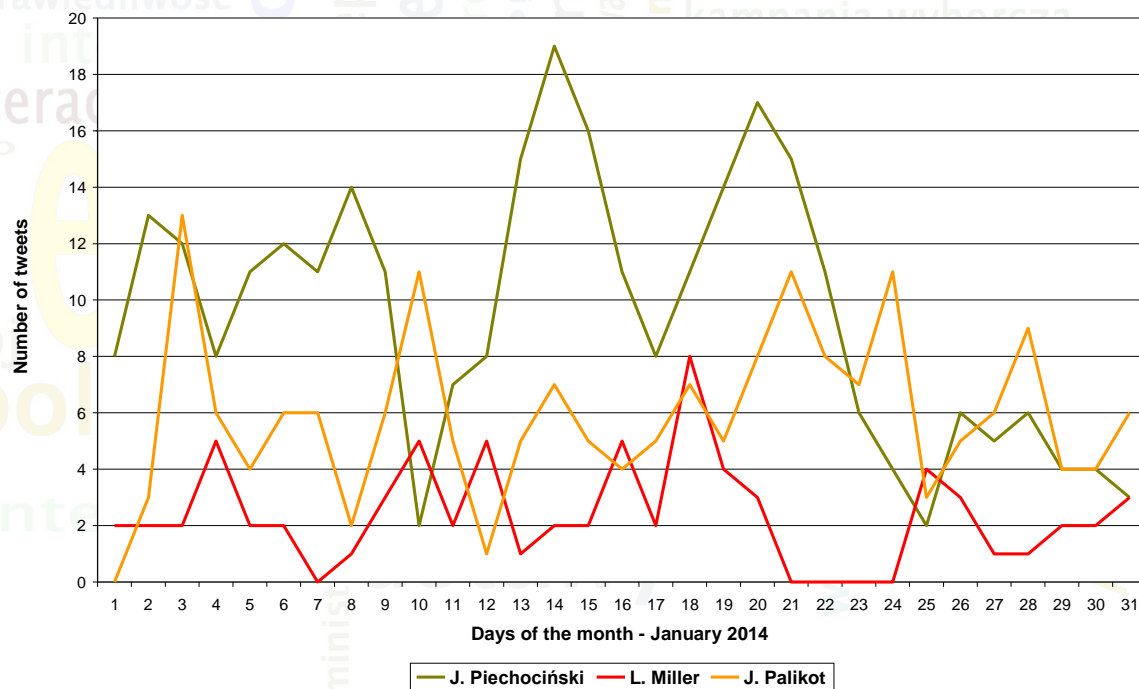


**Source: Own study.**

The analysis of the collected research material allowed to distinguish and divide the tweets posted by the leaders of the parties in terms of their construction into several types, while in the speeches of all politicians a significant place was taken by the tweets constructed on the model of the announcement

of an event, additionally with a link (see Table 3). The study results show that both J. Palikot and L. Miller use Twitter not only through the prism of a new dissemination platform of news, but also to share their opinions and reflexions on various topics with Internet users. For J. Piechociński, Twitter is almost exclusively the place to promote the official blog conducted by the politician in the Polish blog service blog.onet.pl[24] – tweet in this case acts mainly as a function of announcement (being at the same time a part of the material posted and expanded on the politician's blog) with a link (see Table 3). As a result, the content of the politician's account on Twitter gives the impression that it is run by the machine[25].

**Tab. 3. Type of tweets - January 2014 [%].**

| Leader (party)/ Type of tweets | Janusz Palikot (TR) | Janusz Piechociński (PSL) | Leszek Miller (SLD) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Announcement | 1 | 0 | 8 |
| Announcement with a link | 24 | 58 | 19 |
| Mention | 7 | 0 | 14 |
| Mention with a link | 9 | 18 | 18 |
| Comment | 35 | 0 | 31 |
| Comment with a link | 15 | 22 | 7 |
| Other (including greetings/congratulations, thanks, wishes, questions) | 9 | 2 | 3 |

**Source: Own study.**

It is worth adding that some tweets (approx. 10%) of both J. Palikot and L. Miller were additionally equipped with visual materials, moreover 2% of tweets of J. Palikot had audiovisual materials. These materials were even to a greater

---

[24] Blog.pl, *Janusz Piechociński, Prezes PSL, Minister Gospodarki*, http://piechocinski.blog.onet.pl/, 25.01.2014.
[25] For example Twitterfeed, see: http://twitterfeed.com/ 25.01.2014, and R. Niles, *So why aren't you Twittering yet?,* "OJR: The Online Journalism Review" 2009, http://archive-org.com/page/1027716/2012-12-21/http://www.ojr.org/ojr/people/robert/200901/1616/, 25.01.2014.

degree created to attract attention of Internet users to a particular tweet/message.

As a result of the analysis of the research material for the dominance of the specific topics, there were distinguished the following content categories: current events in the country (mainly the road infrastructure, social matters); reports of the proceedings of the government/parliament; economic politics; religious politics; foreign politics (including the EU, events in Ukraine); political competitors; proposals from the election program; electoral campaign to the European Parliament; parties' politicians in the media; direct meetings with the parties' politicians (including press conferences and meetings with voters); media reports; surveys/polls; cultural events; the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity; others (see Table 4).

**Tab. 4. Topics of tweets – January 2014 [%].**

| Leader (party)/ Topics of tweets | Janusz Palikot (TR) | Janusz Piechociński (PSL) | Leszek Miller (SLD) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Current events in the country** | 8 | 5 | 5 |
| **Reports of the proceedings of the government/parliament** | 0 | 9 | 0 |
| **Economic politics** | 2 | 30 | 0 |
| **Religious politics** | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| **Foreign politics** | 1 | 14 | 10 |
| **Political competitors** | 40 | 1 | 23 |
| **Proposals from the election program** | 8 | 9 | 8 |
| **Electoral campaign to the European Parliament** | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| **Parties' politicians in the media** | 14 | 10 | 8 |
| **Direct meetings with the parties' politicians (including press conferences and meetings with voters)** | 2 | 9 | 5 |
| **Media reports** | 2 | 1 | 10 |
| **Surveys/polls** | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| **Cultural events** | 0 | 0 | 11 |
| **WOŚP[26]** | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| **Other** | 10 | 7 | 11 |

**Source: Own study.**

---

[26] The Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity (WOŚP) – yearly nationwide charity action.

The results of the qualitative analysis prove that in the communicative strategy of J. Palikot, Twitter is a tool used most of all to criticise the political competitors (40% of all tweets). This use of Twitter also plays an important role in the strategy of L. Miller (23%). In turn, for J. Piechociński, acting not only as the President of PSL, but also the minister of economy, the micro blog is a place used to publish the latest reports on individual facts/events in the field of the economic politics, thus taking on mostly the formula of the announcement with a link, referring the Internet user to more information to the already mentioned official blog of the politician[27]. Moreover, Twitter (in the case of all leaders) plays a significant role in promoting the speeches or interviews of the politicians of their own party in traditional media (press, radio, television). Tweets of this type are usually published a day before or the same day and they contain accurate information about who of the politicians from the party, where and what time can be seen/heard, often there is also provided a program, which will be covered by the media.

The content analysis of the tweets indicated that each of the studied politicians undertakes on Twitter not only the popular current topics, but also issues with which he would like to be identified and through the prism of which he would like to be perceived by Internet users.

Characteristic for J. Piechociński (and possible thanks to his function of the minister) were the tweets informing Internet users up to date about the progress and decisions or topics of discussions conducted during the meeting of the Council of Ministers (see Table 4). Specific only for J. Palikot was the relatively often occurring negative attitude of the politician and his party to the way of implementation by the Polish country of the religious politics.

---

[27] Blog.pl, *Janusz Piechociński…*

The subjects undertaken in the analysed period only by L. Miller were the cultural events (mostly the cinema premieres).

Twitter, which was shown by the study, became (to a similar degree) a place of the inauguration of the electoral campaign to the European Parliament for the politicians, which was manifested mostly in reminding the potential voters the slogans from the electoral program of the party (8-9% of all tweets) and the official presentation of the leaders of the electoral lists. While interpreting the analysis results, it is worth paying attention once again to the important role of Twitter for the leader of the PSL party J. Piechociński for the announcements and mentions of direct meetings (including these with the potential voters and journalists) and PSL leaders (9% of all tweets). In turn, the review and correction of the media reports (with special reverence of the passages, in which media referred to SLD or its members) was almost a permanent element of the tweets by L. Miller (see Table 4).

From the perspective of the researcher of social media, interesting is not only the way of communicating of the politicians with Internet users or the topics undertaken by them, but also the degree of involvement in this interaction of their fans. Such indicators in the case of Twitter may include, apart from the already mentioned "followers", also the functions "favourite", "retweet" and most of all "reply".

The marking of tweets, as favourites, on one hand is to help the user to archive the selected entries, preventing the situation in which the given tweet is lost among a thousand others, generated by the observed people, and on the other hand – it becomes an indicator of popularity among the Internet users of the selected tweets. A little "broader range" characterises the retweet function, through which Internet users by sharing, and thus recommending their friends the selected tweets, at the same time publicise and

promote them. It seems that both functions (requiring from the Internet user a small commitment) can be perceived in the category of more effective (in comparison to, e.g., data concerning the followers) indicators of the real popularity of specific tweets, and even the given account on Twitter. The latter one – the reply function, without a doubt requires from the Internet user a much greater commitment to communication (here the mere "clicking" is not enough, like in case of two previous functions), but because of it the politician may get to know not only the opinions of Internet users, but also react to them through a response or joining the discussion.

Analysing the accounts of the parties' leaders in terms of involvement in their popularisation by Internet users, it can be observed that only occasional tweets did not raise any reactions of the audience in the studied period (see Figure 3-5). The greatest number of tweets, which were most willingly marked by Internet users as favourite, appeared on the account of L. Miller (40%) and J. Palikot (38%). Less often marked as favourite were the tweets of J. Piechociński (27%), however in comparison to the entries of the competitors, his tweets were systematically commented (48%), in case of L. Miller and J. Palikot these values were similar (respectively: 34% and 29%). While it is worth noting that more often the most numerous discussions among Internet users took place on the account of J. Palikot. In turn, L. Miller was actually the only leader who undertook the conversation with the Internet users; the other politicians, if they responded to Internet users at all, did it in single cases.

In the use of the retweet function by Internet users, a kind of consistency of its use with the favourite function can be observed – often tweets marked as favourite were at the same time shared to the groups of friends of the Internet users (see Figure 3-5). In total, the largest number of the Internet users in the researched period forwarded the tweets of J. Palikot (887 re-

tweets), followed by L. Miller (287 retweets) and J. Piechociński (145 re-
tweets).

**Fig. 3. The use of the Twitter function bye Internet users with respect to the politician's tweets – account of Janusz Palikot (TR).**
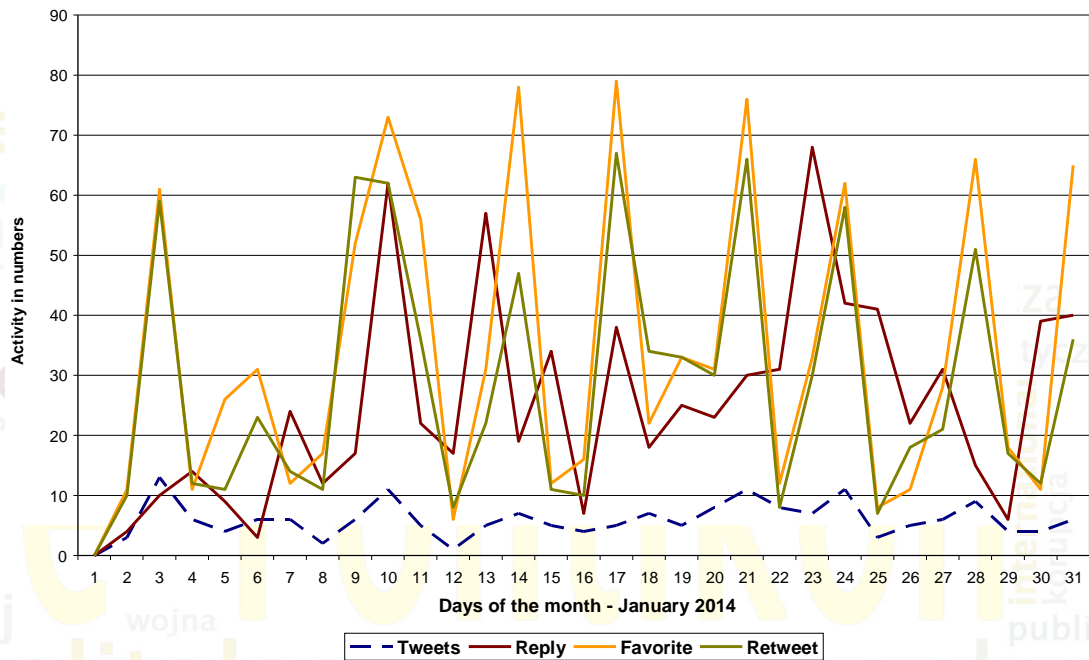


**Source: Own study.**

**Fig. 4. The use of the Twitter function by Internet users with respect to the politician's tweets – account of Leszek Miller (SLD).**
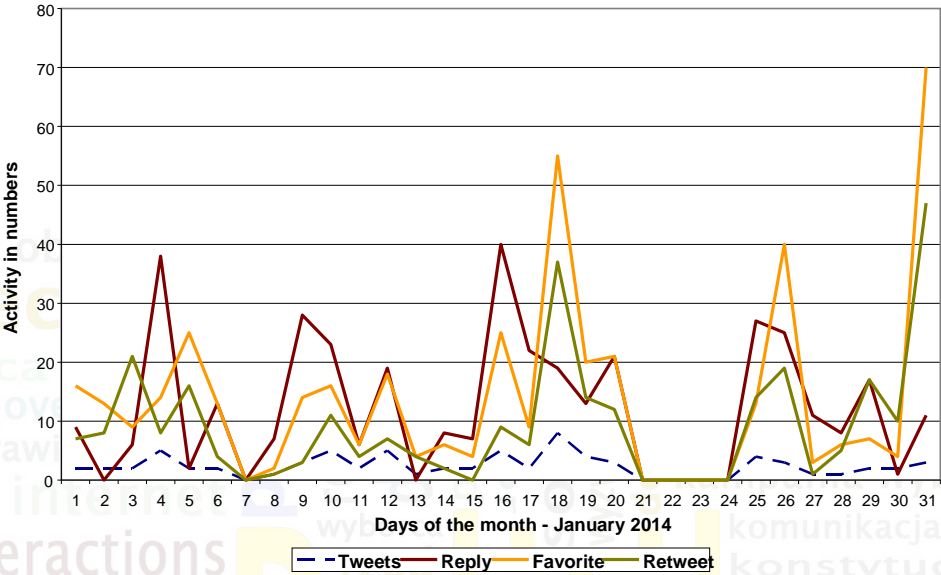


Source: Own study.

**Fig. 5. The use of the Twitter function by the Internet users with respect to the politician's tweets – account of Janusz Piechociński (PSL).**
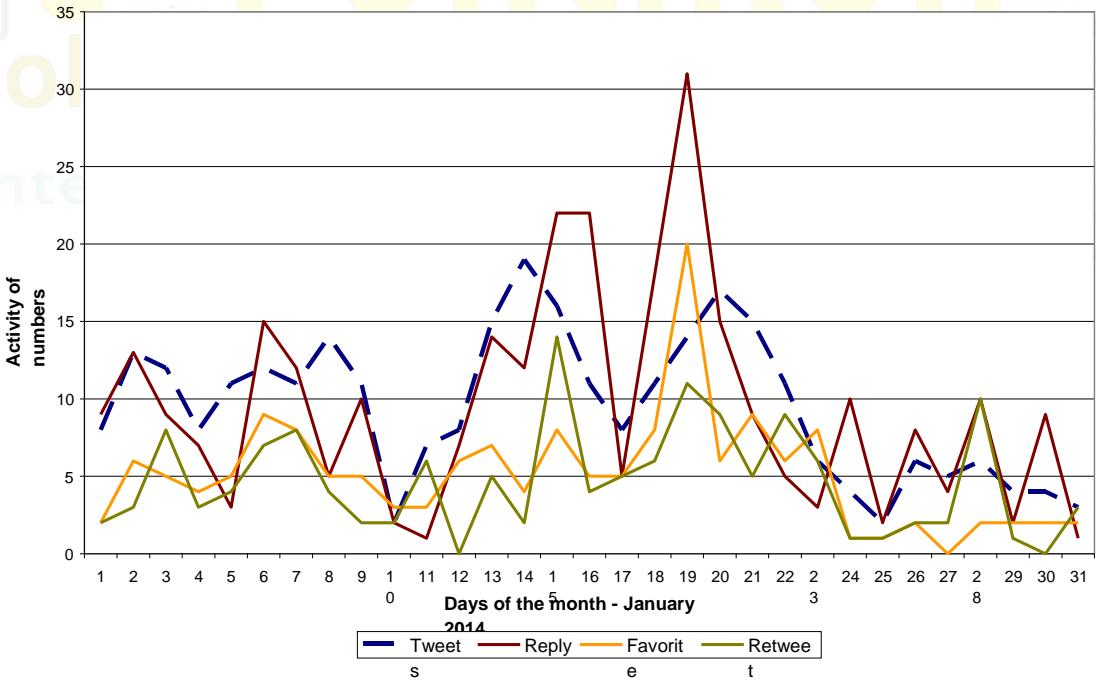


Source: Own study.

## Conclusions

Twitter gives the possibility to the politicians of direct (without the participation of the journalists) reaction to current events, to inform and respond to the questions of Internet users, a rapid reaction to the words of the political rivals or finally to deny the media reports. Characteristic for Twitter are also conversations conducted at the level of politicians of the same or "befriended" party or on the line politicians-journalists. The greatest activity is shown, however, by Internet users themselves, both the supporters and the opponents of the given party, often leading the substantial polemics.

The conducted analysis leads to the conclusion that from the point of view of senders (Polish politicians), the gradation of the recipients of tweets is as follows: leaders of the public opinion, journalists, political competitors, party colleagues and politicians of other countries. It is worth noting that the recipients of tweets are the Internet users interested in (although to a different extent) the socio-political life, also often following the action of the politicians, so Twitter is a micro blog directed de facto at the profiled target groups.

Establishing and running, both by the leaders of the political parties, and the parties, accounts on popular social networking sites encouraging the Internet users to active participation in the political life definitely serves integration, mobilisation and polarisation of the electorate. Examining the degree of involvement of Internet users, especially in terms of their active participation in the discussion caused by the publication by the politician of a given tweet, a phenomenon of the creation of the leaders of the public opinion (people regularly commenting tweets and undertaking the discussion with other Internet users[28]) can be observed. The leaders of the public opinion

---

[28] This observation seems to verify the previous observations of the researchers of the behaviours of Internet users actively joining the discussion groups, i.e., on the one hand the party creating the over-representation of the participation of the narrow group de facto formulating

should also include the Internet users not necessarily joining the conversation, but spreading, thereby promoting tweets thanks to the use of the favourite and retweet function.

Observing the influence of the created network communication structures on the shape of the contemporary political debate, Henry Jenkins cites the concept of Pierre Levy on the collective intelligence. According to this concept, the active participation of the members of a given community in the network, the exchange of opinions (e.g. blogosphere, on social networks) at the same time increases the knowledge and competence of the Internet users, in effect contributing to their greater involvement in political life[29].

The increasing popularity of social media takes the traditional media (press, radio, television) the monopoly to shape the subject and direction of the socio-political discussion. Twitter became a new source (both for the leaders of the public opinion, journalists and politicians) of obtaining various information, a service allowing to follow the events "live" and the irreplaceable place of conversation (including the sharing of one's opinions or thoughts). Specificity of Twitter (tweet = max 140 characters) forces the senders to construct synthetic communications with the possibility to equip them only with a graphic or audiovisual file. Enrichment of the tweet of this kind with a message is a procedure more often applied by the politicians (the only exception here is J. Piechociński), which in the era of video rhetoric seems to be a natural and accurate action.

---

a majority of comments of the users, on the other hand – a numerous auditorium, usually passively following the discussion. See e. g.: L. Porębski, *Elektroniczne oblicze polityki. Demokracja, państwo, instytucje polityczne w okresie rewolucji informacyjnej*, Kraków 2004, pp. 60-61.

[29] More: H. Jenkins, Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide, New York - London 2006, pp. 26-27.

Social media ensuring freedom of communication (which is clearly visible at the level of the language used) serve the "shortening of the distance", and thus the warming and/or strengthening the created images of the politicians. The conducted study indicates, however, that Polish politicians are still exploring the potential of Twitter, treating it similarly to "traditional media" (one-way communication), which is evidenced by the meagre involvement in the discussion with Internet users, and even the lack of reaction to their "technical" remarks (e.g. the already mentioned multiple remarks of the Internet users directed to J. Piechociński and concerning the erroneous publishing of each tweet twice by the politician).

It is worth noting that in the case of the leaders of Polish political parties, the greatest role is played by Twitter in communication strategies of the politicians and parties enjoying the lowest social support. The politicians creating the accounts on social websites are searching for new channels to reach and interest in the youngest, often not yet politically shaped voters, for whom social networks are not only the source of information, but also integration and entertainment. The use of Twitter, therefore, contributes to the strategy of searching for new forms of reaching the potential electorate with the message.

Małgorzata Adamik-Szysiak – PhD, is an associate professor at the Department of Journalism at the Faculty of Political Science, Maria Curie-Sklodowska University (Poland)

**Abstract**

The purpose of the article is an attempt to capture the way of using in the communication strategies the potential of social media on the example of the

micro blog Twitter by the leaders of the Polish political parties. The main research questions concentrate around the answers to the questions of whether and how the leaders of the Polish political parties use the official accounts on Twitter for the communication with the potential voters. The detailed analysis included the activity (frequency of entries) and type and subject of tweets posted by the politicians (Donald Tusk - PO, Janusz Palikot – TR, Janusz Piechociński – PSL and Leszek Miller - SLD) on their official accounts. The study also highlighted the degree of the involvement of both the Internet users and the politicians into the emerging discussions within the given tweet/account. The detailed empirical study included the randomly selected month – January 2014. It is worth adding that it was a period preceding the official electoral campaign to the European Parliament planned for May 25, 2014. In the study of the collected material the method of the content analysis was used, both quantitative and qualitative.

## TWITTER W STRATEGIACH KOMUNIKACYJNYCH LIDERÓW POLSKICH PARTII POLITYCZNYCH

### Abstrakt

Celem artykułu jest próba uchwycenia zjawiska wykorzystania w strategiach komunikacyjnych potencjału mediów społecznościowych na przykładzie mikroblogu Twitter przez liderów polskich partii politycznych. Główne pytania badawcze koncentrują się wokół odpowiedzi na pytania o to, czy i w jaki sposób liderzy polskich partii politycznych wykorzystują oficjalne konta na Twitterze do komunikacji z potencjalnymi wyborcami. Szczegółowej analizie poddano aktywność (częstotliwość wpisów) oraz rodzaj i tematykę tweetów zamieszczanych przez polityków (Donalda Tuska – PO, Janusza Palikota – TR, Janusza Piechocińskiego – PSL oraz Leszka Millera – SLD) na swoich oficjalnych kontach.

W badaniu zwrócono również uwagę na stopień zaangażowania zarówno internautów, jak i polityków w rodzące się dyskusje w ramach danego tweeta/konta. Szczegółowym badaniem empirycznym objęto losowo wybrany jeden miesiąc – styczeń 2014 roku. Warto dodać, iż był to okres poprzedzający oficjalną kampanię wyborczą wyborów do Parlamentu Europejskiego planowanych na koniec maja 2014 roku. W badaniu zgromadzonego materiału posłużono się metodą analizy treści, zarówno ilościowej, jak i jakościowej.

**Tomasz Gackowski**

## TOP 10 POLISH POLITICIANS ON TWITTER – A REVOLUTION IN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION? – RECONNAISSANCE RESEARCH

### Introduction – political impact of Twitter

In December 2013, a few days before Christmas Eve, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Poland published an interview with Radosław Sikorski, Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs[1], summing up the year 2013. In this interview the minister – inter alia – expressed his thoughts about activity of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in social media (mainly Twitter). He has said that nowadays Twitter seems to be one of the most effective tools in modern diplomacy. Sikorski boasted that his ministry is perceived as being the third most active institutions in social media in the whole world, after the External Action Service of the European Union, but before the British or French Ministries of Foreign Affairs. He stressed that the activity of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Twitter has been an effect of a cultural and informational breakthrough in Polish diplomacy. He directly connected being on Twitter with running a diplomacy service. He said – *Thanks to Twitter we are able to spread our statements quicker and wider, to many people and institutions at once.*

---

[1] http://www.msz.gov.pl/pl/aktualnosci/wiadomosci/minister_spraw_zagranicznych_podsumo wuje_rok_2013_i_mowi_o_planach_na_przyszlosc, 8.01.2013 and
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RtMWgWTWha4#t=15, 8.01.2013.

*Furthermore, we can – through the social media – create the global platform of informational confrontation in diplomacy*.

Next – a day before the New Year's Eve of 2014 – Donald Tusk, Prime Minister of Poland, decided to sum up the passing year with users of Twitter during an hour – between 3 and 4 pm on his Twitter account. He answered numerous questions from other politicians, citizens and journalists. Without announcing a press conference in a specific place. Just tweeting in a virtual sphere.

In another case, at the beginning of 2014, James Cameron the Prime Minister of Great Britain, said in a television interview that the British State should not pay social welfare to Polish workers for their children who are living in Poland. This controversial idea was met with a response by the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs. However, this response was not announced during a press conference, on the official website of Ministry, or even in a nationwide newspaper or evening news. This response – or statement – was published on Twitter. Or better – simply – was "tweeted" – *If Britain gets our taxpayers, shouldn't it also pay their benefits? Why should Polish taxpayers subsidize British taxpayers' children?* No doubt Twitter seems to be one of the most transformative web phenomena not only for Polish politicians.

And the final example. The last European Union Summit was a success achieved – as always in pain – in compromise. The Polish government announced a triumph – 105.8 billion € will come to Poland between 2014 and 2020. However, it was not politicians who were stars of the summit, but rather it was Twitter – their tool to communicate with Europeans. On the night of February 8, right after reaching the agreement, Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, wrote (tweeted) on his Twitter account: *Deal done! #euco has agreed on #MFF for the rest of the decade. Worth waiting for*. After that Polish web surfers and Paweł Graś's (the Polish

government spokesman) account followers could read on Twitter: *SMS already received from prime minister: Deal done!!!!!* Is the view of sleepy journalists propping up their heads while waiting for news about the European Council's results and organisation of a press conference a thing of the past? Is the classical communication model – politician -> journalist -> citizen going away? Still growing in popularity among politicians, economists, people of culture, scientists and even citizens – Twitter as a microblogging platform allow web users to bring up these questions. Many researchers have tried to provide an answer to these questions dealing with the idea of "new media" and the essence of social media[2]. However, the focus in this article will be on Twitter and its revolutionary impact on political communication[3].

The aim of this text is to – on the one side – present changes that are undergoing right now in the social communication, due to activity of polish politicians on Twitter. On the other side, according to empirical results which are presented in the second part of this paper, I propose certain indicators of research for the analysis of political communication in social media and stress

---

[2] See first of all: L. Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, Massachusetts 2002; M. Lister, J. Dovey, S. Giddings, I. Grant, K. Kelly, *New Media: A Critical Introduction*, London 2003; L. Lievrouw, S. Livingstone, *Handbook of New Media*, London 2006 (compare also with: L. Lievrouw, *Alternative and Activist New Media*. *Digital media and society series*, Cambridge 2011); P. Levinson, *New New Media*, London 2009; E. Siapera, *Understanding New Media*, London 2012. And of course all issues of *New Media and Society*.

[3] In last years appeared many studies in various disciplines dedicated to Twitter – see e. g.: W. J. Grant, B. Moon, *Digital Dialogue? Australian Politicians' use of the Social Network Tool Twitter*, "Australian Journal of Political Science", Vol. 45, No. 4, December 2010, pp. 579-604; N. S. Terblanche, *You cannot run or hide from social media—ask a politician*, "Journal of Public Affairs", 2011, Vol. 11., No. 3, pp. 156-167; N. Jackson, D. Lilleker, *Microblogging, Constituency Service and Impression Management: UK MPs and the Use of Twitter*, "The Journal of Legislative Studies", Vol. 17, No. 1, March 2011, pp. 86–105; E-J. Lee, S. Y. Shin, *Are They Talking to Me? Cognitive and Affective Effects of Interactivity in Politicians' Twitter Communication*, "Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking", 2012, Vol. 15, No. 10, pp. 515-520; D.S. Lassen, A. R. Brown, *Twitter: the electoral connection?*, "Social Science Computer Review" 2011; Vol. 29, pp. 419–436; J. Golbeck, J. Grimes, A. Rogers, *Twitter use by the US Congress*, "Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology", 2010, Vol. 61, No. 8, pp. 1612–1621; A. Bruns, J. Burgess, *#ausvotes—How Twitter covered the 2010 Australian federal Election*, "Communication, Politics & Culture", 2011, Vol. 442, pp. 37-56.

the need for research in virtual space, because it profoundly affects the thinking and perception of contemporary politicians about their role in the public sphere.

## Twitter's magic

What is the source of popularity of Twitter?[4] It seems that it is an extension of modern human character – it's leading to simplification. Contemporary human being lives in a rush – there is always a lack of time, we always says to ourselves and others "soon", "later", and obviously "not now". Moreover, we are permanently worn-out. In addition, we have a constant feeling that something is still missing, we would like to know more and faster. Not only that, he would also like to understand more, to be able to deduce, draw conclusions – but on the other hand, when do we find the time? Furthermore, we often promise to ourselves – especially in the New Year – to make up for something and take care of something in order to change. This constant pursuit has been recognized by the creators of Twitter, which – as any other social media – reflects the great spirit of the modern life[5].

Twitter has some advantages. Firstly, the speed of it's communication. Before portals and websites (not to mention the so-called old media – newspapers, radio, television) inform us about a catastrophe, an event, a decision of authorities, or an accident of a popular actor, the community of Twitter probably already knows it. Why? Firstly, Twitter's ease of use (austerity combined with grace, neat appearance of the cockpit). Secondly, its friendliness (usability – intuitive interface – every Internet user after a while

---

[4] See: A. Brock, *From the Balchand Side: Twitter as a Cultural Conversation*, "Journal of Broad-casting&Electronic Media, 2012, Vol. 54, No. 4, pp. 529-549.

[5] Cf P. Levinson, *The long story about the short medium: Twitter as a communication medium in historical, present, and future context*, "Journal of Communication Research", 2011, Vol. 48, pp. 7–28.

knows "what" and "how" and "who"). What must to be stress out is the lack of unnecessary and confusing graphics which prolong signing in and loading process (like Facebook, for example). All these factors make Twitter easier to continuously use than any other "delayed medium". It is worth mentioning that anyone can tweet. Twitter is neither institutional nor alternative. It is for all who are here and now. Twitter is the medium of the present time – not about the past, or even what will be – just what is happening at the moment. It is a stethoscope of reality – not only virtual, but most of all real. Twitter allows us to have our finger on the pulse of contemporary vibrant, global world. It happens through its accessibility, visibility, scale and extent of involvement of people worldwide.

Secondly, the directness of communication. No intermediaries and full interactivity - me and my recipient. Besides us there are hundreds, thousands, even millions – like on Barack Obama's account – of "observers" and "followers" – people, who are watching and tracking us, who for some reasons want to receive the same information that we receive. They want to be up to date. Twitter has encoded the easiness of building communities – groups of friends who share primarily information, opinion and views. It is a completely different logic of action than in the case of Facebook which has become the medium of philosophy of life, self-presentation, self-creation. On Facebook, it is crucial who you are – what kind of person you are – what you like, what you look like, what kind of people you know. On Twitter, on the contrary, you are worth as much as your latest tweets – how much your account is rich in interesting content – interesting news, opinions, attitudes, perceived phenomena. That is what counts. It builds the opinion-forming factor of Twitter users. The leader is one who has the biggest number of "followers" – ones who watch his account. Initially, it is enough to have a famous name, messages – tweets – are needed later, they determine popularity and add

something to this phenomenal discourse of aggregated information and opinions about what is happening here and now.

Thirdly, brevity. Twitter is not a place for disputes. Here we do not place screeds, expressions deepening our understanding of reality through a larger number of characters. It is widely known that you can always say something in a shorter way and mostly brevity will improve what anyone says. Everything important can be said briefly. In other words, without mincing words. We are encouraged by the developers of Twitter to do that. To say even more, we are forced to. That is because of a limited number of characters in a single tweet: 140 characters is not a lot. If someone wants to add a hyperlink to some important news, even in the case of using a tool to cut an url address (e.g. tinyURL), there are not many characters left. This brevity of communication is an advantage of Twitter, but can also be a drawback. Speaking of brevity, there is a risk that some kind of undesirable simplifications and even mental shortcuts, which may be misleading, will occur and deteriorate the purpose and effectiveness of our communication. This is a real risk of communication via Twitter, often experienced by Polish politicians. It will not be an exaggeration to say that a tweet is a new kind of media statement. Again, speaking within 140 characters is not so easy. Twitter users are expected to maximise their concentration on thinking in a highly synthetic way. These days writing on paper is not an obstacle anymore (everything can be written down) because everything can be printed out and published, but even on a blog the ability of presenting thoughts briefly is worth its weight in gold. A tweet simply responds to the needs of a modern person, it fits the conditions in which it is located now. On the one hand, it is quick, easy, more specific, on the other hand – a lot of messages appear at once, which can easily be explored. That is what Twitter offers – it is open also to hypertextuality, which allows us to find important data and sources for tweets

in an easy way. Put it brief: we explore the understanding of information/a view when 140 characters are not enough. We could say that tweets are an expression of topics and problem which people are asked to think about while sitting in the waiting room for the doctor, during classes at the university, or on the way home or to work. It can be an occasion for reflection, to build a database of issues that you should consider, which should be discussed with relatives. This is an advantage of Twitter over all social media.

Fourthly, Twitter shortens the distance between the participants of communication-interaction. Accounts of the highest state authorities on Twitter are designed to improve communication between government and citizens (without journalists mediation[6], which is often difficult and nosy). They enable the autonomous, fully controlled narrative about the nature of their responsibilities, tasks performed and fulfilled promises. Finally they shorten the distance, improve the image, let you come closer and build a relation with any Internet user. Each Twitter user following official accounts has a chance, an opportunity to ask about something, criticise or share thoughts directly with people inaccessible to him in a real world. It democratizes a discourse between the government and society[7]. This is a great added value. Another question is whether the account holder will write back and make a statement to his followers' entries. It is no secret that it is very difficult to have a discussion on Twitter – just because it was not designed to meet this expectation. It is rather a place to exchange observations or positions, but not for a lively discussion, which can be seen for example on Facebook profiles.

---

[6] A. N. Ahmad, *Is Twitter a useful tool for journalists?* "Journal of Media Practice", 2010, Vol. 11, pp. 145–155 and P. Farhi, *The Twitter explosion*, "American Journalism Review", 2009, Vo. 31, No. 3, pp. 26–31.

[7] See: A. O. Larsson, *Tweeting the Viewer—Use of Twitter in a Talk Show Context*, "Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media", 2013, Vol. 57, No. 2, 2013, pp. 135–152.

Fifthly, there is universality. Anywhere, at any time of day or night – always someone tweets, someone keeps track of followers, reads and forwards. This is never a sleeping agora. Its participants are never short of topics and never get bored, because – as mentioned earlier – Twitter allows 21st century people to have the impression of keeping finger on the pulse of the vibrant, global world that is happening here and now – on Twitter[8].

## Polish TOP 10 politicians on Twitter in 2013 - reconnaissance research

In line with the topic of this paper, I have conducted research on political Twitter. Namely, I decided to analyse the most popular and most influential (definition of this words – categories – see further) profiles of the Polish politicians on Twitter – TOP 10 of 2013. The day of aggregating data was Christmas Eve – 24.12.2013 r.[9] I chose ten profiles of Polish politicians that have the biggest number of followers. I argue that those who have the most followers were the most influential in social media in 2013 and their activity penetrated the most space of political discourse in the web. The table below (table no. 1) lists the TOP 10 politicians along with a brief information about them.

---

[8] However, it is worth remembering that some limits are set within social media, especially Twitter – N. Miragliotta, *Politicians, Twitter and the Limits of the Virtual Political Public Sphere*, "Social Alternatives", 2012, Vol. 31, No. 2, pp. 5-10.

[9] I decided to choose this date because – on the one side – I wanted to aggregate the most actual data for the research which I would be able to analyse in a proper deadlines for an issue of "e-Politikon". On the other side, I wanted to eliminate the risk of aggregating the data which will be in a very close connection with europarlament campaign. I wanted to omit the so-called "campaign's bias" or "campaign's effects". Furthermore, I assumed that Christmas Eve will be a good date for some summarizing tweets which will effectively cut off the topics related to the 2013 from the problems and ideas relating already to the new year 2014.

**Tab. 1. TOP10 Polish Politicians on Twitter.**

| Name and surname | Account name | Number of followers (from start to 24.12.2013) | Brief characteristic |
|---|---|---|---|
| Palikot Janusz | @Palikot_Janusz | 188 418 | Leader of the party – "Your Move" |
| Radosław Sikorski | @sikorskiradek | 164 606 | Minister of Foreign Affairs |
| Donald Tusk | @premiertusk | 95 910 | Prime Minister |
| Jerzy Buzek | @JerzyBuzek | 64 188 | MEP, Former PM of Poland and President of the EP |
| Paweł Graś | @PawełGraś | 48 920 | Secretary of State in the Prime Minister's Office, Former Spokesman of the Polish Government |
| Ryszard Kalisz | @RyszardKalisz | 45 368 | Member of the Polish Parliament, Lawyer, Former Minister of Interior and Admin-istration |
| Adam Hofman | @AdamHofman | 42 901 | Member of the Polish Parliament |
| Sławomir Nowak | @SlawomirNowak | 41 940 | Member of the Polish Parliament, Former Minister of Transport |
| Wojciech Olejniczak | @wolejniczak1 | 32 025 | MEP, Former Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development |
| Bartosz Arlukowicz | @Arlukowicz | 30 023 | Member of the Polish Parliament, Minister of Health |

Source: own research.

The main purposes of this research was to:

Firstly – present a panoramic view of TOP Polish politicians activity on Twitter;

Secondly – point out the most striking similarities and differences between politicians' profiles on Twitter;

Thirdly – propose – based on empirical data – some indicators (indexes) of analysing politicians' activity on Twitter, which could be used in political communication research. At this point I wanted to outline research

possibilities for political communication which Twitter offers. Namely, what type of question can we put on politican's Twitter and how does provided answers which affect our thinking about political communication – in the 21$^{st}$ century?

Due to the lack of space in this paper, I have focused on presenting indicators, their meaning and their potential use in further research. To a lesser extent I have referred to content of every profile, categories and subjects of tweets or causes of having more or fewer followers, retweets, hashtags or replies. These aspects will be the key issue in my next article dedicated to social media – especially Twitter which is the main target in my research project. All empirical data were aggregated using Twittonomy.com and my own software (web crawling) (I automatically analysed no more than 3200 tweets – characteristics and content – per profile – due to Twitter's limitation of refreshing data.) Twitter returns a maximum of up to 3200 user's most recent tweets (in my research this limitation refers only to Janusz Palikot's, Radosław Sikorski's, Donald Tusk's and Jerzy Buzek's profiles (>3200) – see figure no. 1). The collected data cover the period from the very beginning of 2013 till Christmas Eve 2013).

**Fig. 1. Panoramic view of Polish Politicians on Twitter - TOP 10 (>24.01.2013 r.).**



| | @Paliko t_Janusz | @sikors kiradek | @premi ertusk | @JerzyB uzek | @pawel gras | @Ryszar dKalisz | @Adam Hofman | @Slawo mirNow ak | @wolej niczak1 | @Arluko wicz |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Numbers of Tweets (from start to 24.12.2013 r.) | 2266 | 6565 | 159 | 2227 | 4471 | 1043 | 1531 | 2022 | 1758 | 712 |
| Numbers of Following (from start to 24.12.2013 r.) | 135 | 83 | 95 | 1309 | 813 | 1616 | 2051 | 155 | 2247 | 371 |
| Numbers of Followers (from start to 24.12.2013 r.) | 188418 | 164606 | 95910 | 64188 | 48920 | 45368 | 42901 | 41940 | 32025 | 30023 |

**Source: own research.**

No doubt the most active Polish politician on Twitter, with almost 7000 tweets, is Radosław Sikorski, Minister of Foreign Affairs. Second, with nearly 4500 tweets, comes Paweł Graś, former spokesman of the Polish government. It is worth noting that the smallest number of tweets in the Polish TOP 10 politicians on Twitter is Prime Minister Donald Tusk who tweeted only 158 times, although he joined Twitter 17th September 2011. It could mean that Twitter still is not his main channel to communicate with the public. However, according to Donald Tusk's activity on Twitter in December 2013, we could say that this is changing. For instance, in December Polish Prime Minister decided to sum up the year 2013 on Twitter on 30th December 2013 from 3 pm to 4 pm. It was the first time that Donald Tusk had so openly acted on Twitter.

What must be stressed is the fact that among all Polish politicians who are present on Twitter, two of them seem to be dominant if you look at the number of followers. Janusz Palikot and – already mentioned – Radosław

Sikorski have respectively almost 190 thousand and 164 thousand followers. Donald Tusk – as the third one – has got only around 100 thousand followers. It should be mentioned that Palikot joined Twitter 21st January 2010 and Sikorski merely a month later – 24th February 2010. Sławomir Nowak, former Minister of Transport, Adam Hofman, Member of the Polish Parliament, Wojciech Olejniczak, member of the EP, Bartosz Arłukowicz, Minister of Health and Jerzy Buzek, former President of the EP, started their adventure with Twitter earlier – respectively 21st July 2009, 25th July 2009, 3rd August 2009 and 14th January 2010. Though they have fewer followers and had published far fewer tweets till up until Christmas Eve 2013. Character of politicians' activity is presented in the next figure – it shows how often they use Twitter during a day.

**Fig. 2. The Average Number of Tweets per day (from start to 24.12.2013 ).**
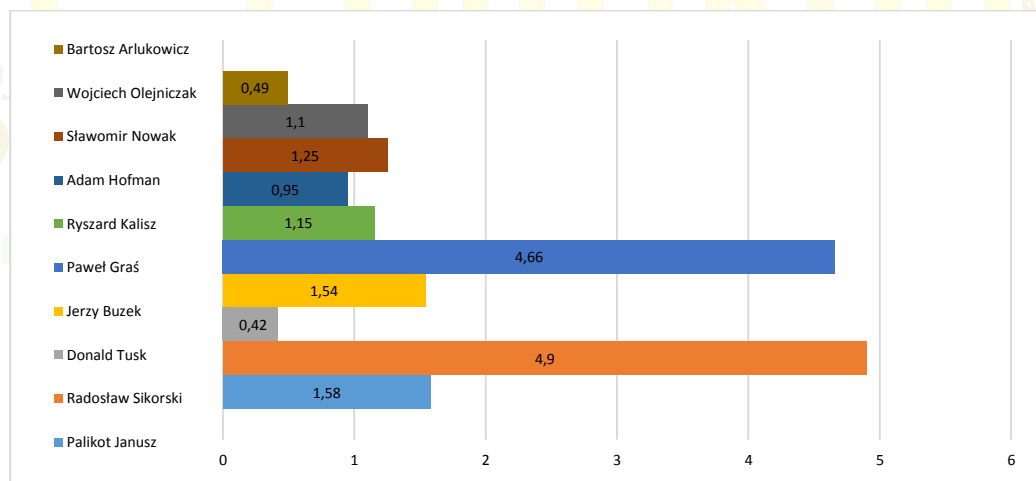


**Source: own research.**

Politicians who use Twitter the most are: Radosław Sikorski, Minister of Foreign Affairs, leader of many comparisons at charts, and Paweł Graś, former spokesman of the Polish government: they reach almost five tweets per day. It

is worth mentioning that the most popular day for tweeting for most of the TOP 10 Polish politicians on Twitter is Friday (average: 17 percent.), Wednesday (16 percent.) and Thursday (16 percent.). Less popular is Sunday (average: 10 percent.) and Saturday (11 percent.). If we look at the most popular hours of tweeting, we notice that Polish politicians tweet at almost every hour of the day from 10 am to even 11 pm – most often at 10 am and 11 am (8 percent.), next at midday and 1 pm(7 percent.). What is worth mentioning is that some politicians like to tweet even at night – for instance Wojciech Olejniczak, Paweł Graś and Bartosz Arłukowicz tweeted more than 70 times at 12 am during the analysed period (what is more, Arłukowicz tweeted later than 1 am 43 times, Graś – 44 times). Radosław Sikorski starts tweeting very early – even starting at 5 or 6 o'clock. Two politicians – Sikorski and Hofman – tweeted during the analysed period at least once every hour. Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs tweeted the least frequently at about 2 am – 5 times. We can say that some of the Polish TOP 10 politicians on Twitter seem to have become addicted to this opinion-forming microblog.

Next figure (no. 3) presents the analytic overview of the aggregated data, namely the index of dispersibility in which we combine the number of retweets and the percentage of tweets which were retweeted. It presents a scale of how politicians' accounts on Twitter influence the network discourse. To be more precise, how does the content of their tweets disperse on Twitter? It is directly connected with the idea of the index of discursivity which is presented in figure no. 4. In this context, discursivity is a possibility of putting certain hypotheses and problems in front of the network society by specific Twitter account, in this case politician's account.

**Fig. 3. Dispersibility on Political Twitter (TOP10) (>3200).**



| | Palikot Janusz | Radosław Sikorski | Donald Tusk | Jerzy Buzek | Paweł Graś | Ryszard Kalisz | Adam Hofman | Sławomir Nowak | Wojciech Olejniczak | Bartosz Arlukowicz |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of Retweets | 473 | 1901 | 0 | 621 | 333 | 44 | 78 | 285 | 1 | 2 |
| Precentage of Tweets which were retweeted | 20,87 | 59,42 | 0 | 28,11 | 10,41 | 4,23 | 5,1 | 14,11 | 0,06 | 0,28 |
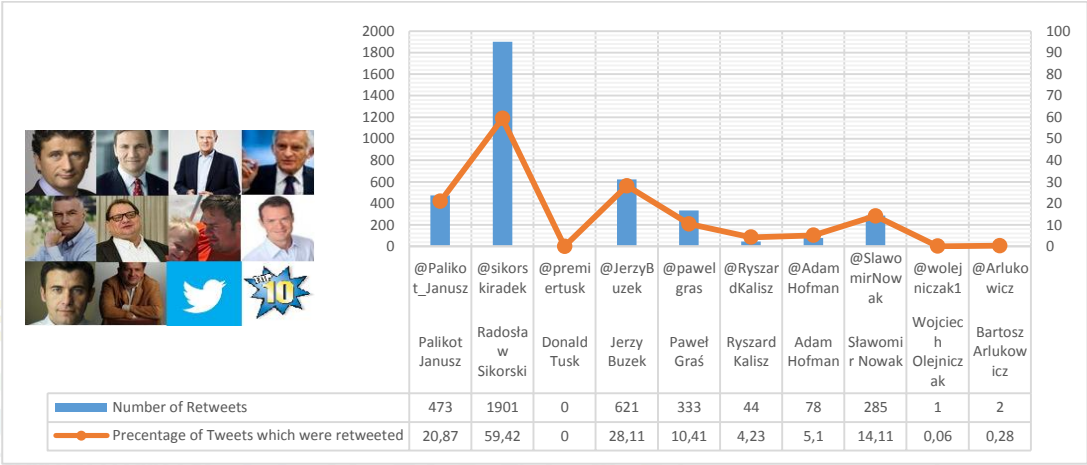
**Source: own research.**

**Fig. 4. Discoursivity on political Twitter (>3200).**



| | Palikot Janusz | Radosław Sikorski | Donald Tusk | Jerzy Buzek | Paweł Graś | Ryszard Kalisz | Adam Hofman | Sławomir Nowak | Wojciech Olejniczak | Bartosz Arlukowicz |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of tweets retweeted | 1543 | 833 | 141 | 1278 | 1006 | 304 | 360 | 595 | 422 | 165 |
| Proc. of tweets being retweeted | 68,09 | 26,04 | 88,68 | 57,85 | 31,44 | 29,2 | 23,53 | 29,46 | 23,99 | 23,17 |
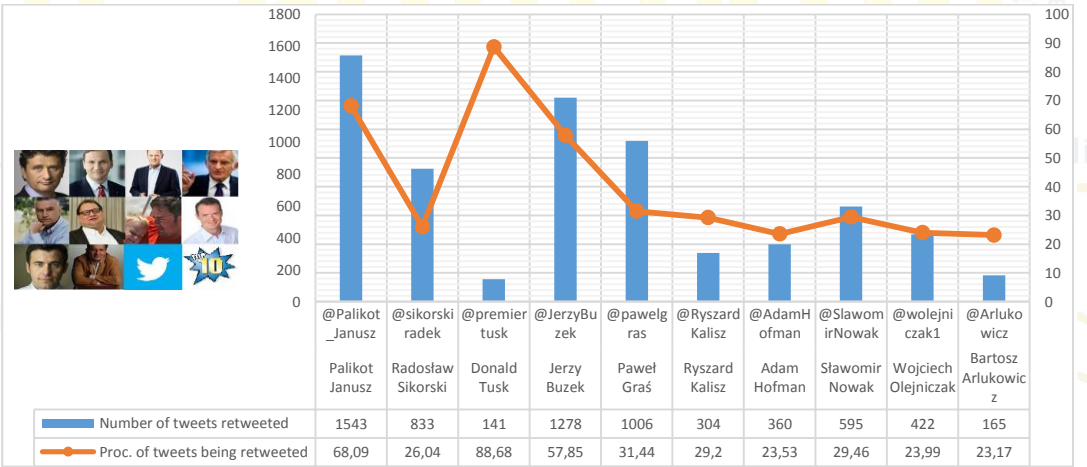
**Source: own research.**

We have to bear in mind an important relation: the higher the number of retweets to someone's tweets, the more this user is considered a valuable source of information by others. From this point of view – see figure no. 4 – the best results achieved Janusz Palikot, Jerzy Buzek and Paweł Graś. However, the biggest percentage of tweets retweeted were by Polish Prime Minister

Donald Tusk. Almost 90 percent of his tweets were retweeted by others. It means that his Twitter account is perceived as an outstandingly priceless source of information. Every nine in ten tweets was retweeted. If we focus on dispersibility, we will notice that the undeniable leader of political discourse in active navigating through Twitter is Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Radosław Sikorski (see figure no. 3). With almost 2000 retweets, he becomes the leader of **index of dispersibility**. Furthermore, almost 60 percent of these retweets were further retweeted. It means that the content which he retweeted on his Twitter account resonated in many areas of the net. This content achieved extra acceleration which we could name "disperse-kick". The second politician in this list – Jerzy Buzek, former President of the EP – had merely 621 retweets and only one third of his tweets were retweeted. What is worth mentioning is the fact that the Polish Prime Minister's account on Twitter has not got no retweets at all. Probably it is connected with his irregular, temporary activity on Twitter and the more frequent activity of the Polish Prime Minister's Office's account. We can also see that Polish politicians in most cases are not interested in retweeting others. That is worth analysing. All in all, the Internet is not only about setting the agenda, it is also about generating discourse, interacting, being listened to and listening. This leads us once more to the question about the direct and bilateral relationship between politicians and citizen-surfers thanks to politicians' accounts on Twitter.

The next figure presents the index of interactivity on political Twitter. In this schedule we combine two parameters – the number of Twitter users (hereafter referred to as Twitters) that were mentioned in tweets which were analysed on every politicians' accounts on Twitter and the number of replies to the politicians' tweets. The basis of this index is an assumption that if you have a bigger number of Twitters mentioned on your account (in your tweets), the more you interact with others. However, it is one thing to mention others in

your tweets, which is not always connected with interacting at all, and another to reply to specific tweets of other users of Twitter (followers, people that you follow and none of both). Combining these two perspectives allows us to point out who interacts the most on Twitter from our TOP 10 Polish politicians.

**Fig. 5 Interactivity on political Twitter(>3200).**



| | Palikot Janusz | Radosław Sikorski | Donald Tusk | Jerzy Buzek | Paweł Graś | Ryszard Kalisz | Adam Hofman | Sławomir Nowak | Wojciech Olejniczak | Bartosz Arlukowicz |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of mentioned Twitters | 538 | 914 | 120 | 396 | 2536 | 767 | 1416 | 1344 | 143 | 423 |
| Number of replies on others tweets | 37 | 660 | 105 | 245 | 1536 | 526 | 859 | 978 | 128 | 387 |
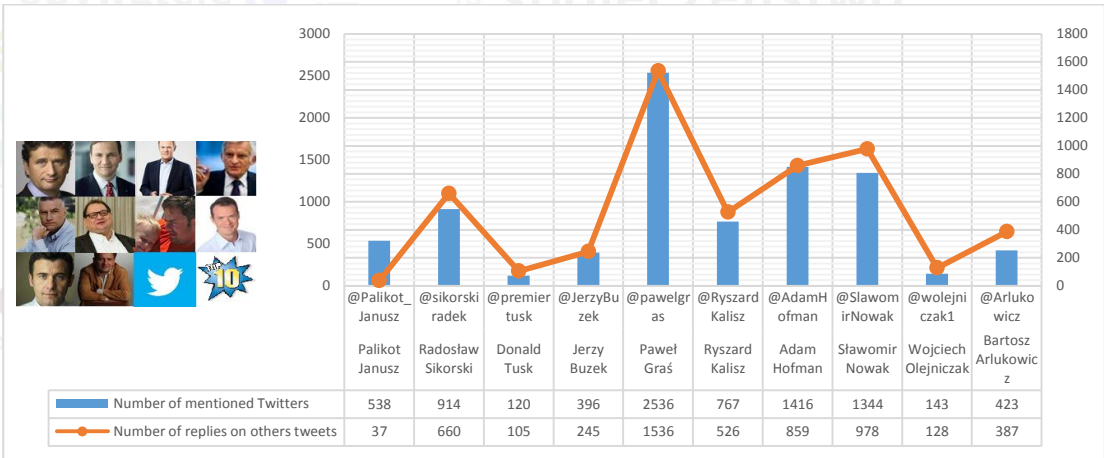
**Source: own research.**

As we can see, Paweł Graś, former spokesman of the Polish government, was unrivalled in both categories. This is likely explained by his function in the government. It is worth noting that our former leader in the index of dispersibility – Radosław Sikorski – is in fourth place only. Of course, to disperse the content of your tweets is not the same as to interact with this content in your tweets. These are two different attitudes to using Twitter. As before, the Polish Prime Minister had the worst results in the index of interactivity on political Twitter. What is worth researching further is mapping the network of Twitter users with whom our politicians interact the most – who are they? What do they do? What do they tweet about?

Figure no. 6 presents the index of hypertextuality on political Twitter. In this perspective we measure how much Twitter accounts of Polish

politicians promote different sources of network by including links in their tweets and how many of them – in the analysed sample – contained a link. Obviously it is a question about focusing attention of other users on specific sources on the Internet – blogs, fanpages, vertical or horizontal portals, political and party websites or maybe to very specific mass media – news, comments, features or interviews? It would be very interesting to create a map of external links which followers are referring to by politicians' tweets. In the end the Internet is about sharing and linking different sources, that is why this index was named "hypertextual".

**Fig. 6. Hypertextuality on political Twitter(>3200).**



| | Palikot Janusz | Radosław Sikorski | Donald Tusk | Jerzy Buzek | Paweł Graś | Ryszard Kalisz | Adam Hofman | Sławomir Nowak | Wojciech Olejniczak | Bartosz Arlukowicz |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of links in tweets | 540 | 418 | 2 | 249 | 523 | 125 | 68 | 85 | 827 | 2 |
| Links per tweet | 0,24 | 0,13 | 0,01 | 0,11 | 0,16 | 0,12 | 0,04 | 0,04 | 0,47 | 0 |
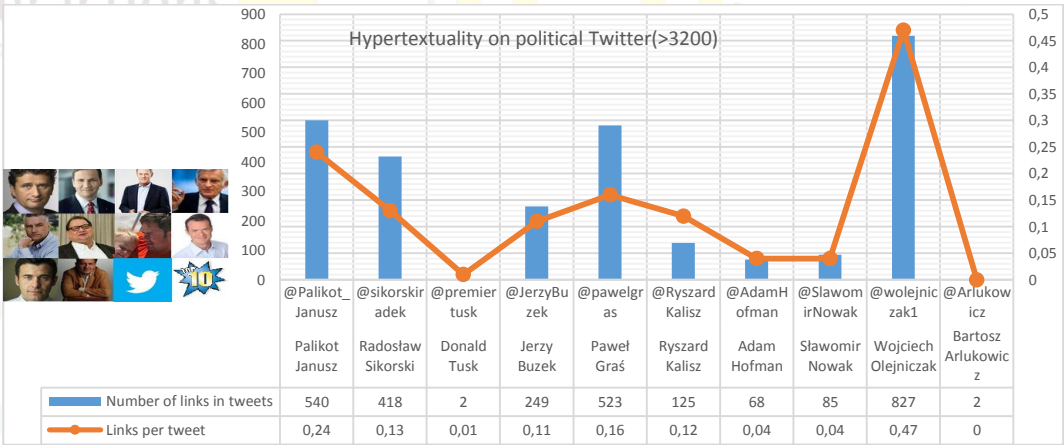
**Source: own research.**

In this view, Wojciech Olejniczak, Member of the EP had the most hypertextual content of tweets. He included links in more than 800 of his tweets. That is why his Twitter account was rated as follows: 0.47 link per tweet. The second most hypertextual was Janusz Palikot, the leader of the Your Movement Party, whose 540 tweets included links with a rating of 0.24 link per tweet. The worst rates in the index of hypertextuality of politicians' activity on Twitter

were achieved by – again – Prime Minister Donald Tusk and Bartosz Arłukowicz, Minister of Health in the Polish government.

The next figure (no. 7) presents the results of the index of intertextuality on political Twitter. According to the idea of hashtags, which help users to navigate through Twitter, the higher the number of hashtags in tweets, the more likely politicians' tweets are to be found by others. In this index, we check which politician from our TOP 10 are trying to participate in broader discourse (not only with their followers and followings who can very easily find politicians' tweets in their panel) thanks to using hashtags to mark their activity on Twitter in specific semiotic and associative frames. This is the main function of hashtags – to frame a problem, to create a proper association structure which can be easily discovered by others thanks to searching modes. From this point of view, the more you use hashtags, the more you can spread your message to a wider group of users. It is connected with the index of dispersibility. What must be underlined is the fact that the intertextuality in this index is directly connected with the idea of very easy and available searching for specific content, which are interesting for web surfers.

According to figure no. 7, only one politician from TOP 10 treats hashtags as a great tool to settle their tweets in a specific frames of discourse. It is Jerzy Buzek, member of the European Parliament, former President of the EP. The second is Wojciech Olejniczak, also a member of the EP. It seems that members of the EP are more likely to use this function in their activity on Twitter. It is possible that others simply do not know how to use hashtags nor for what purpose.

**Fig. 7. Intertextuality on political – Twitter (>3200).**



| | @Paliko t_Janusz<br>Palikot Janusz | @sikors kiradek<br>Radosła w Sikorski | @premi ertusk<br>Donald Tusk | @JerzyB uzek<br>Jerzy Buzek | @pawel gras<br>Paweł Graś | @Ryszar dKalisz<br>Ryszard Kalisz | @Adam Hofman<br>Adam Hofman | @Slawo mirNow ak<br>Sławomi r Nowak | @wolej niczak1<br>Wojciec h Olejnicz ak | @Arluk owicz<br>Bartosz Arlukow icz |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of hastags | 109 | 52 | 4 | 2187 | 131 | 11 | 86 | 59 | 237 | 0 |
| Hashtags per tweet | 0,05 | 0,02 | 0,03 | 0,99 | 0,04 | 0,01 | 0,06 | 0,03 | 0,13 | 0 |
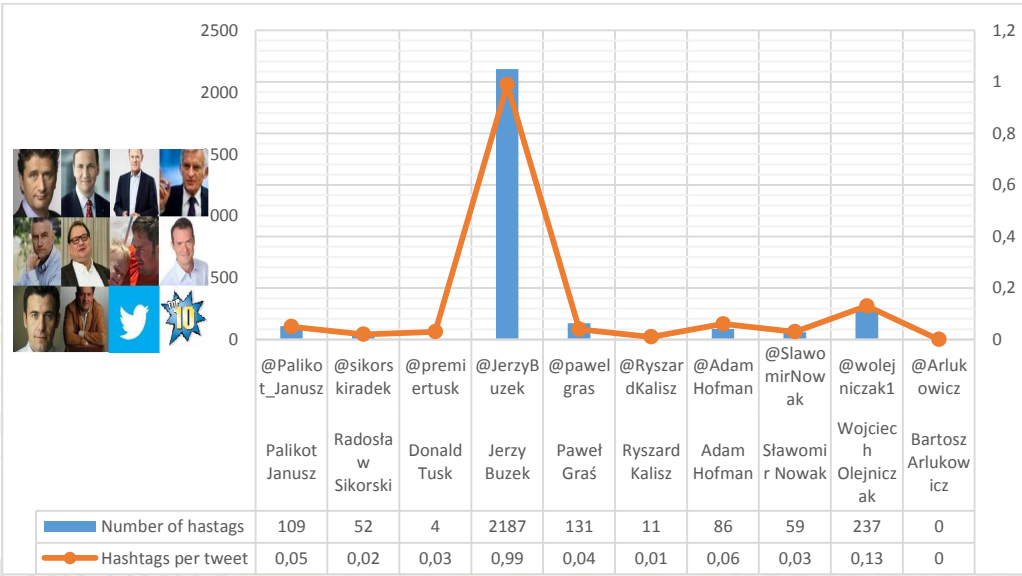
**Source: own research.**

Figure no. 8 deals with the idea of popularity on Twitter. The **index of popularity** consists of three elements. First of all – the number of tweets which were liked by followers (picked as the favourite – instead of "like" (FB), Twitter uses "favourite". This is a very simple measure. It is not like retweeting or replying which is directly connected with interaction on Twitter. We have to bear in mind that in most cases "retweets do not mean support". The same applied to replies, even to a greater extent because you can analyse the reply. Retweeting without a comment does not have to be so obvious. On the other hand, liking somebody's tweet seems to be quite understandable. In other words, a person who likes someone's activity on Twitter simply supports the content – the idea – of this particular tweet. What is also important is the total number of tweets, which were liked not only by followers. We should analyse this result in comparison with retweets. In every case – see figure no. 8 – this number is much bigger than the number of tweets liked by followers.

The reason for that lies in the idea of retweeting. One does not have to be a follower of Janusz Palikot to have an opportunity to like his tweet. We can like a particular tweet thanks to people who we follow and who have retweeted Palikot's tweet. This parameter in connection with the indexes of discursivity and dispersibility seems to be a fantastic measure of the impact of particular politician's Twitter activity on network discourse. The last component of the index of popularity – the third one – is the number of 'likes per liked tweet': the number of people on Twitter who marked as a favourite the tweet which was earlier liked by a politician. The bigger this number, the more selected politician's activity is popular on Twitter. Of course, we cannot anticipate what it exactly means to like tweets that were previously liked by a selected politician, but we can assume some possibilities. First – somebody likes / supports this particular politician as a person, as an activist, as a politician as a whole. Second – somebody likes / supports this particular activity of the politician – in this case liking someone's tweet. It means that somebody only agrees with the politician in this particular case. Third – somebody likes / supports this particular politician as a representative of his favourite party or ideology and he pays attention to the politician's activity on Twitter to a lesser extent. It is all about manifesting support – not selective support, but more generally. All in all, this index of popularity which could be combined with other ratios could be treated as a great measure of political support (maybe identification?) for particular actions, people, ideas or even whole parties and ideological movements. From this point of view, Twitter could be perceived as a tool of measuring potential support for specific ideas and actions before politician decide to announce them in the so-called "mainstream media". In this perspective, Twitter may be treated as a fantastic traverse for many concepts. You are able to discuss it, argue with citizens, journalists and scientists, finally you can try to persuade people of your ideas.

What is more, you can count on crude critique, pointing to the weakest and the strongest sides of the presented concept. In the end, you could always step back and admit that the selected idea / concept was not as good as it seemed to be. In this case, you will agree with citizens, which can be counted as an advantage. In other words – it would mean that you open to discussion, you are open-minded and there is always a possibility to persuade you. In both cases we deal with a win-win situation. All due to Twitter and its attributes, widely described in this paper. From this point of view, Twitter can be a fantastic place for public consultation, quasi-face to face – or rather tablet to tablet / smartphone to smartphone / computer to computer.

**Fig. 8. Popularity on political Twitter (>3200).**



| | @Palikot_Janusz | @sikorskiradek | @premiertusk | @JerzyBuzek | @pawelgras | @RyszardKalisz | @AdamHofman | @SlawomirNowak | @wolejniczak1 | @Arlukowicz |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Palikot Janusz | Radosław Sikorski | Donald Tusk | Jerzy Buzek | Paweł Graś | Ryszard Kalisz | Adam Hofman | Sławomir Nowak | Wojciech Olejniczak | Bartosz Arlukowicz |
| Number of liked tweets by followers | 1518 | 869 | 147 | 556 | 1010 | 403 | 310 | 551 | 290 | 90 |
| Total number of liked tweets | 7733 | 6186 | 3760 | 1254 | 2881 | 1247 | 785 | 1718 | 460 | 161 |
| Number of likes per liked tweet | 5,09 | 7,12 | 25,58 | 2,26 | 2,85 | 3,09 | 2,53 | 3,12 | 1,59 | 1,79 |

**Source: own research.**

The most popular Twitter account was Janusz Palikot with 1518 liked tweets. Also Palikot had the biggest total number of liked tweets. However, the most popular person among TOP 10 politicians on Twitter seems to be Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk who had the biggest number of likes per liked tweet: more than 25. It means that for each tweet that he marked as favourite, more

than 25 people on Twitter liked this tweet too. Of course, Tusk liked much fewer tweets than other politicians, but despite that the ratio of likes per liked tweet was still several times higher than that of the second politician in – Radosław Sikorski – with the result of 7.12. This figure shows that the Polish Prime Minister enjoys considerable support on Twitter and has no equal among the TOP10. It would be very interesting to conduct research in which we analyse the Twitter activity of politicians who do not have the biggest number of followers (as it was done in this paper), but have got the biggest number of likes of tweets which were earlier marked by them as favourite. It should present politicians with the biggest support on Twitter[10].

To sum up the presented data, it is worth raising the most important questions that can be put in front of the research conducted on Twitter. We have to remember that Twitter seems to be perceived as a very influential tool in modern politics. You can see the following relationship dependency: the more politicians use Twitter, the more important Twitter becomes, not only for users of this microblog platform but also for the rest of citizens who are not present on Twitter. Politicians tweet about many different issues which strongly affect citizens' everyday life. From this perspective, providing answers to the questions below seems to be one of the most important challenges for present researchers interested in Twitter as a political communication tool:

- How do governments, presidents, ministers, MPs but also various public institutions use Twitter?

- With whom do they tweet, whom do they reply and retweet the most? How frequently? Who is mentioned in tweets most often?

---

[10] See the mechanisms functioning on Twitter – D. N. Greenwood, *Fame, Facebook, and Twitter: How Attitudes About Fame Predict Frequency and Nature of Social Media Use*, "Psychology of Popular Media Culture", 2013, Vol. 2, No. 4, pp. 222-236.

- From whom do they retweet contents – news, views, ideas? How frequently? When?

- What are the tweets about? Is it possible to define the key topics, frames, narratives?

- When do they tweet? (day / time of a day and night)

- Do politicians mostly prefer to inform or rather to interpret (comment) on Twitter?

- Is Twitter perceived as a medium of information or a medium of views?

- How many tweets relate to one's own action and how many relate to others' activity? (the problem issue of selfpromotion)

- What kind of tweets evoke discussion on Twitter – how long and how vivid? How many people participate in a discussion? How many people only follow the discussion? How many people share this discussion with others?

- In how many tweets do users include links to texts, pictures or videos? To which websites / sources are they linked?

- If they inform, to which sources do they transfer a link in their tweets?

- If they interpret / comment, to which websites do they propose a link in their tweets?

This is only a small number of questions or problems which should be solved in this context. Such research would provide complex answers to these questions and would be very instructive and revealing for many citizens and politicians around the world. We have to bear in mind that the Internet is full of many tools that can be used by researchers to analyse the activity of politicians on Twitter and other social media. We can list just a few: Twittonomy, Twitalyzer,

Sysomos, Hootsuit, TweetReach, Social Mention, Twazzup and Polish SoTrender or Newspoint. When it comes to politics, we can easily use e.g. Politwitter.ca, Politweeter.com (under construction)[11].


**What is the direction of Twitter? – discussion**

Alongside many unquestionable advantages of Twitter – after presentation of empiric data – we should notice and discuss some limitations of this web-phenomenon resulting from the assumptions of its creators (mentioned earlier). It is worth to mention its biggest drawback: in a situation where everyone tweets, who really reads? Who keeps track of it all? (We have to bear in mind that Twitter is now the fastest growing social platform in the whole world[12]) Furthermore, who understands the content, who thinks about the content they read? Twitter can be, and certainly is, the agora, but the question is: what kind of agora is it? Following the many people available on Twitter, sometimes I cannot resist the impression that really everyone speaks, writes, exposes, suggests, imputes something etc. But the question is: how many of those who tweet simultaneously listen, respond, react and finally stay under the influence of other users? What is more, according to various studies, not more than 10 percent of web surfers are active on forums and blogs. In one of the latest reports on Twitter by Global Web Index (the research was conducted on 27 markets)[13] asked the question: *Which online activities have you done in the past month.* The following answers were provided: almost 70 percent of respondents had watched an online video clip,

---

[11] See: R. Poynter, *The Handbook of Online and Social Media Research: Tools and Techniques for Market Researchers*, Chichester 2010, http://www.owlasylum.net/owl_underground/handbook_of_social_media_research.pdf, 25.01.2013.

[12] http://blog.globalwebindex.net/twitter-now-the-fastest-growing-social-platform-in-the-world/, 8.01.2014.

[13] http://globalwebindex.net/, 8.01.2014.

50 percent had managed a social network profile and 35 percent had commented on a story, yet only 25 percent had written a blog post and fewer than 20 percent had written an article[14]. It means that the majority simply reads and browses the Internet, nothing more. Social media is just a little more complicated. What must be stressed is the fact that the present Internet – especially social media, which are one of the biggest actors – was built on the idea of sharing. We could name it as a "golden pentad" – share, retweet, like, follow, comment (rarely). According to Global Web Index reports, Internet users seem to be divided into two groups – active and passive users. The first one – the creators' group – is connected with creating new content, the second one – the contributors' group – with sharing this content. Taking into account various reports on web, for every creator there are approximately 10 contributors who are sharing creator's content further. Sometimes because they like it, sometimes because they are outraged. The motivation can be different, but the way of acting is always the same for every participant of these two groups. It is worth remembering that being a creator or a distributor is not only a name – a category – describing the user's activity. It seems to be a  specific attitude which we cannot change as easily as we think. It is not only the way of behaving during surfing, it is the way of perceiving, understanding and being influenced by virtuality, especially in the social media world.

To sum up, being active in social media (less on Facebook, but undoubtedly by means of microblogging, including Twitter) is the need of probably the most interactive, talkative, politicised and assertive people – they can be named "the leaders". If so, are those "leaders" also readers? When everyone speaks, who listens? The universality of using Twitter by representatives of various social classes makes that it really uncontrolled. It's

---

[14]     http://blog.webcertain.com/global-web-users-like-to-share-content-rather-than-create-it/06/09/2011/, 8.01.2014.

standardised social discourse seems to be getting oversized and swollen. Topics and content that occupy Internet users grow exponentially every day. Are all these things equally important? Probably not. Who will help the most passive Internet users select the most important ones?

### *What do we tweet about?*

An interdisciplinary research project titled "Cyberemotions – collective emotions in cyberspace"[15] funded by the European Union by means of the 7th Framework Programme assesses the role and methods of functioning of collective excitement among Internet-users. The project attended nine scientific and research institutions from six different European countries (Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Slovenia, the United Kingdom and Poland). They brough together specialists in the psychology of emotion, complex network theory, statistical physics, artificial intelligence and virtual reality. The result shows that Twitter users from Poland primarily tweet about their emotions, feelings, fears and fascinations. So it is a personal narration, often expiatory[16]. It appears that Twitter does not have to be and probably is not a realisation of dreams about the 21st century mature socio-political agora, which could reflect the idea of deliberative democracy of Jürgen Habermas by using new technologies.

---

[15]    http://www.wirtualnemedia.pl/artykul/polacy-na-twitterze-komentuja-emocjonalnie-w-wiekszosci-pozytywnie, 8.07.2013.

[16] The report revealed that: *70 percent of comments published by Polish Twitter users on Twitter in 2012 were connected with emotions. Although most of them had a positive character (67 percent), entries with negative emotions were the strongest. They appeared mainly because of Polish athletes' failures, and most of them appeared after the matches during Euro 2012. Similar connotations had entries written when Poles lost a game against Russia in the quarterfinals of the volleyball tournament at the Olympics in London.*

### Twitter and the role of journalists

The revolution of new media seems to consist in a constant inflow of information from various sources to an Internet user who is able to choose whatever he wants, what he is curious about. However, there is always a question about knowledge, about proven information and in-depth analysis and finally, what is most important and what is not at all. On the Internet it is very easy to lose oneself. Communication noise seems to be very loud and it is really hard to spend some time selecting the most important news and views. Here we come to the gist. In many presentations about professional journalism, Michael Schudson, professor at the Columbia Journalism School, said that the main idea and at the same time a mission, for journalism, relies on explaining a surrounding world to people – what is worth mentioning and what is not, what has an impact on society and what is changing my everyday life. According to the professor of Columbia Journalism School, this role of journalists has not changed. Schudson outlines that right now – in the middle of the new media era – professional journalism is priceless in explaining the surrounding world. Journalists should and must help people – especially Internet users – find importance in this constant inflow of information and opinions from various web-sources (the idea of gate-keeping, priming, framing and agenda-setting). Prof. Schudson even jokes that if the modern world forgot about professional journalism, it would very quickly discover that it must re-invent journalism to simply understand today's rapidly changing world; on the internet you can find everything, but you have to invest your time and energy to search what is the most important.

To sum up, journalists help us. That is why the predictions on journalism's collapse are premature. For example Eryk Mistewicz in the book

*Anathomy of power*[17] interviews the journalist Michał Karnowski and claims that soon politicians will not need journalists anymore because they will avoid them thanks to Twitter as citizens will prefer the direct relation with the government. The journalist is important for recipients to understand what is most important, to sort out news and handle the information chaos. Within minutes, Twitter displays in front of our eyes from a few to hundreds informations (tweets) – who can cope with such a challenge?

### Twitter – the medium of winners – conclusion

Twitter is mainly used by politicians to announce their achievements, successes and – of course – stigmatizing negligence, errors and shortcomings of their political rivals. Under the principle of "first come, first served" basis, the splendour of success for the one who announces it to everyone. A good example is the Minister of Foreign Affairs – Radosław Sikorski – who could not resist and tweeted, informing Internet users and the financial markets that the Minister of Treasury would have good news for all Poles in the context of the new arrangements for Russian gas import prices. The same situation took place with the tweet written by the President of the European Commission – Herman Van Rompuy, and the government spokesman – Paweł Graś, citing a text message from the Prime Minister. That is why Twitter resonates well in other so-called "old media", such as press, radio and television. It is impossible today to deal with politics without tracking Twitter accounts of the political class. As a medium of winners, it is continuously becoming more important than the rest of the media. The last European Union summit demonstrates this. Instead of organizing a press conference in the middle of the night and responding to some kind of specific questions from journalists, which could

---

[17] E. Mistewicz, M. Karnowski, *Anatomia władzy*, Warsaw 2010.

cover the enthusiasm and communication success, one entry on Twitter was enough. No questions asked, no conferences, but the success that can be attributed to that one who tweeted first. In terms of the image – only pluses, no disadvantages at all. This is the political communication 2.0 in times of post-politics[18]. Let us note that politicians do not tweet about difficult situations, conflicts or failures. Why? Because it is ambiguous, difficult to describe, there is no way to explain it in 140 characters. This was clearly visible on the Sławomir Nowak's (former Minister of Transport and Infrastructure) Twitter channel, where he unsuccessfully tried to explain the idea of locating numerous speed cameras on Polish roads. Again and again he wrote that it is not as obvious as it might seem at the first glance. This is a good example of how Twitter should not be used. You cannot write about the limitations of a microblogging platform, which you are using, you cannot write that this is not the place to talk about something serious. It is like cutting off the branch you are sitting on. Therefore, without a doubt, Twitter loves winners, those who are successful. It is an easy way, to inform the world about their successes and then just wait for the admiration and compliments. That is what happened after the European Union summit. I am sure that without the agreement neither Van Rompuy nor Donald Tusk and Paweł Graś would tweet in the middle of the night.

There is no doubt that Twitter seems to become one of the most popular tool of political communication for Polish politicians. However, not for everyone and not in the same way as we could see from presented results. Some of them – like Radoslaw Sikorski, Janusz Palikot or Jerzy Buzek are really involved in their activity on Twitter. They treat it really serious and they invest

---

[18] See: T. Gackowski, *Political Image as the Substance of the Political Communication in the Era of Post-Politics*, "Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies", Volume III, Issue 4, October 2013, s. 40-63 – http://www.ojcmt.net/articles/34/344.pdf, 25.01.2014.

their attention and a plenty of time to get to know what happens on Twitter. Others – like Donald Tusk and Bartosz Arlukowicz – seems to be on Twitter not because they want to, but they think that they have to, they need to for some closer undefined purpose. It is not an effect of some kind of strategic decision to communicate with their voters/citizens through Twitter. We could rather say that they treat Twitter as a some kind of fashion. This perspective seems to be connected with the atmosphere on Twitter which we will witness in the coming weeks, during the europarlament campaign. In this time we will notice a great activity of polish candidates to European Parliament, especially on Twitter. They will comment on activity of each other in public sphere. They will announce their promises. They will debate with other candidates. Probably they will also accuse each other of various shortcomings and mistakes. However, after the elections probably their profiles on Twitter will be very quickly abandoned not only by followers, but especially by their own creators – authors (like it was last time after the EP's elections). Only a few of them – probably only those who will get into the European Parliament – will continue to communicate with their followers. Unfortunately those followers will again become only a citizens (from politicians' point of view), because – if we look at deserted profiles and accounts by politicians after last elections – being a voter seems to be a profession performed only once for a while and politicians know it very well. That's why, for most politicians, being on Twitter before elections is only a matter of marketing.

Tomasz Gackowski – PhD, media expert and also historian, assistant professor in the Department of Communication Theory, Chief of Laboratory of Media Studies at the University of Warsaw and Deputy Director for Research and International Cooperation at the Institute of Journalism at the University of Warsaw

**Abstract**

The article refers to the world's largest microblogging platform – Twitter.com. The author, in his reflections on mediatisation and virtualization of modern political communication, indicates changes that are undergoing right now in the social communication. He characterizes the specific nature of Twitter and tries to identify the source of its popularity. In the second part of the text, the author presents partial results of a research project dedicated to the activity of Polish politicians on Twitter. The author qualified the analysis to the ten Twitter profiles of Polish politicians who had the largest number of followers on 24 December 2013. The author, through the presentation of empirical results, considers methodological aspects of the analysis of politicians' activity on Twitter. Furthermore, he proposes certain indicators of research for the analysis of political communication in social media and stresses the need for research in virtual space, because – according to the author – it profoundly affects the thinking and perception of contemporary politicians about their role in the public sphere.

## TOP 10 POLSKICH POLITYKÓW NA TWITTERZE – REWOLUCJA W KOMUNIKACJI POLITYCZNEJ? REKONESANS BADAWCZY

**Abstrakt**

Artykuł poświęcony jest największej na świecie platformie mikroblogowej – Twitter.com. Autor w swoich rozważaniach nad mediatyzacją i wirtualizacją współczesnej komunikacji politycznej wskazuje zmiany, jakie dokonują się na naszych oczach w zakresie szeroko rozumianej komunikacji społecznej. Charakteryzuje specyfikę Twittera oraz próbuje zidentyfikować źródła jego popularności. W drugiej części tekstu prezentuje cząstkowe wyniki projektu badawczego poświęconego aktywności polskich polityków na Twitterze. Analizie poddał profile dziesięciu polskich polityków, którzy mają największą

liczbę śledzących (ang. *followers*) na stan 24 grudnia 2013 r. Autor poprzez prezentację wyników empirycznych rozważa metodologiczne aspekty standaryzacji oceny aktywności polityków na Twitterze. Proponuje określone wskaźniki badawcze do analizy komunikacji politycznej w mediach społecznościowych oraz podkreśla konieczność prowadzenia badań w przestrzeni wirtualnej, gdyż – zdaniem autora – w sposób przemożny oddziałuje ona na sposób myślenia i postrzeganie własnej roli w przestrzeni publicznej współczesnych polityków.
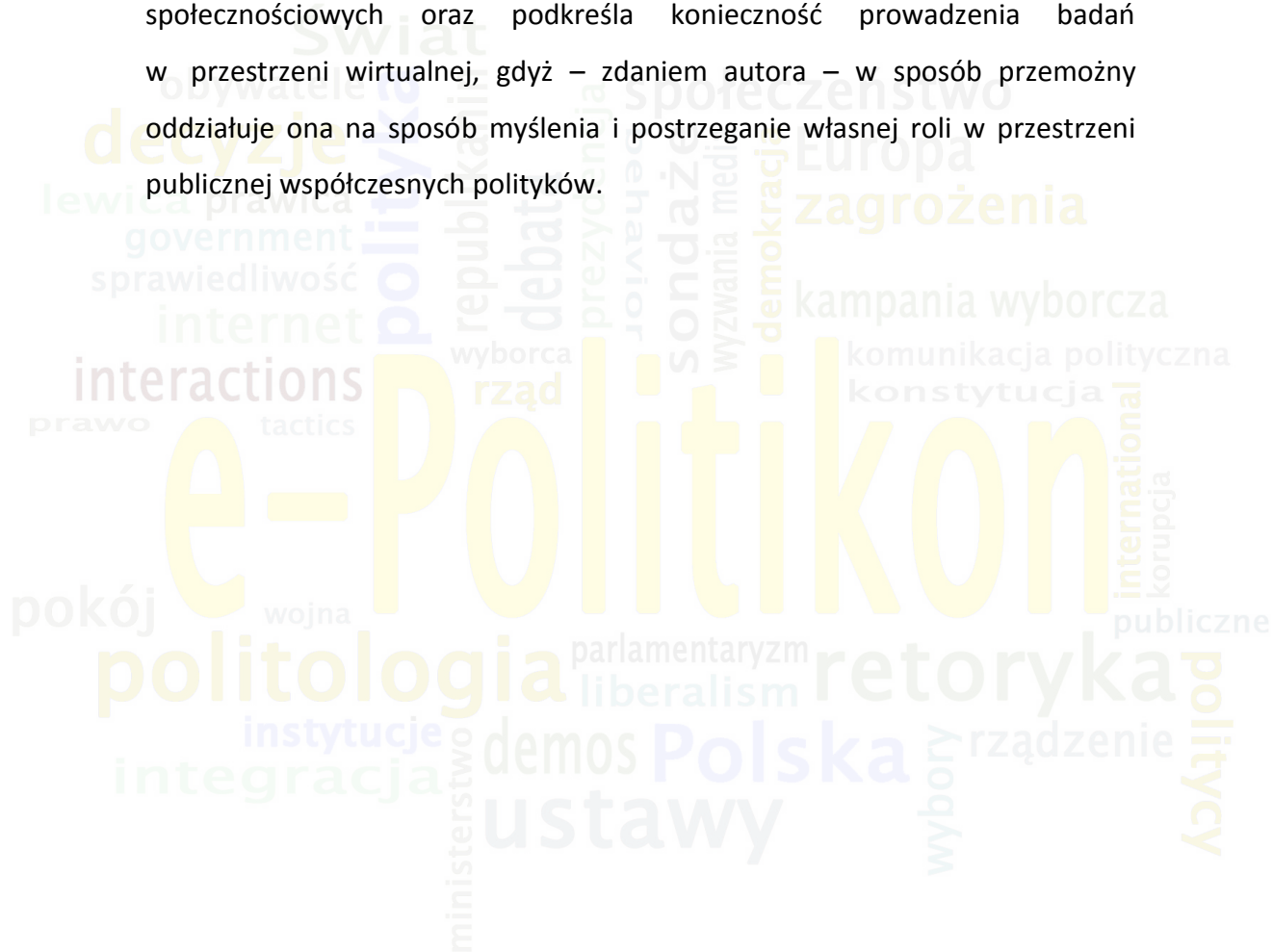
**Kamil Giemza**

# CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN SOCIAL NETWORKS. MIXED METHODS RESEARCH ON THE EXAMPLE OF WARSAW MEPs

## Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to characterize the political communication process of Warsaw MEPs. It shows what type of communication tools are used and which type of communiques are most frequently used. This paper consists of 5 parts. The first two will bring an introduce to the used terms and social networks. To keep a clear framework, methodology of research will be explained further. After that preparing stage, the analysis and results will be presented. My aim is to show the methods and predominant forms of MEPs communication on the Internet using a specific social network.

## Political communication in social networks – theoretical introduction

Communication (Latin *communicatio, comunicare* – to share, to impart) is a process of imparting or exchanging information, idea or emotion. For the purpose of this paper I used the term of political communication based on the main social media platforms. There is no need for explanation of the  influence

of public discourse on the decision making process in national legislatures[1] of the western societies.

How is the political communication defined? In a general view Annusewicz and Bejma see political communication as an exchange of political ideas and information on politics[2]. Grażyna Ulicka uses the definition of political communication proposed by Dominique Volton as a sphere where different ideas and views of three groups of actors who have a right to publicly speak about politics meet. These actors are politicians on one hand and public opinion on the other hand. The third group between them two are the journalists[3]. The people's voice or more specifically the public discourse highlighted by news, reports, commentaries etc. constantly affects politics. Habermas points out that: *The influence of public opinion spreads in opposite directions, turning both towards a government busy carefully watching it and the other way towards the reflecting audiences from where it first originated*[4]. Sudden policy change can be observed after an unfavorable opinion poll, so the authorities react more or less accordingly to a positive image. Even if they are not willing to change their poorly perceived decision, getting involved in a communication process is more than certain.

Journalists' position in the political communication on the Internet should be moved to the background of the process. Denying the influence of traditional media would be a mistake because of their major role in the wide

---

[1] J. Habermas, *Concluding comments on empirical approaches to deliberative politics*, "Acta Politica" 2005, No.40, p. 389.

[2] O. Annusewicz, *Komunikowanie polityczne w okresie przedwyborczym*, "Studia Politologiczne" vol. 25, p. 210-225, A. Bejma, *Bariery, błędy i zakłócenia procesu komunikowania politycznego*, "Studia Politologiczne" vol. 25., p.323-336.

[3] G. Ulicka, *Wpływ marketingu politycznego na zmiany w życiu publicznym państw demokratycznych*, "Studia Politologiczne" vol. 1, Warszawa 1996.

[4] J. Habermas, *Political Communication in Media Society: Does Democracy Still Enjoy an Epistemic Dimension? The Impact of Normative Theory on Empirical Research*, "Communication Theory" 2006, No. 16, p. 417.

agenda-setting. Nevertheless, Internet communication between politicians and their electorate or viewers cuts the cord of exclusive news for the journalists. For the purpose of this paper, the definition of political communication as a process of mutual informational interactions between political actors connected by the relation to power, rivalry and cooperation, presented by Sobkowiak[5] is quite useful. This approach according to Ewa Marciniak[6] *takes into account the reciprocity of political relations, which can be described as an ability to understand, accept, disagree and/or to modify their own and other people's convictions*[7]. This approach puts politicians in the center of political communication, where politicians are indeed able to create messages which affect people.

The power of social media derives from directness and immediacy. Politicians can react personally and instantaneously using social media when e.g. being accused in public and they can only hope that the media will release that information in its original form.

The third valid advantage is a full content-openness, standing in opposition to the limited mainstream media access. It turns out that social media are the perfect answer to unfulfilled politicians' communication needs.

The central point of the communication process is language itself. It is the only weapon held by politicians since we are dealing with the primacy of a superstructure over the Marxist base. This emphasizes the importance of

---

[5] L. Sobkowiak, *Komunikacja polityczna*, [in:] A. Jabłoński, L. Sobkowiak (eds.), *Studia z teorii polityki*, Wrocław 1996, p. 163.

[6] E. Marciniak, *Komunikowanie polityczne w ujęciach interpretacyjnych*, "Studia Politologiczne", vol. 25, p. 16.

[7] Different view comes from Blumler and Gurevitch, which conceptualize the political communication system as a set of interrelated and mutually dependent relationships between various institutions and their audiences. The four main components of the system are: 1.) political institutions, 2.) media institutions, 3.) the audience's orientation to political communication, and 4.) the "communication relevant" aspects of political culture.

a direct politician-society link without any intercessor. An interesting view emerged from a *short report* from 2007[8] *on the language of politicians at the beginning of the 21st century*. Chairman of the Council of the Polish language at the Polish Academy of Sciences Professor Markowski emphasized the originality of the communication process – *is it just valuable or valuable by all means*? This phenomenon can be seen more clearly in the Internet communication, where we observe a specific rivalry in newspeak. The conference provided a general concept of two types of political language, media- and cabinet-type, adjusted to a specific receiver.

Two years later the Senate hosted another conference related to the Polish political language[9], where Professor Simonides touched on the phenomenon of multiplicity of interpretative statements, taking on extremely different forms – from irony to seriousness, which makes the communication process unclear. Professor Bralczyk said that politicians were trying to build a message "choose me" by saying something original or controversial by means of the media. The politician exists due to the language, when the politician stops speaking, he or she stops existing. Mass culture media reduced the language and forced a shorter communication style, where argumentation cannot be too extensive and language too complicated. Other observations were related to the relationship between the journalist and the politician as seen by society, where the politician is regularly being interrogated by a journalist, making him prevaricate. Not all of these can be transferred into a characteristics for political communication on the Internet, but it stands for a reference point.

---

[8] Discussion panel in the Senate of the Republic of Poland, "short report on the politicians' language at the beginning of the twenty-first century", http://ww2.senat.pl/k6/agenda/wydarz/2007/070220a.htm, 19.02.2014.
[9] Discussion panel in the Senate of the Republic of Poland „Polish political language after 1989" http://ww2.senat.pl/k7/agenda/wydarz/2009/091027.htm, 19.02.2014.

Internet changed the rules of political communication. The campaign is not only a short time to make an influence on the voters but it is a permanent communication, which is the main aspect of the postmodern campaign[10]. Why is the political communication on the Internet not identical with other media? We can see three areas: social perception, ways of use and the scale of receivers' identification[11]. The information from social networks is received as equal or even more trustworthy than the information from traditional media. Messages should include multimedia coverage (photographs, images or video)[12] to be more appealing. Another important area that makes a real difference is the bilateral communication, which changes everything. It provides priceless information on voters or haters, useful for preparing a future communique or a wider political strategy. The other side of this solution enforces politicians to communicate wisely and in a restrained way. What is posted on the Internet, stays on the Internet, so everyone has to be aware of the possibility of being cross-checked with statements given some time ago. Additionally there is a high risk of immediate response from friends, fans or political opponents pulling into the vortex of questions and answers, defending a given discourse stand.

In order to continue, the term "social media" needs to be clarified. First of all, social media have a wider meaning, which I will show later, and is based on its social aspects, which are interaction and participation. They wouldn't be of any use without active users whom various messages can be addressed to. Secondly, they have to be open for everyone willing to participate. Overall, we can define social media as: *new information network and information technol-*

---

[10] B. Dobek-Ostrowska, *Komunikowanie polityczne i publiczne*, Warszawa 2006, p. 247.

[11] J. Garlicki, D. Mider, *Wykorzystanie Internetu w komunikowaniu politycznym elit z wyborcami*, "Studia Politologiczne" vol. 25, p.188.

[12] A. Jezierska, A. Łada, *Siema! Tu Europa. Komunikacja posłów do Parlamentu Europejskiego z młodymi Polakami*, Warszawa 2013, p.29.

*ogy using a form of communication utilising interactive and user-produced content, and interpersonal relationships are created and maintained*[13]. Social media can distribute their content by special communication channels such as: social networks (Facebook, Google+, MySpace), mediaproducts community (Youtube, Flickr, Slideshare), blog services (Wordpress, Twitter), link sharing services (Digg, Wykop), information creation community (Wikipedia) or virtual community (Second Life). The most significant social networking services used for political communication in Poland are: widely used Facebook and Twitter[14] with rising Google+. Research shows that 60% of Polish Internet users are registered on at least one social network[15].Political communication using social networks differs from the conventional political language – both spoken and written. It must be matched with the specificity of reading from a screen, no matter whether it is a PC or a mobile device. Though there is a major difference between Facebook (FB), Google+ and Twitter. The first two offer nearly unlimited space for all sort of content, whilst Twitter allows to "tweet" only 140 characters. It sets up a number of communication principles, which will be shown later on.

**Use of social networks by Polish MEP's**

Regardless of the level of politics they are active at and their role, politicians should meet the 21$^{st}$ century standards. One of them related to the paper's subject is to have one's own website. Perhaps a future standard will be being visible and active on social networks. Naturally, this is the social net-

---

[13] A. Auvinen, *Social media – the new power of political influence*, "Centre for European Studies", 2012, p. 7, http://thinkingeurope.eu/publications/social-media-new-power-political-influence, 25.02.2014.

[14] Twitter has a wide social networking functionality, nevertheless it originates from a microblogging type of communication.

[15] CBOS, Internauci, komunikat z badań BS/75/2013, Warszawa 2013, http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2013/K_075_13.PDF , 25.02.2014.

workers point of view, although supported by many NGOs[16] aiming to increase voter participation and knowledge of their representatives.

The importance of this issue connects with the democratic gap, especially noticeable and significant in the work of MEP's from the perspective of the upcoming elections in May. Let me skip the obvious problems with communication, media and public (non)interest visible for instance in the turnout, and provide a characteristic of three leading social networks. As can be seen MEPs are happy to place widgets connected with the selected social network on their official profiles on europarl.europa.eu[17].

The most popular social network used in political communication in Poland is Facebook. It is created by 68% users of the Internet in Poland[18], constituting a large target audience. The communication character on FB differs from using a personal timeline[19] or a dedicated public page[20]. Public pages (also called Fanpages) are optimized for a mass communication, fans engaging and capturing new audience virally. Fanpages are useful for MEPs, however, using them as the dominant communication tool is not a rule. It is followed by Facebook's policy specifying the terms of use, which are being developed constantly e.g. a new feature enables to follow a personal timeline (when a person wants to have their timeline to be visible to others) to see updates from people somebody is interested in but they are not friends[21]. The main difference is the relationship with your viewers. When you use a personal timeline you may have friends and possible followers, whereas when you use a public page you

---

[16] For example the association of 61, http://art61.pl/, 27.02.2014.

[17] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/pl/full-list.html?filter=all&leg=, 27.02.2014.

[18] Megapanel PBI/Gemius Results of research on the Internet in Poland as of July 2012: https://www.gemius.pl/pl/archiwum_prasowe/2012-08-31/01, 22.02.2014.

[19] Which can be referred to as a simple profile. A personal timeline represents individual people and must be held under an individual name.

[20] A dedicated timeline for politicians, celebrities where there is no need to be "friend-accepted" to gain access to published posts depending on chosen privacy settings.

[21] https://www.facebook.com/help/217671661585622, 22.02.2014.

have fans. It implicates other difficulties, like the impossibility to thread-reply on other politicians private timelines, being a follower if you are not friends and the timeline owner is not willing to allow such interfere from the outside. Viewing a private timeline, even used as a public timeline is not possible without a Facebook account. Only Fanpages can be easily observed by the voters which do not want to create one. On the other hand, Fanpage has some limitations in "live coverage" from mobile dedicated apps in comparison to the standard timeline[22]. Posting on a Fanpage is more friendly using a traditional device, but even then you cannot join any events. Therefore instead of the understandable division for personal or political communication use, we end up with quite a dilemma.

The second most popular[23] social medium (not necessarily social network) used by politicians in Poland is Twitter. As I indicated before, Twitter has constructed a unique communication style[24]. The term "Twitter revolutions" has been introduced due to Twitter usage connected with the political situation in Iran, Tunisia, Egypt and Ukraine (#EuroMaidan[25]). Use of Twitter is way beyond the politicians' and society's communication needs, which can be illustrated by creating official accounts by terrorist organizations[26].

---

[22] i.e. dedicated to Windows Phone Facebook App cannot make or add photos to my own Fanpage, use Fanpage mailbox etc. The Fanpage from a mobile is practically limited to posts text-messages on the wall.

[23] Based on popularity measured by the number of profiles and recipients engagement (including media coverage).

[24] Tweets include a high number of specifically designed tools enabling to summarize thoughts and ideas, mainly by the use of hashtags – words or phrases prefixed with the "#" sign, and all sort of URL shortening services, mainly images and other content-hosting services. It seems to be a consequence of the text field's feature: it is by 20 characters shorter than SMS.

[25] v. https://twitter.com/euromaidan, the Official International Public Relations Secretariat for the Headquarters of National Resistance of the EuroMaidan:
https://twitter.com/EuromaidanPR, 25.02.2014.

[26] For example al-Quaeda: www.twitter.com/shomokhalislam, which has been suspended by Twitter.

Apart from being a global trend, Twitter encounters difficulties in Poland with an insufficient and narrow group of users. Because Twitter is just not popular.

It has a substantial impact on political communication in two aspects bringing it to a vicious circle. Firstly, Twitter's active political audience consists mainly of journalists, people already involved in politics (both analyzers and decision-makers), some of them fond of innovative-gadgets. Twitter does not include an adequate audience to whom a specific message may be addressed, which means the people who are politically neutral and not very interested in politics. Secondly, because of the relatively small amount of available recipients, the need to publish on Twitter by Polish politicians in general does not exist. If there is not much to follow for politically interested citizens, politicians will not find this medium attractive enough for expanding their communication channels. A hypothetical barrier can be found in the language itself[27]. The Polish language compared to English consists of somewhat longer words, making it hard to express in a very limited form, which affects both single tweeting and tweet discussion. It is fair to stress that when dealing with social media and social behavior, nothing is surely stable and lasts for a long period, so a sudden increase of Polish Tweeters due to the popularity of smartphones is possible. Latest research shows that the number of users increased by 60% comparing to the previous year[28].

Twitter is indeed almost a perfect tool for political communication. Short messages require more attention from the politician to synthetize thoughts leading to a better understanding and low risk of a bummer. Research indicates that Twitter reacts quicker than Facebook but discussions are

---

[27] M. Wachnicki, Dlaczego Polacy nie lubią Twittera?, "Newsweek", http://polska.newsweek.pl/dlaczego-polacy-nie-korzystaja-z-twittera-newsweek,artykuly,270698,1,2.html, 21.02.2014.
[28] http://www.wirtualnemedia.pl/artykul/twitter-rekordowo-popularny-w-polsce-jacy-sa-jego-uzytkownicy/page:1, 27.02.2014.

not continued after a period of time, while FB statuses are delayed at the beginning but are more of a long-life type[29].

Other types of political communication in social networks are relatively insignificant. Nonetheless Google+ (also called G+) should not be underestimated. Although G+ is not currently used in the Polish political communication, the majority of Warsaw MMEPs has already created G+ profiles. Actually it turns out that they are probably being run by MEPs offices, because two of them added only MEP-related multimedia content without any comments and one only created a profile in order to book a web place and did not risk losing any potential voters. G+ is political friendly, it is based on circles – where we can develop "alternative identities", having our family, friends and followers (politicians) apart but together at the same time. It prevents the mixing of the information stream comparing to the leading services. As I have pointed out before, trends in social media change dynamically and MEPs seem to be prepared for a potential change in order to keep up the communication process with the people whom they represent.

**The methodology of research**

As we identified the main political communication tools, the next step is to specify the research methodology. In order to show the differences and similarities I chose the mixed methods research, which "recognizes the importance of traditional quantitative and qualitative research" and provides the most informative, complete, balanced and useful research results[30]. I concentrated on Warsaw MEPs[31] elected in 2009 from Warsaw and contiguous coun-

---

[29] A. Łada, M. Fałkowska-Warska, *Europoseł w sieci*, Warszawa 2012, p. 53.
[30] RB. Johnson, A. J. Onwuegbuzie, L.A. Turner, Toward a Definition of Mixed Methods Research, "Journal of Mixed Methods Research", 2007, p. 129.
[31] They are: Danuta Hübner (EPP), Michał Kamiński (ECR), Wojciech Olejniczak (S&D), Rafał Trzaskowski (EPP) and Paweł Zalewski (EPP).

ties[32]. Their activity should be larger than in other regions, especially because of Mazovia Province has the biggest number (more than 26% overall)[33] of active Internet users in Poland.

The results of Warsaw MEPs use of social networking, which are the subject of further deliberations may be overstated to the national result, however could be a broader trend, especially in the 2014 election year.

The quantitative analysis results in neutral, calculable use of all keywords, which cannot be reached in an overall qualitative approach. The research includes a comprehensive data gathering from members of the European Parliament. The analysis should emphasize the participation, language usage and overall characteristics of social network services at a supranational level. The selected data contained every post from 2013, starting on the 1st January and ending on 31st December, so we received reliable full time results. To maintain clear standards of the data selected from Facebook, all data from a MEP's Fanpage was taken into account. Additional data from a personal timeline would not be accurate even despite the vagueness of strictly political – private/public communication[34]. There was no MEP with a personal timeline who didn't run a Fanpage, some even transferred their timeline to a permanent Fanpage making the communication process political and more relevant to the recipients.

---

[32] Warsaw MEPs are a number of the MEPs elected from the Warsaw electoral district, which includes Warsaw and contiguous counties.

[33] Ranking is updated weekly by pages viewed from IP geolocation database on gemiusTraffic inquiry: http://ranking.pl/pl/rankings/regions.html, 6.02.2014.

[34] It is difficult to separate private from public, especially when analyzing a politician's activity in social network. In order to keep the research valid, a stout differentiation had to be done. In a technical way, of course you could observe (with or without inviting to friends) the private profile which is used as a public-private but then, every post would count as a public social activity, even a comment about a new movie, because it is connected to overall perception by friends, likely voters. It would be difficult to clearly identify what is and isn't a political communique. It is hard to find a politician in larger municipalities without an FB account, which is not equivalent with communicating with voters, not only friends.

I focused on two selected aspects which are: information introducing the MEP's profiles and added posts in the selected period of time without comments and activities conducted on other timelines, groups, pages etc.

Secondly, the analysis of content gave replicable and valid inferences from texts to the contexts of their use by the use of interpretational study based on symbolic interactionism. I pointed out meanings of the communication context related to types of messages and types of recipients (international, national or local). Emphasizing the symbolic nature of social life allows to explain the specificity of political communication on the Internet. The two key terms in symbolic interactionism are interactions and symbols[35]. Symbols should be understood as characters, images and anything that has meaning. These meanings are constructed in the course of social interaction. Symbolic interaction is a creative process of transferring meaning between the sender and the recipient. The dynamism of interaction is emphasized by the fact that it is always open to redefining and is based on, inter alia, confrontation and indifference. Not every message must be answered, so it implicates the creation of a message drawing enough attention for it to be replied. Public space is filled with various interpretations of each fact. The message is the driver's seat, for example winning a bronze medal in the Olympic Games could be either a historic success or nearly upsetting because of losing to two better teams or athletes. Facts depend on the interpretation status and on the symbolic meaning added to the facts[36]. That is why, the political communication and attributing symbols to facts on the Internet is so important.

To analyze the content, all of the MEP's posts will be grouped according to the political communicative function followed by Olgierd Annusewicz's

---

[35] E. Marciniak, *Komunikowanie polityczne…*, p. 20-23.
[36] S. Stieglitz, L. Dang-Xuan, *Social media and political communication: a social media analytics framework* "Social network analysis and mining" no. 13278, 2013.

*functions of political communication on the Internet*[37]. The proposed typology was made to describe the political communication in general, so I tested the use of these functions on Warsaw MEP's activity on Facebook. They were six functions selected: information and self-presentation, persuasion, education, integration, two-way communication and economic.

**FB's Fanpage characteristic and keywords analysis**

Let us concentrate on the appropriate way of communicating by means of a Fanpage, open for every viewer with web access. At first glance we see inhomogeneous utilization of the communication subject. The majority communicates in the first person, which makes the process more intimate implying that MEPs write personally. Running a Fanpage by assistants is socially acceptable, instead of "ghost-posting" on a personal timeline which does not give a politician credibility, seemingly engaging in direct communication, when in fact he is not interested at all. Some use a clear distinction between posts added by "the office" and the ones added by MEP him- or herself. They are tagged at the beginning of the message as [Office] or [MEP's initials] so before we start receiving the reply, we know who the message is from.

The dominant language used by the studied group is Polish, with one exception, were the entire communication is held in English enabling a wider – international audience.

Starting from the "About" section – what type of information do Warsaw MEPs want us to acknowledge? Four of five Fanpages were taken into account (three from the European's People Party, one from the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament) because of the European Conservatives and Reformists Group member Fanpage absence,

---

[37] O. Annusewicz, *Funkcje komunikowania politycznego w Internecie*, "Studia Politologiczne", vol. 14, p.268-279.

despite a direct link from the European Parliament website[38]. So, is European party membership important in political communication? It seems that it is not. Every MEP informs about the affiliation to a national party, their previous roles and career. Only one MEP underlines the affiliation to the supranational party in EP. In other case, that information cannot be verified in 2014 because of the MEPs was minister nominated in December 2013.

Everyone informs which EP Committees they work in and about the possibility of contacting them via e-mail/website. The fact that all of the MEPs provided information on their education proves that MEP's education status is socially high-rated. Other similarities except showing strengths do not occur in this section.

The core of the political communication process using social network is sending information from politicians to the unlimited number of recipients. The importance of political communication using a Fanpage is underlined by the *enabling to find pieces of absorbing news, which are not usually talked over in the leading media and for many will most definitely be the source of new and inspiring knowledge*[39].

What were the top five words used by the Warsaw MEP's in 2013? The quantitative analysis results was not a surprise: EU (1,53%), European Parliament, Policy (both 1,33%) Poland (1,17%) and Warsaw (0,86%). Despite the high probability of these keywords, the order is not so obvious. The acronym EU refers to so many areas of European Integration, that we should not actually consider it. The next four popular words are interesting because of placing the EP beyond the others. This indicates the prestige and a communication

---

[38] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/23792/MICHAL+TOMASZ_KAMINSKI_home.html, 23.02.2014.

[39]https://www.facebook.com/pages/Paweł-Zalewski/355982117828814?id=355982117828814&sk=info, 23.02.2014.

need of reminding the audience about who actually is an MEP and what does he or she actually do. The term "policy" resulted equally is a continuation of real work related to chosen field visible by EP's committee membership. Not every parliamentary work can be presented in an interesting way, so big policies  with an impact on either inside or outside of the EU are topics worth sticking to. Members of the European Parliament as representatives of society should care about the member state they were elected from, because of the nationality and furthermore care about the specific constituency – the place were real votes and support stands. MEPs seem to fulfill the needs providing much information on Poland and less but still enough about Warsaw.

Interestingly enough, no one from the studied group "got in the way" of one another in terms of the discussed subjects. We clearly receive the image of areas of interests coming directly from the high usage of each MEP: Ukraine (1,82%), national party membership acronym (1,01%), cohesion (2,50%) and privacy policy (0,86%). Research on Polish MEPs on Facebook relating to three subjects of posts gives similar results, which are related as follows: 56 % - Europe, 36 % - Poland and 26 % - consistency[40].

The lexical density test[41] gives scores between 24% and 49% with an average of 37%. The result is more than understandable for a typical not-politically oriented recipient.

Warsaw MEPs do not prefer one communication style. The differences can be seen even in the use of welcoming phrases. Some use a  direct welcoming phrase like "Good morning, Good afternoon" or "dear friends", others go straight to the point.

---

[40] A. Wronowska, M. Wnuk, *Europosłowie na Facebooku*, Warszawa 2014, http://blog.mamprawowiedziec.pl/2014/02/europosowie-na-facebooku.html, 20.03.2014.
[41] The lexical density of a text tries to measure the proportion of the content (lexical) words over the total number of words. Texts with a lower density are more easily understood.

I focused on the similarities in my research. All MEPs realize the need of multimedia content attached to the text. The data shows a range from 34% to even 224% overall shared images when compared to the number of posts. The average is about 104%, which clearly sets the primacy of image communication to text coverage[42]. Frequency of adding content is also varied but the average word usage in each post seem to be close as the majority of MEPs used 61-71 words per post, (which makes 56 words on average in each post).

MEP's regularly shared links to their mainstream or social media activity. Half of Warsaw MEPs redirected their followers to an external blog with a rate of 15 – 23% of overall posts. Having summed up it gives nearly one of five posts related in a straight line to a prepared message. Linking to an online newspaper or TV interview or even a short commentary on current affairs in traditional media indicates a strong link between them. The aim is to reach as many recipients as possible and mainstream media appearance is high-rated as appreciation of the politicians position. Social network still does not have the indicator status of politicians' popularity[43].

Quantitative analysis alone is not enough to understand Warsaw MEP's political communication in social networks. Further research was taken referring to the functions of the communication by Annusewicz mentioned before in this paper. The effects of the analysis are shown in the figure 1.

**Fig. 1. Warsaw MEP's Fanpage activity according to the functions of political communication on the Internet.**

---

[42] Where each post and added image were counted as 1:1.

[43] It also refers to Internet political polls, which do not correspond to the real polls at all. The largest deviation could be noticed in the declared web-support for Janusz Korwn-Mikke, populist leader of the Congress of the New Right (a conservative libertarian political party) with 200k fans on FB. Internet non-representative surveys gives him a presidential election chance and the support always overcomes a threshold to the parliament. While in fact he and his party didn't pass through any elections since 1991 and his electorate is approximately about 2%.
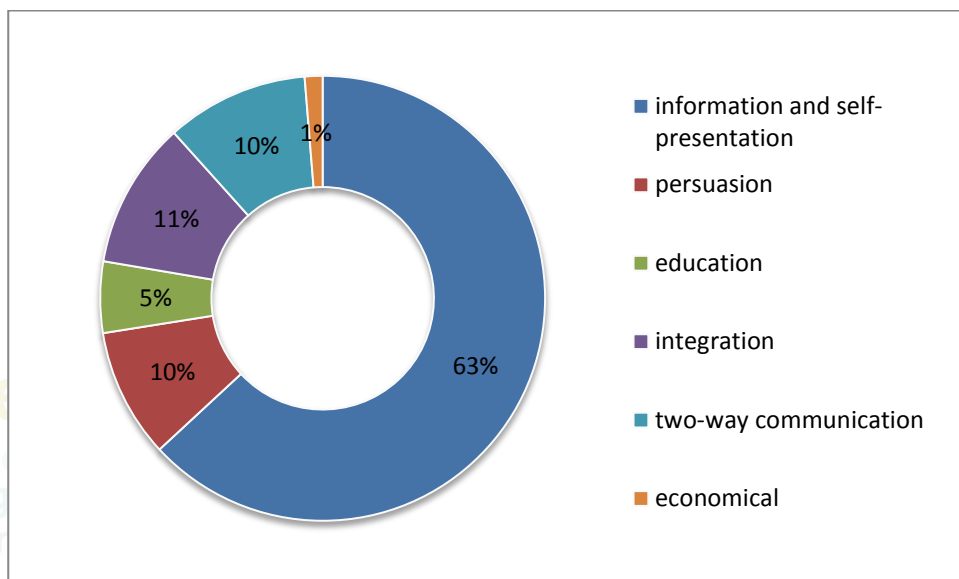
The analysis of the political communication functions based on MEP's activity should give a comprehensive overview of the political communication process on Facebook. The results will be explained in six functional sections.

*Informational and self-presentation function (63%)*

The largest part of the figure is occupied by the informational and self-presentation function. Differentiation of this function surprisingly ranges from 39.24% to 73.13%, where only one result was under 70% of posts. MEP's keep informing about almost everything, starting from their political aims, achievements, through commentary on varied topics or sports events important to society, including leisure activities. Even using an official Fanpage, MEPs communicate simple things and common topics. That is why analysis of politicians private timeline could be misleading because of the non-political related communication. It also depends on the researchers' view on what a political communication is and what it is not. Can politicians communicate anything

180

without a political context? This deliberation cannot be unambiguously answered because of the general complexity. Perhaps non-political communication is available for a politician who is not active in the public sphere?

This communication identity issue is strongly related to uploading images. For research purposes, politicians' photographs from meetings, conferences etc., were classified as self-presentation. Even a simple portrait photo cannot be treated as an empty message. Facebook offers not only a Profile Picture but also a profile/Fanpage cover which can express what the current page is about. All MEPs use both features in a correct way and often update or change one or both for a higher purpose, for example related to the situation in Ukraine, showing their solidarity. The perception of messages including constant not indifferent graphic elements has an impact on the politicians' reception.

### Integration function (11%)

The second most frequent used was the integration function. Politicians not only divide society as many could suppose, but put an effort in integrating it. Integration was considered in the research as event creation and event invitation. There was a noticeable usage of Facebook dedicated tools in order to create an event and invite people to different events not only political but also related to sports or culture. Overall the results of the integration function were *circa* 4.76% to 21.52%.

Communicating through a standard political Fanpage does not allow to attend events created by private timeline profiles, nevertheless you can always share this information on your Fanpage timeline. That activity was also counted as an integration function.

### Persuasive function (10%)

According to Annusewicz's description of this function, it appears to have an emotional character with the intention of gaining the recipient's specific response. Posts counted as this type of function were precisely selected because of the thin line between the persuasive and informational/auto-presentation function. Almost every message sent by politicians is a bit persuasive, so only a visibly intentional message was counted.

I found messages related to political opponents (in general, not personal using Facebook's timeline functionality), political parties and current events as persuasive, when the tested post was showing a certain point of view e.g. convincing to their views in a direct way "Do not let them tell you that...". A situation when MEP candidates benefited from the positive image of well-known politicians was considered a persuasion because of producing a positive association with one related to another. Warsaw MEP's did not show the need of being associated by another cherished person, so when common pictures with other politicians or celebrities were added, they were counted as self-presentation, because of the similar public status.

Referring to these standards, the usage of this function ranged from 0 to 15.19%, which is actually not much compared to the social feeling that every politicians word is sort of persuasive. The real difference is between informing, convincing in a not emotional way and persuasion.

### Two-way communication function (10%)

The two-way communication is one of the most important features in social network. However, the usage of this function in my research was about 7.46% – 17.72%. The analysis could not sneak into inbox/chat messages, so it

bypasses the messages received from FB users, likes and comments. A closer look was taken into the posts from politicians to other users, politicians etc.

This type of communication leads to a reaction because there is a certain recipient. The two-way communication was either negative (criticism, call for a policy change) or positive (support, compliments, open letters).

Anniversaries were always a good occasion to greet mothers, kids etc. This kind of messages was counted in this section, which was confirmed by the positive response of the mentioned group. The wishes posted on grandmother's day made some followers raise questions like "what about grandfather's day?".

### Educational function (5%)

Typical educational related posts were selected only from not persuasive and politically neutral entries. All MEPs delivered educational content which ranged from 4.22% to 9.52%. It was expressed either by sharing an external link to a full source, infographics or just written as a post. Educational posts spread extensive knowledge regardless of their views and belonging to a political party. Regular mention of the possibilities established by the EP for the citizens was not counted.

The educational function is very important, especially when speaking about MEPs. The European Union structures, institutions, decision centers etc. are so complicated to an average observer that any explanation attempt is worth attention. Although MEPs are not expected to be guides to the EU, we can assume that education related posts provide valuable input into the development of the civil society and overall understanding of the EU related issues.

### Economical function (1%)

The least visible function was the economic one. This result was expected and it is hard to imagine what could cause an increase of this function because comparing to the US, in Poland fund-raising does not exist. Furthermore, in the analyzed year there were no elections, so encouraging cooperation was not present.

**Fig. 2. MEP's posts divided from the minimum to maximum use rate of functions of political communication on the Internet.**



| | information and self-presentation | two-way communica-tion | integration | education | economical | persuasion |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| min. | 39,24% | 7,46% | 4,76% | 4,22% | 0,70% | 0 |
| max. | 73,13% | 17,72% | 21,52% | 9,52% | 4,76% | 15,19% |
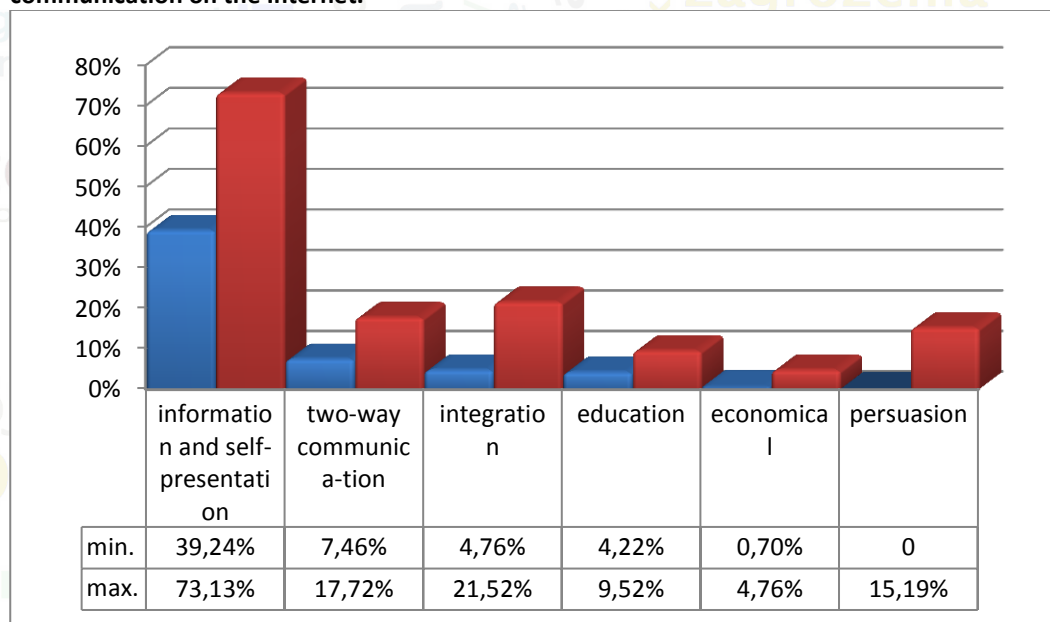
**Source: own research.**

The economic function can either relate to a financial benefit or to any financial help. This can be seen in MEPs support for GOCC[44] in promoting the charity idea or even offering a trip with lunch in Brussels for the winners on Internet auctions[45]. The overall results of this section are shown in the figure 2.

---

[44] Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity, which is one the biggest charity organizations in Poland.

[45] http://aukcje.wosp.org.pl/sld-wyjazd-do-brukseli-od-wojciecha-olejniczaka-i902251, http://aukcje.wosp.org.pl/ kup-mnie-dla-idei-rafal-trzaskowski-i734653 26.02.2014.

**Summary and future trends**

Social networks constitute a serious alternative to traditional media in the subject of political communication. Warsaw MEPs are willingly using this type of communication, although not always personally. They are aware of the importance and capabilities of this type of political communication.

Political communication on the Internet requires the use of a specific language related to the chosen social media and establishes a permanent campaign. Characteristic for Warsaw MEP's political communication in social media are bilateral communication, multimedia content sharing and self-presentation.

The use of mixed methods research gave comprehensive results related to contents of MEP's communication in social network such as Facebook. Quantitative analysis of content enabled to select the used keywords, which could be compared to the political communication on the Internet function usage of MEP's. The results of the qualitative analysis comply to other results of MEP's communication points of interests, where the order of most related topics was as follows: Europe, Poland and the electoral district[46]. MEPs regularly informed about their areas of work or interests which were not identical for the whole studied group.

Research shows that Warsaw MEPs are not as persuasive as expected, however, a quite educational sharing. The vantage of the informational and self-presentation function defines the daily Facebook communication style, whether a political one or not. Overall functions of political communication in social networks on the example of Warsaw MEP's Facebook communication may be divided into three blocks. The informational and self-presentation

---

[46] A. Wronowska, M. Wnuk, *Europosłowie na Facebooku*, Warszawa 2014, http://www.mamprawowiedziec.pl/file/3972, 25.02.2014.

function simply outweighs the others gaining the first position alone. The second block consists of integrative, persuasive and the two-way communicative functions which reached approximately 10%. The educational and economical functions are in the last block resulting in the lowest use.

The above structure of political communication functions use cannot be considered as stable. Further research on the subject of political communication in social networks needs to be continued or even regularly repeated in order to be up to date. Results in an election year could differ significantly.

Kamil Giemza – MA in European Studies, PhD student of human science in the field of political science at the Faculty of Journalism and Political Studies of the University of Warsaw

**Abstract**

The paper presents the issues of political communication on the Internet with particular emphasis on the most popular social network. It characterizes the selected tools used in political communication on the Internet and contains a study of Facebook activity of the Warsaw Members of the European Parliament in 2013 on the basis of own research using a mixed methodology and divides it by functions of political communication on the Internet.

## CECHY KOMUNIKACJI POLITYCZNEJ W SIECIACH SPOŁECZNOŚCIOWYCH. ANALIZA Z WYKORZYSTANIEM MIESZANEJ METODOLOGII NA PRZYKŁADZIE WARSZAWSKICH POSŁÓW DO PARLAMENTU EUROPEJSKIEGO

**Abstrakt**

Artykuł przedstawia problematykę komunikacji politycznej w Internecie ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem najpopularniejszej sieci społecznościowej. Cha-

rakteryzuje stosowane narzędzia komunikacji politycznej w Internecie. Zawiera analizę aktywności warszawskich eurodeputowanych na Facebooku w 2013 roku na podstawie własnych badań z wykorzystaniem mieszanej metodologii i dokonuje jej podziału według funkcji politycznej komunikacji w Internecie.

**Wojciech Cwalina and Milena Drzewiecka**

## NEGATIVE POLITICAL ONLINE BANNERS: AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

### Introduction

The development of technology, particularly in well-developed countries such as the United States or some European countries, plays a key role in the success of modern political campaigns as well as the marketing campaigns that are closely related to them[1]. In his model of political marketing, Newman[2] mentions three areas of technological development which foster changes in communicating and influencing citizens: the computer (information technologies; IT), television and direct mail. Their evolution has led to a more intense and broader application of those channels in marketing practices. Moreover, they are increasingly interrelated, forming one developed and interactive communication platform or, as Gibson[3] puts it, a "cyber-campaign tool box". The percentage of the population using the Internet to collect news or to explore political alternatives has increased significantly with the diffusion of technology.

---

[1] W. Cwalina, A. Falkowski, B. Newman, *The macro and micro views of political marketing: The underpinnings of a theory of political marketing*, "Journal of Public Affairs" 2012, Vol. 12, No. 4, p. 256.

[2] B.I. Newman, *The marketing of the president: Political marketing as campaign strategy*, Thousand Oaks 1994, p. 44-47.

[3] R.K. Gibson, *Web campaigning from global perspective*, "Asia-Pacific Review", 2004, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 95.

The paper reviews briefly psychological knowledge on the use of internet tools in political campaigns, providing practical examples and arguing that although nowadays marketing strategists are mostly concentrated on Web 2.0, political on-line banners still play an important role. Its potential role on the Polish political market was checked by conducting an experimental study. The results indicate that the negative banners decrease ratings of the attacked party image. However, these changes are moderated by certain variables. The practical implications show, that if one decides to use negative online banners, he or she must be ready to deal with results contradicting some theoretical expectations.

### Internet use and modern politics

One of the best examples is the use of the Internet during the 2010 and 2012 campaigns in the US. The American Pew Research Center[4] survey indicates that as much as 73% of adult Internet users (representing 54% of all US adults) went online to find news or information about the 2010 midterm elections, or to become involved in the campaign in one way or another. 58% of online adults looked for news about politics or the 2010 campaigns online, whereas 32% of online adults got most of their 2010 campaign news from online sources. Moreover, 53% of adult Internet users use the Internet to take part in specific political activities, such as watching political videos, sharing election-related content or "fact-checking" of political claims. Moreover, one in five online adults (22%) used Twitter or a social networking site for political purposes. During the 2012 campaign in the US, some 66% of registered voters who use the Internet (55% of all registered voters) went online to watch videos related to the election campaign or political issues. Specifically, they

---

[4] Pew Research Center's & American Life Project, The Internet and campaign 2010, http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/The-internet-and-Campaign-2010.aspx, 17.03.2011.

watched: video news reports online (48% of Internet-using registered voters), previously recorded online videos  of candidate speeches, press conferences, or debates (40%), informational videos online which explain a political issue (39%), humorous or parody online videos  dealing with political issues (37%), political advertisements online (36%), and live online videos  of candidate speeches, press conferences or debates (28%)[5].

### *Internet use and its authority in Europe*

In European countries, the use of the Internet and its role in getting informed about politics has also changed. In 2011, 29% of Europeans relied primarily on the Internet to get news on national politics[6], and in 2012 – 31%[7]. The German Research Institute YouGov indicates that for Germans Web 2.0 is still not their "first" source of political information; 38% of them declared they did not trust political information placed in social media, however 42% went online to search for political news before the 2013 parliamentary elections[8]. It is not surprising that those who rely on  the Internet to gain political knowledge are younger. In Poland, for instance, 93% of people between the ages of 18 and 24 perceive  the Internet as the most relevant information tool[9]. 43% of the youngest voters (18-24 years) looked  for information about a party or candi-

---

[5] Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, Online political videos and campaign 2012, http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2012/Election-2012-Video.aspx , 2.11.2012.

[6] Media use in the European Union, "Standard Eurobarometer" 76/ Autumn 2011- TNS Opinion and Social, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb76/eb76_media_en.pdf, 25.02.2014, p.24.

[7] Media use in the European Union, "Standard Eurobarometer" 78/ Autumn 2012- TNS Opinion and Social, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb78/eb78_media_en.pdf, 25.02.2014 , p.28.

[8] Marktforschungs-und Beratungsinstituts YouGov, *Politics by Social Media*, http://yougov.de/news/2013/08/26/politik-studie-wahlkampf-20/ , 22.02.2014.

[9] D. Batorski, M. Drabek, W. Gałązka, J. Zbieranek (ed.). *Wyborca 2.0.*,  Warszawa 2012, p. 40-41.

dates online, while among all registered voters the tendency remained 27%[10]. For Polish[11] as well as for German voters[12], TV remains their preferred information source in the period before elections. Still, one should not forget that those who watch TV might do it via the Internet. 7% of European citizens did so on a daily basis in 2011, while 17% did it at least once a week[13].

### Hypermedia campaign

Information technologies have played a role in campaign organization since the 1970s, but it is only over the last decade that the application of new technologies has also become an opportunity for organizational restructuring within political parties and campaigns. As a result, a completely new and different way of planning and conducting campaigns has emerged, which Gibson[14] calls a "cyber-campaign", and Howard[15] defines it as the *hypermedia campaign – an agile political organization defined by its capacity for innovatively adopting digital technologies for express political purposes and its capacity for innovatively adapting its organizational structure to conform to new communicative practices*. It is not that political campaigns simply employ digital information technologies in their communications strategies. Rather, integration of such technologies becomes an occasion for organizational adaptation, affecting organizational goals and relationships among professional staff, political leadership, volunteers, financial contributors, citizens, and other polit-

---

[10] *Ibidem*, p.40-41.

[11] *Ibidem*, p.40-41.

[12] Marktforschungs- und Beratungsinstituts YouGov, Politics by Social Media, http://yougov.de/news/2013/08/26/politik-studie-wahlkampf-20/ , 22.02.2014.

[13] Media use in the European Union, "Standard Eurobarometer" 78/ Autumn 2012- TNS Opinion and Social, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb78/eb78_media_en.pdf , 27.02.2014, p.6.

[14] R.K. Gibson, *Web campaigning …*, p. 96.

[15] P.N. Howard, *New media campaigns and the managed citizen*, New York 2006, p. 2.

ical campaigns. According to Howard[16], this rising prominence of hypermedia campaigns is related to three factors. Firstly, we observed the emergence of professional political technocrats with special expertise in information technology (IT). Unlike other campaign managers, the consultants specializing in IT focus mainly on building new communication technologies for citizens and candidates. Secondly, the political consulting industry replaced mass-media tools with targeted media tools, ranging from fax and computer-generated direct mail to email and website content, which allowed the industry to tailor messages to specific audiences. Thirdly, the engineers of political hypermedia made technical decisions about political hypermedia that constrained subsequent decisions about the production and consumption of political content.

Howard[17] argues that the hypermedia campaign has replaced the mass media campaign, like the one launched in 1988 which marked the beginning of an important transition in the organization of political information in the United States. Between the 1988 and 2004 presidential campaign seasons, the political content in the Internet emerged as a critical component of American campaign strategies. Beyond the US, Internet campaigning also gathered momentum in other national contexts from the mid- to late 1990s. The British general elections of 1997 were certainly marked by the first extensive use of the new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) by the parties to communicate with the voters. In other parts of Europe, particularly in the Scandinavian countries and in the Netherlands, but also in Southern-European states such as Greece and Portugal, political parties started to realize the need to establish some kind of web presence. As far as the Asia-Pacific region is concerned, the parties in Australia and New Zealand demonstrated first signs

---

[16] Ibidem, p. 2-3.
[17] Ibidem, p. 5-18.

of taking their campaigns into the web for the first time during elections held in 1998 and 1999, respectively[18].

This new channel for mass communication provided the political parties and candidates with new means to reach the voters. Furthermore, it was expected that this could be done at low, or at least reasonable, costs and without the interference of news media. The Web also meant opening of a new, fast and direct channel for two-way communication between the parties and the electorate.

### Hypermedia campaign in practice: USA vs Poland

From the perspective of candidate campaign management, the Internet and related tools have allowed a number of campaigns to make significant advances in fund-raising, volunteer coordination, logistics, intelligence on voters and opposition research. The establishment of the 'MyBarackObama.com' or MyBO sites in early 2007 introduced a new and innovative 'twist' to online campaigning that quickly came to be seen as one of the defining features of a highly successful web strategy. The site offered a wide range of Web 2.0 type functionalities such as personal blogging, social networking, video and photo sharing; all of those moved campaign web offerings forward from the largely static 'brochureware' style that was predominant in the Web 1.0 era. Users could register to access databases that would provide them with names and addresses of likely or leaning Democrats in their neighborhood whom they could visit or call. One was able to download tools to fundraise on Obama's behalf. Over one million people signed up to the site, thousands of events

---

[18] R.K. Gibson, *Web campaigning …*, p. 96.

were planned using its tools, and supporters using it collected around $35 million in donations, constituting about six percent of the final amount raised[19].

Although the Internet enables great opportunities for campaign message dissemination[20], advanced and sophisticated ICT innovations remain relatively rare, unsystematic and unsuccessful[21]. The analysis of the Polish parliamentary campaign in 2011 conducted by Batorski, Nagraba, Zając and Zbieranek[22] showed that although the Internet is an increasingly important medium, its information relevance for voters is surprisingly low. It might be explained by poor web presence of candidates and the low quality of Internet campaigns. Only nearly one fourth of Polish adults managed to reach Internet information about candidates. Moreover, Internet users were not satisfied with what they found. Social networking sites (SNS) used to play a bigger role, however candidates seemed to underestimate their potential and neglect their use. Candidates missed a coherent strategy and failed to involve voters by the means of interactive tools. The lack of professionalism was evident.

On the other hand, the effectiveness of online political marketing tools is also being affected by Internet users. And those who search for information on

---

[19] R.K. Gibson, *'Open source campaigning?': UK party organisations and the use of the new media in the 2010 General election*, 2010,
 http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1723329 ; J.K. Woolley, A.M. Limperos, M.B. Oliver, T*he 2008 presidential election, 2.0: A content analysis of user-generated political Facebook groups*, "Mass Communication and Society", 2010, Vol. 13, No. 5, p. 631-652; D.L. Cogburn, F.K. Espinoza-Vasquez, *From networked nominee to networked nation: Examining the impact of Web 2.0 and social media on political participation and civic engagement in the 2008 Obama campaign*, "Journal of Political Marketing" 2011, Vol. 10, No.1-2, 189-213; W.J. Miller, *We can't all be Obama: The use of new media in modern political campaigns,* "Journal of Political Marketing" 2013, Vol. 12, No.4, p.326-347.

[20] W. Cwalina, A. Falkowski, B. Newman, *Political marketing: Theoretical and strategic foundations*, Armonk 2011, p. 237-246.

[21] M. Hindman, *The real lessons of Howard Dean: Reflections on the first digital campaign*, "Perspectives on Politics" 2005, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 121-128.; S. Ward, W. Lusoli, R. Gibson, *Australian MPs and the Internet: Avoiding digital age?* "Australian Journal of Public Administration" 2007, Vol. 66, no. 2, 210-222;

[22] D. Batorski, M. Nagraba, J.M. Zając, J. Zbieranek, *Internet w kampanii wyborczej 2011*, Warszawa 2012, p. 9-12.

politics online appear to represent a specific group. As Djupsund and Carlson[23] note, it seems that this group of Internet users consists in particular of citizens who are interested in or are connected to politics anyway. Hence, this fact would enhance the reinforcing rather than the mobilizing effect of the Internet presence of politics. In other words, the Internet will strengthen existing patterns of political participation rather than encourage those who are currently marginalized by the political system from participation in political discourse.

## Negative campaign on the Internet

### First cases and theories

Negative advertising was used in the first political campaign presented via television, in the 1952 Eisenhower-Stevenson race. Several commercials from the "Eisenhower Answers America" series overtly attacked the Democrats, although Stevenson was not usually mentioned by name. Negative political advertising serves a number of campaign functions. It creates awareness about candidates and their issue positions, helps voters set issue priorities on their political agenda, and increases interest in the campaign by stimulating interpersonal and public discussion of it and by generating media coverage[24]. Faber, Timms, and Schmitt[25] assume that using negative advertising during political elections is driven by three major goals:

---

[23] G. Djupsund, T. Carlson, Catching *the 'wired voters'? Campaigning on the Internet*, "Nordicom-Information" 2003, Vol. 25, No. 1/2, p. 48.

[24] E. Diamond, S. Bates, *The spot: The rise of political advertising on television*, Cambridge 1992, p. 44-63; L.L. Kaid, *Political advertising in the United States*, In LL. Kaid, C. Holtz-Bacha (eds.), *The Sage handbook of political advertising*, Thousand Oaks 2006, p. 37-38; W. Cwalina, A. Falkowski, B. Newman, *Political marketing…*, p. 224-236.

[25] R.J. Faber, A.R. Timms, K.G. Schmitt, Accentuate *the negative?: The impact of negative political appeals on voting intent*, In P. Stout (ed.), *Proceedings of American Academy of Advertising*, Austin 1990, p. 11.

1. Negative appeals may simply give a voter a reason not to vote for the target candidate. As a result, voters choose based on whom they do not want to be elected ("negative vote" or "protest vote").

2. Negative appeals make voters compare the candidates, making the sponsor look better by comparison. As a result, the sponsoring candidate gains positive support.

3. Negative appeals may polarize voters. The existing attitudes of supporters of the sponsoring candidate strengthen and increase the likelihood of voting.

From this perspective, negative advertising can be considered efficient only in three cases: when it increases support for the sponsor candidate, and, simultaneously, lowers or keeps at the same level the support for the target candidate, and when it does not change the support for the sponsor but lowers it for the target candidate. However, the other six possible effects of using negative advertising are omitted: three of them preserve the *status quo* (support for both candidates simultaneously goes down, increases, or does not change) and three related to a backlash effect (the target gains or loses support and the sponsor loses or, if the target gains support, the voting situation remains unchanged). From this perspective, without taking into account the content of the advertising and its target audience, the probability of a negative campaign's success is 30 percent. Moreover, Homer and Batra[26] in their experimental study concluded that negative political messages are more successful in damaging overall voter attitudes toward the target candidate than positive messages are in raising such attitudes.

---

[26] P.M. Homer, R. Batra, *Attitudinal effects of character-based versus competence-based negative political communications*, "Journal of Consumer Psychology" 1994, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 163-185.

Lau[27] believes that the psychological principles underlying the effectiveness of negative messages consist in the fact that negative information stands out against a positive background (the figure-ground hypothesis) and that people are more strongly motivated to avoid costs than to approach gains (the cost orientation hypothesis). The first phenomenon is defined as perceptual explanation of negativity. According to this assumption, we like our jobs, our neighbors and the people around us, and it is against this positive background that the negative information may stand out due to its relative infrequency. It may act as a simple perceptual contrast because it is unexpected and therefore more credible and more informative. The other mechanism indicated by Lau is a motivational explanation of negativity. It is related to the survival of species: it is more adaptive to avoid life-threatening costs than to approach pleasurable gains. Skowronski and Carlson[28] point to yet another mechanism that may lay the foundations of negative campaigns' effectiveness: greater diagnosticity of negative (rather than positive) information in person-related impression formation. Extreme or negative behaviors are generally perceived as more diagnostic than moderate or positive behaviors and, as a consequence, they have more influence on the process of impression or attitude formation.

### Modern use of negative campaigns on the Internet

Since the first negative advertising spot was broadcast by Eisenhower's staff, this way of appealing to voters has become one of the most frequently used marketing methods. Its goal is to undermine or even destroy the image of the rival and – by contrast – to strengthen voters' perception of the candi-

---

[27] R.R. Lau, *Two explanations for negativity effects in political behavior*, "American Journal of Political Science" 1985, Vol. 29, No. 1, p. 119-138.
[28] JJ. Skowronski, D.E. Carlston, *Negativity and extremity biases in impression formation: A review of explanations*, "Psychological Bulletin" 1989, vol. 105, No. 1, p. 136-137.

date's own image. Kaid and Johnston[29] conducted a content analysis of 830 American television spots from eight presidential campaigns launched between1960 and 1988. They found that 29 percent of all ads contained some negative appeals. However, there were many fluctuations in their frequency, depending on particular presidential campaigns. As noted by Lau, Sigelman, and Rovner[30], 83 percent and 89 percent, respectively, of the ads sponsored by the Democratic and Republican Congressional Campaign Committees in 2004 were negative. The researchers from the Wisconsin Advertising Project[31] found that during just one week between September 28 and October 4, 2008, nearly 100 percent of John McCain's campaign advertisements were negative and so were 34 percent of Barack Obama's. Comparing this presidential election to the one held in 2004, the researchers indicate that both campaigns of McCain and Obama, aired more negative advertisements than their counterparts did. In 2004, 64 percent of ads from the campaign of George W. Bush were negative, while (until October 4) in the case of McCain's campaign this figure was 73 percent. Similarly, 34 percent of all Kerry's ads were negative while Obama's ads amounted to 61 percent.

### Why to do a negative campaign on the Internet?

Many more cases of "going negative," as Ansolabehere and Iyengar[32] define it, are related to both candidates and their political consultants being convinced that negative ads are effective and that they bring particular profits

---

[29] L.L. Kaid, A. Johnston, *Negative versus positive television advertising in U.S. presidential campaigns, 1960-1988,* "Journal of Communication" 1991, Vol. 41, No. 3, p. 53-63.

[30] R.R. Lau, L. Sigelman, I.B. Rovner, *The effects of negative political campaigns: A meta-analytic reassessment*, "Journal of Politics" 2007, Vol. 69, No. 4, p. 1176-1209.

[31] Wisconsin Advertising Project, Pres. TV advertising spending continues to grow: Over $28 million spent from September 28–October 4, 2008,
http://wiscadproject.wisc.edu/wiscads_release_100808.pdf

[32] S. Ansolabehere, S. Iyengar, *Going negative: How political advertisements shrink and polarize the electorate*, New York 1995, p. 145-158.

to the sponsor. However, the results of meta-analysis of 111 studies on negative political advertising conducted by Lau, Sigelman, and Rovner[33] clearly disprove this view.

According to their conclusions negative campaigning tends to be more memorable and therefore stimulates knowledge about the campaign. However, there is no empirical proof that negative campaigning is an effective mean of winning votes and bolstering a candidate's own image in comparison to opponent's image.

Moreover, Lau and his collaborators stated that there is large amount of evidence indicating a modest tendency for negative campaigns to undermine a positive effect for the candidates they target. Furthermore, there is no reliable evidence that negative campaigning reduces voter turnout, though it does lead to a slightly lower sense of political efficacy, trust in government and possibly overall public mood. Although the results of the analysis contradict conventional wisdom, in some circumstances negative campaigns have an advantage over positive ones[34]. It is probably easier for candidates and their consultants to fine-tune attacks, rather than positive messages and, therefore, to focus on what is more controllable and new.

An increasingly common phenomenon that can be observed during political campaigns is the emergence of negative advertising not sponsored by the candidate (so called third-party advertising)[35]. Third-party election advertising is political advertising in any medium during an election period with the purpose of promoting or opposing, directly or indirectly, a registered political party or the election of a registered candidate. These ads are sponsored by various "independent" voter or pressure groups (e.g., Swift Boat Veterans for

---

[33] R.R. Lau, L. Sigelman, I.B. Rovner, *The effects of negative political campaigns…*, p. 1176-1209.

[34] W. Cwalina, A. Falkowski, B. Newman, *Political marketing…,* p.234-236.

[35] Ibidem, p. 229-230.

Truth's ad against John Kerry or the anti-Bush ad sponsored by Air Traffic Controllers in the 2004 U.S. presidential campaign). These groups spend particularly large amounts of money on advertisements when major public policies are under consideration. For example, $14 million was spent by the Health Insurance Association of America to air its "Harry and Louise" advertisement opposing President Clinton's Health Security Act[36]. In a content study comparing third-party and candidate spots from the 2004 US presidential election, Dalton and McIlwain[37] found that third-party spots were significantly more negative, addressed more issues than candidate spots, and made fewer explicit references to issues. Furthermore, Weber, Dunaway, and Johnson[38] in an experimental study found that ads sponsored by unknown interest groups are more persuasive than those sponsored by candidates or known interest groups, and persuasion is mediated by perceived credibility of the source.

Another sort of negative third-party advertising are ads, whose sponsors do not want to show their name. In 2007, Polish voters could observe on the streets black billboards criticizing the Law and Justice Party. Each billboard showed the title "Rules of the Law and Justice Party" surrounded by such words as "aggression", "contempt", "defames". The label in the end pointed out that "Polish people are ashamed of the Law and Justice government". Later it was discovered that it was the Civic Platform (competitor of Law and Justice) who sponsored these billboards[39].

---

[36] K.H. Jamieson, *Everything you think you know about politics and why you're wrong*, New York 2000, p. 126.

[37] P. Dalton, C. McIlwain, *Third-party "hatchet" ads: An exploratory content study comparing third-party and candidate spots from the 2004 presidential election*, "Atlantic Journal of Comunication" 2011, Vol. 19, No. 3, p. 129-151.

[38] C. Weber, J. Dunaway, T. Johnson, *It's all in the name: Source cue ambiguity and the persuasive appeal of campaign ads*, "Political Behavior" 2012, Vol. 34, No. 3, p. 561-584.

[39] http://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/polityka/artykuly/81242,tusk-nie-musi-przepraszac.html

Research on the effectiveness of such negative advertising was also conducted by Gina Garramone[40]. More precisely, her experiment explored the roles of sponsor and rebuttal (refuting the attack by launching one's own ad or ignoring it) in negative political advertising. A 1982 political commercial targeted against Montana senator John Melcher by the National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC) was used as the stimulus. The video-only sponsor identification tag was removed from the original spot. Two corresponding sponsor identification tags consisting of white lettering on a blue background and an announcer's voice-over were created. The first read "Paid for by the Williams for Senate Committee" and the second "Paid for by the National Conservative Political Action Committee. Not authorized by any candidate or candidate's committee". The newscast containing the NCPAC-sponsored ad was used in the rebuttal manipulation. For the "no rebuttal" condition, subjects viewed only this newscast. For the "rebuttal" condition, an actual rebuttal ad aired in Montana was exposed.

The experiment results showed that both the sponsor – and rebuttal-related factors determined the impact of the negative ad on perceptions of the candidates and voter intentions. Independent sponsorship was more effective than candidate sponsorship, resulting in greater intended effects against the target candidate and in reduced backlash effects against the opponent. Rebuttal by the target candidate increased backlash against the opponent, but failed to influence perceptions of the target. According to Garramone[41], campaign media planners may draw some conclusions from these results. The intended effects of negative political ads are increased by the use of an independent sponsor, while backlash effects against the opponent are decreased. The au-

---

[40] G.M. Garramone, *Effects of negative political advertising: The roles of sponsor and rebuttal,* "Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media" 1985, Vol. 29, No. 2, p. 147-159.
[41] Ibidem, p. 157-158.

thor concludes that *the direct implication for campaign planners is to leave the 'dirty work' to the independent organizations*[42]. However, as "The Economist" stated: *Republicans have bought up hundreds of web addresses with Democratic candidates' names and set up at least 18 websites that look supportive at first glance but then lambast the candidate*[43].

As the medium in which negative advertising appears remains an important element of negative political campaign, it is not surprising that online political campaigns are full of negative messages as well. The normalization hypothesis suggests that *political practice on the Internet closely resemble[s] politics offline and that traditional factors affecting the distribution of political resources shape the way that political actors use the Web*[44]. Druckman, Kifer and Parkin[45] found support for the normalization hypothesis; they compared data from over 700 congressional candidate websites over three election cycles (2002, 2004 and 2006) with television advertising data and came to the conclusion that candidates go negative across those media with similar likelihood.

Klotz states that *perhaps the most alluring attraction of negative advertising on the Internet is that the viewer typically chooses to see the negative advertising*[46]. In television ads, the viewer of the ad has no choice as to what information is received, if the channel is not changed. Furthermore, negative information is meticulously segregated into separate documents on the can-

---

[42] Ibidem, p. 158.

[43] How to date a supermodel, "The Economist", February 15th-21st 2014, p.35.

[44] K.A. Foot, S.M. Schneider, *Web campaigning*, Cambridge 2006, p. 169.

[45] J.N. Druckman, M.J. Kifer, M. Parkin, *Timeless strategy meets new medium: Going negative on congressional campaign web sites*, 2002-2006, "Political Communication" 2010, Vol. 27, No. 1., 88-103.

[46] R. Klotz, Virtual *criticism: Negative advertising on the Internet in the 1996 Senate races,* "Political Communication" 1998, Vol. 15, No. 3, p. 362.

didate websites. More recently, Wu and Dahmen[47] conducted an experiment to test the  impact differences between campaign websites of different orientations sponsored by a fictitious senatorial candidate, John Robinson, and an independent interest group. They designed six distinct sites to mirror conventional candidate home pages or websites of interest groups. Three of them appear to be official sites of a feature candidate and the other three sites are sponsored by a civic nonprofit organization called "Citizens for Change", which supports the fictitious senatorial candidate. Out of the six sites, four contain identical information and pictures about the feature candidate John Robinson, except for sponsorship. Two other websites sponsored by the featured candidate and by Citizens for Change contain only negative messages about Robinson's fictitious opponent Bill Carter. The participants in the experiment sessions were instructed to view the designated website, and after they finished, their attitudes toward the candidates was assessed. The obtained results of the experiment indicate that website message orientation – positive or negative – does lead to different support levels toward the candidates, predicting at the same time the voting intention. This is precisely why negative campaigns are rampant during elections. The study results also show that negative information about opponents can function well to the sponsoring candidates' advantage and risk little backlash. Moreover, site sponsorship only makes a  difference to the credibility of negative information. If respondents' Internet literacy is not universally high, they do not always discern the sponsorship of websites.

Among many of Internet campaign tools, banners seem to be particularly interesting.

---

[47] H.D. Wu, N.S. Dahmen, *Web sponsorship and campaign effects: Assessing the difference between positive and negative web sites*, "Journal of Political Marketing" 2011, Vol. 9, No. 4, p. 314-329.

**Political online banner ads**

Obama's victory in 2008 and 2012 elections was greatly aided by his campaign's social media efforts, but few realize that his campaign dove deep into online advertising. In 2012, his campaign was using online ads even more than in 2008, and by June 2012 it generated 1.2 billion ad impressions. In July of 2012 alone the Obama campaign ran 921 million online ads, eclipsing the Romney campaign ad count by 571 million. While the Obama campaign significantly outpaced Romney's online efforts early on, the supporters of Romney ramped up their ad spending, doubling their efforts from June to July 2012. In total, spending for online advertising related to 2012 elections was expected to reach $160 million when it was all said and done. That's over six times more than what was spent for online ads in the 2008 elections[48].

Given the highly focused targeting which online ads can provide, compared to offline media, political campaigns that do not have banner ads in their marketing mix are missing a major opportunity. This is especially important for candidates who lack massive financial war chests, like many grass roots movements. As Howard pointed out: *Even though banner ads are no longer a major source of revenue for Internet advertisers, they do help interested parties collect information about the people who use political hypermedia. They allow organizations to track users and their habits and create relational profiles for use as political marketing tools*[49]. Moreover, according to Mentzer[50], current local ad-targeting capabilities by national newspapers, TV channels sites, informational portals, blogs, etc., mean they can now be in-

---

[48] L. Van Zee, Political banner ads in of 2012,
http://blogs.imediaconnection.com/blog/2012/09/12/political-banner-ads-of-201222.02.2014.
[49] P.N. Howard, *New media campaigns…*, p. 94.
[50] B. Mentzer, *Banner ads: The new entry in paid political media plans*, "Campaigns&Elections" 2000, Vol. 21, No. 6, p. 69.

cluded in candidate media plans. Each site has different targeting abilities. Some target by market, others by region, ZIP code or phone number prefixes.

Persuasion capabilities of political online banners could be used to directly influence voters' attitude and decisions; they also form a tool of negative campaigns focused on opponents. During the 1998 American election campaign for senators and governors, Westhill Partners, Turtleback Interactive, and DecisionTree (three companies dealing with online marketing consulting and studies of Internet use) in collaboration with the New York Times Electronic Media Company, conducted an analysis. It considered online banner campaign of Peter Vallone, the Democratic candidate for governor in the state of New York. The authors of the research were Karen Jagoda from Turtleback Interactive and Nick Nyhan from Decision Tree[51]. Their research, called *E-Voter 98*, was focused on the influence of Peter Vallone's banners targeted at George Pataki, the Republican governor who was running for reelection. Vallone's banners, which included negative slogans about the achievements and program of his rival, were put on the *New York Times* webpage toward the end of October 1998. They were part of the media mix developed for this campaign by the consulting company Gould Communication Group. The research was conducted between October 17 and November 3 (the day of the election) in the form of a mail survey sent out to registered voters in the state of New York.  1,335 respondents replied to it, 729 of whom had at least once seen Vallone's advertising banner (the experimental group). The other 606 respondents had never been exposed to the banner (the control group). The main objectives of *E-Voter 98* were to quantify the attitudinal impact of Vallone for Governor online banner advertising;

---

[51] K. Jagoda, N. Nyhan, *E-Voter 98: Measuring the impact of online advertising for a political candidate. A case study*, http://www.e-voter98.com/overview.html, 21.01.1999.

determine if the mere presence of the online advertising had any impact on favorability ratings and unaided and aided awareness; and provide the first set of empirical research data on the topic of online political advertising and its attitudinal impact on people who were exposed to it.

The obtained results suggest that Pataki's favorability rating stood at 42% among the experimental group, compared to 49% among the control group. None of the participants from the experimental group clicked on the banner, serving as evidence that the mere presence of the banners and their negative anti-Pataki message had an impact on people even when they did not click on the banner ad. Furthermore, the banners sponsored by Vallone had a significantly unfavorable impact on the attitudes of the undecided and independent voters toward the target candidate. The banners had a strong influence also on people who frequently used the Web.

Thus, despite the fact that Vallone's negative banners had a negative influence on the evaluation of his rival, they did not develop a more positive image of their sponsor. In the end, Peter Vallone decisively lost the fight for the governor's seat in New York State to George Pataki.

**Experimental study**

The aim of the conducted experiment was to check the influence of a political negative online banner ads on image perception of attacked party and on support for this party, when the ad is posted on a non-political website.

### Participants and method

*Participants*. The sample consisted of 55 participants (36 females and 19 males) aged between 19 and 40 (M=24,7; SD=4,4). Most of them were students (78%), while the rest represented higher education professionals (22%).

Subjects for the experiment were selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher (so called convenience sampling method).

*Procedure and method*. The experiment was conducted with the use of a standard procedure widely known in the research of advertising effectiveness: before and after (stimulus exposition) measurements[52]. The study took a place in university computer rooms, where PCs were networked.

In both measurements (pre- and post-test) participants evaluated the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) with a use of eight semantic differential scales with opposing adjectives at each end (responsible-irresponsible, sincere-insincere, efficient-inefficient, strong-weak, honest-dishonest, trustworthy-untrustworthy, friendly-hostile, professional-amateurish). Each scale has 7-points, from 3 to 1 on the left and right scales' side, and 0 in the middle). The principal component analysis allows grouping these scales into two factors corresponding with two dimensions of party image: credibility (pre-test: Cronbach's $\alpha=0,92$, and post-test: $\alpha=0,94$) and professionalism (pre-test: $\alpha=0,57$, and post-test: $\alpha=0,71$). Moreover, participants were twice asked about their support for SLD. All of the measurements were transformed into a scale of 0 to 100, based on degree of clarity. The higher the rating, the more positive the evaluation.

*Stimulus material*. Between both measurements, the subjects were asked to navigate through a popular-science website (named "Knowledge and Human") for ten minutes. The site was made up especially for this experiment. One group of subjects (*the casual Internet users*) did it without additional instructions (this experimental condition was supposed to simulate an accidental

---

[52] W. Cwalina, A. Falkowski, L.L. Kaid, *Role of advertising in forming the image of politicians: Comparative analysis of Poland, France, and Germany*, "Media Psychology" 2000, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 124.

or incidental connection with the site from a browser), while the other group of participants (*the intentional Internet users*) received instructions to pay a particular attention to information (articles) posted on the website as well as on its attractiveness and functionality.

The created website consisted of a main page with short articles and scientific facts (three short facts about nature) and a "Do you know..." section (five questions with answers). Moreover, the website offered four main sections (topic of the day, physics, technology and entertainment), each presenting one different article with a picture. The homepage of the website is shown in Figure 1.

**Fig. 1. Homepage of popular-science website created for an experiment.**



**Source: Own elaboration for experimental purposes.**

The website contained a negative political banner, without a sponsor's name, presenting SLD in an unfavourable manner. The banner consisted of Leszek Miller's picture and quotations: "self-polished concrete" (*„Beton autoszlifowany"*) and "the SLD staff is a deeply dishonest community" (*„kadry SLD-owskie, to zbiorowość głęboko przeżarta nieuczciwością"*). The picture as well as quotations were taken from the Polish daily newspaper "Gazeta Wy-

borcza" (September 17, 2001)[53]. The ad was an animated flash banner with quotations presented alternately. The banner ad is displayed in Figure 2.


**Fig. 2. Negative banner ad used in experiment.**
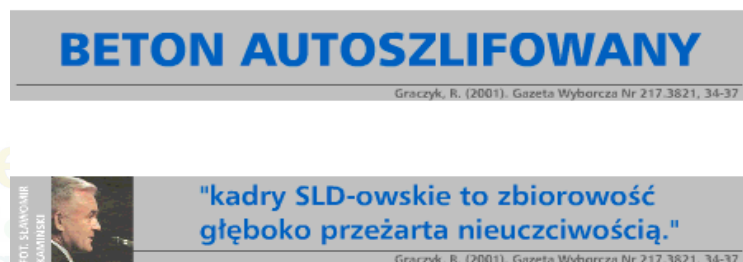


**Source: Own elaboration for experimental purposes.**

## Results

According to the intensity of Internet use, participants were divided into two groups: heavy users (N=30), that is those, who use Internet on a daily basis, and non-heavy users (N=25), who use Internet less frequently. The indexes of the party image change were counted for every participant by subtracting the first measurement from the second one. The indexes responded to change in perception of SLD credibility, change in perception of SLD professionalism and change in support for this party. The experimental design for these three variables was: 2 (intentionality of WWW use: intentional vs. casual) $\times$ 2 (frequency of the Internet use: heavy vs. non-heavy).

An analyses of changes in perception of credibility and support for SLD have not revealed any statistically significant results (means for all subjects, respectively: M=-0,85 and M=-1,52; F<1). However, the perception of SLD professionalism was significantly influenced by an interaction of WWW use and Internet use frequency (F(2, 51)=7,32, p<0,01), which is graphically presented in Figure 3.

---

[53] http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,436813.html, 15.03.2014.

**Fig. 3. Intentionality of Website use and frequency of the Internet use in changes in perception of party professionalism.**
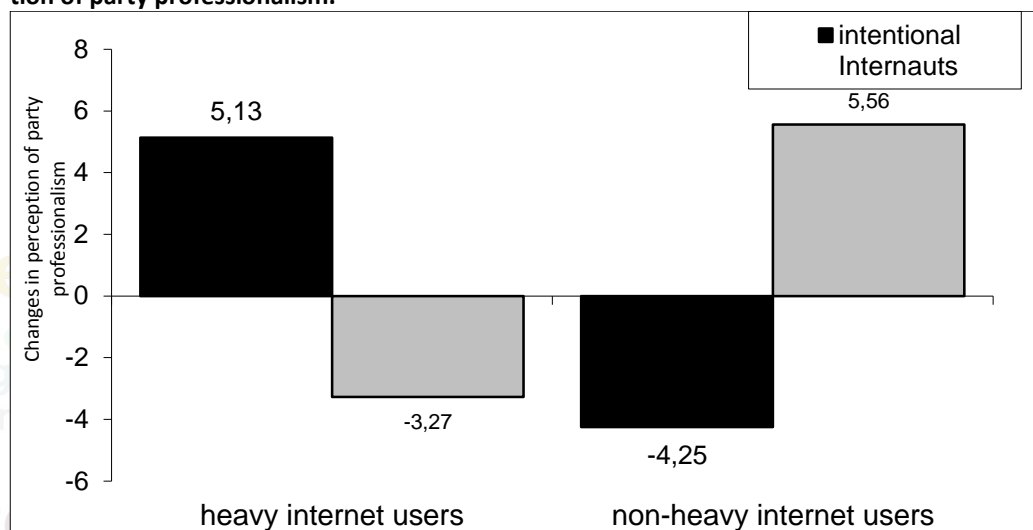


Source: Own elaboration.

The results of means comparison (Duncan tests) show that in the case of *intentional Internet users*, if they were heavy Internet users, their evaluation of SLD professionalism increased following the exposure to the banner, but if they were non-heavy users – it decreased (respectively, M=5,13 and M=-4,25, p<0,05). *Casual Internet users* displayed opposite effects: ratings of SLD professionalism increased among non-heavy users, but decreased among heavy users (M=5,56 and M=-3,27, statistical tendency p=0,06). On the other side, if heavy users used the website intentionally, their ratings of SLD professionalism increased, whereas if they did it accidentally (without purpose) – their ratings decreased (statistical tendency p=0,08). On the contrary, non-heavy users concentrated on information posted on the website perceived SLD as less professional, rating SLD more professional in case of no instruction (statistical tendency p=0,06).

The second aspect of data analyses was focused on specifying predictors of change in support for SLD (dependent variable), separately for groups divided

according to their intentionality of WWW use. Two regression analyses were conducted using changes in perception of SLD credibility and changes in perception of SLD professionalism as the predictors (independent variables).

Among *intentional Internet users* ($R^2=0,17$), the change in perception of SLD professionalism was the only significant predictor of change in support for this party ($\beta=0,41$, p<0,05; for change in credibility – $\beta=0,01$, *ns*.). Among *casual Internet users* the pattern was reverse ($R^2=0,25$): change in credibility perception emerged as the only significant predictor of change in support for SLD ($\beta=0,49$, p<0,05; for change in professionalism – $\beta=0,13$, *ns*.).

**Conclusions**

The study results supported predictions about the effectiveness of negative banners ads on party image perception. Nonetheless, although negative banners ads influenced change in perception of credibility and in perception of professionalism, only the second change was statistically significant. Furthermore, the influence of negative banners depended on website use intentionality as well as on Internet use experience. After negative banner exposure, *intentional Internet users* who were also heavy Internet users evaluated SLD professionalism as higher, while non-heavy users – lower, contrary to *causal Internet users*, whose ratings on SLD professionalism increased as long as they were non-heavy users.

The findings of the current study also suggest that change in party image perception influenced by negative banner ad affects support for that party as well. If Internet users go online intentionally to check a site they are interested in, and encounter a negative banner which lowers their ratings of party professionalism, their support for that party would get lower as well. However, the changes in party professionalism perception do not play a significant role

here. On the other hand, people who go online without purpose and see a  negative banner accidentally, would change their perception of party credibility, but not in party professionalism.

The results support the prediction about the influence of negative banners on the attitude towards the advertised object, but do not stress the impact of negative ads. As assumed by Faber, Timms, and Schmitt[54], negative advertising might lead to different effects. In this case, negative banner ads would have fulfilled their expected role. Losses in support for SLD and changes in party image could cost the candidate party  some points. The results, however, go along with what Wu and Dahmen[55] found in their research: negative messages lead to decreased ratings – in the presented study, to lower level of perceived professionalism, especially. It seems, that perceptual explanation of negativity might have played a role, because the negative banner ad was surrounded by rather neutral content. Further research examining the influence on heavy *vs.* non-heavy users is warranted. The current experiment has confirmed what Jagoda and Nyhan[56] showed in their work, that people who use the Web often are also under the influence of banners.

The relationship between ad negativity, Internet use intentionality and Internet use frequency requires deeper research. Better understanding of negative political online banners could help politicians and marketing specialists use the tools more professionally and enable psychologists to examine the negativity effect on the Internet. As for now, the findings of the experiment as well as the research on the persuasive role of political banner ads seem to be perfectly summarised by the president of Gould Communication Group: *online*

---

[54] R.J. Faber, A.R. Timms, K.G. Schmitt. *Accentuate the negative...*, p. 11.

[55] H.D. Wu, N.S. Dahmen, *Web sponsorship and campaign effects...*, p. 314-329.

[56] K. Jagoda, N. Nyhan, *E-Voter 98*.

*advertising should not be the main but additional element of candidate's promotion in his political campaign*[57].

Wojciech Cwalina – professor at University of Social Science and Humanities in Warsaw

Milena Drzewiecka – PhD student at University of Social Science and Humanities in Warsaw, MSc in Psychology and M.A. in Journalism and Communication

## Abstract

Modern and technologically advanced political marketing campaigns are making increasing use of the Internet. Although now one can observe a growing interest in particular in Web 2.0 (social networking, YouTube, etc.), it is also the "old" online tools (e.g. banner ads) which play an important role in marketing strategies. The article presents the results of an experiment whose purpose was to evaluate the effect of a negative political banner on the image and support for the attacked party. The results indicate that the negative banners decrease ratings of the attacked party image. However, these changes depend on both the intentionality use of the particular Web page on which a banner was placed, as well as on the level of Internet "experience" of affected individuals.

---

[57] J. Deane, A vote for political ad banners. ZDNN News, http://www.zdnet.com/, 16.04.1999.

**NEGATYWNE POLITYCZNE BANERY INTERNETOWE:**

**BADANIA EKSPERYMENTALNE**

**Abstrakt**

Nowoczesne i technologicznie zaawansowane polityczne kampanie marketingowe w coraz większym stopniu wykorzystują możliwości Internetu. Chociaż obecnie szczególnie wzrasta zainteresowanie Web 2.0 (sieci społecznościowe, YouTube, itp.), to jednak również „stare" online'owe narzędzia Internetowe są istotnym elementem strategii marketingowych. Artykuł przedstawia wyniki eksperymentu testującego skuteczność negatywnego baneru politycznego w zmianie ocen wizerunku i poparcia dla zaatakowanej w nim partii. Uzyskane wyniki wskazują, że negatywne banery obniżają oceny wizerunku zaatakowanej partii. Przy czym zmiany te zależą zarówno od intencjonalności korzystania ze strony Web, na której umieszczony był baner, jak również od internetowego „doświadczenia" badanych.

**Marek Górka**

# THE MEME AS AN EXAMPLE OF CARNIVALIZED INTERNET COMMUNICATION

> *Man is least himself when he talks in his own person.*
> *Give him a mask and he will tell you the truth...*
>
> Oscar Wilde

## Introduction

One of the prerequisites for democratic participation in a country is the existence of a public debate characterised by criticism. Nowadays, cyberspace makes it much easier for people to participate in the community life. Civil liberties may flourish due to the Internet, and said liberties may later on turn into a manifestation of support, discontent, social resistance or political satire which comprises both unfavourable comments about the authority.

In contrast to the new kind of politics practiced by new means of political communication in this place the reality of politics is understood in the traditional way. In other words, the politics is no longer reserved for educated individuals; all members of society may contribute. Thanks to the use of the Internet, citizens have become participants in a political debate regardless of their education, experiences or financial situation.

It is due to the exchange of opinions online that participants can express and explain their views, learn about other people's views, and become aware of the fact that they belong to a particular group. The use of the Internet enables citizens to participate in political socialization. Moreover, it influences the selected leaders' decisions and behaviour, as well as ensuring that the country is governed democratically. Especially present on the Internet the public intensifies its influence and importance to the functioning of democracy and the choice of its representatives. Regardless of the fact whether citizens use cyberspace occasionally or on a daily basis, it may influence the way they think and the manner in which their opinion is formed.

**The advantages of the Internet communication**

The Internet is characterised by a number of unique features which increase its meaning in political life and allow citizens to extend the public sphere. There is a myriad of qualities that are significant in relation to this communication channel; qualities that allow political debates to be conducted in an unrestrained manner.

One of the most distinctive features of communication is its interactivity. It allows Internet users to have a genuine opinion exchange. The possibility to express one's opinion about the real world in real-time is probably the most important and revolutionary characteristics of the Internet as a communication medium[1].

According to some researchers, interactivity is one of the most promising aspects of the Internet with regard to promoting a democratic society. It is partly because the Internet gives the opportunity to communicate not only horizontally, i.e. among citizens, but also vertically, i.e. between citizens and

---

[1] K. L. Hacker, *Missing links in the evolution of electronic democratization*. "Media, Culture & Society", 1996, Vol. 18, pp. 213–232.

elites. As a result, interaction is created which would be hardly possible in of-fline communication[2].

The Internet's interactivity can be defined in a variety of ways due to the fact that this phenomenon relates to the user's influence on technology itself, interaction with other users, and interaction as a phenomenon in the users' perception. This interaction depends on the interlocutors' engagement.

Another significant feature of the Internet communication is the fact that the distance between the interlocutors no longer matters. Therefore, one can find groups of people with similar political values or groups of opposing views. As a result, one can engage in either expressing one's own opinion or discussing a given topic with others[3].

Being anonymous is probably one of the most important aspects of the Internet. It allows the expression of views and opinions with no fear of bearing the consequences in the real world. On the one hand, anonymity lowers the sense of social presence, social conventions as well as ethical and moral norms. On the other hand, it may increase eagerness and interest in express-ing what one really thinks about politics. However, anonymity may also lead to anti-social behaviour such as online rows or flaming.The Internet allows users to be anonymous, which enables them to discuss a given topic freely. Howev-er, anonymity also offers a chance to express one's opinion in a negative or

---

[2] S. J. McMillan, J. S. Hwang, *Measures of perceived interactivity: An exploration of the role of direction of communication, user control, and time in shaping perceptions of interactivity*, "Journal of Advertising", 2002, Vol. 31, pp. 29–43; J. Stromer-Galley, *Interactivity-as-product and interactivity-as-process*, "The Information Society*", 2004, Vol. 20, pp. 391–394; S. Sundar, S. Kalyanaraman, J. Brown, *Explicating web site interactivity: Impression formation effects in political campaign sites*, "Communication Research", 2003, Vol. 30, pp. 30–59; D. Endres, B. Warnick, *Text-based interactivity in candidate campaign web sites: A case study from the 2002 elections*, "Western Journal of Communication", 2004, Vol. 68, pp.322–343.

[3] J. Stromer-Galley, *On-line interaction and why candidates avoid it*, "Journal of Communica-tion", 2000, Vol. 50, pp.111–132; J. Stromer-Galley, K. A. Foot, *Citizens perceptions of online interactivity and implications for political campaign communication,* "Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication", 2002, http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2002.tb00161.x/full, 02.02.2014.

hostile way. This, in turn, may lead to an increased level of discrimination against those who are different. As a result, cooperation only with the Internet users of similar values is strengthened. The illustrative of the thesis above is the form of the mobilization of political organizations where common denominator is defined ideology underpinned hatred to other groups.

Anonymity may not only encourage but also initiate a protest of the social group suffering discrimination. Moreover, due to the opportunity to express one's opinion anonymously and freely, a leader can emerge who will set the goals and determine characteristic features of a group that has been previously passive[4]. The possibility to anonymously express one's opinion is significant for the democratic discourse. It is important because it allows unpleasant consequences to be avoided; anonymous criticism makes it possible to express unpopular opinions or articulate slogans of the less privileged groups or communities.

Anonymous criticism expressed in the Internet is like a coin – it has two sides. On the one hand, it can serve as a „shield", on the other – as „a sword". Citizens who are Internet users, who need to be protected may use one of the Internet options to get support or obtain advice and assistance, which leads to catharsis[5]. Therefore, the Internet becomes a place for expressing one's own opinion[6].

Expressing unpopular slogans may encourage other Internet users to communicate similar views which might be a starting point for change. More-

---

[4] K. Y. A. McKenna, J. A. Bargh, *Coming out in the age of the Internet: Identity >>demarginalization<< through virtual group participation,* "Journal of Personality and Social Psychology", 1998, Vol. 75, pp.681–694.

[5] R. Davis, *Politics Online: Blogs, Chatrooms, and Discussion Groups in American Democracy,* New York: Routledge, 2005, http:/ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/download/35/6, 02.02.2014.

[6] K. D. Trammell, A. Keshelashvili, *Examining the new influencers: A selfpresentation study of A-list blogs,* "Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly", 2005, Vol. 82, pp.968–982; E. Wynn, J. E. Katz, *Hyperbole over cyberspace: Self-presentation and social boundaries in Internet home pages and discourse,* "The Information Society", 1997, Vol. 13, 297–327.

over, exchanging ideas anonymously on the Internet may be a substitute of fighting in real life; and it may be equally effective.

Verbal attacks and flaming in the Internet discourse, as well as hostile posts on social networking sites may effectively discredit a political opponent. However, once the attacks are exaggerated, other Internet users may be discouraged to get involved in the discussion. Then, the result might be exactly the opposite than expected. It is worth mentioning that the number of personal attacks in discussions moderated by a neutral party, by a government official or moderators employed for that purpose is much lower than in non-moderated discussions. No wonder that non-moderated websites are visited mostly by a huge number of frustrated Internet users whose opinions are much more hostile and aggressive.

Internet discussions may also serve a good purpose, especially when they are initiated by citizens for other citizens. Government websites do contribute to the political discourse on the Internet; however, since they are not interactive, they are excluded from the informal information flow.

Summing up, one can observe that there are at least three main advantages of Internet discussions: the first relates to the group of Internet users for whom talking about politics is not only pleasant but also beneficial[7]. This group may use a carnivalized form of communication; the term will be explained later on. The second advantage refers to a group of users that treat discussions on social networking sites as a resistance tool[8]. They do not criti-

---

[7] J. Stromer-Galley, *Diversity and political conversations on the Internet: Users perspectives*, "Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication", 2002, http:/jcmc.indiana.edu/vol8/issue3/stromergalley.html,02.02.2014.

[8] A. Fung, *One city, two systems: Democracy in an electronic chat room in Hong Kong*, "E-Networks and Democracy", 2002, Vol. 9, pp. 77–94; D. T. Hill, K. Sen, *The Internet in Indonesia's new democracy* [in:] P. Ferdinand (ed.), *The Internet, Democracy And Democratization,* Frank Cass Publishers, London 2000, pp. 119–136; S. V. Kulikova, D. D. Perlmutter, *Blogging down the dictator? The Kyrgyz revolution and Samizdat websites*, "International Communication Gazette" 2007, Vol. 69, pp.29–50.

cise democracy, but they protect it. Similarl to the first group, the second group can also express its opinion about the regime in a mocking and satirical way.

The third advantage is the fact that the discussions held on websites, especially when they are run by government institutions, "implement" democracy where citizens have a say in creating country policy[9]. It is beneficial not only for the citizens, but also for the government bodies and government policies. Since the message sender is the institution which is hardly ever spontaneous, any form of humour or fun is usually unintentional.

Nowadays, the Internet is the most common communication medium; it is a production tool but also a set of objects, materials, and ideas. Access to the Internet and its content poses a question about what the social communication in cyberspace is, and what forms it can take.

Together with the development of social media, society has more to say when it comes to expressing political views. By the growth of social media the public has more to say and can say more due to the new forms of communication. Therefore, governments and corporations no longer have a monopoly on political news. Social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter, as well as "memes" and demotivators have become tools that put pressure on both non-governmental organisations and individuals. What was impossible ten years ago, has now become commonplace. Therefore, a shift from centralised government policy to a decentralised one can be observed.

---

[9] J. W. Stanley, C. Weare, J. Musso, *Participation, deliberative democracy and the Internet: Lessons from a National Forum on Commercial Vehicle Safety,* [in:] P. M. Shane (ed.), *Democracy Online: The Prospects for Political Renewal through the Internet,* New York 2004, pp. 167–79.

**Carnivalized communication**

Contemporary politics is very demanding in terms of definitions. Today it is difficult for unambiguous the definition of public activity. Politics enters into every aspect of human life and *as a tool of political communication* the Internet rubs out the traditional concepts and boundaries. It also requires from its observers new criteria and tools that allow describing public life. Of course, researchers while searching for new ways of describing phenomena in the public sphere, have made every effort to understand the nature of social processes. One of the ways to describe political events is the application of the carnival category.

Constant antagonisms among political groups have led to a situation where instead of debating about ideas and development projects, issues un-important for the country are being discussed. Observing the emotions, games, entertainment, tension, as well as aggression and omnipresent para-doxes and humour present in political life, one can assume that politics is be-coming growingly infantile. However, there are observable elements of the medieval carnival to it. The whole dynamics of contemporary public life re-sembles the carnival convention. Even though both spheres might seem dis-tant from each other, politics and carnival do share some analogies and simi-larities.

Due to its provocative and ambiguous nature, the carnival has already been used in such fields of study as anthropology, ethnography, literary stud-ies, and social sciences. However, it seems the carnival has not been studied sufficiently in the field of social sciences. Social networking sites have become tools that shape our culture. They are also starting to play a significant role in the world of politics. Millions of interconnected computers and servers enable the digital information flow. Each piece of information is immediately copied and transferred to computers all over the world. The Internet users can, there-

fore, be both message senders and recipients. The cyberspace is constantly active; it multiplies already generated messages indefinitely and continually adds new content.

The influence of contemporary social media on the way politics functions indicates their huge potential in the field of social communication. Thanks to the Internet, both supporters and opponents of values presented via social networking sites can meet on the political arena and engage in disputes. Such freedom allows people to express views they would never say in public. Consequently, the freedom has a huge influence on the slogans presented on the Internet and converges with the carnival form in which irony distorts the already existing reality[10].

Therefore, cyberspace has turned out to be a place where criticism flourishes and there is no fear of facing consequences[11]. Moreover, it has become a fertile ground for an even more attractive nature of laughter. Depicting political mechanisms or public life phenomena in a comic manner mocks the vices of contemporary society and the said mechanisms. One needs to bear in mind that in order for carnivalized messages to become a part of political debate, they need to be visible. Present media coverage needs to raise a lot of controversy in be visible in the background of many other messages. Carnival communication with its irritating colors and topsy-turvy world arouses controversy and provides popularity. Furthermore, since mockery is an insepara-

---

[10] C. Rhodes, *Coffee and the business of pleasure: The case of Harbucks vs. Mr. Tweek*, "Culture and Organization" 2002, Vol. 8(4), pp. 293–306.

[11] I. Grugulis, *Nothing serious? Candidates' use of humour in management training,* "Human Relations", 2002, Vol. 55(4), pp. 387–406; D. P. O'Doherty, *Heidegger's unfunny and the academic text: Organization analysis on the blink,* [in:] R. Westwood, C. Rhodes, (eds.). *Humour, work and organization,* Abingdon, UK 2007, pp. 180–204.

ble part of carnival, carnivalized messages need to mock the reality in an exaggerated way[12].

Technological development and inexpensive access to the Internet led to the creation of new and interesting ways of presenting carnival performance. The term carnival helps to comprehend the role of laughter and satire in contemporary public sphere. Parody makes it possible to stay more reserved towards often unfriendly surroundings. It also allows the audience to think certain situations over.

The key to understanding the link between both caricature and Internet satire, as well as the carnival is the creation of a performance. If the performance is to be successful, it needs to be funny[13]. Therefore, if "memes" are to be funny and effective, they have to contain something new. They need to be surprising, they need to spread new forms of criticism and at the same time avoid repeating the same methods of irony so as not to become a cliché. Parody is essential to political thought in the public sphere. Carnival provides the distance to the reality and it is a convenient satirical tool. Therefore, irony is one of the crucial elements to maintain a public debate.

The Internet provides room for laughter, discussion and parody[14]. It reaches a wider range of audience, constantly providing a "vivid" ground for debates for both supporters and opponents of a particular view. Due to technological changes which made both tools and products cheaper and easier to create, everyone can participate in the carnival.

---

[12] R. Hariman, *Political parody and public culture*, "Quarterly Journal of Speech", 2008, Vol. 94(3), pp. 247–272.

[13] D. Kavanagh, O'Sullivan D., *Advertising: The organizational production of humour*, [in:] R. Westwood, C. Rhodes (eds.). *Humour, work and organization,* Abingdon, UK 2007, pp. 235–249; M. Parker, *The little book of management bollocks and the culture of organization*, [in:] R. Westwood, C. Rhodes, (eds.). *Humour, work and organization,* Abingdon, UK 2007, pp.77–92.

[14] R. Hariman, *Political parody and public culture*, "Quarterly Journal of Speech" 2008, Vol. 94(3), pp.247–72.

When it comes to the political sphere, parody may provide many points of view: there is a plethora of ways of looking at a particular idea[15]. However, in certain situations, parody may become a rationed form of freedom whose task is to keep social anger under control. Caricature may, therefore, be a more cunning and discrete form of power. It may help to maintain social order, serving as a kind of safety valve for protests[16]. That is why both critical and tongue-in-cheek parodies may cause an ambivalent approach in relation to authority[17]. Public sphere makes use of the carnival convention. Its form – irreverent towards official conventions - allows maintaining the democratic nature of the political discourse.

**What is a "meme"?**

Human beings, just like other living organisms, are only "breeding machines" that came into existence thanks to genes. People constitute the best environment for the genes to multiply and create new copies. Richard Dawkins, the author of "The Selfish Gene", presents the thesis that cultural data media called "memes" multiply information the way genes do[18]. Therefore, people reinforce information and become machines to multiply it. According to Dawkins, "memes" include, *inter alia*, music, fashion, ideas, common

---

[15] C. Rhodes, *Coffee and the business of pleasure...,* p.301.

[16] D. Collinson, *Managing humor*, "Journal of Management Studies", 2002, Vol. 29(3), pp.269–289.

[17] D. Hodgson, *Putting on a professional performance: Performativity, subversion and project management*, "Organization", 2005, Vol. 12(1), pp. 51–68; R. Westwood, *Comic relief: Subversion and catharsis in organisational comedic theatre*, "Organisation Studies", 2004, Vol. 25(5).pp. 775–795.

[18] J. Z. Langrish, *Darwinian Design: The Memetic Evolution of Design Ideas,* "Design Issues", 2004, Vol. 20(4), pp.4-19; A. Grafen, M. Ridley, *Richard Dawkins: How a Scientist Changed the Way We Think*, Oxford University Press 2006, pp. 45-100.

phrases, official and common types of behaviour, rituals, and religious beliefs[19].

Satire and parody are also copied and they constitute a common cultural media. However, they are rather marginalised. There is a clear disproportion between the attention paid to "memes" and the widespread use of "memes" on the Internet. Carnivalisation, the key to interpreting messages present in the cyberspace, constitutes yet another factor encouraging researchers to analyse "memes".

The idea that human culture develops analogically to the biological processes is not new. Charles Darwin mentioned it back in 1859, in the book entitled "The Origin of Species"[20]. Richard Dawkins' theory about "memes" as cultural media has inspired a number of researchers, not only biologists but also philosophers, sociologists, political scientists, information technology, media specialists, and interdisciplinary studies enthusiasts[21]. The theory encourages conducting further research and analyses concerning, *inter alia*, carnivalised reality.

Nowadays, the Internet is an information medium which copies culture, mentality, personality, awareness, and behaviour as dynamically and effectively as a viral epidemic[22]. "Memes", just like genes, need people to multiply and spread, and cyberspace is where contemporary population communicates[23].

Commonness and the number of pieces of information are becoming even greater psychological problems. People are addicted to the constant flow

---

[19] G. Keogh, *Reading Richard Dawkins: A Theological Dialogue with New Atheism*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis 2014, pp. 145-172.

[20] D. C. Dennett, The evolution of culture, "Monist". 2001, Vol. 84(3), p.305.

[21] B. Doyle, *Memography and the Memetic Web,* "EContent",2006, Vol. 29(1), p.25.

[22] D. Gatherer, *Meme pools, World 3, and Averroes's vision of immortality*, "Zygon: Journal of Religion&Science", 1998, Vol. 33(2), pp.203-219.

[23] L. Shifman, *MIT Press Essential Knowledge: Memes in Digital Culture*, Cambridge 2013, pp. 17-36.

of information  and continuous exchange of information. They change television channels without end and spend more and more time surfing the Internet.

Culture evolves at an unprecedented pace. In combination with the modern means of communication the culture is growing in a rapid pace. The evolution in question affects all its aspects: be it political, technological or aesthetic ones. Each discovery concerning the mechanisms of how behaviour and views spread on a mass scale makes researchers determine both the importance and the role of carnivalized humour which is being used in advertising and politics on a daily basis.

Everybody who has come up with an idea and wants to depict it in a  funny form may do it. A contemporary Internet user might get the impression that  the entirety of cyberspace is inundated with humorous pictures. The popularity of satires comprising a picture and a short caption is driven by, as one might assume, the need to laugh. However, such satires also  attempt to explain the contemporary reality by means of the carnival language.

Phenomena of that sort are called "memes". They appear on the Internet blogs, social networking sites and emails in the form of pictures, sounds, and films. When the YouTube platform became popular, amateur films with its characters and makers became well-known as well. However, the popularity did not last long. "Memes" can be discovered and watched very frequently, but they can be forgotten equally quickly. Particular varieties refer to cultural memory and reflect current events in an absurd manner.

A **"**meme" is a picture with a short caption which is a caricature illustration of current political, sports, and cultural events. „Memes" usually depict common, current situations which are retold in the carnival fashion. It places them in a new context. And the recipe for success is rather simple. Using sites such as memegenerator.net, one can create their own "memes" by clicking

a few times and posting them". Nowadays, such absurd-based means of communication is hugely approved by Internet users.

As the carnival convention requires, "memes" are focused on events. Thanks to that they are more visible, ironic, and, above all, they obtain a new meaning. Both the carnival and "memes" are a new way of perceiving the world. Although "meme-makers" intend to present something ironically or critically, there might appear doubts concerning the importance of their effectiveness. Moreover, parody plays a key role in this "awry" performance. This exceptional parody is repeated, and therefore one can see an apparent ideal. Parody makes the power hegemony relative, and, at the same time, it attempts to show an alternative world.

"Memes" have turned into a tool for presenting all kinds of ordinary as well as unfortunate political events. They have become mocking comments which are not only to provoke but also to induce laughter. One can never predict what real-life situation will be mocked on the Internet and how strong a reaction it will evoke in a satire. A political satire is based on a willingness to be either the first one who reacted to a particular situation or the one who creates the best parody. In other words, there is strong competition to be the best.

## "Memes" as a tool in the hands of Belarusian opposition

Is carnivalized protest capable of destabilising a particular institution or political order? The question was answered by Wojciech Dudzik, who said that: *many years ago, as well as nowadays, hardly anyone was/is satisfied with the world. Therefore, people want to change it. Sometimes it is possible by means of a revolution. However, when they do not want to or they cannot foment*

*riots, they pretend to change the world, turning it upside down temporarily. They engage in carnival*[24].

By promoting a radical change in perceiving something that is necessary or feasible, the carnival *per se* constitutes a political revolution. Along with the carnival, mocking and carnivalized messages created by social media, reinforce social and political changes that have already been happening. They are a massive tool for both governments and citizens. Real-life events become an inspiration for the cyberspace "art". The digital era has contributed to an increased number of social movements. The number of their leaders and members is almost uncountable. Due to technological development not only protest movements but also individuals may spread their ideas in an unrestrained manner.

Criticising authority is a natural phenomenon of a public debate in democratic countries. However, a demanding carnivalized assessment of a regime might apply to both democratic and authoritarian regimes. Such a public discourse aims to mock and undermine the values that have been accepted so far. Criticism based on parody allows the weaker opponent to undermine the authority.

---

[24] W. Dudzik, *Carnivals - holidays, fun, spectacle,* "Polish Folk Art – Contexts", 2002, Vol.56 (3/4), p. 98.

**Pic.1. *Europe's last dictator* meme.**

Due to some activities undertaken by the Belarusian opposition, one can form a thesis concerning carnivalized forms of a political protest. The carnival is a special and unique time different from reality. It is also a contradiction of official, common, and widely accepted norms and rules. Its form contradicts the style and image of authority. Therefore, one can observe the following caricatures of the Belarusian regime: a combination of a kolkhoz member with a hockey player similar to Banksy's wall paintings, a statue of liberty, with president Lukashenko's face, holding a police baton and a shield, an image of Belarusian president depicted as a fairy tale character, such as Shrek, Dracula or superheroes who possess extraordinary powers. The carnival distorts official norms and habits. Protests have their own rules, the rules of the carnival. Satires and funny images in the carnival convention are a perfect tool for a political satire. They also make Lukashenko's propaganda less significant.

**Pic.2. '*Shrek*' meme.**

Communication carnivalization is based mostly on creating parodies of events sanctioned by the Lukashenko regime. Belarusian opposition activists who fight the regime effectively parody the regime on the Internet. For instance, they created a grotesque Gillette razor advertisement which compared Saddam Husain to Alexander Lukashenko.

**Pic.3: '*Gillette-presidential selection: Before ... After ...*' meme.**

Everything which is serious, official and accepted by the regime, is mocked and undermined by the opposition. Importantly, at that particular point of time, there are no orders, no bans, no barriers, and no limitations – there is an omnipresent sense of freedom. All kinds of behaviour get out of control.

The carnival weakens the bans connected with authority which is resistant to any kind of change. It turns out that both cynicism and criticism can be forms of social anger expressed by dissatisfied citizens in contemporary societies. Therefore, thanks to protests and its manifestations, also the Internet ones which take place once the reality proves to be against the citizens, the carnival is capable of toppling either a regulation or a norm. If the parody is to be distressing and enable social mobilisation, it requires a special context. The cyberspace carnival demonstrates how the Internet shapes the way society thinks about political reality. It also initiates art that mocks and destabilises regimes. The Internet influences not only what people think, but also how the thoughts spread. Therefore, "memes" spread ideas in a viral way.

**"Memes" and the carnival**

In order to understand the analysed phenomenon, one should start with the carnivalization theory by Michał Bachtin in relation to a contemporary media democracy[25]. The carnival laws, which are used to interpret literary works and the works in the field of culture studies, may become a useful tool to interpret political phenomena in a new way. The term *carnival* is very

---

[25] The main basis of that analysis in political science is the theory of *carnivalesque* designed by: M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics and Works of Francis Rabelais and the folk culture of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, Kraków 1975, also developed by contemporary Polish researchers, among others: W. Dudzik, *Carnivals in culture*, Warszawa 2005; A. Bełkot, *Carnivalizationas the concept of ludic*, "Homo Communicativus", Vol. 2 2008, pp. 45-57; A. Stoff, A. Skubaczewska-Pniewska (eds.), *Theory carnivalesque. Contexts and interpretations*, Toruń 2011.

broad. However, discussing the carnivalization of politics may present a new perspective on the way the democratic regime functions.

This part of the article aims at determining key features of "memes". The said features will help to understand the relation between a "meme" and the carnival convention. Not only researchers but also carnival participants perceive the carnival as a specific and extraordinary period of time. It contradicts common and officially accepted norms and rules. The Internet "meme" functions analogically: it mocks elements of the current discourse and culture, and questions mainstream hierarchy.

Satirical art is also characteristic of the periods when politics contradicts the previous regime and establishes its own laws. By the same token, the carnival as well as "memes" distort officially accepted norms and habits. One needs to bear in mind that the two phenomena would not exist if it was not for their spectacular form of communication, *i.e.* the use of the absurd, parody, and fun.

The carnival convention creates a dualistic way of perceiving the world; a juxtaposition of opposition views with the officially accepted values. This double existence is visible during the carnival time. Serious issues officially accepted by the hierarchical regime are negated, rejected, and marginalised by the instincts that have so far been restrained by public order rules. This distortion of reality is to temporarily bring social equality.

Such a dualistic distinction can also be observed in politics. It is due to mechanisms that are to shorten the distance between the authority representatives and voters. Therefore, rallies and meetings are organised during which politicians emphasise their plebeian origin as well as the fact that they have experienced a lot of every day hardships. This direct contact with the voters often inspires Internet users to create new funny images.

One of the  advantages of the carnival as well as a feature distinguishing it from the contemporary authority is the fact that during celebrations nobody is left alone. Since there are no boundaries between actors and participants during the carnival time, one can deduce that all participants are laughing at themselves. The Internet art also draws its artists to the satirical script. Everyone can become an object of criticism or parody; everyone can become its author, be famous for a while and become a carnival king.

A similar feature characterises the carnival – there are no class, age or financial status divisions. Everyone becomes equal; everyone is important according to the laws of democracy. There is no division for the better and the worse. The Internet gives everyone a chance to share their art, regardless of its artistic quality. There are no authorities in the fields of acting, journalism, music or cabaret. Therefore, everyone has a chance to become visible. A "meme-maker" is an ordinary person; (s)he is not a professional, but it does not matter. What matters is the context and opposition in relation to what happened in real life and what is being watched.

The fact that the distance between politicians and voters is becoming smaller and smaller has led to politicians using simpler and less formal language, as well as gestures. However, be it verbal or non-verbal communication, there is an unofficial message register which does not follow any etiquette. Internet messages are analogically transferred – they omit the official information flow. Some words are created for a  particular reason, others come from real life and start to serve as a  symbol or a code recognized and understood by a particular social group.

Humour is an inseparable part of the carnival convention. Umberto Eco claims that: *in order to define carnival, it would be enough to provide a clear*

*and unambiguous definition of humour*[26]. Grotesque, caricature, humour, and mockery are common during the carnival period; they are also omnipresent on the Internet, especially in the unofficial form of communicating with the citizens. Moreover, any extravagance in either behaviour or appearance is nothing unusual in the carnival context.

As Bachtin claims: *almost each church holiday comprised a time-honoured folklore part, a moment of laughter*[27]. Politics also does not only consist of activities and events which are fully official and sanctioned by the authority. One can observe that whenever people celebrate national holidays or there is a highly important meeting, things such as manifestations, protests, and strikes are organized. Even though they are serious, sometimes full of resistance and aggression, they often contain an element of fun and laughter.

However, the key carnival phenomenon that exists in the public sphere is creating parodies of politicians by the Internet users. Polish politicians like Donald Tusk, Jarosław Kaczyński, Antoni Macierewicz, Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz, Krystyna Pawłowicz or Janusz Korwin-Mikke have become objects of the cyber-mockery. All the mentioned politicians have one thing in common – they evoke huge emotions in the society. Therefore, they have zealous or even fanatic, supporters and opponents.

---

[26] U. Eco, *Humor, freedom, carnival,* "Polish Folk Art - Contexts", nr 3/4 2002, p. 132-136.

[27] M. Bachtin, *The work of Francis Rabelais and the folk culture of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, Kraków 1975, p. 61.

**Pic.4. 'Antek, I have one request..[28]' meme.**



ANTEK, MAM JEDNĄ PROŚBĘ

facebook.com/ASZdziennik

NIE ODBIERAJ Z WIDEO

**Source:** **http://gadzetomania.pl/2013/10/23/najwieksze-technologiczne-wpadki-polskich-politykow, 12.02.2014.**

Such a situation often takes place when it comes to unfortunate behaviour or statements. They become an inspiration for "memes", for instance when Elżbieta Bieńkowska said *Sorry, we live in such a climate*. Internet tools not only give a chance to mock a particular event but also, and above all, to distort an already existing hierarchy destroying the present order and authority.

The governments have little influence on bottom-up campaigns. Therefore, the Internet has become a massive tool for showing social discontent. It is politicians that are often mocked, and their photos are usually accompanied by ironic comments which reflect politicians' characteristic features.

---

[28] The picture depicts an embarrassing situation between two opposition politicians during a press conference organised after the Internet users' provocation. The caption reads: *Antek, I have one request. Do not answer with a video.*

**Pic. 5. *'Sorry, Madam Minister!'* memes**[29].

Still, everyone can become a "meme" hero. It might be a random football match spectator running away from the Police on a wet football pitch or a little girl with a strange grimace during prince William and Kate Middleton's wedding. One can see that "memes" belong also to the entertainment convention. Pop-culture sources inspire Internet artists to mock embarrassing situations in which celebrities found themselves. It cannot be denied that "memes" may relate to the political sphere as well.

Ruthlessness and lack of compromise in relation to the real world are also characteristic of the carnival. Mocking images are a kind of healing reaction to anger and complexes that have accumulated before. Of course, satire is nothing new; it has existed ever since politics has. It can even be stated that both these spheres – officially accepted and the unofficial one, are intertwined.

---

[29] The meme which is a reaction to the statement made by the Deputy Prime Minister *Sorry, we live in such a climate* in relation to frozen stiff trains.

**Pic.6. *'Bad referee' meme*[30].**



"Sędzia kalosz"

Nabiera nowego znaczenia

The Internet is especially suitable to mock elite pomposity and snobbism. Cyberspace is full of mocking, humorous or offensive gestures and words. The lack of hierarchy of values and often infantile behaviour in public do not prove any closeness between politicians and voters, and between understanding their needs. Gestures and statements that are officially unacceptable still become an element of political life. It should also be mentioned that statements and gestures considered to be offensive, but still being a form of carnival expression, are allowed for fun and play; however, they gain new meaning in the official public sphere and can lead to communication pathologies. Various gestures, symbols or rituals indicate that political rows give

---

[30] The meme depicts a referee wearing wellington boots during the 2012 European football Cup. He is wearing the shoes because of a completely wet football pitch. The caption reads: *"Bad referee" acquires new meaning* [author's note: the combination of the Polish idiomatic expression "sędzia kalosz" and the photo is a verbal and visual pun. The expression comprises the word 'wellington' which denotes a bad referee in Polish]*.

a chance to cross the boundaries of established cultural patterns, which often ends in inappropriateness.

**Pic.7: '*Grace Van Cutsem*[31]' meme.**

Other common features of both the carnival and the Internet satire are effectiveness and spectacularity – phenomena based on images rather than words. In both of these spheres one can observe profanation blended with carnality. What matters is irony and accurate criticism. Characteristic features of famous people inspire mocking images. Take for instance Jean Claude van Damme who does the splits between two moving lorries or Chuck Norris whose physical capabilities have also been mocked in many "memes".

---

[31] One of the bridesmaids has become a heroine of many memes. She was not enthusiastic about the royal wedding.

**Pic. 8: '*Van Damme did epic splits[32]' m*eme.**



VAN DAMME ZROBIŁ EPICKI SZPAGAT

ALE TO CHUCK NORRIS PROWADZIŁ
OBIE CIĘŻARÓWKI

**Source: http://www.obrazki.jeja.pl/tag,chuck-norris,1, 12.01.2014.**

Carnival laughter in the "meme" form is not only a kind of Internet sense of humour, but also a mockery. Taunting people or events is its central part. In everyday life, people cannot laugh at others when they want to. Mocking human vices might have unpleasant consequences. Anonymity allows the Internet artist to use a nickname and an avatar to create a completely new personality – a carnival image of a real human being.

What matters in the carnivalized communication is the lack of orders, bans, barriers, and restrictions which results in an omnipresent freedom. Everybody is important and lives according to their own rules. One can observe a comeback to folk anarchism which cures social complexes. Just like during the carnival procession, there is a sense of fun, happiness and joy where adulthood is not so visible among young faces. The Internet communication is mostly the domain of young generations.

---

[32] The meme mocking supernatural skills of the action film actor. The caption reads: Van Damme did the epic splits, but it was Chuck Norris who was driving the two lorries.

Moreover, the carnival is a special period when all kinds of behaviour do not follow rules of communication between the authority representatives or opposition and the society. Thanks to "meme-makers," politicians get rid of a burdensome kind of official way of conduct. They appear as citizens' representatives, at the same time not losing their seriousness. If one assumes that carnival desacralizes the world, carnivalization depoliticises politics and it becomes an arena for disputes that have no relation to the real problems and social challenges.

The "meme" logic is based on spontaneous and open humour. In the carnival convention, carnality, the opposite of spirituality, plays a huge role. It is also the easiest way to reach the audience. During the carnival time there are no boundaries between actors and spectators; all the involved become actors, participants, and spectators of the performance. Direct contact between Internet users and authority representatives is characteristic of carnivalized communication. As Bachtin pointed out: *Carnival makes people come closer to one another. It unites them in a marital bond. It combines holiness with sacrilege, grandeur with commonness, greatness with nothingness, intelligence with stupidity*[33]. The audience is constantly watching the performance, and the number of visits to the site determines whether the "meme" and its maker will be successful or not. No experts are included in the verdict. Moreover, the carnival makes people forget about everyday problems and allows them to enjoy the moment. During the period of political campaigns we are also presented with a better version of life and hope. They improve our mood and create joy similar to the one we experience while creating and watching "memes".

---

[33] M. Bachtin, *The work of Francis Rabelais...*, p.189.

Each epoch is marked by tragedy and wars but also by joy and fun. They are a good alternative for a harsh and difficult reality. In other words, humour is a natural way of dealing with serious issues. The need to escape from mundane reality is also present nowadays. Regardless of political views or situation, it is not politicians but comedians who help citizens in the most difficult periods in history. However, the real problem is that the reality is already complex enough and its interpretation can get out of hand.

What matters in the mass media culture is immediately visible to a wide audience and unified messages. As far as the process of information flow, information understanding, and reflection is concerned, the time barrier has been drastically limited, if not completely removed.

Marek Górka – PhD, Instytut Polityki Społecznej i Stosunków Międzynarodowych Politechnika Koszalińska

**Abstract**

A "meme" is a picture with a short caption which is a caricature illustration of current political, sports, and cultural events. "Memes" usually depict common, current situations which are retold in the carnival fashion, giving them a new context. "Memes" have become a tool for presenting all kinds of normal as well as unfortunate political events. They have become mocking comments which not only provoke but also induce laughter. Communication carnivalization relies mainly on creating parodies of events sanctioned by the Lukashenko regime. Cyberspace carnival shows how the Internet shapes the way the society perceives the political reality. It also initiates art that mocks and destabilises the regime.

**MEM JAKO PRZYKŁAD SKARNAWALIZOWANEJ KOMUNIKACJI INTERNETOWEJ**

**Abstrakt**

„Mem" to nic innego jak zdjęcie ze słownym komentarzem będącym karykaturalną ilustracją bieżących wydarzeń politycznych, sportowych, kulturalnych. Tematem ironicznych żartów są zazwyczaj znane, powszechnie obecne historie opowiedziane ponownie w konwencji karnawału, w ten sposób zyskujące nowy kontekst. Karnawalizacja komunikacji polega przede wszystkim na parodiowaniu oficjalnych i sankcjonowanych przez reżim wydarzeń. Cybernetyczne wcielenie karnawału pokazuje jak Internet może kształtować sposób myślenia społeczeństwa na temat rzeczywistości politycznej, a tym samym inicjować prześmiewczą i destabilizującą system twórczość.

**Michał Marcin Kobierecki**

# INTERNET MEMES AS AN EXAMPLE OF POLITICAL DISSATISFACTION OF POLES ON THE INTERNET

## Introduction

There is a number of types of political communication on the Internet. Polish politicians willingly use such tools as Twitter or Facebook in order to be in touch with their voters. It is a very convenient and effective tool for them. The most characteristic publications are even reported by traditional media, such as television and press, and the most popular Polish politicians profiles have up to tens of thousands of followers[1]. The Internet is, however, a specific phenomenon and gives opportunity to express one's views publicly not only to well-known people, but also to ordinary ones. Naturally such people have little likelihood of creating very popular profiles and as a result have the possibility of reaching great amounts of Internet users with their opinions and views. However, there are other means available for them. Commenting on political news by creating or sharing Internet memes is among the most popular of them.

---

[1] Ł. Woźnicki, *Który polityk rządzi na polskim Twitterze i dlaczego jest nim Radosław Sikorski*, http://wyborcza.pl/1,75478,15243508,Ktory_polityk_rzadzi_na_polskim_Twitterze_i_dlaczego.html, 22.01.2014.

The Internet meme is the main aspect of analysis in this article. An attempt to define and classify it and to observe its place and significance in political discourse on the Internet will be undertaken. According to the main hypothesis of the article, Internet memes can be regarded as an expression of political activity of Polish citizens on the Internet. The other aims of the article are to investigate the speed at which Internet memes spread in comparison to the political facts they apply and to determine the place of Internet memes in the political discourse.

The article is divided into three parts. First, theoretical analysis of Internet memes will be conducted. Second, Internet memes concerning politics in Poland will beassesed. This part will propose a typology of memes in Polish politics, as well as some of the most significant examples of the memes themselves. The third and last part concerns considerations on the role and significance of Internet memes in Polish political discourse and in political communication in general.

A semiotic approach will be used in order to investigate internet memes and its role in the political discourse. A semiotic method focuses on signs and texts and enables analysis on how the relations between images, texts and meanings connect with each other to form for example social and political messages[2].

**What is an Internet meme?**

The word "meme" is usually bound with evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins. In his book *Selfish Gene* in 1976, he described it as a natural *human*

---

[2] A. A. T. Kariko, Analysis of Internet Memes Using Semiotics,
 http://english.binus.ac.id/2013/06/24/analysis-on-internet-memes-using-semiotics/,
07.03.2014.

*spreading, replication, and modification of ideas and culture*[3]. The word *meme* was to be adequate for its meaning due to the similarity to the word *gene*. According to Dawkins, melodies, ideas, common phrases, styles of clothes, ways of building arcs etc. are the examples of memes[4]. In this perspective, memes are likened to genes or viruses. They are units of cultural information which, according to biological metaphor, replicate, evolve and mutate, just like genes. In other words, memes are the basic unit of cultural transmission which are formed by processes of identical replication and the capability of introducing innovations allowing for derogations[5]. Such approach is described as memetics.

This explanation of the meaning of a meme seems to be relatively general and not necessarily connected with the Internet communication. As a matter of fact, an Internet meme is a much narrower term. It can be described as content or a concept which has the ability to quickly spread between the Internet users[6]. According to Magdalena Kamińska, an Internet meme is a colloquial symbol of popular, semiotic complex transmitted via Internet, which most commonly has a characteristics of an Internet joke. It can be considered as a metaphor of a hypothetic cultural transfer or as a visualized meme itself. Along with the spreading of an Internet meme, it is transformed somehow, which seems to be in accordance with the theory of memetics that was mentioned earlier. This transformation of an Internet meme – creating new varieties – by adding, for instance new layers of comments to the original versions by Internet users – is called by some investigators as the *infectious-*

---

[3] C. Chen, *The Creation and Meaning of Internet Memes in 4chan: Popular Internet Culture in the Age of Online Digital Reproduction*, „Habitus", vol. III, Spring 2012, p. 7.

[4] R. Dawkins, *Samolubny Gen*, Warszawa 2007, p. 244.

[5] M. Kamińska, *Niecne Memy. Dwanaście wykładów o kulturze internetu*, Poznań 2011, s. 60, U. M. Husted, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way from the Forum: The life and death of internet memes*, p. 19, http://purl.umn.edu/137171, 23.01.2014.

[6] C. Bauckhage, *Insights into Internet Memes*, ICWSM, 2011, p. 42.

*ness* of a meme[7]. An interesting approach to explaining the meaning of an Internet meme has been introduced by Patrick Davidson, *according to whom an Internet meme is a piece of culture, typically a joke, which gains influence through online transmission*[8]. Humorous character seems to be the key feature.

Investigators draw attention to two characteristic features of Internet memes: the rapidity of spreading and similarity to the original version. Unlike spoken or printed jokes, an Internet meme is almost unlimited in terms of how quickly it reaches the new viewers. At the same time their shape remains unchanged because it is not dependent on, for example, memory like in the case of a spoken joke[9]. Transmitting Internet memes is crucial in this aspect. It is even claimed that "creating an Internet meme" does not necessarily mean "producing" it, but above all transmitting it by Internet users by a file or a link. According to Magdalena Kamińska, contents like a *web page, video clip or animation, which consists of a joke, a rumour, extraordinary news, a collage or an original graphics or a photography could be named Internet memes*[10]. However, in popular understanding of an Internet meme, it is an even narrower content.

The history if Internet memes started at the beginning of 1980s when emoticons[11] became popular. All variations of *smilies* became the first Internet memes, although very minimalistic. With the passing of time they were becoming increasingly complicated. In the late 1990s and at the beginning of the twenty-first century Internet memes began to be created on the basis of digi-

---

[7] M.Kamińska, *op.cit.*, p. 61, 64.

[8] P. Davidson, *The Language of Internet Memes*, [in:] M. Mandiberg (ed.), *The Social Media Reader*, New York 2012, p. 122, L.K. Börzsei, *Makes a Meme Instead: A Concise History of Internet Memes*, February 2013, p. 3, http://works.bepress.com/linda_borzsei/2, 23.01.2014.

[9] P. Davidson, op.cit.

[10] M. Kamińska, op.cit., p. 63.

[11] This is a symbol of emotions created with the use of keyboard symbols, such as ":-)" or ":-(".

tal photographs or pictures manipulated in computer programs, such as Photoshop[12]. Currently this exact form of an Internet meme seems to be the most popular – a digitally manipulated picture or photography, most frequently with a humorous phrase added on the top or bottom of it, or both[13]. A typical Internet meme is presented below.

**Pic. 1. 'This flavor tastes like your soul' meme.**



Source: littlefun.org, 07.03.2014.

The amount of Internet memes and their diversity is enormous. Both worldwide and in Poland there are plenty of web sites where Internet users publish or share Internet memes, for instance www.quickmeme.com, memebase.cheezburger.com, www.memecenter.com, www.memestache.com among English-speaking ones, and kwejk.pl, demotywatory.pl, chamsko.pl and many other Polish ones. This article focuses on Polish memes.

The review of popular Internet memes available on the Internet suggests a number of characteristic features, such as plenty of vulgar expressions

---

[12] L.K. Börzsei, op.cit., p. 5-8.
[13] P. Davidson, op.cit., p. 127.

or grammatical and spelling mistakes apparently made intentionally. This last characteristics of Polish memes has been derived from the English-speaking ones.

Pic. 2. 'I can has Poland?' meme.



Source: www.theroyalpoke.com, 23.01.2014.

Pic. 3. 'Co ja pacze?' meme[14].



Source: www.fakt.pl, 07.03.2014.

Popular Internet memes are created on the basis of old and popular pictures (they are the bases for many memes only with comments being changed) as well as of more original photographs and pictures. Very frequently their subject concerns politically incorrect matters. Racist, chauvinistic, anti-Semitic, homophobic etc. motives are very common, which obviously is an aberration concerning the all-embracing political correctness of the today's world. However, claiming that all Internet memes are that kind would be an excessive simplification. On the Internet there are also plenty of memes that are highly polite. What is more, many of the traditional types of media, such as TV broadcasters or newspapers, often show the most popular Internet memes, especially when they apply to current socio-political situation[15].

---

[14] "Co ja pacze" should be written as "Co ja patrzę", which means "What do I see".
[15] See:

**Internet memes as a citizen's reaction to politics in Poland**

According to the theoretical considerations presented above, Internet memes can be described as simple forms of entertainment available to the vast audience that can be created by ordinary people. No wonder they are sometimes classified as "junk humor"[16], an expression that highlights its simplicity and lack of sophistication. As has already been mentioned, Internet memes can concern plenty of matters. In this article memes will be restricted to those concerning politics – and specifically those Internet memes that are recognized as examples of political activity of Polish citizens on the Internet. The research question of this article can be stated as follows: can society express itself politically with the use of Internet memes and if they can, how?

In the context of political discourse, it appears – political memes are, most of all, examples of criticism of the political reality. Internet memes, as has been mentioned, are basically Internet jokes. Similarly to other satiric forms, such as a stand-up comedy, Internet memes are aimed to satirize or mock the social or political reality. As a result, the creators of "political" memes usually refer to current public news and try to mock either the situation or the politician responsible for it.

**Categories**

Proposing a typology of Internet memes concerning politics appears to be difficult. From one point of view they all have a lot in common – mocking politicians. On the other hand, great diversity of "political Internet memes" and particular issues that become objects of satirization. Five major categories

---

http://www.tvn24.pl/wideo/z-anteny/internet-drwi-z-zalanego-narodowego,520378.html?playlist_id=16572, 23.01.2014, http://rozrywka.dziennik.pl/hity-internetu/galeria/448707,1,elzbieta-taki-klimat-bienkowska-memy-galeria-zdjec.html, 23.01.2014.

16 See: http://natemat.pl/46913,dymitr-gluszczenko-tworca-kwejk-pl-opowiada-o-kwejku-sobie-pieniadzach-i-nowych-projektach-wywiad, 28.01.2014.

should be taken into consideration. The first two regard whether the **politician represents the ruling or oppositional party**. The first group is much more common, especially concerning the fact, that very often they hold public offices. Representatives of political opposition are also mocked, especially in regard to overall negative image of a politician or after a  public disgrace, although they seem to be less frequent. Classifying a meme to one of those groups may be difficult in respect to politicians working in local or regional authorities, so it is worth to introduce the caveat that regardless of the level of political activity, the politician shall be classified on the basis of the membership in the ruling party on governmental level. This division applies not only to politicians, but to parties as well, as they also happen to be mocked in internet memes.

Another three categories regard the **particular subject of the Internet meme**  – concerning the reason for mocking a politician or a party. In relation to this division, memes can be assorted to one of categories:

- regarding disgrace of a politician,
- regarding politicians in charge of public services,
- regarding the overall negative image of a politician.

The memes regarding disgrace of a politician are the most numerous. Such disgrace can be derived from a speech that reveals incompetence or lack of understanding of problems of the people. Politicians can embarrass themselves by acting irresponsibly in private life, or by participating in a political scandal such as corruption. Most of the memes that will be presented in this article can be classified within this category (pictures 4-7, 14-17, 18-23, 26-29).

Another category of Internet memes concern politicians in charge of public services. They become mocked in internet memes especially when they

fail to assume their responsibilities. Such memes can be seen on pictures 24 and 25. This category can be very easily confused with the previous one. For instance memes on pictures 4-7 could be classified both as ones regarding disgrace of a politician and regarding politicians in charge of public services. In such situations the intention of the creator of the meme must be taken into consideration.

The third category regards the overall negative image of a politician. Some of Polish politicians are simply disliked by many people, due to many reasons, for instance past disgraces. As a result they become a frequent object of mockery in internet memes. Examples of this type can be seen on pictures 8-13.

In respect to the categories, 6 types of internet memes concerning politics can be presented:

- regarding disgrace of a politician representing ruling party,
- regarding disgrace of a politician representing oppositional party,
- regarding politicians in charge of public services representing ruling party,
- regarding politicians in charge of public services representing oppositional party,
- regarding overall negative image of a politician representing ruling party,
- regarding overall negative image of a politician representing oppositional party.

Tab. 1. Typology of Internet memes concerning politics.

| | | Subject of mockery | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Representing ruling or oppositional party | | Disgrace of a politician | Politicians in charge of public services | Overall negative image of a politician |
| | Representing ruling party | Disgrace of a politician representing ruling party | Politicians in charge of public services representing ruling party | Overall negative image of a politician representing ruling party |
| | Representing oppositional party | Disgrace of a politician representing oppositional party | Politicians in charge of public services representing ruling party | Overall negative image of a politician representing ruling party |

**Source: Own elaboration.**

It must be noted that new internet memes concerning politics appear constantly. Therefore it is possible that in the future memes that do not match to any of the types presented above may be created. However, for the time being the presented typology seems to be exhaustive.

In January 2014, as a result of bad weather conditions (freezing rain in particular) considerable delays of some trains occurred. The Polish Vice-prime Minister and Minister of Infrastructure and Development Elżbieta Bieńkowska commented on this situation in a TV show *Fakty po Faktach* on TVN24 as follows: *Sorry, this is the type of climate we have* (originally: *Sorry, taki mamy klimat*) stating at the same time, that *out of 4 000 trains only two were stuck*[17]. What was exceptionally touchy, is that minister originally used the world "sor-

---

[17]http://faktypofaktach.tvn24.pl/mroz-zatrzymal-pociagi-sorry-mamy-taki-klimat,389604.html, 23.01.2014.

ry", which in Polish has rather informal and in this case mocking character. The words may have sounded unfortunate and incorrect, especially concerning the fact they were said by the incumbent minister responsible for domestic railway communications. As a result, the reaction of the Internet users appeared very soon. Despite comments under news about the statement of minister Bieńkowska, many memes appeared as well (pictures 4-7).

**Pic. 4. 'Sorry, taki mamy klimat' meme**[18].



Source: polska.newsweek.pl, 23.01.2014.

**Pic. 5. 'Winter is coming' meme.**



Source: polska.newsweek.pl, 23.01.2014.

**Pic. 6**[19]**,'Sorry, taki mamy klimat' meme**



Source: polska.newsweek.pl, 23.01.2014.

**Pic. 7. Elżbieta Bieńkowska in train's restroom meme.**



Source: polska.newsweek.pl, 23.01.2014.

---

[18] English translation: *I can only say one thing to the passengers that got frozen in the trains; Sorry, this is the type of climate we have*.

[19] English translation: *Sorry, this is the type of climate we have*.

The presented memes have a form of a simple photograph with a citation of a politician (pic. 4) or a modified image of the minister with the background showing a toilet in a frozen train (pic. 7), as well as more complicated forms referring to a popular TV series *Game of Thrones* (pic. 5 and 6). The time period between the statement of Elżbieta Bieńkowska and the appearance of the first internet memes is worth mentioning – both happened at the same evening[20].

The situation above refers to a politician currently holding public office. Such a subject of Internet memes concerning Polish politics seems to be especially eagerly chosen by the authors of Internet memes. Individuals holding public offices are particularly exposed to criticism and mockery. Currently in Poland many Internet memes refer to the Prime Minister Donald Tusk (examples on pictures 8-11).

**Pic. 8. 'Które ulgi jeszcze zniesiesz' meme[21].**



Source: deser.pl, 23.01.2014.

**Pic. 9. 'Ciong Le Mao' meme[22].**



Source: deser.pl, 23.01.2014

**Pic. 10.'Może i autostrady nam nie wyszły** **Pic. 11.'Dziwnie wymiawiam R' meme[23].**

---

[20]See: http://natemat.pl/89287,elzbieta-bienkowska-o-paralizu-kolei-sorry-taki-mamy-klimat-internet-bezlitosny-dla-wicepremier, 23.01.2014, http://kwejk.pl/obrazek/1990532/sorry-taki-mamy-klimat.html, 23.01.2014.

[21] English translation: *Which tax credits are you going to lift? A – Happy Hours, B – Last Minute, C – Summer Sales, D – VITAY Loyalty program.*

[22] This is a word play meant to look like a Chinese. Word *Mao* is used in reference to PRC leader Mao Tse Tung. In Polish *Ciong Le Mao* sounds like *Still too little*, which refers to tax raises introduced by Tusk's government.

**meme**[24].



Source:fabrykamemow.pl, 07.03.2014.    Source: sfora.pl, 07.03.2014.

Obviously Internet memes concerning politics in Poland do not focus only on politicians in-office. Oppositional politicians can also become subjects to criticism by Internet users through memes. This refers most often to individuals who are popular in media and in a way characteristic. Chairman of the biggest oppositional party in Poland (Law and Justice) Jarosław Kaczyński (pic. 13) and another politician of this party Antoni Macierewicz (pic. 12) are particularly often criticized and mocked in Internet memes. Kaczyński is accused of permanently criticizing the Tusk's government, while Macierewicz is accused of a characteristic attitude towards the crash of Polish Air Force aircraft with the president Lech Kaczyński onboard on 10th April 2010. They are, however, only examples and there are many other oppositional politicians that are satirized on the Internet (pic. 14-15).

---

[23] English translation: *When I lie, I pronounce "R" strangely*. This refers to Donald Tusk's speech impediment.

[24] English translations: *Maybe we didn't do well with the highways, but the sides of the roads are quite cool*.

**Pic. 12. Antoni Macierewicz meme**[25].



**POSZEDŁ DO KLUBU ZE STRIPTIZEM**

**NIKT NIE CHCIAŁ POGADAĆ Z NIM O ZAMACHU**

Source: rozrywka.dziennik.pl, 03.02.2014.

**Pic. 13. 'Wina Tuska' meme**[26].



**KSIĘŻNA KATE W CIĄŻY?**

**TO WINA TUSKA!**

Source: rozrywka.dziennik.pl, 03.02.2014.

**Pic. 14. Krystyna Pawłowicz meme**[27].



**"SPOŁECZEŃSTWO NIE MOŻE FUNDOWAĆ SŁODKIEGO ŻYCIA JAŁOWYM ZWIĄZKOM OSÓB, Z KTÓRYCH NIE MA ŻADNEGO POŻYTKU"**

**KRYSTYNA L. 60, NIEZAMĘŻNA, BEZDZIETNA, POSEŁ NA SEJM**

Source: www.comedycentral.pl, 03.02.2014.

**Pic. 15. Renata Beger meme**[28].



**WRACAM DO POLITYKI**

**BO OWIES MI SIĘ SKOŃCZYŁ**

Source: m.dziennik.pl, 03.02.2014.

It should be noted, there are no strict rules concerning the objects of mocking of Internet users with the use of memes. Every politician can become

---

[25] English translation: *Went to a strip club, no one wanted to talk to him about assassination*. This refers to the thesis of Antoni Macierewicz that the crash of Polish president's aircraft was a result of assassination.

[26] English translation: *Duchess Kate is pregnant? It's Tusk's fault*. This refers to Jarosław Kaczyński's criticism towards prime minister Donald Tusk.

[27] English translation: *Society cannot provide sweet live to counterproductive relations of people that give it no benefit Krystyna, 60 years old, not married, no kids, Member of the Parliament*. This refers to a statement of Krystyna Pawłowicz in the parliament concerning the debate about registering partnerships, see:
http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/12,114927,13330678,Pawlowicz__Spoleczenstwo_nie_moze_fundowac_slodkiego.html, 03.02.2014.

[28] English translation: *I'm coming back to politics. I've run out of oat*. This refers to a former Member of the Parliament Renata Beger, who said once that she liked sex just as a horse liked oat.

a target of such criticism, regardless of the fact if he or she represents radical or moderate, governmental or oppositional party. Of course it is easier to find memes about famous and recognizable politicians. However, those less known can also become famous in the "world of Internet memes" – all they need to do is to embarrass themselves publically. This was the case of the Member of Parliament Przemysław Wipler, who took part in a scuffle with the police late at night on Tuesday on29[th] October 2013 in front of a night club in Warsaw. After the occurrence, the MP was taken to a detoxification detention centre. Both Przemysław Wipler and the police presented different reports of the occurrence. According to the police, Wipler began to insult the police officers and scuffle with them, whereas according to the MP, it was the policemen who were aggressive towards him while he intervened during a quarrel between a few people and the police[29].

Even though the situation described above was not clear, it became the subject of many vicious comments of Internet users (pic. 16-17), especially concerning the fact that a Member of Parliament under the influence of alcohol took part in the quarrel at night in the middle of a week. Another thing that was criticized on the Internet was the fact that next day Przemysław Wipler was very bruised while giving interviews in public. Apart from this, photographs of the MP in a shirt covered with blood appeared on the Internet. Internet users tended to express disbelief of Wipler's version. As a result, a number of memes concerning the situation appeared almost immediately, just as in the case of the minister Elżbieta Bieńkowska.

---

[29] http://www.polskatimes.pl/artykul/1029995,pijany-przemyslaw-wipler-bil-i-wyzywal-policjantow-w-warszawie-posel-zostalem-brutalnie-pobity,id,t.html, 24.01.2014.

**Pic. 16. 'Breaking Bad' meme.**



Source: gadzetomania.pl, 24.01.2014.

**Pic. 17 . 'Monopol na przemoc ma tylko policja' meme**[30]**.**



Source: deser.pl, 24.01.2014.

The case of Przemysław Wipler shows clearly how quickly, due to a single embarrassment, a politician can become the main character of Internet memes. There are plenty of examples of such situations and probably most public humiliations of politicians receive such a response. For instance Polish president Bronisław Komorowski became a target of such memes after he made two spelling mistakes while writing a message in the book of condolences for the victims of the earthquake and tsunami in Japan in 2011[31]. This mishap became a sort of recurring motive in mocking the president on the Internet (pic. 18-19).

---

[30] English translation: *Only the police monopolizes the violence*. 997 is the phone number of the police.

[31] See: http://wiadomosci.wp.pl/kat,1515,title,Dwa-bledy-Komorowskiego-we-wpisie-z-kondolencjami,wid,13235385,wiadomosc.html?ticaid=112149, 24.01.2014.

Internet users reacted similarly to one of the statements of Stefan Niesiołowski, a Member of Parliament, about a report concerning malnourishment among Polish children. In the TV show *Kropka nad i* the politician said that he does not believe the figures in the report and that when he himself was of school age, children used to eat sorrel, while nowadays no one eats it[34]. The statement reveals the same elements as the one of Elżbieta Bieńkowska concerning trains' delays. In both cases the politicians expressed a characteristic lack of empathy for ordinary people and disconnection with society. Such characteristics of politicians are always criticized. Consequently, the speech of Stefan Niesiołowski also evoked a kind of rage among Internet users, who commented on it satirically with the use of memes (pic. 20-21).

---

[32] English translation: *A bee is written with e because it's an exception. And what, are you speechless??* In the Polish sentence a number of mistakes has been made: pżez (correct form: przez), wyjontek (correct form: wyjątek), zatkao (correct form: zatkało).

[33] English translation: *Should one write moustache or moustasche? And the problem is solved.*

[34] See:

http://wyborcza.pl/1,75478,13514594,Niesiolowski_nie_wierzy__ze_w_Polsce_dzieci_gloduja____.html, 25.01.2014.

**Pic. 20. 'Tyyyle szczawiu' meme**[35].

**Pic. 21. 'Dietetyk roku' meme**[36].





**Source: wyborcza.pl, 27.01.2014.**

**Source: lodz.gazeta.pl, 27.01.2014.**

Internet memes' creators joked about the former president of Poland Aleksander Kwaśniewski as well. The politician looked as if he had been drinking during a speech in Szczecin in 2007. When asked about his state of sobreity, he responded that it was due to a disease he contracted during his stay in Philippines, which requires radical treatment[37]. Public opinion seemed to have not credited his explanations and Internet memes showing former president being drunk became frequent. For example they appeared when Aleksander Kwaśniewski participated in Europa Plus conference in April 2013, when president also seemed indisposed (pic. 22-23)[38].

---

[35] English translation: *Thaaaat much of sorrel we have eaten from the embankment*.
[36] English translation: *The dietician of the year*.
[37] http://www.gk24.pl/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071010/WYBORY/71010046, 27.01.2014.
[38] http://wiadomosci.wp.pl/kat,1342,title,Kontrowersje-wokol-wystapienia-Aleksandra-Kwasniewskiego,wid,15490897,wiadomosc.html?ticaid=11218f, 27.01.2014.

**Pic. 22. 'Europa %' meme .**        **Pic. 23. 'Jestem t!rzeźwiutki' meme**[39]**.**





JESTEM T!RZEŹWIUTKI

TYLKO FILPINY TAK NA
MNIE DZIAŁAJĄ

Source:www.wykop.pl, 27.01.2014        Source: www.xdpedia.com, 27.01.2014

Politicians are often criticized with the use of Internet memes due to current problems that occur on different occasions. This refers to, for instance, local authorities when a city or regional local services' fail to fulfil its responsibilities. This may occur, for example, as a result of weather conditions, such as heavy rain. A frequent object of such criticism is the president of Warsaw Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz. In June 2013, a heavy storm occurred in the capital city of Poland. The sewage system was unable to absorb all the water, which resulted in the flooding of a few streets[40]. Like in other similar situations, Internet memes concerning this situation appeared immediately. The majority of them were critical towards the president of the city (pic. 24-25).

---

[39] English translation: *I am completely sober, it's just the Philippines that work on me like this*.
[40] See:
http://www.polskatimes.pl/artykul/915660,zalana-warszawa-burza-z-gradem-sparalizowala-stolice-zdjecia,id,t.html, 25.01.2014.

**Pic. 24. 'Zrobię Wenecję' meme**[41] **.**     **Pic. 25. 'Metho nie kuhsuje?' meme**[42]**.**



Source: kwejk.pl, 25.01.2014.



Source:www.twojewiadomosci.com.pl,
25.01.2014.

The second of the memes above (pic. 25) reveals that delicate and completely faultless issues are used, such as speech impediments. It could also be seen in one of the memes concerning Donald Tusk (pic. 11).

In spite of the fact that Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz is probably the most frequent object of mockery in Internet memes among cities' presidents, other representatives of local authorities are also criticized that way. Two examples of Internet memes concerning the president of Wrocław Rafał Dutkiewicz have been presented below. The first of them (pic. 26) refers to one of the speeches of the president about the criticism towards him that the amount of money designated for the citizens budget in Wrocław was not big enough, comparing to Łódź. Dutkiewicz responded to it in Radio Rodzina that *if anyone thinks that it is better to live in Łódź, than he should move to Łódź*[43]. The second (pic. 27),

---

[41] English translation: *I'm going to do Venice here*.

[42] English translation: *The subway isn't working? One can yacht*. The Polish version was mis-spelled: letters "r" were changed into "h", which refers to speech impediment of Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz.

[43]

See:http://wroclaw.gazeta.pl/wroclaw/1,35771,13631551,Prezydent_Dutkiewicz__Prosze_si e_przeprowadzic_do.html, 25.01.2014.

on the other hand, refers to a conflict between the president and a business-man Zygmunt Solorz-Żak concerning the football club Śląsk Wrocław[44].

**Pic. 26. 'Wrocław potrzebuje drugiego centrum'meme[46].**



Source: wroclaw.naszemiasto.pl, 25.01.2014.

**Pic. 27. 'Dutkiewicz and Solorz' meme[45].**



Source: wroclaw.naszemiasto.pl, 25.01.2014.

Another situation that was strongly criticized on the Internet refers to the case of filling positions in governmental agencies by the politicians of the Polish People's Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe). In 2012, an economic magazine *Puls Biznesu* revealed the talk between the chairman of agricultural organizations Władysław Serafin and the former chairman of Agricultural Market Agency Władysław Łukasik about the malpractices of members of Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe in agricultural companies related to the Ministry of Agricultral and Rural Development, particularly Elwar. Apparently the party members granted well paid positions in supervisory boards and expensive business

---

[44] See:
 http://www.wroclaw.sport.pl/sport-wroclaw/1,123437,14692795,Wroclaw_rezygnuje_z_Solorza__a_kogo_ma_w_zamian__Biznes_meni.html, 25.01.2014.

[45] English translation: *The figures are correct? You should call >>Uwaga TVN<<*. This refers to the fact, that Zygmunt Solorz owns a Polish TV broadcaster – Polsat, while >>*Uwaga TVN*<< is one of the shows of another broadcaster – TVN.

[46] English translation: *Wrocław needs another city center. We are going to build it in Łódź*.

trips to their relatives and acquaintances. The whole affair resulted in the dismissal of the Minister of Agriculture Marek Sawicki[47]. The scandal was described as "PSL[48] tapes" and generally the issue of nepotism in the Polish People's Party evoked a strong reaction of the creators of Internet memes (pic. 28-29).

Pic. 28. 'Partia Swoich Ludzi' meme[49].



Source: kwejk.pl, 27.01.2014

Pic. 29. 'Szczery plakat wyborczy' meme.



Source: kwejk.pl, 27.01.2014

The amount of Internet memes that refer to politicians is enormous and growing. Almost in any situation when a political scandal occurs or politicians embarrass themselves somehow, a number of Internet memes are created. These memes are in a way comments on the current political situations. The Internet memes presented above are only some examples of mocking politicians or political parties this way.

---

[47] http://www.tvn24.pl/raporty/tasmy-psl,473, 27.01.2014.

[48] PSL is an abbreviation of the Polish name of the party: Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe.

[49] English translation: *It is the man that matters – our man. PSL. The Party of Our People*. In the background the emblem of the party can be seen. In the Polish comment a play on words has been used. The abbreviation of "The Party of Our People" is the same of the shortcut of the party's name: Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe.

**Internet memes as a part of political discourse**

Legal aspects of humorous content available on the Internet, memes in this case, are an interesting issue. The examples of Internet memes presented above are relatively polite comparing to many others, which often have a very insulting and vulgar character. As a result, Internet memes concerning politics may often libel politicians. Despite this fact, legal accusations are extremely rare. There was however one case that gained a lot of attention, which concerned the Internet website antykomor.pl. Contents insulting and mocking the Polish President Bronisław Komorowski were stored there, Internet memes among others. The case also concerned the way of arresting the creator of the page Robert Frycz, who was detained at home by the Internal Security Agency officers[50]. Frycz was found guilty of insulting the president and sentenced to one year and three months of restriction of liberty and 40 hours of social work. However, following the appeal against the decision, the court declared it null and void, claiming that politicians should deal with the situation that they can legitimately become the objects of mockery[51]. The statement of the judge seems to summarize the issue of the legality of publishing and diffusing Internet memes about politicians. The anonymity of people creating memes is another issue. Such people assign themselves a nick name instead of using their legal name and surname, so at least in theory they remain anonymous. According to all this, Internet memes can be described as content which is more or less controversial, but regarded as jokes only.

Are the Internet memes only entertaining, without any influence on politics? The answer to this question seems to be no. Under some circum-

---

[50] http://tvp.info/informacje/polska/frycz-doniosl-na-abw-do-prokuratury/4558628, 27.01.2014.

[51] http://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/sprawa-antykomor-pl-sad-umorzyl-zarzut-zniewazenia-prezydenta,300610.html, 27.01.2014,
http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,13252281,AntyKomor_nie_zniewazyl_prezydenta.html, 27.01.2014.

stances, Internet memes do have the possibility of influencing people. According to Richard Bridie, there are three ways by which memes affect people: by conditioning (an Internet user sees a meme repeatedly so it begins to affect him increasingly, similarly to commercials on TV), by cognitive dissonance (according to which the mind struggles to make sense out of things that do not make sense, so in an unclear situation a mind can base its view on a meme) and in the manner of a Trojan horse (exceptionally interesting memes work this way, by attracting attention in order to *sneak in some other memes along with them*)[52]. Thus the political significance of Internet memes becomes quite plausible. As a matter of fact, many people who are not particularly interested in politics do not follow all the current news concerning this subject.

For example according to research conducted by the Institute of Public Affairs in 2012, 44% of young Poles at the age between 18 and 24 years old declare either very little or no interest in politics (17% very little, 27% none). At the same time, this particular age group is the most active in using Internet – 93,1%[53]. It can be argued that Poles in this age group read Internet memes, including those about politics. As a result, such people can derive their knowledge and views concerning this area of life from memes instead of more credible traditional opinion-making media. Obviously such knowledge could be more or less distorted.

It is worth noting that the analyzed age group is constituted by full citizens, who despite no interest in politics are entitled to vote. In other words, they are a potential electorate of political parties, which at the same time may be uneager to vote for politicians that are mocked and criticized in Internet memes. Of course the influence of Internet memes on political attitudes of

---

[52] R. Brodie, *Virus of the Mind. The New Science of the Meme*, London 2009, p. 188-189.

[53] D. Batorski, M. Drabek, M. Gałązka i J. Zbieranek (ed.), *Wyborca 2.0*, Warszawa 2012, p. 11, 31, http://www.isp.org.pl/uploads/pdf/1674809630.pdf, 27.01.2014.

young Poles requires further research, but it is possible that the role of Internet meme in the political discourse is bigger than it has been perceived so far. Maybe even the political parties should consider using Internet memes in order to embarrass political opponents, as a tool of political communication. At the same time it cannot be claimed unquestionably that they have not done it already, as the creators of Internet memes are usually anonymous, so some of the memes can well be created by the people related to political parties.

So far there are no voting statistics that can be correlated with internet memes. As a matter of fact such research would be extremely difficult to conduct, as it would be hard to assess to what extent for example voting decisions have been influenced by internet memes in relation to other means of political communication. Memes concerning political facts tend to appear simultaneously with many other means of communication. For instance when minister Elżbieta Bieńkowska commented on the delays of the trains, she was criticized by journalists in various media, by politicians representing oppositional parties, by Internet users putting comments under the information about her statement, in internet memes and probably in many other ways. Individuals can be affected by those means differently. Politicians and political parties obviously desire to avoid such criticism, but at the same time have nothing against their political opponents to be criticized that way. However, it should be noted that criticism of politicians usually appears simultaneously in various means of communication and it is impossible for politicians to work against any single form exclusively.

It could be argued, that many people do not read internet memes about politics at all, but on the other hand there are also Polish citizens who neither watch TV news nor read newspapers, but they take their knowledge about politics from internet memes. Such people are less probable to vote actively, but they still are a potential electorate of political parties. Therefore it

can be concluded, that internet memes can have political significance, but it is hard to assess the strength of their influence on the political discourse so far.

## Conclusions

The article presents Internet memes in the context of participation of ordinary people in the political discourse. Considering the information about commenting the political events with the use of Internet memes brings a conclusion that these contents can actually be regarded as an example of political activity of citizens. As mentioned, it is one of the ways that ordinary people can comment on the political reality loudly. Most frequently these expressions are in fact more or less harsh criticisms. Commonly they are regarded as jokes only, and at the same time they are published and shared anonymously, which in a way secures their authors from legal consequences. Therefore Internet memes can be a convenient and at the same time safe way of expressing opinions about politics by citizens.

It is characteristic for Internet memes that they appear and spread very quickly. This applies to memes concerning politics as well. In most of the situations when a politician embarrasses himself, Internet memes appear very soon. Internet memes are therefore an extremely quick tool of shaping opinions of ordinary people on politics in public.

As it appears, in favorable circumstances Internet memes can mean more than simple entertainment contents. If their readers have no interest in politics, they may derive their knowledge about it from memes. As a result, in some situations Internet memes can be regarded as a tool of political communication aimed to discredit political opponents. It is very hard to assess their strength in political discourse though, as they appear simultaneously with other forms of criticism of politicians.

Michał Marcin Kobierecki – PhD, University of Lodz, Faculty of International and Political Studies

**Abstract**

The article deals with the issue of Internet memes concerning politics. Internet memes can be described as humorous contents that are created and shared via Internet. They can be regarded as one of the ways of commenting on political reality, available to ordinary people. In the article examples of situations when activities of politicians received responses from Internet users using Internet memes have been presented. According to the main hypothesis, these entertaining contents can be regarded as examples of political activity of the Poles on the Internet.

## AKTYWNOŚĆ POLITYCZNA POLAKÓW W INTERNECIE NA PRZYKŁADZIE MEMÓW INTERNETOWYCH

**Abstrakt**

Artykuł dotyczy zagadnienia memów internetowych odnoszących się do polityki. Memami internetowymi można określić humorystyczne treści, które są tworzone i udostępniane przez internautów. Można je uznać za jeden ze sposobów komentowania sytuacji politycznej, który jest dostępna dla „zwykłych ludzi". W  artykule przedstawione zostały przykładowe sytuacje, w których działania polityków spotykały się z odpowiedzią internautów przy użyciu memów internetowych. Zgodnie z główną hipotezą te rozrywkowe treści mogą być uznane ze przykład aktywności politycznej Polaków w Internecie.

**Katarzyna Maksymowicz**

## TOTAL RECALL: THE POLITICAL CRISIS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

### Introduction

Every change in technology entails a number of changes in the ways it can be used. With the advent of social media, which belongs to a collective category of Web 2.0, the so far irrefutable position of the traditional media has been compromised. A new area of information flow based on the idea of public generating and sharing content has emerged. Unlike traditional media, social media, its existence and condition, is strongly dependent on the commitment of its users. By this I do not mean the demand for particular media stimulating its supply, but the thoroughgoing transformation of the medium's nature: the key feature of social media is networking. Network of connections accelerates information flow and extends its reach. It is based on a natural human need for communication and knowledge transfer: upon gaining access to new information, with some exceptions, our natural desire is to share it with others. We can therefore claim that social media is a natural consequence of our needs. It constitutes a new online discourse, in which people create, recommend and preserve content much faster than traditional media do (and are able to do), as well as incessantly network them, which is not possible in the case of traditional media.

In the following paper I would like to examine the changes the advent of social media brought to politics and handling political emergencies. First, I will briefly analyse the key characteristics of social media, trying to expose its aspects that can affect politics most. Then, I will take a closer look at the notion of crisis as a social phenomenon and explore what use can be made of social media in the face of critical situations. I will refer to two thinkers who have strongly influenced the analysis of media in the political context: Jürgen Habermas and Manuel Castells[1]. As Habermas put emphasis on the concept of deliberative public sphere and developed a theory of communicative action, this reference would make a good starting point for the subsequent analysis of the communicative aspects of social media[2]. Castells, in turn, provides a profound insight into the concept of 'network' as a social structure. Afterwards, I will introduce the *securitization* theory developed by the Copenhagen School in security studies, which provides a framework for analysis of critical situations and security threats. I will then try to put theory into practice, looking back at recent examples of political crises in which social media played an important role, to eventually pose a question of the perspectives social media gives to the future political discourse.

Personalization of the content we are presented within social media platforms is the result of increasingly precise and intelligent mechanisms operating on the data, such as the Edge Rank mechanism managing Facebook con-

---

[1] Stefanie Plage carries out a more complex comparative analysis of the role of media within contemporary social life as seen by the two authors in her article: S. Plage *Mass Communication, Information Technology and Social Exclusion in Contemporary Society: Reconciling Public Sphere and Network Society?,* http://www.essex.ac.uk/sociology/documents/pdf/graduate_journal/2008_2009/plage%205.pdf, 18.03.2014.

[2] For a broader reconstruction of Habermas's concept of Public Sphere in context of Media see: R. Benson, *Shaping the Public Sphere: Habermas and Beyond,* https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/scmsAdmin/uploads/006/243/Benson%202009%20American%20Sociologist%20FINAL.pdf, 18.03.2014.

tent. It has a direct impact on both information we receive and likeliness it will make us actively use the portal. Social media makes manifesting our commitment simple and effortless. The messages tailor-made for us make half the battle to achieve the effect of social networking. Giving a "like" or adding content to "favorites" requires minimal effort – a single click of the mouse button. Contrary to what the names of functions in question suggest, the fact that we "like" certain message does not necessarily mean that we actually approve of its content. It rather suggests that we consider it important in some way, distinguish it from other messages and want to be evaluated based on the fact that we have expressed particular interest in it. Some additional engagement is required in various forms of sharing content require some additional involvement, such as the Facebook "share" feature or "retweet" on Twitter. Even more valuable are the comments – they constitute a form of critical engagement, which forces us not only to notice the content or pass it on, but also to refer to it and add some personal contribution, an added value. Nevertheless, although it might seem pretty advanced within the social media engagement scale presented above, it is still not gruelling. As Malcolm Gladwell argues analysing the phenomenon of social media activism, the only way to get many people we would not otherwise have contact with (Gladwell defines social media networks as built around weak ties with acquaintances and strangers we would never stay in touch with outside the Web) do something on our behalf is by not asking too much of them[3]. Indeed, if giving the social media feedback cost us more than a single click or typing a few characters, we would probably express it seldom or scarcely. However, we cannot ignore the fact that, no matter how easy it is, people engage and want to contribute to the social media discourse. Jason Chan identifies five characteristics that dif-

---

[3] See: M. Gladwell, *Why the revolution will not be tweeted*, "The New Yorker", 4.10.2010.

ferentiate social media from other forms of traditional media: Collectivity, Connectivity, Completeness, Clarity and Collaboration[4]. Let us remember this distinction because it is essential for the great importance social media has gained in recent years and it gives a basis to understanding its inevitable popularity.

The notions I would like to focus on in the following paper and analyze in context of their relevancy to the social media era are the notions of "crisis", "threat" and "securitization". I would argue that all of them can change the picture of state's political situation by being under the influence of social media. In both cases social media proves its role as a tool used commonly within the society, at the same time elaborating a feedback loop between the state and society, which might strongly affect the ways of both doing and planning the politics.

**Crisis as a social phenomenon**

Among various functions of media, their informational aspect is undoubtedly of great importance. We expect media to provide us with reliable and up-to-date content. The more rapid and dynamic the related events are, the more important becomes the time in which information is transmitted. It is also crucial how it is targeted – different messages are directed to different recipients. At the peak of the "media events" pyramid we will find all kinds of crises. A crisis – a notion fairly broad, yet vague, can be simply defined as a period of breakthrough, change, a decisive turning point and a time of economic collapse[5]. A special kind of crises is the political ones. They are usually

---

[4] J.C. Chan, *The role of social media in crisis preparedness*, response and recovery, http://www.oecd.org/governance/risk/The%20role%20of%20Social%20media%20in%20crisis%20preparedness,%20response%20and%20recovery.pdf, 17.01.2014.
[5] See: W. Kopaliński, *Słownik wyrazów obcych i zwrotów obcojęzycznych*, Warszawa 1967, p.417.

temporary and short-lived, refer to current events, have a rapid course and are likely to lead to change or trigger off a sequence of changes[6]. At the same time they most often take place in the social environment involving two or more parties, representing different interests and degrees of power. The relation-driven nature of such situations, their social dimension and hence their reach, allow us to speak of them as crises. Jurgen Habermas, although he developed his crises theory way back before social media came into being, paid much attention to the position of individuals in context of social emergencies. He claimed: *Only subjects can be involved in crisis. Thus only when members of a society experience structural alterations as critical for continued existence and feel their social identity threatened can we speak of crises. Disturbances of system integration endanger continued existence only to the extent that social integration is at stake, that is, when the consensual foundations of normative structures are so much impaired that the society becomes anomic. Crisis states assume the form of a disintegration of social institutions*[7].

This statement can not only be easily applied to the political crises, but it also refers to the most basic category Jason Chan ascribes to social media – collectivity. The latter is inseparably linked with the adjective "social", and so will repeatedly appear in the further analysed case studies, proving its crucial role in both social media and social reality context.

The collective nature of both crises and social media affects not only the way the crises occur, but also the way in which critical situations are defined. Traditionally a crisis, defined as a threat to the social order and therefore the state integrity, used to be recognized and managed by the authorities. The state was the right subject to first name the critical situations and subse-

---

[6] See: W. Szewczak, *O pojęciu kryzysu polityki* [in:] M. Kołodziejczak, R. Rosicki (ed.), *Od teorii do praktyki politycznej*, Poznań 2012.

[7] J. Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, London 1976, p. 3.

quently react in order to avoid their harmful consequences and to protect the society. At present, the state's monopoly on defining the critical threats has been compromised. Due to the operations of social media the society gained an effective tool for communicating and formulating its statements in a collective way. This, in return, gave a handy solution to the state, which could start monitoring the Web and, thereby, gather information on burning social issues needing to be solved. In this sense, the notion of threat has to be re-defined. Before I try to investigate its redefinition, it seems advisable to set the subject of Web 2.0 aside for the time being and have a quick look into the field of security studies, for which "a threat" is one of the fundamental notions. Here I would like to address the Copenhagen School[8] in security studies, which proposed a number of tools that prove useful in emergency analysis.

**The securitization theory**

The Copenhagen School introduced a scheme of analysing how certain matters can be managed within the states' governance. They can be either non-politicized (being not matters for state action and not included in public debate), politicized (being 'managed within the standard political system') or securitized (framed as security questions through acts of securitization)[9]. What should interest us in the context of formulating security issues and critical threats is the latter category. The *securitization* theory argues that: *The process of 'Security' is thus a self-referential practice, because it is in this practice that the issue becomes a security issue – not necessarily because a real existential threat exists but because the issue is presented as*

---

[8] It emerged in the 1990s and is one of the major schools of thought in the security studies. It developed the sectoral approach in security studies and introduced the notions of *securitization* and *desecuritization*. The main representatives are Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde.

[9] R. Emmers, Securitization, [in:] *Contemporary Security Studies,* A. Collins (ed.), Oxford, 2007, pp. 111-112.

*such a  threat. (…) The process of security is what in language theory is called a speech act. It is not interesting as a sign referring to something more real; it is the utterance itself that is the act. By saying the words, something is done (like betting, giving a promise, naming a ship)*[10].

The act of securitization consists of two elements. First, some issues, entities or phenomena must be described as existential threats to certain subjects (referent objects). Then the subject that defines (securitizing actor) must persuade the audience (it can be either the society, politicians, social elites as well as other groups potentially having impact on public policy) that the issues in question pose a real existential threat to the endangered object. The latter can also be of various kinds. What matters, is that it has to be important enough to be considered a security issue when threatened. The spectrum of referent objects is very broad, ranging from survival of ecosystems, through the large transnational corporations liquidity, up to the sovereignty of states or the sense of identity in religious groups. Next, existential threats are defined as risks that may have an impact on the existence and the survival of the referent objects.

This short insight into the *securitization* theory gives us a basis to examine social media through a prism of defining and naming certain issues that prove existential to the society's security and, thereby, are critical as political issues. As mentioned, the verbal stage of securitizing is followed in the nonverbal reality by far-reaching, practical consequences. This brings us to the social media-influenced redefinition of the notion of "threat". As I have already argued, it arises from the way the threats are defined within the society. It is no longer the state that has the monopoly on proclaiming that something poses an existential threat to a state-related referent object. Social media gave

---

[10] B. Buzan et al*., Security. A New Framework for Analysis*, London 1998, p. 24, 26.

the society a forum to express its views and concerns and thereby take an active part in the verbal stage of securitizing certain issues. It gives its users a unique opportunity to (at least theoretically) freely, equally and transnationally share opinions, name problems and mutually search for best solutions. Consequently, the state can monitor social media, get the social feedback and include it in the process of securitizing things. It can also contribute to minimizing the risk of using extraordinary measures, as the latter can be avoided if the emergency is recognized at an early stage. This, in return, works in favour of democracy, as each usage of extraordinary measures, even developed within the constitutional framework, can be dangerous for the regime.

The analysis so far reveals a dual function of social media is revealed. Both aspects apply to the notion of crisis and should not be confused with other functions of social media referring to different fields of usage. Firstly, it serves the society to self-organize and reinforce its clout in regard to critical issues. In this aspect, social media contributes to making massive manifestations of social discontent easier to run and more visible. Secondly, social media can be used by the state authorities to monitor social moods and thus allow including the society in securitization processes, which has former been an exclusive domain of the state. As Manuel Castells argues in *Networks of Outrage and Hope* (2012), *the Internet provides the organizational communication platform to translate the culture of freedom into the practice of autonomy*[11] and in this way gives strong basis to forming of different social movements. I will return to this issue in the subsequent part of this paper when giving a closer look to the dynamics of arising crises on particular examples.

---

[11] M. Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*, Cambridge 2012, p. 231.

**Political crises in social media and crises in political social media**

*Facebook allows manifestation of discontent in an extremely simple manner. Not only without leaving home, but also without visiting the offices or participating in demonstrations, and even without sending signed petitions or e-mails. Clicking one 'Like' below the appropriate entry is enough. With the right amount of clicks every problem can be noticed*[12].

This statement, despite perfectly recognizing the social mechanism essential for the discussed cases, refers to the more general problem of crises in social media. They are defined differently than crises in classical sense. "Social media crisis" is a term used in the field of Public Relations and refers to the situation of a problem which occurs in or is amplified by social media, resulting in negative publications in traditional media, changes in business (or political) process or financial losses[13]. This definition can be supplemented with elements such as image loss or impairment of entity's functioning (this usually refers to companies, but can be also applied to political organizations or states). Here, two phenomena should be clearly distinguished: a political crisis in social media and a crisis in political social media. They do not exclude each other, however, the lack of understanding of the difference between them may lead to unwanted ambiguity. The concept of a political crisis in social media always refers to events in the real world, which are, to different extent, reflected on the social platforms (regardless of whether the seeds of crises lie in the network or outside of it). Speaking of them, we use the classical definition of "crisis". Meanwhile, crisis in political social media means nothing but a social media crisis regarding the profiles devoted to political topics: ranging from politicians' social profiles, to fanpages of political movements and organi-

---

[12] Kryzys w czasach Facebooka. Raport o kryzysach PR w mediach społecznościowych, http://blog.sotrender.com/pl/2013/04/kryzysy-w-mediach-spolecznosciowych-raport, 10.01.2014.

[13] Based on the definition by experts from Altimeter Group.

zations, to the accounts of political bodies and governments. When diagnosing such crises, we use the PR criteria included in the definition of "social media crisis", which refer primarily to the characteristics of Web 2.0. Although this sort of crises may rapidly spread and transfer to the real world, the main subject of analysis is the mechanism of its expansion and its 'networked' dimension. In response to such crises, it is important not only to refer to the usually very emotional content, but also to be aware of the specific rules governing virtual communities. Removing an inconvenient comment may result in repercussions much worse than ignoring it, and every unfortunate comment, even deleted immediately after publication, may repeatedly resurface and strike at its author. Both kinds of crises can be political, it is also likely they overlap and combine. However, the distinction gives us a utile tool to classify the complex landscape of Web 2.0.

**Reporting crises in social media**

The massive earthquake which struck Haiti in 2010 gained a name of the first "Twitter Disaster[14]" – the microblog was the place where first reports of the alarming situation appeared. It was also the channel where current information from the disaster-affected area appeared, while TV broadcast failed. Thanks to the widespread availability of Twitter, reports about the disaster were edited simultaneously by countless informants and were much broader than it would be possible with traditional media. This event can be considered as another media breakthrough since the so-called "CNN effect" in 1991, when CNN provided the first ever live broadcast of an armed conflict, showing the

---

[14] See: N. Bruno, *TWEET FIRST, VERIFY LATER? How real-time information is changing the coverage of worldwide crisis events*, "Reuters Institute Fellowship Paper", University of Oxford, 2011.

mass audience live pictures of military operations in Iraq during the first Gulf War. Thanks to its microblog formula, Twitter became an invaluable channel for real-time content distribution. Messages limited to 140 characters won the hearts of press and media, but in the first place – individual Web users. This led to a significant breakthrough in journalism: following the changes it had to devote more attention to the process of creating content and its flow, introduce a more polyphonic, diverse narrative and allow new, previously disregarded sources.

As after every significant breakthrough, also in this case the new medium quickly spread from one field to others and reached popularity as a useful tool in social and political reality. In the era of traditional media political crises coverage was a difficult task. Unilaterally transmitted messages often reached the audience with delay. Due to much lower information and source accessibility, impartiality and transparency were challenged. Press releases were exposed to the pressure of political subjects, especially taking into account that their final receivers had no means to easily verify their credibility. It is plausible that due to this many potentially critical situations passed unnoticed or were nipped in the bud, while others artificially gained notoriety. Moreover, a centralized message did not, and could not cover a complete, diversified image of social moods and attitudes. Today, traditional media increasingly tend to make use of social media and rely on its content. Commenting on recent election protests in Iran, Golnaz Esfandiari recalls how *Western journalists who couldn't reach – or didn't bother reaching? – people on the ground in Iran simply scrolled through the English-language tweets posted with tag #iranelection*[15]. Esfandiari puts emphasis on the linguistic aspect. She refers to a Green Move-

---

[15] G. Esfandiari, *Misreading Tehran: The Twitter Devolution*, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/06/07/the_twitter_revolution_that_wasnt, 20.02.2014.

ment Persian-speaking activist, who did not gain much popularity among Western journalists who did not speak Farsi, but became a valuable source of information on the social mood for those who did. This example exposes the dialectical nature of social media. Egalitarian on one hand, it gives everyone free access to generating content and does not interfere in it or manage it (or does it only to a very limited extent). On the other hand, it favours those who have competencies to access and make use of the content, as it does not help users to make use of the provided data – this is left to users on their own. Speaking of data, easily accessible does not necessarily mean useful. The lack of clearly defined borders and visible distinctions between content target groups exposes us to new obstacles. Personalized content works well for private needs, but leaves much to be desired in the search for information. Nevertheless, social media platforms serve their users as a field for incessant exploration, and journalists – as an excellent social litmus test. The trends, social changes and first signs of social discontent or potential critical threats are nowhere as visible as in social media.

**Political social media**

The great advantage of social media over traditional media is that they shorten the distance between the sender and the recipient of the message. This aspect is particularly important in the political context, this is when social media serve as a carrier of political communicates. This mechanism works both ways: politicians or state structures representatives can reach out directly to individual citizens and communities, at the same time becoming easily accessible to everyone. These mutual benefits made politicians love social media. The Cieślak's study from 2014 shows that in 2011 over 80% of American congressmen used Twitter and Facebook, and more than one third of Americans

took the opportunity to contact them via Internet[16]. Another example is the fact that the European Parliament published on its fanpage a list of websites and social media profiles belonging to individual MPs, of which, as it turns out, as much as 70% are active on Facebook[17]. Making direct contact between politicians and the society easy and commonly accessible has positive consequences for the democratic system and the State as such. Still, this is only one dimension of political social media. I would not like to underestimate or diminish it, as it plays a significant role in establishing relations between authorities and the society. It facilitates introducing desirable, democratic practices in public discourse and takes advantage of technological progress in order to satisfy the social need for more profound and direct insight into the politics. However, we observe a growing number of cases in which political engagement in social media has consequences reaching much further than just building the politicians' public image or carrying out citizen-friendly election campaigns. These far-reaching cases become more and more visible in the political landscape and in consequence cannot and by any means should not be omitted. A large percentage of the cases are the social movements I have already mentioned in context of the *securitization* theory. We can distinguish two basic types of social movements in social media. The first type is the already existing movements, which moved into cyberspace, created their virtual identity and continued their previous activity using Web 2.0. The second type is the new movements, self-organized via social platforms. In both cases, social media is an important starting point for mustering and maintaining the manifestations, but experience shows that sooner or later it has to move from the Web 2.0 comfort zone into the real public space. Castells describes this pattern,

---

[16] M. Cieślak, Politycy w mediach społecznościowych – jak to się robi na świecie, http://www.kompassocialmedia.pl/blog3M/info?itemId=95545, 17.01.2014.
[17] *Ibidem.*

claiming that: *While these movements usually start on the Internet social networks, they become a movement by occupying the urban space, be it the standing occupation of public squares or the persistence of street demonstrations. The space of the movement is always made of an interaction between the space of flows on the Internet and wireless communication networks, and the space of places of the occupied sites and of symbolic buildings targeted by protest actions*[18].

### Case study 1: the Arab Spring

Three years ago, during the Egyptian revolution, the April 6 Youth Movement, a pro-democratic and anti-governmental Egyptian youth group, organized the so-called 'Day of Anger' (also known as Day of Wrath, Day of Revolt), designed to topple the then-President Hosni Mubarak. The protests in Egypt were influenced by the Tunisian revolution and the hopes the latter has raised, as well as the government's decision to raise the food prices. As the early strikes were brutally repressed by the authorities, social anger accumulated. More and more people started expressing discontent, which led to more demonstrations and subsequent bloody responses of the government. The protesters sought support and social media, especially Facebook and Twitter, came as a handy tool for promoting the cause, gathering people and organizing further protests. Numerous relations and amateur videos showing violent scenes of the riots were being recorded, uploaded and eventually flooded social media, which quickly turned the eyes of the political world to the situation in Egypt. As the later analysis show, social media and individual engagement had an unquestionable impact on the dynamics of the revolution. *An analysis of a  large data set of public tweets in Tahrir Square during the period of Janu-*

---

[18] M. Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope…*, p. 222.

*ary 24-29 shows the intensity of Twitter traffic and provides evidence that individuals, including activists and journalists, were the most influential tweet originators, rather than the organizations present at the scene. In other words, Twitter provided the technological platform for multiple individuals to rise as trendsetters in the movement*[19]. All of this was possible since social media was the only communication channel beyond governmental control at the time. What is more, it was the easiest way to reach the public and potential supporters.

*Internet networks, mobile networks, street demonstrations, occupations of public squares and Friday gatherings around the mosques all contributed to the spontaneous, largely leaderless, multimodal networks that enacted the Egyptian revolution*[20]. As Castells shows, the scale of the revolution was the resultant of its diverse background combining virtual and physical actions. *Urban networks had taken over the role that Internet networks had played in the origins of the protest. People were in the streets, media were reporting, and the whole world had become aware of a revolution in the making*[21].

As we can see, social discontent and mutiny found a vent and spread in cyberspace to quickly evolve into fully measurable, actual revolution. In the foregoing description we can find the key characteristics ascribed to social media by Jason Chan, including collectivity, connectivity and collaboration. The same features accompany most of the protest movements. Evgeny Morozov in "The dark side of Internet for Egyptian and Tunisian protesters" corroborates this thesis, and adds that *it is only natural that the new protest movements in the Middle East turn to Facebook and Twitter: These platforms are cheap and*

---

[19] *Ibidem*, p. 58.
[20] *Ibidem*, p. 56.
[21] *Ibidem*, p. 66.

*provide almost instantaneous visibility to their causes*[22]. It is also worth mentioning that protesters in Egypt were mainly young people, under 30, often students. This explains how they made such a good use of social media – it was the natural environment for their generation. As eventually Mubarak was removed from his position, they did not rest on their laurels, but continued the undertaken actions and fought for the democratic future, using the already built social media potential to remain visible to the international environment.

The Egyptian case proves that social media cannot be overrated not only as an effective tool for bringing people together, but also as a medium enabling a coordination of large groups of strangers brought together by a common cause. Coordination and organizing the protests via social media can, as shown, prove very effective, albeit it is not always attainable for the protesters. A good example can be the situation that occurred at the same time in Tunisia, where the Internet was a subject to a strong state censorship since the very beginning of the social unrest. This prevented the citizens from planning and organizing protests using social media. However, the latter played an important role as a channel for conveying information outside the borders of the country. Numerous commentators named both of the given examples "the Facebook revolution". People all over the world realized the immense power that social media gives its users – the power that allows people to induce political pressure or even intimidate governments.

The above analysis shows that in face of political crises social media can either serve a passively (reporting on the course of events) or actively (as a tool for organizing political actions). They allow a more profound insight into causes and courses of crises, bring many of them out into daylight and give

---

[22] E. Morozov, *The dark side of Internet for Egyptian and Tunisian protesters*, "The Globe and Mail", 28.01.2011.

many voices that traditional media would not recognize or downplay a chance to be heard and reach the public consciousness. Apparently, marginal protests are likely to rapidly spread on the Web, gain new supporters and escalate into large-scale phenomena. They can be a  highly destabilizing factor for the society when uncontrolled messages spread fear, anger, panic, shock and awe. This makes them "existential threats" within the framework of *securitization* theory and it should result in putting them on the states' security agenda. Thanks to social media those threats can be noticed at an early stage and averted. Since naming the threats is a big part of managing them, the open, dynamic communication platforms provided by Web 2.0 should both allow the society or smaller social groups to freely gather and express their interests, and the State to notice their needs and take extraordinary measures to resolve potential sources of conflict before it occurs. Gladwell notices how this has affected the traditional relationship between the society and the authorities: *The world, we are told, is in the midst of a revolution. The new tools of social media have re-invented social activism. With Facebook and Twitter and the like, the tradition-al relationship between political authority and popular will has been upended, making it easier for the powerless to collaborate, coordinate, and give voice to their concerns*[23].

Social media allows to gather and distribute information on a large scale, involving the public in anti-crisis measures (a perfect example can be the crowdsourcing actions, which is gathering opinions on the crises-related issues from individuals of different social backgrounds and statuses to gain the fullest possible picture of the situation and consequently be able to help managing the crisis) or even using the 2.0 platforms for emergency training, collective

---

[23] M. Gladwell, *Why the revolution…*

problem-solving and decision-making. An example of a tool used for such purposes are the gamification practices[24].

## Case study 2: the ACTA protests

As I tried to show above, the Arab spring fits the type of a political revolution, which made use of social media to self-organize, catch attention and gain support. As a counterexample I would like to have a look into another crisis, which would not occur if not for the Web 2.0. The example I have in mind are the massive protests against ACTA (Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement), which occurred in Poland in 2012. The social media origins of the protests were two-fold. Firstly, the protesters were convinced that the agreement would compromise their freedom on Web 2.0. They claimed it would endanger their free access to data gathered on the Net and strongly criticized the government for planning to sign the agreement. Secondly, the mechanism of how the protests rapidly grew to a considerable extent was deeply embedded in social media platforms – they were the main place for information transfer. Protesters spread the word via social media and gained numerous supporters. An interesting thing is that, at some point, the crisis kept growing due to the stampede effect. Social media is easily affected by temporary vogues. At that time, being anti-ACTA became in good taste. Thus it gained many supporters who were not really into the substance of the protests nor were they aware of the effects the agreement would bring. Provided with several keywords and slogans repeated by the initiators of the protests, they just followed the tide.  In face of more and more visible protests and accusations aimed at the Polish government, the latter could not remain passive. The sting

---

[24] Gamification is the use of game mechanics, such as scoring points, applying certain rules or competing with others, in the fields unrelated to games, in order to promote desirable behaviors.

of criticism first hit the government's virtual identity: thought to be transparent and freely accessible, the fanpage of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister did not perform its function anymore as its admins started deleting posts and comments added by the protesters. Although such actions were explained as reactions to vulgar and aggressive hate speech, the forthcoming analysis have shown that it was less than 3 per cent of the deleted contents could be defined as offensive and unacceptable according to the law of Facebook Policies[25]. Such reaction of the government has shown its deep lack of understanding of the rules governing social media. This, in turn led to a series of hacker attacks aimed at the websites of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister, the President, Parliament and Ministry of Culture. Although the criticism was initiated and expressed mainly on Web 2.0, the protests eventually moved to the streets, and so the ACTA issue became a subject of public, and political interest. What I would like to point out in this case is what Edwin Bendyk puts in the following words: *Castells in his book >>Communication Power<< argues that the essence of power is today the ability of agenda-setting, this is picking the topics media and public opinion would cover.* (...) *In case of the ACTA protests, although it seemed impossible due to its complexity and non-mediality, the agenda was set by the opponents of the agreement*[26]. There is a significant twist in the practice of agenda-setting in comparison to the ways described above. We can examine it through the lens of the Framework Buzan provided us within the securitization theory. The speech act accompanying the defining of existential threats to the state's security used to be in state's competence. Now its weight is moved to the society's side. In this way a social-media-originated crisis not only affected the politics, but also had impact on redefin-

---

[25] See: http://blog.sotrender.com/pl/2012/01/jak-nie-powinno-sie-reagowac-na-kryzys-pr-na-facebooku--czyli-kasowanie-wpisow-na-fanpageu-kancelarii-premiera/, 08.03.14.
[26] E. Bendyk, *ACTA, dzień po*, translated by author, http://bendyk.blog.polityka.pl/2012/01/22/acta-dzien-po/, 08.03.2014.

ing the ways of doing security. Bendyk adds: *The pros and cons of the sponta-neously-organized anti-ACTA movement, which erupted with great force, but at the same time quickly and quietly fade out. The protests can be thus handled as an episode, albeit underestimating them would be rather a bad idea – young people, who went out to the streets claiming that ACTA compromised their freedom, are an example of social power not only worth analyzing, but also constituting an early-warning, since it was the society that disciplined the authority this time*[27]. Indeed, the ACTA case is precedential and the state should learn the lesson. Otherwise, even being able to monitor social media, authorities would not be able to prevent prevent or successfully manage the subsequent similar situations.

The realm of Web 2.0 is a subject of numerous studies, ranging from theoretical academic papers to popular newspaper articles. The same applies to the political aspects of Internet. It is inarguable that the link between Web 2.0, politics and democracy (especially taking into account its egalitarian and deliberative features) constitutes new perspectives for the concept of public sphere and civic actions. Andrew Chadwick examines the phenomenon of In-ternet-enabled e-democracy as a tool of participatory democracy and deliber-ative democracy in the widely discussed article "Web 2.0: New Challenges for the Study of E-Democracy in an Era of International Exuberance"[28]. The author outlines the 1990s e-democracy paradigm and its development into the con-temporary form of Web 2.0 involvement and the implications it has for e-democracy. Another insight to the topic is provided by Zizi Papacharissi, in

---

[27] E. Bendyk, *Bunt sieci – premiera*, http://bendyk.blog.polityka.pl/2012/04/04/bunt-sieci-premiera/, translated by author, 08.03.2014.
[28] A. Chadwick, *Web 2.0: New Challenges for the Study of E-Democracy in an Era of International Exuberance*, "I/S: A Journal of Law and Policy for the Information Society" Vol. 5:1, 2009.

"The Virtual Sphere 2.0: The Internet, the Public Sphere and Beyond"[29], where she traces the main narratives regarding internet as the public sphere and place for civic engagement, as well as the ways subversive movements emerge in the latter. Nevertheless, most approaches to the topic cover it quite comprehensively, putting emphasis on general mechanisms governing the virtualized society[30] rather than the question of specific dynamics of political crises 2.0. Those, except for few exceptions (such as the analysis of Castells or Bendyk) mainly appear in media themselves, as comments to the ongoing events. As the topic is dynamic and evolves quickly, it constitutes a field for debate to be opened and run permanently along with the course of political events. Although it can be argued that the vogue for herein analyzed Facebook and Twitter *will fade as online audiences migrate to new services*[31], which is plausible taking into account the pace of technological change, those new services will evolve from the same core characteristics which make cyber reality so influential within the political discourse. Even the most recent occurrences, such as the opposition rallies in Ukraine, show the same patterns concerning the use of cyber networks as in the former cases. As we once entered the Era of Web 2.0, there is no way back, it might only evolve into more advanced and thereby more efficient forms.

---

[29] Z. Papacharissi, *The Virtual Sphere 2.0: The Internet, the Public Sphere and Beyond.* [in:] A. Chadwick, P. Howard (ed.), *The Handbook of Internet Politics*, New York 2008.

[30] See also: C. Hood , H. Margetts, *The Tools of Government in the Digital Age,* New York 2007; R. Inglehart, C. Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy,* London 2005; T. Miller, *Cultural Citizenship*, http://www.revistas.usp.br/matrizes/article/viewFile/38292/41116 , 19.03.2014; M. Seong-Jae, *From the Digital Divide to the Democratic Divide: Internet Skills, Political Interest, and the Second-Level Digital Divide in Political Internet Use*, "Journal of Information Technology & Politics", Volume 7, Issue 1 January 2010; P. Norris, *Digital divide: Civic engagement, information poverty, and the Internet worldwide*, http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/pnorris/Books/Digital%20Divide.htm, 19.03.2014.

[31] E. Morozov, *Facebook and Twitter are just places revolutionaries go*, „The Guardian", 7.3.2011.

One more thing worth mentioning is the social media "content recycling". It is much easier and therefore much more frequent than in the case of traditional media. Decentralized nature of the communities, countless groups and networks formed around certain events or topics, constant content flow within those groups – these are all factors that influence the data life cycle. They maintain commitment of their members and facilitate returning to particular topics, which in other circumstances would be probably forgotten. Hence the social media content is easily renewable and more likely to be brought back to life than the traditional media content. "Social" messages live longer, or if we refer to the idea of Big Data – have no "expiry date". Here lies the greatest strength and the greatest danger Web 2.0 brings. Political leaders change, so do social moods, the press follows current events. But as yesterday's newspapers go to waste, yesterday's entries in social media, stored on the servers, stay frozen, able to be restored in the least expected moment. This, in turn, makes outbreaks of further crises more likely. Our historical and political memory wears off as time goes by. Memory stored on the networked servers is a total recall.

Katarzyna Maksymowicz – MA student of the University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Warsaw

**Abstract**

The article describes the significant impact social media has on politics and handling political emergencies. After analysing key characteristics of social media, the author takes a closer look at the notion of crisis as a social phenomenon and explores what use can be made of social media in the face of critical situations. Using the theoretical framework provided by Barry Buzan in his securitization theory, she looks back at the recent examples of political

crises in which social media played an important role, to eventually pose a  question of the perspectives given by social media to the future political discourse.

## PAMIĘĆ ABSOLUTNA: KRYZYSY POLITYCZNE A MEDIA SPOŁECZNOŚCIOWE

**Abstrakt**

W artykule opisano znaczący wpływ mediów społecznościowych na politykę i  możliwości zarządzania politycznymi sytuacjami kryzysowymi. Po przeprowadzeniu analizy najważniejszych cech charakteryzujących media społecznościowe, autorka koncentruje się na pojęciu kryzysu jako zjawiska społecznego i  potencjalnych zastosowaniach mediów społecznościowych w obliczu sytuacji kryzysowych. Korzystając z  aparatury pojęciowej zawartej w teorii sekurytyzacji Barry'ego Buzana, przygląda się niedawnym przykładom kryzysów politycznych, w których media społecznościowe odegrały istotną rolę, by w końcu zadać pytanie o perspektywy oferowane przez media społecznościowe przyszłemu dyskursowi politycznemu.

**Aleksandra Bagieńska-Masiota, Joanna Jaroszyk-Pawlukiewicz**

## POLITICIANS' RIGHT TO PRIVACY ONLINE. POLISH AND INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION STANDARDS. SELECTED ISSUES.

### Introduction

The right to privacy concerns the right to preserve some aspects of one's life in secret. It is currently treated as a personal right and one of the human rights[1]. Inherently, it is a right due to a human being, although one could also speak about privacy in the context of legal rights. Therefore, the right is of different importance as protection covers a separate legal subject[2].

Current European democracies at the level of internal law, as well as the law of the European Union and international law all regulate the matters regarding privacy protection of natural persons. In Polish law this kind of protection is provided by both civil law regulations: construction of personal rights, and administrative or legal regulations as well as protection of personal data and regulated access to public information. Privacy is also subject to protection by penal law in the context of on-going court cases.

The tradition of legal regulations dates back to the turn of the 20th century in the United States. The so-called *right to privacy* concept stood in natural opposition to the freedom of speech.

---

[1] Cf. The European Convention of Human Rights and Charter of Fundamental Rights. The problematics of privacy as a human right will be presented further.
[2] For more information, cf. notes to Article 43 of the Civil Code, included in *Komentarz do KC* [*A commentary to the Civil Code*] by Andrzej Kidyba, Warszawa 2012.

Here, it is worth noting that there is little tradition of settlements of conflicts between the freedom of speech and right to privacy in Poland. Freedom of speech did not exist in Poland before 1989 despite constitutional declarations. The right to privacy was first perceived as a personal right as a result of Poland ratifying the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1977). The first verdict which captures the right to privacy as a personal right dates back to 1984[3]. Thus, in Poland there is no long-term legal nor judicial culture, tradition of dispute and also well-established entities in the press or media market which benefit from the freedom of speech they are entitled to[4].

The interest of society in the privacy of other people – including politicians – arose in Poland after 1989, the moment the free uncensored press appeared. At the end of 1990s the literature introduced the phrase 'commercialisation of privacy'. Privacy became a commodity on the media news market.

The end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century may be called the time of the digital revolution. Instead of traditional, e.g. printed, media, information generated appeared online. As a global and easily accessible medium, the Internet facilitates access to privacy of others[5]. It creates conditions for the

---

[3] Cf. Verdict of the SC of January 18, 1984. I CR 400/83, OSNC 1984, no. 11, pos. 195.

[4] Post-war Polish legislation concerning the freedom of speech was among others entered into the Constitution passed in 1952. Article 71 of the Constitution features regulations concerning freedom of speech. It has been enumerated next to freedom of assembly, print, marches and manifestations. Therefore, freedom of speech has been listed as a political freedom and placed in the chapter entitled the basic rights and duties of a citizen. Providing the working class with i.e. printing houses, paper, means of communication and other goods was fulfillment of the freedom of speech (section 2). cf. The Constitutional Act of July 22, 1952 Introductory regulations of the Constitution of People's Republic of Poland, Journal of Laws 1952, No. 33 pos. 233. More about the freedom of speech in People's Republic of Poland: A. Bagienska-Masiota, *Problematyka wolności słowa w kontekście uregulowań prawnych dotyczących cenzury w latach 1944-1981 w Polsce* [*Freedom of speech in the context of legal regulations of censorship in 1944-1981, in Poland*], "Politeja" 2013, issue 25, p. 329-345.

[5] The new dimension of threats as regards interactive character of the Internet is called Privacy *2.0*. It is mainly used in the context of protection of personal data on the Internet. More: J. Kulesza, *Ius Internet, Między prawem a etyką* [*Ius Internet. Between the law and ethics*], Warszawa 2010, p. 86.

violation of personal rights, also due to anonymity and the spontaneity of expression. These violations result from the dissemination of written statements, but also images (the right to the image) and sounds.

The aim of this article is to present the standards of protection of politicians online, in the context of violation of their privacy understood as a personal right and a human right. The standards will be discussed in the context of regulations and judicature of Poland, international and European law.

The scope of the article does not comprise the administrative protection of privacy of people performing public functions (cf. the Act on Access to Public Information and Protection of Personal Data), nor penal law-related issues.

The pioneers of political application of the Internet appeared in the USA in 1995, during the primary elections of the Republican Party. Further on, their experience was replicated on other continents[6]. At the beginning, American politicians did not use the web to interact with potential recipients of information, treating it rather as a cheap broadcasting channel[7]. Also on the Polish ground, the initially budding presence of politicians online consisted of treating the Internet as a transmission channel, especially for some political parties[8]. The changes in the approach to the Internet (also among politicians) have been related to the transition from the pre-modern Web 1.0 to the second generation Web 2.0. The activity of pre-modern Internet user, as political scientist Mirosław Lakomy rightly notes, came down to *the search and consumption of what the others had uploaded*. Web 2.0 (developed after 2001)

---

[6]After: M. Lakomy, *Demokracja 2.0 interakcja polityczna w nowych mediach* [*Democracy 2.0: political interaction in the new media*], Kraków 2013, p. 196.

[7] After: *Kampania w sieci, analiza wyborów samorządowych w 2000 roku* [*Online campaigns and analysis of local government elections of 2000*] , ed. J.M. Zając and D. Baran, Warszawa 2011, p. 16.

[8] More: M. Nowina-Konopka, *Rola Internetu w rozwoju demokracji w Polsce* [*The role of the Internet in the development of Polish democracy*], Kraków-Nowy Sącz, 2008, p. 145-146.

integrates the whole output of Web 1.0 *like a saprophyte – via providing options of active participation in community building, blogging, content sharing and communication in the 'many-to-many' model*[9]. The same author noted that in current politics, the following elements of contemporary Internet are growing in importance: Google search bar, the blogosphere, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Flickr, Second Life and exposure-oriented media such as Wikileaks[10].

Among legal acts, the constitutional approach is of primary importance for privacy. Article 47 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland ensures legal protection of private life for everyone. At the same time, it qualifies it as a personal freedom and right of the so-called third generation. The right to privacy is also a personal right understood as non-property, individual values of the emotional world and psychological state of a human being[11]. Therefore it is the subject of civil code regulations regarding personal rights (article 23 and 24 of the Civil Code).

As for the functioning of the Internet as press, it is regulated by the Act entitled Press Law. For discussion of judicature of Polish and foreign courts, the period 1989-2014 was taken into account in the area of The Judicature of the Constitutional Tribunal and common courts. In the last twenty years, the Constitutional Tribunal has had numerous times to deal with the conflict (collision) between the discussed right to privacy and the citizen's right to information and transparency of the public life.

According to the authors, violations of personal rights on the Internet share aspects common to all violations of such rights – also committed offline, for instance in traditional printed press; however they also have self-contained

---

[9] M. Lakomy, *op. cit.*, p. 45-46.
[10] *Ibidem*, p. 75-76.
[11] S. Grzybowski, *Ochrona dóbr osobistych według przepisów prawa cywilnego* [*Protection of personal rights in line with civil law regulations*], Warszawa 1957, p. 78.

features. This pertains to e.g. differences in regards to penal qualifications (defamation), but is at the same time out of scope of this article. Other differences stem from specific techniques increasing effectiveness of online communication, which are used only on the Internet. The techniques are *linking* and *framing*. *Linking* in this particular example means that a website without materials violating the personal rights includes a hyperlink to another site with such materials. *Framing* means that a hyperlink is placed on a site, and once the user clicks it another website is displayed in a frame. The Internet user remains on the same website. In regards to violation of personal rights, this leads to the same situation as linking. Content violating personal rights is then treated as a recurring dissemination of the content (not reproduction). Civil liability for violation of personal rights is then borne by the author of the text (supplier of content), as long as they can be identified. If no identification is possible, the possible addressee of civil law claims may be the entity which makes the content available[12].

## The legal status of the Internet

The Internet is an internally varied phenomenon, analysed not only by jurists but also political scientists, sociologists, psychologists and economists. It is obvious that each of these scientific disciplines creates a separate language to describe the phenomenon dependant on the subject of study of a given discipline.

From the legal viewpoint, attempts have been made to define the Internet as an institution or already-existing notions, such as press or mass-medium. However, this notion falls outside of the narrow framework of legal

---

[12] For more about liabilities of particular entities for content published online, cf. A. Wojciechowska*, Naruszenie powszechnych dóbr osobistych w Internecie* [*Violation of common personal rights on the Internet*], [in:] *Media a dobra osobiste* [*Media and personal rights*]*, ed. J. Barta and M. Markiewicz, Warszawa 2009, p. 387-395.

language. Thus, legal literature presents a following definition: *The Internet is a technical possibility of providing services of varied character*, consisting of individual communication (e-mail), group communication (discussion boards), and mass communication (sending radio and television broadcasts via the Internet and publication of widely-available data online)[13]. For this article, the most significant research field as regards the Internet is constituted by group and mass communication services[14].

Since the Internet cannot be subjected to rules dictated by press law, a specific part of legal doctrine claims it cannot be fully regulated by press law[15].

The literature qualifies the Internet to be regulated by press law in cases when it distributes press which is also published traditionally[16].

More liberal approaches also qualify periodicals published solely online as regulated by press law, as long as they maintain press characteristics: periodicity, a permanent title, subsequent issues, clearly marked date)[17].

From the information above it appears that the Internet is not press, even though press may be published there. The Supreme Court addressed the

[13] A. Wojciechowska, *Naruszenie powszechnych dóbr osobistych w Internecie* [*Chapter VII, Violation of common personal rights on the Internet*]*,* [in:], *Media a dobra osobiste* [*Media and personal rights*]*,* J. Barta and M. Markiewicz (ed.), Warszawa 2009, p. 359.

[14] After: J. Sieńczyło-Chlabicz, Z. Zawadzka, M. Nowakowska, *Istota prawa prasowego w Polsce. Podstawowe pojęcia z zakresu prawa mediów* [*Chapter I. The core of press law in Poland. Basic notions of media law],* [in:] J. Sieńczyło-Chlabicz (ed.) *Prawo mediów* [*Media law*],, Warszawa 2013, p. 32.

[15] Cf. Article 7, section 2, point 1 of the Act - Press Law of January 26, Journal of Laws 1984, No. 5, pos. 24 with amendments. The notion of press has already been described by representatives of press law doctrine. Cf. for instance comments to Article 7 of Press Law (in:) E. Ferenc-Szydełko, *Prawo prasowe. Komentarz* [*Press Law. A Commentary*], , Warszawa 2013, or older: J. Sobczak*, Prawo prasowe. Komentarz* [*Press Law. A Commentary*], Warszawa 2008.

[16] J. Barta, R. Markiewicz, *Postęp techniczny w mediach* [*Technical progress of the media*]*,* [in:] J. Barta, R. Markiewicz, A. Matlak, (eds.) *Prawo mediów* [*Media Law*], Warszawa 2008, p. 202.

[17] E. Czarny-Drożdżejko, *Dziennikarskie dochodzenie prawdy, a przestępstwo zniesławienia w środkach masowego komunikowania* [*Journalists' journey to the truth and crimes of defamation in mass media*], "Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego", issue 90, p. 199.

question of whether an online publication is press in 2008. It stated that the press character of a publication should be decided by its objective. The role and task of press is to distribute social, economic, political, scholarly, and cultural information[18].

Therefore, an assessment of a direct relation between a piece of news distributed via press and public activity of a specific person should each time be submitted to the court's decision, as regards the objective and potential consequences of the distribution. If a piece of news has been distributed via press, the court takes into account among others its functions. These include:

- social control which guarantees openness and transparency of the public life;
- the informative function, which provides the news to the society and constructs the public opinion[19].

Where the Internet cannot be perceived as press, jurists suggest the application of Article 54, letter b of Press Law. The regulations on legal responsibility and proceedings in press-related cases are applied appropriately when the law is violated due to distribution of human thought with means other than press, regardless of the distribution technology. In particular, they apply to nonperiodical publications and other press publications, video and audio broadcasts. With this approach, a cumulative application of press law and the Civil Code is possible for the protection of personal rights online[20].

The judicature of the Supreme Court also indicates that the Internet may be perceived as a mass medium described in Article 212§2 and 216§2 of the Penal Code. Thus, defamation and libel crimes may be committed via the

---

[18]Cf. Verdict of SC of December 15, 2010 III KK 250/10, OSNKW 2011, no. 3, pos. 26.

[19] More about the function of press in e.g. J. Sieńczyło-Chlabicz (ed.), *Prawo mediów* [*Media law*], Warszawa 2013, p. 40-42.

[20] A. Wojciechowska, *op.cit.*, p.362

Internet. In the verdict of the SC of 2008 we read that mass media are understood as all the means of communication which distribute varied content at a mass scale. This includes printed press, online coverage and posters and books[21].

When analysing the issue violation of privacy of a politician, it would be more appropriate to perceive the Internet from a viewpoint broader than just press law. Violations of the right to privacy occur also outside of press *sensu stricte*, presented online – for instance via blogs, forums etc. Such an approach brings forward important implications.

Entities expressing themselves online will, namely, utilise the freedom of speech, expression of viewpoints, distribution and obtaining of information[22], as described in Article 54 section 1 of the Constitution. Freedom of speech plays a key role in a democratic country. It guarantees democracy and pluralism, and thus any limitations imposed thereon must be formalised. The limitations include, pursuant to Article 31 section 3 of the Constitution of 1997, the imperative to set limitations to constitutional rights and freedoms solely via legislative acts. Potential limitations may only be imposed due to an enumeration of rights comprising, among others the so-called public interest: security of the state, public order, the environment, public health, public morality and rights and freedoms of others. Moreover, limitations to constitutional rights and freedoms should occur in line with the rule of proportionality (to the necessary and indispensable extent), and the limitation should not vio-

---

[21]Cf. Verdict of the SC of May 7, 2008. III KK 234/07, OSNKW 2008.

[22]Freedom of expression is wider than freedom of press, and may be exercised via print, oral coverage, the Internet, electronic records, films or in essence any kind of expression which presents viewpoints, stands or ideas, etc. More: P. Winczorek, *Komentarz do Konstytucji RP z dnia 2 kwietnia 1997* r. [Commentary on the Constitution of the Republic of Poland of April 2, 1997], Warszawa 2008, p. 131.

late the core of the rights[23]. Such limitations also pertain to the general limits of freedom of speech online.

The literature  rarely presents the viewpoint that the law is not an effective measure of regulation of cyberspace, e.g. blogs, due to for instance jurisdiction-related problems. Thus, according to Joanna Kulesza common ethical standards should be referred to, and effective solutions adjusted to contemporary needs should be worked out on their basis[24].

**A politician or a public person?**

The word 'politician' used in the article title does not come from legal jargon. The notion is utilised by e.g. political sciences, where it describes a person who constantly participates in strategic and tactical political decision making, via direct participation in formal and/or informal meetings or influencing such meetings[25].

When describing an activity which may be political, the legal jargon utilises among others the phrase: **'public activity'** and **'a person performing public functions', 'a well-known person'.**

Article 14.6 of Act – Press Law states as follows: *It is forbidden to publish information and data concerning private life without the assent of the interested party, unless it is directly related to the public activity of a given person.*

---

[23] More about limitations on constitutional rights and freedoms cf. L. Garlicki. *Polskie prawo konstytucyjne. Zarys wykładu [Polish constitutional law. An introductory lecture],* Warszawa 2002, p. 104-108.

[24] J. Kulesza, *Ius Internet, Między prawem a etyką [Ius Internet, Between the law and ethics],* Warszawa 2010, p. 214.

[25] After: A. Antoszewski, R. Herbut (ed.), *Leksykon politologii* [*Lexicon of politology*], Wrocław 2004, p. 328-329.

The interpretation of the notion of public activity may include under-taking actions and tasks for the common good, available to all[26]. The legal doctrine in the most part interprets the notion quite broadly, applying it not only to the performance of a public function and acting within the entrusted public mandate[27]. B. Michalski, A. Kopff, P. Winczorek, J. Sobczak and others understand public activity also as writing, journalism, and professional, social, religious and charitable activity which awakens particular interest of the society[28].

Judicature also imposes a wide meaning on the 'public activity' notion. In a verdict of 2008, the Supreme Court indicated that people from outside of political circles belong to people conducting public activity – among others, they are such persons whose viewpoints co-shape the notions of the society and who gather around meaningful opinion-forming groups and may thus influence the public affairs[29].

Also the judicature clearly marks the difference between public persons (a wider notion) and people performing public activity. What makes the distinction is the wide recognisability of a public person. The catalogue of public persons comprises both people performing public functions and those who do not perform them, also in politics[30].

According to the authors, a politician may be both a recognisable public person and a little-known person performing public functions.

---

[26] M. Szymczak (ed.), *Słownik języka polskiego PWN* [*PWN Dictionary of the Polish language*], , T.1., T.2., Warszawa 1983.

[27] Thus, J. Sieńczyło-Chlabicz*, Naruszenie prywatności osób publicznych przez prasę [Violation of privacy of public persons by press],* Zakamycze 2006, p. 235.

[28] B. Michalski, *Podstawowe problemy prawa prasowego* [*Basic notions of press law],* Warszawa 1998, p. 50-51 and J. Sobczak, *Prawo prasowe. Podręcznik akademicki* [*Press law. An academic handbook],* Warszawa 2000, p. 296.

[29] Verdict of the SC of 24.01.2008. I CSK 341/07. OSNC 2009, no. 3, pos. 45. Also other verdicts provide a wide understanding of pubic activity. Cf. e.g. Verdict of the SC of 11. 05. 2007, ICSK 47/07, Rejent 2007, no. 5, pos. 173.

[30] Verdict of the SC of 24.01.2008. ICSK 341/07, OSNC 2009, no. 3, pos. 45.

The authors maintain that the words politician and celebrity are not interchangeable. Such viewpoint stems from previously quoted judicature of the SC of 2008. According to the SC, a celebrity is a person who becomes widely recognised due to the media image they create for themselves and to the readiness to provide information about their private life. On the other hand, a celebrity or a person accompanying a celebrity cannot be denied the right to privacy. A celebrity decides each time about the extent to which their private life is made public. In this context they may be considered public persons. When describing an activity which may be political, the law utilises, among others, the phrase: 'a widely known person' (article 81, section 2, point 1 of Copyright Law states: no assent is required for distribution of image: 1) of a commonly known person, if the image has been created due to the public, in particular political, social or professional function they perform.

In conclusion, one should note that

- the law conditions the violation of private life on the relation between distributed content and public activity of a given person;
- the relation justifies limitation of protection of these rights.

**Right to privacy – an attempt at definition**

In Polish literature, the concept of privacy as a personal right which deserves protection appeared about 1972. A. Kopff wrote and published an article in which he defined privacy as *everything that due to justified separation of an individual from the society leads to his or her physical and psychological development, and maintenance of achieved social status*[31]. Following Kopff, private life is divided into two subspheres:

---

[31] A. Kopff, *Koncepcja prawa do intymności i do prywatności życia osobistego. Zagadnienia konstrukcyjne* [*The concept of right to intimacy and privacy of personal life. Basic notions*], "Studia Cywilistyczne", 1972, p. XX, p. 32.

- the intimate life;

- the personal life.

The intimate life is fully protected by law, since it includes personal feelings and experiences of people who do not share them with third parties, and the revealing of which could lead to for example shame, embarrassment and anguish.

Conversely, personal life (news from personal and family life) is not protected by legal regulations to such a high extent. Interference is allowed in particular when it comes to the so-called justified interest of the society factor. This pertains in particular to public persons who play an important role in the social, political or cultural life, and who participate in events drawing public interest.

J. Barta and M. Markiewicz divide the protection of private life into three spheres:

- what is publicly available,

- what is private,

- what is intimate[32].

The publicly available information is not protected. This category includes the news on:

- public activity of a specific person,

- public statements and speeches,

- behaviour when performing public functions, for instance of an MP,

- information provided in official communications, e.g. during press conferences.

---

[32] J. Barta i M. Markiewicz, *Dobra osobiste osób fizycznych*. Rozdział II [Personal rights of natural persons. Chapter II], [in:] . J. Barta and M. Markiewicz (ed.) *Media a dobra osobiste* [*Media and personal rights*], , Warszawa 2009, p. 76.

The authors qualify information which a given person wants to keep to themselves, or only reveal to those closest to them as private information (called personal life by Koppf). What determines inclusion in this category is not only the content (relation to family, home, social life, neighbours relations, opinions, religious and political sympathies), but also the will of a given person to keep it secret. In this context, violation of privacy will mean secretly taped conversations, phone tapping, revealing a conversation conducted in confidence. Information coming from an individual cannot be distributed on principle, even if it is true[33].

People who have achieved a certain social status and have become recognisable must take into consideration certain limitations of privacy protection. They are:

- persons who perform specific public functions, publicly active;
- public persons, equated with well-known persons;
- people who are subject of general interest.

A politician may in fact belong to each of the above mentioned category, next to athletes, artists, public servants, religious authorities, social activists and famous entrepreneurs.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that a politician has less privacy than other natural persons.

## International regulations of privacy protection

The Polish legal system – similarly to other European regulatory systems – is systematically growing more bound to the supranational system  to

---

[33] *Ibidem*, p. 78.

which it belongs. This pertains especially to these legal regulations which are to assure the full exercise of freedoms and rights in confrontation with public authorities. The right to privacy is not only a citizen's but also a human right. Such was the ground for common values shared between various states, based on democracy, lawful government and human rights, and then expressed in international covenants and declarations. As a result, local legal systems grow closer together as regards protection of freedoms – which means both concrete legislative solutions and methods for interpretation of the regulations. Here, judicature of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg is of particular importance, especially in relation to issues which have been neglected by domestic legislation.

### The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

One of the most basic sources of human rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, was adopted by the UN General Assembly in Resolution 217, on 10th December 1948[34]. Already in the preamble the Declaration indicates that human rights stem from the inherent dignity of each individual and are equal and inalienable. It contains a number of both individual and collective rights – citizens', political, economic, cultural and social ones. They complement each other and together form a catalogue of rights of each individual living in a society, and are thus indivisible. Pursuant to Article 12 of the Declaration, *No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interfer-*

---

[34]The declaration was adopted by a vote of 48, with 8 abstentions (USSR and other socialist countries, Saudi Arabia and South Africa). Two delegations, from Honduras and Yemen, failed to appear at the meeting.

*ence or attacks*[35]. Despite the fact that the Declaration did not specify any potential protection of these rights or other legal control mechanisms, as a moral obligation of the signing parties it had a deciding impact on further acts of the General Assembly, including Conventions, multi- and bilateral treaties, national Constitutions and internal legislation.

### The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Due to the lack of binding force of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations General Assembly, on December 16, 1966, adopted the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights – precisely to guarantee respect for human rights. The latter Covenant preserves each person's right to privacy, stating in Article 17:

1. *No one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his honour and reputation.*
2. *Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks*[36].

Similarly to the Universal Declaration, the International Covenant in Article 17  protects  two types of personal rights: the private, family and household life together with correspondence, and the good name of an individual. It forbids 'arbitrary or unlawful interference', but does not specify against whose actions an individual should be protected. It also does not indicate in which situations the public authorities may lawfully interfere with citi-

---

[35] Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10 December 1948.
36 Article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of December 16, 1966, www.ms.gov.pl/prawa_czl_onz/prawa_czlow_ICCPR.doc, 26.02.2014.

zens' privacy, and only constitutes the obligation of protection against violations of personal rights[37].

A significant novelty in the Covenant, as opposed to the Declaration, is the commitment of the states to respect and guarantee the rights and freedoms in their territories via such legislative solutions which would make it effective[38]. Despite the doubts concerning the practical application of the Covenants, it is worth underlining that their adaptation was the first stand of the international community on the issue of human rights protection.

### The Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. The role of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg

The Rome Convention was signed on 4th November 1950, entered into force on 8th September 1953, and was ratified by Poland in 1993. Thus, the European system of protection of human rights established by the Council of Europe – and its accompanying executive mechanism – was adopted. The right to privacy concerns Article 8 of the Convention, which reads as follows:

1. *Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence.*

2. *There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or*

---

[37] Joanna Braciak, *Prawo do prywatności [The right to privacy]*, Warszawa 2004, p. 65.
[38] Very general regulations of the Covenant require detailed legislative normalization within the States Parties in order to guarantee performance of rights and freedoms guaranteed in the Covenant.

*morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others*[39].

The quoted regulation states that local governments have the duty to assure privacy protection against violations and not to interfere with privacy, for instance via penalisation of behaviours belonging to privacy sphere. It is also worth underlining that the Convention in Article 8 differentiates between privacy *sensu stricte* and those privacy spheres which refer to family, home and correspondence[40]. Simultaneously, since the right to privacy is not absolute – it may be subject to certain limitations resulting from local law. For an interference to be in line with the Convention, it must fulfil the following conditions: firstly, the limitation must have been anticipated by already existing local law; secondly, it may be performed only when it protects the closed list of rights indicated in point 2 of article 8; finally the interference is allowed if it is essential in a democratic society[41].

The general guidelines of Article 8 have been developed by the extensive jurisprudence of Strasbourg Tribunal. This institution has assessed diverse cases from the state granting assent to strewn ashes of a deceased person in their garden, to photograph and store photographs of participants in manifestations or penalisation of sado-masochistic practices[42]. Most often, complaints concerning violation of article 8 concern (or concerned) have been the following:

- secrecy of correspondence of prisoners,

---

[39] Article 8 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of November 4, 1950.

[40] M. Pryciak, *Prawo do prywatności [The right to privacy]*, p. 219. www.bibliotekacyfrowa.pl/Content/37379/011.pdf, 26.02.2014.

[41] However, the lack of definitions for 'public safety' or 'protection of health and morality' and similar notions may open the door to arbitrary decisions of local authorities, not always in line with the spirit of the Convention.

[42] D. Ostrowska, *Prawa człowieka. Zarys wykładu [Human rights. An introductory lecture]*, Warszawa 2008, p. 116.

- the problems of phone tapping,

- admissibility of pregnancy termination,

- penalisation of homosexual practices,

- interference with sexual activity of mentally disabled persons[43].


One should also note that the bans concerning respect for private life are limited to the extent to which an individual decides to publicly reveal facts from their private live. The problem concerns in particular well-known people, the so-called celebrities, whose presence in mass media is often founded on unlimited provision of information belonging to the privacy sphere.

Among people performing public functions, politicians constitute a special category, as their activity and statements are often assessed and heavily criticised. Therefore their private life is the subject of interest of the society and media, regardless of whether it has any connection to their public activity. Therefore, is the privacy of politicians protected to a lesser extent than that of other citizens? This dilemma has been adjudicated by the Tribunal not without reason, and analysed from the point of view of a conflict of fundamental rights: freedom of speech and the right to privacy. In this context, one of the most important rulings of the Tribunal was the case *Tammer vs. Estonia*[44]. The judges analysed a complaint filed by a journalist because of a fine imposed on them due to unfavourable comments made about the private life of a person active in Estonian public sphere. The accusations concerned very sensitive private matters, namely wrecking a marriage and neglecting a child. The Tribunal stated that the private and family life of a politician is subject to protection. This protection will not be exercised when the private life is related to the po-

---

[43] *Ibidem*.

[44] Verdict of February 6, 2001, complaint no 41205 in: J. Barta, R. Markiewicz, A. Matlak (eds.): *Prawo mediów [Media Law]*, Warszawa 2005, p. 47.

sition held or when some facts from the private life influence the reliability of the politician. In this case, the Tribunal did not note such a link, thus the media was ordered to be cautious when dealing with the privacy of politicians. No public rights in this case justified the usage of harmful and humiliating statements.

As for the limits of protected privacy sphere of politicians, another verdict brought forward by Caroline, daughter of Prince Rainier III of Monaco was of fundamental importance[45]. The complaint concerned the fact that German tabloids would publish her photographs taken by paparazzi against her will in various private situations (e.g. on holidays, with children), which is a violation of article 8 of the Convention. In its verdict, the Tribunal stated the said article of the Convention had been violated and simultaneously indicated that revealing materials and publication of photographs concerning private life is only permissible when this life is related to a current debate of public importance[46].

The undoubted input of the Convention in providing privacy protection relates to a control mechanism of observation of its resolutions by Member States, established as the European Court of Human Rights. After Protocol 11 came into force on 1 November 1998, it is the only competent body in regards to dispute settlement[47]. The control is initiated by an individual or internation-

---

[45] Verdict in the case *Von Hannover vs. Germany* of June 24, 2004, Ibidem, p. 48.

[46] Ibidem, p. 48.

[47]It is worth mentioning that initially the control procedure would engage as many as three bodies: the European Commission of Human Rights, European Tribunal of Human Rights and Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. In the first stage of the proceedings, the Commission analysed the permissibility of an individual complaint, established the factual state and encouraged the parties to settle the case amicably. When finishing the works on a given case, the Commission would issue an opinion with the factual state and manner in which the case had been settled. This opinion filed to the Committee of Ministers would open the second stage of proceedings, going either to the Committee of Ministers of the European Tribunal of Human Rights. Within three months, the case could have been sent to the Tribunal, which issued the final and binding ruling after its analysis. If the case had not been turned to the Tribunal within that time period, the final decision would have been taken by the Commit-

al complaint, which is permissible once the domestic remedies have been exhausted. The sentence of the Tribunal is limited to a statement that resolutions of the Convention have been violated (or not), and does not undertake the matter of potential violation of internal rights. Execution of the Tribunal's sentence belongs to the state involved in the dispute. Should the state neglect its function or executes the sentence in a non-satisfactory manner, the Tribunal may intervene again and set out the compensation in a new sentence[48]. In other words, settlements of the Tribunal are of declarative character. In contrast to the Convention they do not modify or even annul acts or sentences, since that belongs to state competencies. However, the fact that the Convention does not obligate Poland to accept the direct effectiveness of the sentence within its legal framework does not mean there is no effect exerted by Tribunal sentences on the legal framework in question. The way in which Poland fulfils such international obligations has been specified in its Basic Law.

**Privacy of a public person in the jurisprudence of Polish courts**

Remarks presented in sub-chapter 2, 3 and 4 concerning the legal status of the Internet, the issue of who a politician is from a legal viewpoint and privacy as a personal right lead to the following conclusions:

- A politician may be qualified to a broad category of the so-called public persons (persons publicly known). Thus, some of rulings regarding violations of the right of privacy of public persons in press may be applied, respectively.

- Violations of the right to privacy of public persons may be conducted on the Internet understood as press, and also outside of it. Thus,

---

tee of Ministers. In: Luis Escobar de la Serna: *Manual de Derecho de la Informacion*, Madrid 1997, p. 142-143.

[48]Lluis de Carreras Serra: *Regimen juridico de la informacion. Periodistas y medios de comunicacion*, Barcelona 1996, p. 154-155.

some of rulings regarding violations of the right of privacy of public persons via press may be applied, respectively.

Both the Constitutional Tribunal, courts of general jurisdiction and the Supreme Court analyse the issue of privacy in their jurisprudence.

Therein, the following three criteria justify the entrance to the private sphere of people known publicly. They are:

- justified interest[49],
- the fact that the circumstances are relevant (of significance) to the assessment of functions performed[50],
- the fact that concealment would harm the public interest[51].

In the above-quoted verdict, the Constitutional Tribunal (CT) stated that the decision of a natural person to perform a public function should be preceded by an examination of potential positive and negative consequences, including specific limitations resulting from interference in one's personal life[52].

In a separate verdict the CT stated that the citizens' right to information and transparency of public life in a democratic country allows a deeper interference into personal lives of people performing public functions. However, there are limitations to violation of privacy of people performing public functions. They include:

---

[49]Cf. Verdict of CT of October 21, 1998, K 24/889, OTK 1998, no. 6, pos. 97.

[50]Cf. Verdict of AC in Cracow, of June 14, 1994, I ACr 281/94. After: B.Gawlik, *Dobra osobiste, Zbiór orzeczeń Sądu Apelacyjnego w Krakowie [Personal rights. Collection of verdicts of Administrative Court in Cracow],* Kraków 1999, p. 129.

[51]Cf. Verdict of SC of October 11, 2001, II CKN 559/99, OSNC 2002, no. 6, pos. 82.

[52]Cf. Verdict of CT of October 21, 1998, *op.cit.*

- the necessity to relate the revealed information with the public activity of a natural person (the functional relation);
- the imperative to respect the dignity of natural persons in case of revealing information from their personal lives;
- the absolute obligation to protect the intimate life of a person performing public functions;
- the prohibition on violations of privacy of third parties, including family members[53].

Due to revocation, in 2011 the Supreme Court analysed the issue of violation of personal rights of an expert serving Sejm committees, committed by printed press. The expert has been recognised as a public person by the court of second instance. The court decided that the following circumstances were in favour : the plaintiff was an activist of the Polish Chamber of Liquid Fuels and participant in activities of Sejm committee for biofuels, and reports from the meetings of that committee are open to the public. The Supreme Court, took a different decision  than that of the court of second instance. It stated then that the information on due diligence in business activity – including information on debts arising from public receivables – are directly linked to the public activity. Revealing them cannot be treated as unlawful violation of the private life. The court also noted  that debts of natural persons do belong to their private spheres, and thus publicly revealing such debts does constitute a violation of personal rights. In case of public persons, however, the private life sphere is subject to less protection that the private life of people who do not undertake such activity, on the condition that the relation of such information with public activity is indicated. According to the court, the fact that

---

[53]Cf. Verdict of the CT of July 13, 2007, (K 20/03) OTK -A 2004, No. 7, pos. 64.

a person participating in legislative works has such liabilities is important. When changing the verdict of the court of second instance, the SC ordered that the press statement be changed, and the plaintiff was to a large extent burdened with the legal costs. What is worth noting is the fact that apart from the violation of privacy, the expert also imputed violation of other personal rights – insults and compromising his good name[54].

Public persons were also concerned by another verdict of the Appeal Court of 2013 . The Court examined the appeal of the defendant to the verdict of the Regional Court. The case referred to the printed press (a tabloid) spreading the news from a private holiday trip of a daughter of a well-known politician, and her boyfriend (a famous jazz musician). According to plaintiffs, their privacy and image were violated. They demanded an apology in press and PLN 100,000 (with interest) as compensation for the damage. The Appeal Court in Warsaw stated that both the personal rights and the right to the image were violated – but there were circumstances which diminish the actual damage done to the plaintiffs. One of them has been indicated by the AC as the fact that plaintiffs were public persons. Their professions (journalist, musician) linked them to the media inextricably, and their activity was immanently connected to the media coverage and audience.  Plaintiffs need to take the media interest into account[55].

Also in 2013 the Appeal Court in Warsaw analysed the case of violation of personal rights filed by a well-known journalist against a publishing house of a  magazine. The magazine published an article entitled 'The marriage at the brink' and 'He went crazy for a twenty-year-old', illustrated with numerous photographs. It described the journalist's extramarital affair with his assistant.

---

[54] Cf. Verdict of the SC of April 20, 2011, ICSK 500/10. As quoted in http://lex.online.wolterskluwer.pl, Lex no. 846541.

[55] Cf. Verdict of the Appeal Court of September 12, 2012, I ACa 234/13. After http://orzeczenia.ms.gov.pl, 26.02.2014.

The magazine was widely advertised on television. The appeal court shared the view of the regional court that privacy had been violated. According to the Appeal Court, public persons, such as the plaintiff, on the one hand provoke the media by voluntarily agreeing to publish information about their personal lives. On the other hand, however, they have the right for some of the facts from their personal lives not to be published. Therefore, it cannot be judged that the plaintiff allegedly provided assent to publish information on all the details of his private life. In another part of the justification the court also stated in a response to the allegation of the defendant that personal rights may be violated with the whole content and sense of the publication, and not only concrete sentences. The appeal court also shared the views of the regional court regarding the compensation of damage in the sum of PLN 30,000. The court analysed the following factors: the type of violated right, measure of intensity, duration of negative psychological state of the person whose rights had been violated (damage) and the measure of guilt of the person violating these personal rights[56].

It is also worth to note the verdict of Regional Court in Gdańsk of 2013 in case on violation of personal rights, issued by the court in case brought by a public person against a publisher of a web portal. The plaintiff is a person well-known in Poland and in the past he used to be – among other public functions – an MP, councillor and president of an association. In 2011 a website published an article about him citing psychological problems, alcoholism and his past as a former secret service agent spying on the Catholic Church. The plaintiff accused the domain owner that his personal rights had been violated: honour understood as good name and human dignity, good opinion among other people, respect of the public opinion and the private sphere. He de-

---

[56]Cf. Verdict of Appeal Court in Warsaw of April 22, 2013, I ACa 1311/12. Published on: http://orzeczenia.ms.gov.pl, 26.02.2014.

manded a statement in a specific form to be published, and a compensation of PLN 200,000 for the damage.

The regional court determined that the website is one of the more popular web portals where actions of public persons operating in widely-understood social life are commented upon. Articles placed online are commented upon by the Internet users. According to the court, due to the publication the personal rights of the plaintiff were not violated.Personal rights should be perceived in an objective, and not relativized manner. Honour, good opinion and respect are in the court's opinion no separate personal rights but simply emanations of a personal right – human dignity, understood as a good name of a person. The justification further states that it is so because the abovementioned qualities refer to the environment in which a given person functions, and are not objective or identical for all people. According to the court, privacy of the plaintiff had not been violated at all. In the court's opinion, privacy encompasses in particular events connected to family and sexual life, health status, the past or material status. Protection may pertain to cases when facts from personal or family life are revealed, the information obtained is abused, information and assessment of intimacy is gathered via private interviews to be published or distributed in other ways. Information published online attributes negative characteristics to the plaintiff which discredit him as a person and a public person. This is a violation of dignity and not privacy.

Additionally, the court stated that the owner of the domain was a publisher in the understanding of Article 7 par. 1 of the Act – Press Law, and therefore was liable for violation of personal rights of the plaintiff resulting from the publication of the article.

Yet, the court did not adjudge the compensation in the amount of PLN 200,000 demanded in the lawsuit; deciding instead on a sum of PLN 40,000, a  high sum in the court's opinion. In the justification, the court stated, howev-

er, that the means of communication – the online website where the questioned material had been published, is publicly available and an unlimited number of people may have access to the content of the article from any place[57].

Yet another verdict seems to incidentally pertain to the considerations of privacy protection for public persons. It is namely related to privacy protection of people accompanying public persons. In one of analysed cases, the Appeal Court in Warsaw judged the artistic manager of a performer to be 'a person accompanying a public person' (the performer). Despite the widely held opinion that such a person should enjoy privacy protection to a lesser extent, the court judged that photographs published online and taken during a private dinner with the performer violate the manager's right to privacy protection. In its argumentation, the court referred to the content of the photographs, recognising that their publication in a web portal is not appropriate as regards the professional position of a manager. Interestingly, the court judged that the manager agreed to be photographed by paparazzi since she accompanied a person in whom the media are interested. The key fact as regards to privacy violation was therefore that she had a specific and responsible job based on good image, which was influenced by provocative photographs published on the paper's website. The court ordered the defendant to publish an apology online and in the daily and remove the article along with all the photographs and comments, as well as photographs featuring the plaintiff. What is worth noting is the fact that the plaintiff accused the press of privacy violation since it distributed her image illegally. However, the court stated that the paparazzi

---

[57] Cf. Verdict of the Regional Court of March 12, 2013, XVC1 1795/12. After http://orzeczenia.ms.gov.pl, 26.02.2014.

cannot presume there is consent to distribute the photographs since "there was no objection"[58].

In conclusion, one should note that:

1. The Constitutional Tribunal plays an important role in marking privacy borders of public persons. The citizens' right to information and transparency of public life in a democratic country do not justify each interference into personal lives of people performing public functions.

2. In most of analysed cases settled by the courts, violation of privacy was accompanied by violation of other personal rights and intangible rights (the image).

3. The Supreme Court also plays an important role in marking privacy borders of public persons. In the Court's opinion, the information on due diligence in business activity - including information on debts arising from public receivables – are directly linked to the public activity. Revealing them cannot be treated as unlawful violation of the private life.

4. Courts of higher instances often change the compensation amount for the damage done by the publication, due to the fact that it was done to public persons whose professional activity is inextricably linked to the media.

Aleksandra Bagieńska-Masiota – PhD, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Lecturer at Private Law Cathedral


Joanna Jaroszyk-Pawlukiewicz – PhD, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

Lecturer at Faculty of History

---

[58]Cf. Verdict of Appeal Court in Warsaw of April 25, 2013, I ACa 1381/12. As quoted in http://lex.online.wolterskluwer.pl Lex no. 1322776.

**Abstract**

The article concerns the following issues: legal status of the Internet, considerations concerning the definition of a politician from a legal viewpoint, definitions regarding the right to privacy, international privacy protection regulations and privacy of a public person in the jurisprudence of Polish courts.

**PRAWO DO PRYWATNOŚCI POLITYKÓW W INTERNECIE. POLSKIE I MIĘDZYNARODOWE STANDARDY OCHRONY. WYBRANE ZAGADNIENIA**

**Abstrakt**

Artykuł składa się z następujących merytorycznych części, dotyczących zagadnień: statusu prawnego Internetu, rozważań związanych z definiowaniem osoby polityka z punktu widzenia prawa, zagadnień definicyjnych związanych z prawem do prywatności, międzynarodowych regulacji dotyczących ochrony prywatności oraz prywatności osoby publicznej w orzecznictwie sądów polskich.