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### SOCIAL MEDIA'S IMPACT ON POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

Media has always been considered as the main instrument of communication between government and population. However this communication used to be unilateral and aimed to inform people before the Internet. The Internet and social media in particular created opportunities for bilateral communication of government and population. Thus, users can not only openly discuss one or other political topic but also influence on outcomes of political campaigns.

The main goal of the article is to define how internet users can influence on outcomes of elections through social media and how politicians use social media to pursue their own political goals.

Scientific significance of this article is in the compliment it makes to existing concepts of social networks and new media.

As a result of conducted study it has become clear that social media is a strong instrument of communication of government and population using which authorities can communicate with target groups immediately and agitate or antagonize. Using comments, blogs, messages and creation of online-communities social media users can respond to actions of politicians, agitate or antagonize. And since these conclusions were made on the basis of study of foreign experience of using social media as a tool of influence on the outcomes of political campaigns, this work is very important from the viewpoint of international journalism. Practical relevance: Social networks and new media are considered as platforms using which anyone can feel themselves journalist and highlight political themes without even having appropriate education. That means that any concerned citizen can influence on the outcome of one or other political campaign, and doing so increase index of democracy and freedom of speech.

**Key words:** social media, new media, the internet, political campaigns, elections, politics, communication.

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#### Әлеуметтік желілердің саяси кампанияларға ықпалы

Бұқаралық ақпарат құралдары әрқашан билік пен халықтың арасындағы байланыстың негізгі құралы болып саналатын. Алайда Интернеттің пайда болуына дейін мұндай байланыс бір жақты болатын, әрі оның басты мақсаты – ақпараттандыру болып табылатын. Интернет және атап айтқанда, әлеуметтік желілер, жаңа медианың негізгі платформасы ретінде халық пен билік арасындағы коммуникацияны екі жақты қылуға мүмкіндік жасады. Осылайша қазір қолданушылар Интернет кеңістігінде белгілі бір саяси мәселелерді талқылап қана емес, сондай-ақ саяси кампаниялардың нәтижелеріне өз ықпалдарын келтіре алады. Әлеуметтік желілер пайдаланушылары сайлауларға қалай ықпал ете алатындарын және билік өкілдері әлеуметтік желілерді өздерінің саяси мақсаттарын орындау үшін қалай пайдаланатынын анықтау – бұл мақаланың басты мақсаты. Мақаланың ғылыми маңыздылығы оның әлеуметтік желілер мен жаңа медиа жайындағы түсініктерді толықтауында.

Жүргізілген зерттеудің нәтижесінде әлеуметтік желілер – халық пен билік коммуникациясының мықты құралы екендігі, оның көмегімен билік өкілдері мақсатты аудиториямен байланысты лезде орнатып, үгіт не қарсы қою жұмыстарын жүргізе алатындары белгілі болды. Өз кезектерін-

де, әлеуметтік желілер пайдаланушылары комментарий, блогтар мен хабарлама жіберу, онлайн қоғамдастықтарды құру арқылы билік өкілдеріне жауап беріп, үгіт не қарсы қою жұмыстарын жүргізе алады. Бұл тұжырымдар әлеуметтік желілерді саяси кампанияларға ықпал ету құралы ретінде пайдаланудың шетелдік тәжірибелері негізінде жасалғандықтан, бұл жұмыс халықаралық журналистика саласы үшін аса маңызды.

Мақаланың тәжірибелік маңызы: әлеуметтік желілер мен жаңа медиа бұл мақалада әрбір адам өзін сәйкес білімсіз-ақ журналист болып сезініп, саяси тақырыптарды баяндай алатын платформа ретінде қарастырылады. Яғни саясат тақырыбына қызығушылық танытатын әрбір адам белгілі бір саяси кампаниялардың нәтижелеріне ықпал етіп демократия мен сөз бостандығының индексіне көтере алады.

**Түйін сөздер:** әлеуметтік желілер, жаңа медиа, Интернет, саяси кампаниялар, сайлау, саясат, коммуникация.

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### **Влияние социальных сетей на политические кампании**

Во все времена средства массовой информации считались основным способом коммуникации власти с населением. Однако раньше, до появления Интернета, коммуникация эта была односторонней, нацеленной на информирование. Интернет, и в частности социальные сети, как основная платформа новых медиа, создали возможность для двустороннего общения представителей власти с населением. Таким образом, теперь, пользователи могут не только открыто обсуждать те или иные политические вопросы на просторах Интернета, но и влиять на исход политических кампаний.

Основная цель статьи – определить, как пользователи социальных сетей могут влиять на исход выборов, а также, как политики используют социальные сети для достижения собственных политических целей.

Научная значимость статьи заключается в том, что полученные выводы дополняют представления о социальных сетях и новых медиа.

В результате проведенного исследования стало ясно, что социальные сети – это мощный инструмент связи населения с правительством, с помощью которого представители власти могут мгновенно налаживать контакт с целевой аудиторией, агитировать и противопоставлять. посредством комментариев, блогов, сообщений, создания онлайн-сообществ и т.д. пользователи социальных сетей, в свою очередь, могут отвечать на действия политиков, агитировать и противопоставлять точки зрения. И так как эти выводы были сделаны на основе изучения зарубежного опыта использования социальных сетей в качестве инструмента влияния на исход политических кампаний, данная работа представляет особую ценность для международной журналистики.

Практическая значимость работы заключается в том, что социальные сети и новые медиа рассматриваются в ней в качестве платформ, на которых каждый пользователь может стать журналистом, и освещать политические темы, не имея соответствующего образования. А значит, любой, кому это интересно, может повлиять на исход тех или иных политических кампаний, тем самым повышая индекс демократии и свободы слова.

**Ключевые слова:** социальные сети, новые медиа, Интернет, политические кампании, выборы, политика, коммуникация.

### **Introduction**

Media has always been considered as the main instrument of communication between government and population (Howard, 2005). However this communication used to be unilateral and aimed to inform people before the Internet. The Internet and social media in particular created opportunities for bilateral communication of government and population. Thus, users can not only openly discuss one or other political topic but also influence on outcomes of political campaigns.

The object of the study is social media's impact on political campaigns. The subject of the study is social media users.

Conducting the study three main objectives were established:

- to identify the role of the Internet in political discourse;
- to identify the concept of new and social media;
- to assess impact of social media (namely, Facebook) on political campaigns through a case study (End of Hosni Mubarak regime (Tolbert,

Macneal, 2013), B.Obama's electoral campaign) (Bivings Group, 2009).

To reach the objectives quantitative exploratory case study method was used.

In the study it is proposed that using social media authorities can communicate with target groups immediately and agitate or antagonize. Using comments, blogs, messages and creation of online-communities social media users can respond to actions of politicians, agitate or antagonize. It means that any concerned citizen, no matter politician or ordinary person can influence on the outcome of one or other political campaign, and doing so increase index of democracy and freedom of speech which is of paramount importance now (Cornfield, 2004).

### Material and methods

To be able to examine the date connected with the topic of the article quantitative exploratory case study method was used. The case study method enabled the author to explore and investigate the relationship between social media use and outcome of a political campaign. To reach the objectives of this particular study Revolution started by Wael Ghonim on Facebook which lead to the end of Hosni Mubarak regime and Barak Obama's electoral campaign on Facebook were took as an examples.

### Literature review

Researchers have studied the relationship between voters' use of social media and their levels of political attentiveness, knowledge, attitudes, orientations, and engagement (Jamieson, Capella, 2008). Early studies of the effects of social media on voter's campaign knowledge acquisition are mixed, while more recent study shows more consistent evidence of information gain (Bimber, Davis, 2003; Weaver, Drew 2001; Drew, Weaver 2006; Wei, Lo 2008). Researchers also have studied the impact of using of new election media on the development of political attitudes and orientations, such as efficacy and trust (Johnson, Mahmoud, Sothirajah, 1999; Kenski, Stroud 2006; Wang, 2007; Zhang, Johnson, Seltzer, Bichard, 2010). In some studies a connection between exposure to online media and higher levels of electoral engagement and turnout are discussed (Johnson, Kaye 2003; Tolbert, Macneal 2013; Wang 2007; Gueorguiva 2008; Gulati, Williams 2010). Social media use does not necessarily enhance the level of participation to elections, even though it has a positive effect on people engagement, such as community volunteerism (Zhang, Johnson, Seltzer, Bichard 2010; Baumgartner, Morris 2010).

### The role of the internet in political discourse

Rapid development of electronic communications, in particular of the Internet brought new communication variables to society. Development of virtual sphere contributes to emergence of multiplicity of forms and methods of communication among participants by presenting better and more effective instruments of interaction and influence on each other. At the same time, the Internet stimulates the intensification of communication processes as a result of precipitous penetration of computer technologies to all the spheres of life of the society (Mutz, Martin, 2001).

Thus, the global network is becoming the most dynamic and rapidly developing technological, economic, cultural and political phenomenon of modernity shaping new possibilities and realities of communication.

According to Owen, theoretical analysis is basically impossible in the framework of the Internet-discourse since the Internet is being "revolutionized" very quickly, by those provoking changes in conceptual apparatus (Owen, 2002). He also considers the Internet anti-theoretic as there is no science that could describe the Internet-processes adequately (Blumler, 1979). Nevertheless, in politics the Internet is considered to be a computer network in which different communications including political take place. Moreover, for politicians the internet is the instrument of political communication and just a mass media.

There are many definitions of the Internet phenomenon. Broad understanding of the internet as a technical mean of communication is one of its most popular interpretation. For instance, A.A. Tedejev defines it as "an electronic communication network linking all the world computers through telephone lines and optic fiber cables" (Blumler, 1979).

The Internet is a very multidimensional phenomenon combining different aspects of social and technical characters. Therefore it is reasonable to consider this phenomenon in the context of its complex understanding in which its core purpose is to create technically indirect communication process in society. Thus, S. Boulianne notes that computer-indirect communication includes information exchange that takes place in global united complex network using TCP/IP protocols (Boulianne, 2009).

In light of the Internet penetration question of granting it a status of mass media is broadly discussed. Very general, today we can divide two main research attitudes towards this issue:

In the first case, the internet is acknowledged as a full-fledged mass media on an equal basis

with television, press and radio involving in the communication process large masses of population. According to some researchers it is the mass character of this phenomenon that makes it possible to acknowledge the Internet as a mass media, in particular, V. Voroshilov believes that “the transformation of the Internet into mass media is a logical outcome of emergence of new information carrier available to large masses” (Lepore, 2010). However the researcher suggested that the Internet should be considered in two theoretical time-table. On the one hand, the whole virtual network could be considered as a kind of mass media with particular structure that is divided according to thematic, target and other basis. From the other hand, electronic versions of magazines, newspapers, information agency resources created by professional journalist community are considered to be the mass media.

It can be deduced that the Internet is a multidimensional area of mass medium including various communicational configurations. Moreover, the Internet has distinctive characteristics that distinguish it from traditional forms of communication and mass media. In particular, interactivity, hypertextuality, multimedia, batch communication and timing are distinguished.

Regarding interactive parameter of the Internet it is worth noting that whilst traditional mass media oriented on dissemination of information on a wide scale among the public are less interested in audience participatory and do not expect a steady feedback, virtual information implication can be understood as interaction in which users are involved in communication process by forming feedback and further dissemination of information.

The interactive format of the Internet is in fact makes it possible to implement bilateral political communication which is vital for development of civil society. In the modern world social networks, blogs and chats can be viewed as the most interactive instruments of internet-communication.

So, the Internet is considered as a two-way communication. This definition is very close with the definition of new media term. Thus, according to Robert Logan, new media refers to “those digital media that are interactive, incorporate two-way communication and involve some form of computing”. Moreover, new media is “very easily processed, stored, transformed, retrieved, hyperlinked and, perhaps most radical of all, easily searched for and accessed” (Lepore, 2010)

### **Social media and new media**

Professor and new media theorist Lev Manovich describes new media as being native to computers or relying on computers for distribution: websites, human-computer interface, virtual worlds, virtual reality, multimedia, computer games, computer animation, digital video, special effects in cinema and interactive computer installations (Owen, 2009).

It is noteworthy that political communication gained new qualitative characteristics from the viewpoint of such parameters as effectiveness of communication, the speed of information dissemination and promptness of receiving feedback or reaction (Jenkins, 2006). Changes in the above mentioned vectors of development of political communication are connected with the emergence of the new media (social media, blogs and video services).

Social media is one of the key resources of new media. Popularization of social media in the world is evolving rapidly during the last (Owen, 2009). Thus, according to statista.com information, the number of monthly active Facebook users worldwide as of 3rd quarter 2018 is equal to 2.27 billion users, and Twitter averaged at 326 million monthly active users in this period (Statista.com). So, social media serve as one of the key trends of development of internet communication tools in general and political communication in particular.

Thus, rapid development of new media in the last 5-7 years opened new possibilities for improving quality and effectiveness of using communication technologies in political marketing. Namely, today we have such broad possibilities of increasing effectiveness of informational influence as targeting or direction of informational influence towards particular target groups, contextual promotion of political parties and programs, creation and development of internet communities and personal pages of particular leaders and political figures (Druckman, Hennessy, Kifer, Parkin, 2010)

It should be noted that social media, proving itself to be one of the best tools in professional marketing and promotion of goods and services, create great possibilities to evaluate effectiveness of various informational, advocacy, image and other messages which are of paramount importance in creation of measured strategy of political campaign in the context of political marketing (Bivings Group, 2009). It is available to analyze it due to the high speed of receiving feedback from wide range of users of social media, including cross section of various target groups. Moreover, the named advantage makes it possible to correct development vector of

discussions of one or another information through efforts of professional blogger and the specialists in the field of WOM-marketing (Davis, Owen, 2001).

However, obvious advantages of new media such as rapid feedback from users can also be presented as a complex of problems connected with the risks of vulnerability of political strategies and campaigns for anti-advocacy, incriminating information messages, and the absence of total control over and prevention of immediate extensive development of adverse information field among broad mass of users.

Importance of comments on one or another news opportunity can be reaffirmed by a number of research projects. For instance, David Schlosberg Head of the Department of Political Science at University of Arizona South conducting a survey received data that "approximately 75% of respondents always read commentaries with interest and 34% of respondents admitted that they can change their minds after reading comments (Boulianne, 2009)

Thus, the Internet and social media in particular enable public to feel and become subject of political process in practice (Sunstein, 2007). Foreign and Kazakh experience of development of internet show that new media, in particular social media are the most effective instrument of mobilization of citizens under one political theme and interests.

### **International experience of using social media for political purposes.**

Repost technologies today enable users to find associates, create groups of many thousands of supporters and turn "online" or virtual manifestation into "offline" or a real event. It is obvious that now new media serve as a base for further development of civil society in which networks of people consisting of large number of participants-ordinary Internet users will be the core subject of social and political life (Davis, 1999).

December, 2010 Wael Ghonim, head of marketing of Google in the Middle East and North Africa, had created a Facebook page, "We Are All Khaled Said", which portrayed and protested the death of a 28 year-old man beaten to death by Egyptian police. The page showed frightening mobile phone photographs of Khaled Said's tortured body. The page attracted interest of Facebook users and galvanized protests. International human rights organizations, social justice movements and other ordinary people around the world started reposting of the images. They created online communities where they discussed demonstrations. Thus, on January, 25 massive rally at Tahrir Square took place in

Cairo. Protests with calls of end of Mubarak regime continued up until February, 9 2011. February, 11, 2011 Hosni Mubarak, after 30 years of brutal dictatorship was overthrown (Lepore, 2012). After that Wael Ghonim, the symbol of Egypt's revolution told in an interview that he wanted to meet Mark Zuckerberg one day and thank him as that revolution started online; it started on Facebook (Tolbert, Macneal, 2013).

In fact, effectiveness of direct solicitation of followers in social media and blogs as a part of election campaigns in developed western countries has already been proved. For instance, according to the results of Barack Obama's first electoral campaign a significant proportion of votes were vested to internet users. Obama's team could gather 13 million of email addresses and more than 3 million Facebook Followers on the candidate's personal account. The internet communication brought about an encouraging mobilization for his electoral campaign (somewhere around 500 million US dollar) (LaRose, Eastin, 2014)

Furthermore, social media and blogs are being used as an instrument of involving and mobilization of users implicitly assigning role of adherents and active participants of political campaigns, in fact forming a strong networking instrument of communication in the Internet (Baum, 2005).

### **Results and discussion**

Using social media authorities can communicate with target groups immediately and agitate or antagonize. Using comments, blogs, messages and creation of online-communities social media users can respond to actions of politicians, agitate or antagonize. It means that any concerned citizen, no matter politician or ordinary person can influence on the outcome of one or other political campaign, and doing so increase index of democracy and freedom of speech which is of paramount importance now. This could be proved by the example of overthrowing of Hosni Mubarak after Facebook revolution started by Wael Ghonim in 2010 (Lepore, 2012).

It is worth concluding by highlighting weaknesses in the study, and thus pointing the way for

future research. Only one social media platform was addressed in this paper. The extent to which the use of Twitter correlates with use of other types of social media (such as Facebook and Snapchat) is unknown, hence we are unable to say to what extent it is Twitter itself which makes the difference, as compared to other platforms. Future work that studied campaign effort on multiple platforms would be highly valuable.

## Conclusion

It is obvious that development of the Internet platforms in the above mentioned context to a great extent brings renewed specificity to processes of political communication; in the strict sense promoting development of new instruments of political marketing, in a broader sense bringing complication in political communication challenging political systems and stimulating direct democracy and freedom of speech establishment.

Thus, specific features of computer-based communication makes it possible to consider

social media as an effective instrument of political communication bringing new opportunities and horizons of interaction in political aspects of society's life (Burgess, Green, 2009). In particular it should be noted that social media gives opportunity to create utmost informative information flow; inform a target audience timely; post information unsuitable for traditional media. In addition social networks make it possible to receive feedback of public immediately and broaden the level of political participation of citizens. In this sense it can be argued that social media are influencing political campaigns to a significant extent in the era of the Internet.

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