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Online Communities and Online Activities of Politicians – Opinions of Internet Users

Abstract: Marketing activity in the field of social media has seemed to be more professional for few years. This communication channel (web 2.0) is established and frequently used on the market of products and services. Social media services are also in progress. They are focused of big data, sale support or profiling offers at an angle of brand fan`s behavior in social media. Collaterally, similar activities in the field of politics appear. The objective of this article is answering the question: what is the attitude of the Internet users to promotion activities like this? It seems to be important from the effective and specific point of view in political communication of social media. Thus, we conducted research described in this text that is going to verify if social media services are the source of knowledge about politics in Poland. What is more, we wanted to check in which way the Internet users find information about politics and what is their level of engagement `around` politicians` online activity.

Key words: virtual communities, political communication, the Internet, new media, web 2.0

1. Introduction

Online communities are a communication phenomenon of the first and second decade of the 21st century. The statement that these new forms of community are an element of communication reality which has revolutionized the way people spend their time in different parts of the world would be a platitude. However, it is a fact that in a relatively short period of time they became an important frame of reference in the discussion about the evolution of the tools for numerous areas of research on the functioning of an individual in the globalised, postmodern world. Two areas that are the object of interest of this discussion are marketing and politics.

On the level of economy and communication, this first area of activity is a relatively well recognised practice of the functioning of online com-

munities, in particular because the reality of the market of products and services provide a considerable amount of research material. In other words, the rapid development of marketing services in the area of online communities, their variety and numerous profits related to them have made this type of activities become the main area of research interest of marketing in a broad sense. Examples of such trends include: growing budgets for social media activities, a rising number of interactive agencies, an increase in the number of websites based on the folksonomy procedure (Roszkowski, 2007), a rising variety of paid forms of online promotion of products and services, as well as an improving precision of reaching with the message to the selected target segments.

At the same time, politics, usually drawing from and following commercial marketing trends rather than coming up with new solutions, still seems to be waiting for the time when the potential of online communities in the area of building a positive image and promoting a political product will be fully used. Beyond doubt, what contributes to this situation is the fact that the specific character of political products does not allow to use the possibilities of marketing solutions to their full extent in the area of social networking sites. It does not change the fact that some patterns observed in mature democracies of the West (in particular the USA) indicate that including online communities into the current of a marketing strategy bring benefits to a candidate, a party, or an idea, and particular examples are convincing evidence in the discussion about the effectiveness of this kind of solutions.

The meeting point of these two perspectives is a tip for the choice of political marketing as a ground of conceptualization of a theme based on the research aim of this article: exploring the attitudes of the Polish internet users towards online activities of politicians. The communities are defined in different ways, depending on the research perspective and will be understood as new forms of community based on a particular integrating factor, in the subject literature called a knot (Wojakowski, 2006, p. 122). It seems that in the context of the structures borrowed by the internet, the knot has a key significance for their existence and is not based solely on a community in a symbolic sense, but it has a more tangible character, for example, when the members of the community have some common interests (Bugliarello, 1997). M. Slouvka (Slouvka, 1996) or S. Jones (Jones, 1995, p. 19) describe this issue in a similar way. However, in the case of communities based on a political factor, the knot may mean a particular aim, in other words the assumption that making a bottom-up or top-down community serves the fulfilment of a plan, making a change in

a desired direction, satisfying individual needs, or pursuing an interest. Who administers this aim – it depends on the character of the community understood as: an organization of citizens serving the aim of protecting their interests, a provider of entertainment in the form of a political caricature, or a website promoting a politician. Generally the potential of the latter, as well as of its related forms are to be researched by the prepared empirical procedure.

In the Polish reality, the way of functioning of politicians online is typical for the trends present in these parts of the world where information becomes a precious commodity on the market of services. Such countries take advantage of liberal democracy with its well-developed media systems, including digital media. What also has influence on this fact are the matters such as: a regular increase in the number of internet users[1] (GUS, 2014; CBOS, 2014, p. 1), an increasing number of social networking sites (such as *Facebook* or *Twitter*) or a growing number of people being members of online communities. In the recent years, a number of characteristic "areas" have been created that can be included into a catalogue of virtual communities based on the factor of purposefulness and fulfilment of politician interests. The following communities are the most popular and settled in the Polish reality:

– communities concentrated around a political or political activist;
– communities concentrated around a political party;
– communities concentrated around an office or state body;
– communities of supporters of particular ideas or demand (e.g. socialists, supporters of abortion ban, opponents of ACTA etc.);
– communities concentrated around a political commentator/journalist/press title;
– political anti-profiles or websites mocking politics/politicians.

Since the market of social networking is maturing and developing and there are more and more politically oriented communities, it seems justified to try to explore the potential of this type of functionality of the socialised internet (Web 2.0). Particularly interesting seem the possibilities for using internet communities in political marketing, in the context of both political science and marketing. Therefore it is worth making such an attempt when looking at the problem from the point of view of an active internet user and at the same time a consumer of political products (such as election candidates, parties, ideas and political programmes).

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[1]   In 2014, 63% of adult Poles used an internet tool at least once a week.

2. Research methodology

Bearing in mind such questions, aims and dilemmas connected with the functioning of political internet communities, the following research hypotheses (RH) were put forward:

RH 1. Social networking sites are an important source of knowledge about politics and to a more limited extent they are a tool for getting involved in one's own political activity.

RH 2. The users of social networking sites tend to choose information obtained by means of their own research or the activity of their acquaintances rather than this obtained by means the activity of political actors themselves.

RH 3. The users of social networking sites are more willing to get involved in political activities online than in similar activities taking place outside of the virtual space.

RH 4. The users of social networking sites display political activity online, but they do it with a low level of involvement.

To verify the above hypotheses, research was conducted on a sample N=524 of social networking sites users. It was carried out with the use of the procedure of triangulation of research methods (Kaczmarek, Olejnik, Springer, 2013), with the use of auditorium questionnaire and an identical internet survey. The sampling was targeted. The respondents were Polish users of social networking sites.

In the context of the applied survey and research method, a researcher has little influence on the structure of the acquired sample,[2] which lets refer the results only to the surveyed group of people.[3] The size of the group was established on the basis of methodological minimums in relation to

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[2] For more on the possibilities and limitations of an internet survey, see: Kędzior (ed.), 2005, p. 87–90.

[3] It should be noted that because of the specific character of carrying out a survey in an academic environment, a majority of the sample are university students or graduates of subjects related to political sciences. This may result in the reservation that the results of the survey may be valid only for the groups of people who are interested in politics more than the rest of the population. It should also be noted that as provided by Gemius data, the users of social networking sites are prevalently young people – more than 50% of them are aged 15–34, and 60% have an education on at least secondary level. Moreover, the most popular social networking site in Poland is Facebook, see: http://naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,394820,blisko-90-proc-internautow-korzysta-z-serwisow-spolecznosciowych.html, 26.03.2015.

the recommendations for these research methods (Kramer, 1994, p. 213). The research was conducted on 13–27 April 2014.

3. Results

In order to verify the presented hypotheses, the results of research demonstrating the specific character of communities using political content by means of social networking sites are presented below. They, too, were the object of interest in this study as an important landmark when looking for "areas" which could be regarded as a platform of communication in the sphere of politics. A "universal area" was found here – *Facebook*, which turned out to be clearly the most popular site of this kind.

The research enabled answering the question about the ways of acquiring information and the role of social networking sites in this process. They also gave answers regarding a responder's own communication activity online. These two issues are presented in Graph 1.

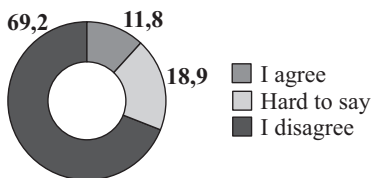**Graph 1. Respodents' opinions on aspects of political communication online**

The advantage of social networking sites is the fact that I can decide which information gets to me.
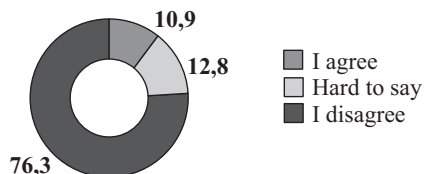
20,8   44,9

34,4

□ I agree
□ Hard to say
■ I disagree
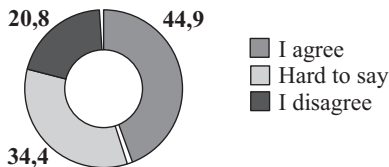
Social networking sites are my main source of information on domestic and foreign politics.

65,8   16,8

17,4

□ I agree
□ Hard to say
■ I disagree
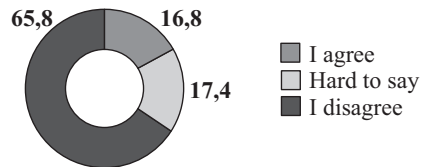
Iam willing to express my political views on social networking sites.

69,2   11,8

18,9

□ I agree
□ Hard to say
■ I disagree

It is important to me that my activities on social networkig sites are noticed and coomented on by ther users.

10,9

12,8

76,3

□ I agree
□ Hard to say
■ I disagree

Source: Own study.

When analysing the ways and sources of obtaining information about politics, it can be noticed that, firstly, the audience have the feeling of being independent in terms of shaping their own communication environment. It is probably connected with the use of the mechanisms enabling selecting the content that is valuable to an individual from a range of content offered by numerous websites (e.g. by subscription). Interestingly, despite the sense of being in such control, social networking sites are by no means the main source of information on domestic and world politics for the users. Since this opinion was expressed by as many as 16.8% of respondents, it can be implied that websites of this kind are a supplement to other sources – websites or traditional media (the press, the radio, television).

This data may provide interesting conclusions in the context of other information obtained by means of the survey or other external sources of information. Firstly, it is worth looking more closely at the character of political content with which the users of social networking sites have contact. This information is presented in Graph 2.

Graph 2. The character of political content with which the users of social networking sites have contact (%)
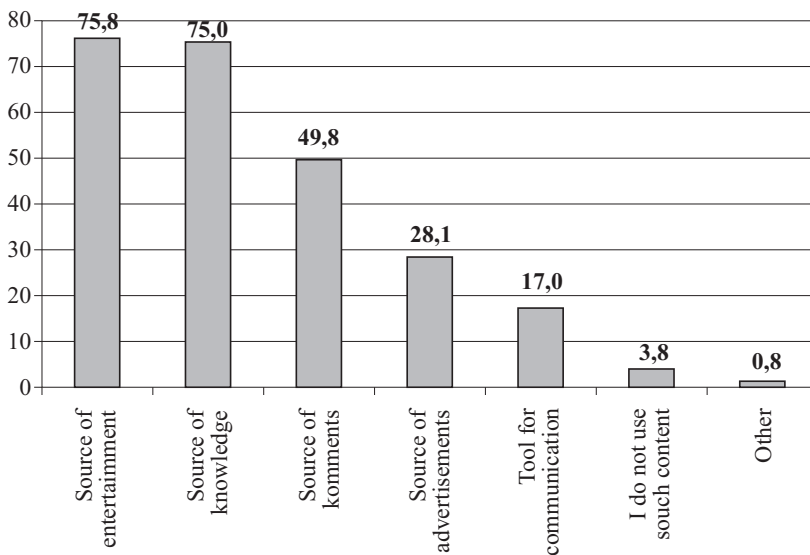
Note: The answers do not sum up to 100, because the respondents could choose a few answers.
Source: Own study.

As it is clearly seen, the internet users who have contact with political content in social networking sites, to a considerable extent treat it as a source of knowledge about politics. It can be concluded that these sites are a potentially important tool of communication processes taking place on the axis political actors – citizens. Nevertheless, it should be taken into consideration that it is not the main or the only source. These results are significant, since the age of the surveyed population indicates the dominance of young people, who, according to other research in this area, are more likely declare acquiring their knowledge about political issues from the internet. It is worth mentioning the research conducted by D. Batorski, M. Nagraba, J. Zając and J. Zbieranek, who analysed data obtained during the parliamentary elections in 2011. While for the majority of the surveyed population the internet was an important source of information about politics (26% of the respondents), in the segment of those aged 18–24 it was 65%. At the same time, 13% of all the surveyed declared that they obtained this knowledge from social networking sites (Batorski, Nagraba, Zając, Zbieranek, 2012, p. 66–67).

Therefore, it can be concluded that the surveyed internet users diversified their sources of knowledge about politics, treating the named websites mostly as a way of complementing their knowledge and a tool for building relationships. To a more limited extent these websites were treated as the main and only tool of this type, even among the younger internet users. However, it must be emphasised that for the users this source of knowledge provides both entertainment and reliable political news. One may also try to explain these specific paradoxes by the very nature of social networking sites. They are some kind of agent in obtaining information from other media and only a certain stage in obtaining political content. That is why the question whether these tools are important in the process of political communication is difficult to answer.

On the other hand, the users as senders of political messages prefer to remain anonymous, or not to express their views in a direct way. It is enough to state that 69.2% of them are reluctant to express their political views on social networking sites, and 76.3% believe that it is not important to them whether their activity is noticed and commented on by other users (see: Table 2). An important, but hard to resolve question within the proposed research is one about the source of this situation, taking into consideration such issues as political culture, or the consequences of the changing types of statehood. The lack of involvement in communication activities in the area of politics having their source in culture is confirmed by other

research in this area. The analyses conducted by Pew Research Center, indicate that for the Poles using social networking sites politics is a taboo. In Europe, a similar result was obtained only in the case of the French (Pew Research Center, 2012). Therefore, an important cultural context of this matter is the question: to which extent (if any) does the Polish politics remain a taboo? The lack of precise comparative research renders answering this question impossible, even though attempts to find the answers have been made in Poland (Fleischer, 2006, p. 283–300).

The second research hypothesis concerned the assumption that the users of social networking sites tend to choose information about politics having its source in their own queries and their friends' activities rather than in the activities of political actors themselves. As to the level of matching the content appearing in social networking sites, it looks as presented in Graph 1. The data indicate that this type of websites cater for various informational needs of the users, who treat them more as a source and not the tool for direct communication between them and political actors. However, it is beyond doubt that the information (and also entertainment) aspect prevails over the one perceived as a paid tool for promotion of politics/politicians (advertisement). This fact itself suggests that matching any persuasive content (at least paid) in social networking sites is inconsiderable.

From the point of view of declarations, most popular of particular categories of the content are informational activities (75% of respondents encounter them) vs. persuasive (28.1% declared having contact with advertising materials). This difference shows the scale of discrepancy in the perception of various types and styles of media content with which the users of social networking sites have contact. Another result is that the number of messages of commercial character is relatively low, or the interference of the perception result in such considerable shift in favour of one of these types of content. Taking into account the results of other research conducted in this area, one can be in favour of the latter way of argumentation regarding the collected data and conclusions drawn from them. Commercial content dedicated to particular individuals is often difficult to differentiate from that being the result of the actions of the community, and the complicated algorithms of their exposure make them match the mode of functioning of an individual user and his/her statistical features.

The property of the functioning of social networking sites being limited to the neutralising of commercial content in order to increase their

credibility is an important element of shaping of the new communication reality in the field of politics. Marketing content, rarely classified by the internet users as classical advertisement, in the time of general fall of the trust to messages of this type (CBOS, 2011, p. 3–5), may get to particular groups of users in a way much better adjusted to the present reality. The community as a group recipient finds in this process its role, as additional strengthening of this rule in the context of folksonomy mode of searching for information. Information, differentiated from non-commercial content with difficulty, and at the same time recommended or positively evaluated by another member of the community, becomes more credible from the point of view of an individual being a part of a bigger communication entity.

In order to analyse this problem more closely, it is worth mentioning the data related to the problem of the ways of receiving information about politics by the users of the mentioned websites, presented in Graph 3.

Graph 3. Ways of initialising of following/becoming a fan/following profiles on social networking sites (in %)
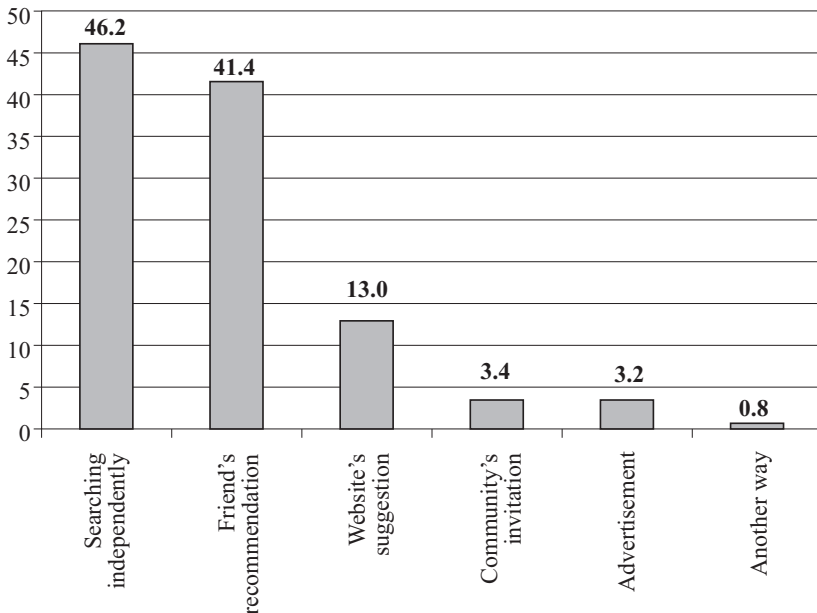
Source: Own study.

As recipients, internet users have the feeling of autonomy and to a more limited extent they are willing to rely on a commercial way of obtaining information, which makes it politically less effective. Selected ways of making commercial contact with a recipient are thought to be used more rarely in the case of decisions to subscribe to particular information. The following factors were named as such: proposal of a given website, invitation of a subject (which does not always have to be paid) and advertisement treated literally. Accordingly, as the tools influencing the subscription to information on politics were named: 13.2% (proposal of a website), 3.4% of respondents (invitation of a subject) and 3.2% (advertisement). A totally different scale of values are brought by the other tools of building relationships and obtaining information. 46.2% of the respondents declared independence in this matter, and 41.4% – being suggested by the activity of other members of the community. It indicates a substantial difference regarding the area of politics between the so-called new and old media. In the latter case, leading are these actions which do not make a recipient consume a unit of information easily found by a potential consumer, which is an authoritative choice of a sender or an agent. It matches the theory of inbound marketing developed on a commercial ground, but which – if we adjust its character to the product of political agents – can be easily used in this area (Halligan, Shah, 2010).[4] Its essence is limited, among others, to the change of the paradigm regarding the promotion of products, ideas and people by means of the change in the direction of thinking from making it more popular to making it easier to access independently by the recipient. The obtained outcomes indicate that the communicating habits of the internet users, shaped in the last two decades, result in the choice of the way of searching for information about politics, as well as influencing the factors regulating the frequency of supplying them to the recipients. In this regard, the leading modes of searching are the autonomous and folksonomy ones which express the sense of being a subject in both individual members but also the community as a whole.

In this way, the users of social networking sites seem to be suggesting that the communication activities of individual and institutional political actors may be in conflict with their interests. It is particularly visible in the area of trust towards content presented by political actors. What confirms

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[4] This relates to inbound marketing, a strategy in which recipients are attracted to a service or sender of a particular message.

this lack is the opinion of the users about the truthfulness of politicians creating content in social networking websites – only 6.3% of the surveyed population believe that political actors tell the truth about themselves. At the same time, as many as 61.1% of them believe that their communication activities serve the promotion of themselves or the wish to impress their voters. Internet users as recipients perceive such actions mainly as marketing ones, which take into consideration their particular political aims. At the same time, they are strongly divided regarding the opinions on the paid tools for promotion of political objects in social networking websites. 39.5% of the respondents agree with the statement: "I believe that in the case of most content on social networking websites, someone paid to appear there." 25% of the respondents do not agree, and the rest have no opinion. This may result from either inadequate knowledge of the mechanisms governing such tools, or the inability to tell the difference between the actions paid for and those being internet public relations (Leśniewska, 2006, p. 74).

The third verified hypothesis refers to the greater involvement in political actions online versus offline. The latter is presented in Graph 4.

**Graph 4. Offline activities of the members of online communities**
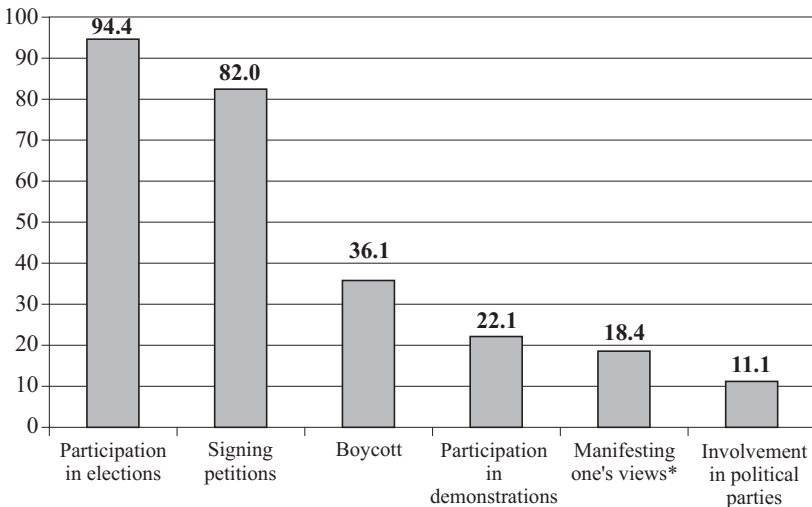
* manifesting one's views by clothes, emblems etc.
Note: The answers do not sum up to 100, because the respondents could choose a few answers.

Source: Own study.

A high rate of participation in elections may be explained by a number factors, such as: a considerable number of respondents who live in a big city (51%), interest or keen interest in politics showed by a considerable part of the sample (40.6%), as well as a common propensity to attribute to oneself positive features, such as participation in elections (Cześnik, 2009, p. 1–30). Apart from this feature, the rest of the actions typically fit in the hierarchy of activities from the one characterised by a low level of risk and involvement, through signing petitions and letters of support, to membership in political parties and organisations. Also the levels of the involvement of the respondents in various online activities was explored. The obtained data are presented in Graph 5.

Graph 5. Types of involvement within political character profiles on social networking sites (in %)
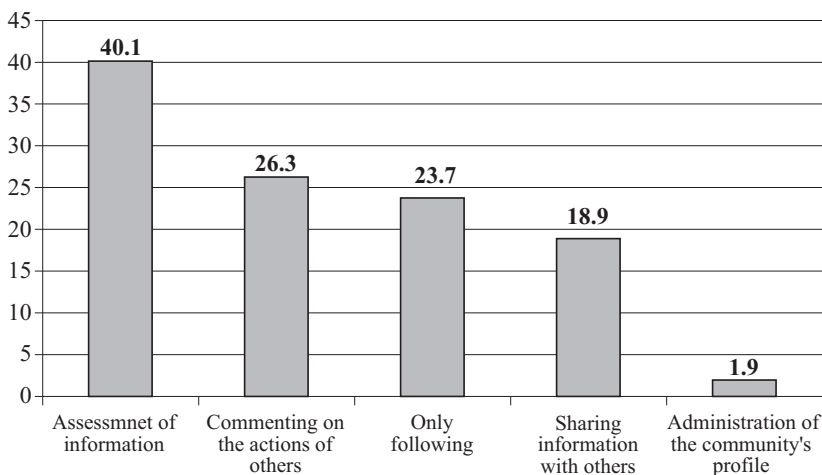
Note: the answers do not sum up to 100, because the respondents could choose a few answers.

Source: Own study.

The compared data did not show a greater popularity of involvement in communication activities online, except for such offline activities which are characterised by a high level of psycho-social risk and physical or intellectual effort. The mentioned activities included a membership in a political party or a boycott caused by political factors. However, the analyses of the tables of contingency revealed another rule: the same people who were characterised by a high level of communication activity online, at the

same time declared a greater involvement in the offline sphere. This is not a new conclusion, since a lot of research done also in Poland proved that being active in one sphere is statistically equivalent to being active in the other (Skarżyńska, 2009)[5]. However, it is worth noticing that this dependency appears also in the sphere of political activities. This relationship is pivotal, since conclusions constructed in such a way may find their continuation in the practical activity of a political actor, for example in marketing activities. In-depth knowledge in this scope could provide a valuable clue when selecting individuals that would be useful for online for offline actions.

The attempt to verify the fourth of the hypotheses was based on the research on the levels of involvement of online community members in virtual reality activities (see: Graph 5).

The analysis of data in this case indicates that the involvement is higher in the case of the activities which do not require from the users more effort in the form of intellectual resources or effort connected with a long-term and complicated activity[6]. In this regard, the most popular positive/negative assessment of political content match the definition of slacktivism – activities pretending involvement in an issue in order to achieve particular rather personal than social (Christiansen, 2011). A relatively high rate of declarative participation in a discussion regarding public matters at the same time provides the basis for the usefulness of such tools of communication for the development of bottom-up initiatives or strengthening the deliberate character of the activities supporting democracy.

As it turns out, the hierarchy of activities depends on the extent of the complexity of a given activity, which is not surprising from the point of view of psychology. However, it is a transfer of certain social regularities to the ground of political activities in the virtual reality. In the context of

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[5] Such dependencies were shown when comparing time spent on actions in virtual reality to the activities such as taking advantage of cultural offer or reading books. Numerous research and analyses indicate that people who are more active in the virtual reality show a heightened activity offline.

[6] The full verification of the hypothesis on the greater willingness to get involved in political activities not requiring any effort from the citizens, carried out on the example of the participation in elections would require simultaneous verifying the willingness to take part in online voting (e-voting), which because of the lack of such an option in Poland excludes the possibility to draw unequivocal conclusions. Only then would it be possible to verify if the factors such as intellectual effort and being active are the most significant variables in this case.

the considered concepts, the fact that this regularity may be an important factor for shaping the relationship political actor – citizen on the ground of political communication. There is a dependency in which the decrease in active involvement and the awareness of a user is translated into his/her objectifying and therefore doing the same with the whole group. This relationship is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Online communication activities and political subjectivity

	Involvement	The lack of involvement
Aware activities	Subjective activities	Absence
The lack of aware activities	Objective activities	Communicational exclusion

Source: Own study.

At the same time, slacktivism type activities are not only a thoughtless way of communicating, but they can also become a tool used by the other side of a political relationship to achieve particular aims. An example can be Facebook's function "Like" (Karpen, 2013). It is worth noticing that the website gives only a one-sided possibility to express one's positive attitude towards particular actions and contents. The lack of an option to express one's disapproval makes it a useful tool for promoting particular objects, ideas or content. It should be borne in mind that in this case "Liking" of given piece of information is equivalent to participation in its promotion – in this way an internet user is able to share this piece of information with friends. In this way, a chain of content is made, where each user becomes a part of the mechanism. A frequent thoughtless evaluation makes it possible to use the activities for the aims that are against recipient's will. The mechanisms of the new media, still complicated to many of internet users, promotes and accelerates the process of social objectifying.

4. Conclusions

In the age of technologies facilitating communication between various objects, it is clear that the communication channels are also taken advantage of as a ground for employing marketing tools. While commercial activities seem to be a natural environment for this type of processes, other

areas, including politics, are still trying to "find their feet" in a world which may become a useful ground of communication activities. One should draw conclusions in this area bearing in mind that these relationships are of a specific character, and the rules governing commercial marketing cannot be translated directly into the specific character of politics, although such attempts have been made (Sempach, 2012, p. 36–49). It is enough to state that the traditional form of advertisement on Facebook, redirecting to landing page, where a purchase is made, in fact loses its strategic potential when a "product" becomes something which cannot be purchased in a traditional way such as a politician, a political party, or an idea. From this and also from the need to think differently about being promoted in social networking sites, comes the necessity to create a new paradigm of thinking about politics in the evolving internet. Social networking sites would not be limited to being a marketing tool and sales support, but it would have to be acknowledged as a "conveyor belt" whose aim is transmitting selected information, overpassing a gatekeeper, as well as being an image-making and relationship-building tool.

The aim of the presented research was to verify some of the assumptions and approach to the role of online communities and to create a starting point for the discussion about the marketing potential of social media, bearing in mind that it should be measured in a different way than in commercial activities. Firstly, social networking sites are an important source of knowledge about politics, even though they do not have a leading, but rather a supplementing character. At the same time, the users of social networking sites are reluctant to get involved in politics in terms of communication and it is not important to them whether their activities are noticed by others. The diagnosis of the reasons for this situation would require separate in-depth research.

At the same time, the users of social networking sites are involved in searching for information about politics and seem to be doing it in an autonomous way, or they use the recommendations of their friends. It can be implied that a traditional way of advertising or an attempt to reach a recipient with a message without his/her active participation will face rejection in most cases. It indicates quite clearly how substantial changes have occurred in this area and how different way of thinking is required in new media in comparison with the traditional methods of reaching a "consumer". It can be also assumed that the users of social networking sites will not be more active in the virtual space than outside of it, however in the case of activities requiring a high level of involvement, it becomes

more probable. However, it can be concluded that the individuals who are politically active offline, will be at the same time involved online, which makes it possible to answer numerous questions regarding a suitable targeting of information. Finally, it should be emphasised that the users of social networking sites do not tend to be very active in the case of political activities with high level of psycho-social risk or effort put in political activities. Hence the conclusion that the culture of "Like", a phenomenon much broader than its cultural context, believed to be of little value from the point of view of marketing, may have its side effect on online activities of politicians.

5. Recommendations

Political marketing activities done by means of social networking sites seems to remain in the stage of adaptation of the western (in particular American) solutions, trials, errors and conclusions drawn from particular examples and endeavours to plant commercial tools into the new, a bit different ground. Citing the conducted research and conclusions drawn from it, it is worth trying to make a series of recommendations for those who want to use political marketing tools on the ground of social networking media:

- Social networking sites are an important source of information mostly for young people. This conclusion may be a basis for a suitable targeting of information to this particular group. As a complementary source, it can also be a related tool, which sends one to the content created by traditional media. Taking into consideration the popularity of entertainment, it is worth considering the usefulness of social networking sites in spreading information about political products engaging internet genres based on humour, grotesque or irony.
- A low level of consumers' involvement in politics-related activities may suggest that certain mechanisms used in this area by commercial marketing will not be well adapted in the political environment. Regardless of the source of this regularity, one may risk the statement that a consumer is more willing to share online the fact of buying a new pair of footwear rather than the fact of voting for a particular political party in elections.
- Because of the falling interest in advertising understood in a traditional way, as well as its decreasing attractiveness, it is worth considering us-

ing the mechanisms of viral marketing more frequently or visual distancing oneself from the forms which suggest a paid character of reaching a consumer of a political product. In the case of viral marketing it is more justified because of the popularity of the content concerning politics or politicians.

- Similarly to the traditional media, a high activity of a small group of individuals, both online and offline, seems to suggest getting the leaders of opinion involved in promoting political products on social networking sites (e.g. blogs). The more valid seems to be the conclusion that the users of social media pay considerable attention to the recommendations of their own "friends" when it comes to choosing interesting and valuable content.
- A considerable popularity of low-significance forms of involvement in discussions about politics (slacktivism, the culture of "Like"), indicates that the usefulness of social networking sites is low when it comes to promoting political products (commercial marketing noticed the lack of translation of the number of "Likes" into the level of sales, only benefits in terms of image were noticed). These benefits should not be therefore overestimated, but the importance of political image and a frequent analysis of good and bad practices should be remembered (Puszczyński, 2013).

It is worth adding that the question of politics and social networking sites remains a methodological and conceptual challenge to researchers, not only because of the quickly changing media reality, but also because of the fact that research is only an imperfect reflection of the reality measured in a particular time and area. It seems necessary to conduct further analyses and multiply the perspective of looking at the problem if we want this sub-discipline of political communication to develop, but we should also try to answer the question "what are the facts"? At the stage of establishing good practices and patterns in this area, both practice and theory of communication have a lot to offer each other.

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Społeczności internetowe wobec działań polityków w sieci w opiniach internautów

Streszczenie

Działania marketingowe w obszarze mediów społecznościowych od wielu lat ulegają procesowi profesjonalizacji. Na rynkach produktów i usług kanał ten (*web 2.0*) ma już charakter ugruntowany. Rozwija się też rynek usług *social media* zajmujący się badaniami wielkiej ilości danych, wsparciem sprzedaży czy profilowaniem ofert pod kątem zachowań fanów określonych marek w serwisach społecznościowych. Równolegle pojawiają się też podobne próby działań w sferze polityki. Celem artykułu jest więc odpowiedzenie na pytanie: jaki stosunek mają użytkownicy Internetu do tego typu zabiegów promocyjnych? Wydaje się to istotne z punktu widzenia specyfiki i skuteczności narzędzi komunikowania politycznego w *social media.* Stąd przeprowadzone i opisane w artkule badania mające na celu sprawdzić m.in. na ile serwisy społecznościowe są źródłem wiedzy o polityce, w jaki sposób ich użytkownicy poszukują informacji na ten temat i jaki jest poziom ich zaangażowania *online* w działania samych polityków.

Słowa kluczowe: społeczności internetowe, komunikowanie polityczne, Internet, nowe media, web 2.0