

" Electoral campaign 2013, in its innovations of on-line communication"

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Abstract

Besides political parties, another power is running in the electoral race of 2013- the media: social networks versus classic media. Politicians are striving to exploit as much as possible the space provided by television screens on one hand and screens of IPads, tablets, PCs and mobile phones on the other.

A new chapter of cybernetic dynamic has opened in the sociology of political communication and marketing in Albania. Online democracy, or else 3.0 democracy is functioning. Exploiting the online rhetoric, videos, pictures or other applications provided by profiles and accounts on Facebook, Twitter and the parties' official websites, politicians are trying to get the maximal attention of online voters. The two main leaders of the Albanian political class, Berisha and Rama, as well as other politicians, have best understood the profits deriving from the dynamic of integrated communication. The main goal is to reach as many as possible and as fast as possible: friends, followers and likes, on Facebook, blogs and twitted messages, video and audio spaces on Youtube, as well as on other websites. This study tries to bring a summarized perspective about novelties and problems of online political communication. The projection of the electoral campaign on web 2.0, the changes that the 3G technology has brought in the relations between politics and the public on one hand, politics and the media, as well as within the power of media on the other, is at focus of this study. Among some of the issues requiring further elaboration are:-The transformation of rhetoric from classic speeches to short messages on Facebook, Twitter, etc. Online communication and the audience's fragmentation. What is the change technology is bringing to the political communication modeling? Media and message- what is converging with what? How do web 2.0 and 3.0 affect the protagonist of television in public communication?

Keywords : *Online communication, audience's fragmentation, 3.0 democracy, cybernetic dynamic*

Chapter I: The new modelling of the Political Communication in the electoral campaign

1.1 *Fb, twitter, the virtual message in the Ipad and PC tablets screens.*

In Albania there are 1.44.928 users of internet or 48 per cent of the population and most of them use the internet through their mobiles. According to “Global Information Technology Report”, the index of the tendency for the use of information technology ranks Albania in the 68th place out of 142 countries subject of the study. These indicators try to legitimize the hypothesis that this election campaign transformed the Albanian politics into the virtual forum of the political and public communication. A massive and frequently strategic use of the integrated communication platforms is modelling in a non lineal way the oratory of halls, town-halls and open meetings podiums into the rhetoric of iPods and mobiles plasma. What does it mean politics in social media? The politics closer to and more clear for the people? In this great overturn, what overturns what...?

The media scholar, professor Artan Fuga thinks that at present the political communication has become evermore symmetrical and according to the “two ways of communication” model. It has passed the time when the politician speaks from “the top of the tree” and the poor citizen listens “as Zeqo’s mother, sitting under the tree’s shadow, but can’t speak”. At present the political public space is established not only vertically, “top-down”, but also horizontally, according to the “peer to peer”¹ model.

The scholar Dominique Wolton, considers the political communication² as an engine of the public opinion, a shameless triumphant, partly arrogant. The communication in social media is a kind of construction or reconstruction of an image in the improvement of political strategies. The analyst Lutfi Dervishi says that social networks are nothing else than transparent scales where any official or politician can see “How much worth is he”.³

Media analysts describe the online dimension of Berisha’s campaign as the relationship of a man related to innovation, to new technologies, to 3 G,

This way of communication, according to Mentor Nazarko „is an attempt to give to his image the modern dimension, it is an attempt to use everything possible to make propaganda and Berisha is a man that tries everything “⁴. The new generation, from the informative or political point of view prefers to be fed in small portions and the social media, portals provide you with such a packed food, like McDonalds let’s say.

Rhetoric and the online political communication

The online media panorama of the political race of the two leaders changes from hour to hour; it’s impossible to calculate the friends, like or friends’ friends algorism who comment the posting of the comment’s comment of the facebook army, or that of the postings in Twitter. A vertiginous communication dynamics and unforeseen by the media analysts or the communication sociologist in our country. The leader of the opposition, Edi Rama has 331.339⁵ friends.

¹<http://al.ejo-online.eu/1300/mediat-e-reja-dhe-ëeb-2-0/politika-troket-te-mediat-qytetare#respond>, Artan Fuga 16 Mars, 2013

² Ëolton Dominique, Let’s save communication, Papirus Editions Tirana 2009, pg 112

³ <http://al.ejo-online.eu/1232/mediat-e-reja-dhe-ëeb-2-0/beteja-politike-nga-sheshi-tek-ekrani-i-kompjuterit>, posted on 7 February, 2013

⁴ <http://ëëë.panorama.com.al/2013/03/30/berisha-facebook-u-dhe-votuesi-i-ri/> from Mentori Nazarko

⁵ <https://ëëë.facebook.com/edirama.al>

33.135 comment the messages during the day. Prime Minister Berisha has statistical data for the use of facebook, including details, interesting for a study.(refer to table.⁶).

Whereas the number of readers per week has reached 2.397.155 (photo 2) whereas the number of our fans' friends has reached 20.412.962 people

“Many politicians participate to blogs in order to increase even more their influence”, says Joseph R. Dominick in his book ”Dynamics of massive communication”⁷

“Internet and blog have given the possibility to speak even to those who didn't have the chance to express themselves⁸ and this is one of the healthiest developments of social media”. As regards the on line rhetoric, Philip Patterson, explains it with what he calls the problem of the digitalised information use as a mean to impose the public⁹

“Social networks are quite a dynamic medium, but unstable; the important thing that the digital quotes do not expire”

Social networks such as Facebook or Twitter, where appeared also Berisha and Rama are communication options with new opportunities for interaction and information management. Rhetoric is numbed, numerous and rude. In Rama's profile in facebook are posted more than 3 messages, about 10 photos a day, depending on the political activities' agenda and videos (these are empirical data from the webpage, they're not official as the seat of SP doesn't affirm anything).

Whereas the PR staff of Berisha affirms that in his facebook are published much more data. They also publish alternative ideas such as different applications; the announcement of a photo competition with the subject “Photograph the change to become part of the race” was another discovery for the socialisation of Rama as a politician. Its users are part of a competition which will have a winner and he will be given an iPod.

Chapter II The innovations and features of the online campaign.

2.1 Comparative analysis with the international practises.

The campaign of Bepe Grilo, the leader of the 5 stars movement in Italy, brought a new conception for the use of the online media by the politics and the public in an electoral campaign. The media scholars described Grilo's friends as the community of the Internet, from a certain political movement.

The online politics, as one of the main dimension of e-democracy, emerges active in many European countries where the classic media have a stable relation, almost conservative with the policy-makers and especially with the MPs.

In Germany, Chancellor Merkel even though through the TV screen has created a popular image, she's successfully facing the development of the digital technology. She's enjoying the fruits of the online political communication by considerably increasing the number of her friends in a short period of time.

Even the curricula on the power of social media are one of the most frequented in the universities of different countries. Graham Meikkle, a professor of social media in the Westminster University in London judges that “What we see when social media are involved

⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/SaliBerisha>

⁷ Joseph R.Dominick, Dynamics of massive communication, Media in the digital period, UET Press, 2010 pg 443

⁸ The same page 435

⁹ Philip Patterson, Lee Wilkins Etika në Media, Issues and cases, Sixth Edition, Ufo Press , January 2009 , pg 314-5

in political events of a high level, what we often see is not only dissatisfaction, but also a rebellion against the way of information about politics.¹⁰

Douglas Curswell “The end of politics and the rise of cybernetic democracy¹¹ the politicians, active or not in the parliamentary life are of the opinion that “Internet has deeply changed the way how democracy is realised, it allows us to merge the thoughts. It allows people to do what so far was done only by the political parties. This is a challenge not only for the public, but also for the traditional politics.

Some of the features of communication in the online electoral campaign are

It is noticed a lack of interaction in the social platforms of the two political leaders. The online chat or the conferences of the two leaders with the public are very rare (however up two now Berisha and Rama have had two iPod conferences). It seems that even in this campaign the meetings or the town-halls, broadcasted live on TV are the choice of the two parties' leaders.

In the field of communication an overturn has happened, where we have the replacement of the viewpoint with the comprehensive image.¹²

The online message is not complete as regards the information. The cybernetic space gives you the chance for rhythm but not for the content of the political messages because the too long speeches can't be edited in the networks of facebook or twitter. The online electorate doesn't have time and energy to read in the screens of computer, laptop and mobile.. the electoral fast food is at the peak of its trade.

It lacks the „on demand“ information. A citizen who may ask to Berisha or Rama what has happened during these four years, for example related to x issue in his city or commune, or what is expected to happen, he doesn't receive an answer in their social media.

The online electorate is oriented towards the online media product, carefully selected (photo, video or written message) and edited by the political leader himself or his staff. So, there's no possibility to choose, it lacks the information pluralism.

The social media are serving as political or personal marketing platforms of the leader or politician (the daily political agenda, propaganda, the journal, everything is there, in the web) rather than authentic platforms of conception and approaches of programs and political ideas ... The communication standard seems even lower in the case of online exchanges rather than in the case of classic media.

On the other hand, the sceptics of the technology's influence in politics are conservative for the evaluation of the campaign. Some of them say that the results of the online electoral campaign will have a minor influence in the elections final results.

Web 2.0 challenging the classic TV media. Who defeats whom..?

It is difficult to discuss with statistic data al long as in Albania there's no specialised agency to measure the audience of electronic media or newspapers. So, what we can do is to analyse the empiric data that are daily offered by the electoral campaign. It is clear that for Prime

¹⁰ <http://ëëë.voaneës.com/content/burmas-president-opens-us-visit-ëith-voa-toën-hall-meeting/1664170.html>

¹¹ <http://ëëë.voaneës.com/content/ëhite-house-unaëare-of-irs-misdeeds-us-official/1664109.html>

¹² Marshalm McLuhan , Communication instruments, Media as an Extension of Man, Dialogue and Communication Institute, Tirana 2010, pg 11

Minister, Sali Berisha television is his traditional passion when he says “I use facebook for communication, whereas television for politics”.

On the other hand, both camps have established a modern functional logistics, from the team of cameramen and stage managers, the agency contracted for the organisation of meetings, town-halls or other electoral activities, up to moving stage managers which forward the signal to all the interested channels. So, it seems that the giant of television remains awake in the political conscience, even though there’s a strong attraction to the social media.

The communication scholar, professor Artan Fuga says that the social media platforms are causing the lack of media in politics, meaning that the political communication is almost detached from the massive media, newspapers, radio, conventional television, considering the decrease of their audience¹³.

In the international literature, the scholars are divided in two groups, those who think that social media is causing the end of the television era and those who convinced for the undisputed superiority of this media. Joseph Dominick thinks that televisions, serving as important sources of the political news, by structuring the political reality and by shaping the image of candidates or alternatives might have an appreciable effect in the attitude towards the candidates. Especially referring to television scholars say that victory in the TV debate during the presidential campaign in USA is not necessarily translated into ground victory of the respective candidate.

To my opinion, the dynamics of an electoral campaign can not be conducted more vivid a more rhythmic than in a television screen. Can one imagine news chronicles containing just social or cultural chronicles or gossip, meanwhile we are in the middle of an electoral campaign..? Screen is the image, video and audio, with the background of enthusiastic applauds and the cured landscape of the crowd’s euphoria. The social media are a supplement instrument in the emotional race of propaganda to bring the effect of victory even to the most indifferent and neutral voter.

Conclusions

The 3G technology and the quality of social networks distribution both to the public and to the politician’s mentality has transformed the electoral campaign of 2013 into a cybernetic race..the online democracy has already started its era even in Albania. The politicians are making use of the space and the effectiveness of the message in the social media platform, aiming to reach even the most indifferent and neutral voter, something that some years ago could not even be imagined.

All the highways of the digital communication infrastructure used by the two leaders of the politics: fb, twitter, google plus, my space, you tube, have only one goal, to bring the message and the political propaganda to each and every voter ...

The image in the facebook profile and the message in twitter, in the whole political race are dynamic as regards photo, text, video or other online applications. The rhythm of the political aggressiveness of the campaign has reached its maximum through the online communication. But on the other hand, the cybernetic game creates wrong perceptions in the social media oasis.

The users, through the production of the content (friends, followers) believe that they are protagonists in the political communication, but this remains just a mirage of perceptions. Is

¹³ Politika “troket” te mediat qytetare|”, [Artan Fuga http://al.ejo-online.eu/1300/mediat-e-reja-dhe-ëeb-2-0/politika-troket-te-mediat-qytetare#respond](http://al.ejo-online.eu/1300/mediat-e-reja-dhe-ëeb-2-0/politika-troket-te-mediat-qytetare#respond) 16 Mars, 2013

it that 3G and 4G in communication are causing what Francis Balle describes as the downfall of information? On the other hand there are considerable deficiencies of the online communication. One of them is the uniformity of the political rhetoric (only excessive praises or accusations), lacking the interaction of blogs and the online forums with the voters. There's a clear fragmentarization of the audience; those who accept and those who refuse; with a euphoric and conflictual rhetoric. The feedback of the audience as the receiver of the message confirms the above affirmation; The neutrals of the centre are outside the communication blogs of these networks. The conservative groups have difficulties to accept the criticizers while saving the leader's image.

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