SOCIAL MEDIA AND KOSOVO’S POLITICAL ACTORS

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Abstract: Social media are changing the nature of mass communication, demediating traditional media. They are being used as powerful platforms for the distribution and dissemination of information, activities, promotion of institutions, certain groups of interest of individuals, but also political actors for different purposes. Placing and disseminating information through the opportunities offered by social media enables the mobilization of a wider audience in new ways and ways. Politicians are exploiting these opportunities provided by social networks, without having to put information through journalists or traditional media. There are two theories in the literature regarding the use of social networks, optimistic and pessimistic theory. According to optimistic theory, social networks provide opportunities to compete for power. Theorists of this theory of using social media think that in the digital age, we are witnessing the transformation of information and the audience that uses them. According to them, the global success of social media has made it possible for everyone to connect directly to his audience through the platforms offered. With the use of these platforms, politicians gain attention and at the same time build a symmetrical or asymmetric relationship with their followers. Pessimistic theory, however, blames the social media for the use of false promise, and a pseudo-modernization of modern society. Studies believe that involvement in social networks and political actors at the same time implies a greater engagement of the audience that absorbs the information disclosed and affects the democratization of political competition. This paper aims to analyze the use of social networks as a means of information dissemination by Kosovar political actors and the content of the information being disclosed. The paper analyzes the posts of three key Kosovar politicians, Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj, President Hashim Thaçi and Kosovo Assembly Speaker Kadri Veseli in their profiles on Facebook and Twitter social networks during a one-month monitoring period during May 2019.

Keywords: social media, traditional media, information, political actors, audience

1. INTRODUCTION
Social media are fast, multimedia platforms and provide evidence of abundant information. Just like professional and social media play an increasingly important role in informing the public. As new channels of connectivity with the audience, social media have become an important tool for distributing content produced by the users themselves and the general audience. This has influenced individuals, institutions, public life characters, politicians to create profiles and their pages in social media to communicate with their audience.

The two largest social networks Facebook and Twitter are used directly as a source of information for journalists, as every post of politicians turns into news and is presented in news editions of television and other media. The provided communication space through profiles created on social networks creates unrestricted opportunities for political actors to disseminate information, promote, expose political activity, present policy agendas, and express attitudes to certain issues. Political actors do not rely on classical methods of providing information such as: meetings, press conferences, emails, etc. but they rely in communicating with a target audience on social networks, good marketing, photos, videos, and exploitation the most adequate online space, which is attended to by many hundreds of thousands of followers and fans of their Facebook or Twitter profiles. This paper analyzes the use of social networks as a mean of dissemination of the information by Kosovar political actors and the content of information that is posted through postings and statuses.

The paper analyzes the posts and statuses of the three political actors in Kosovo, the prime minister, the president and the speaker of the Parliament on their profiles on social networks, Facebook and Twitter. For the needs of this paper, their posts were monitored during the one month, respectively in the period during May 2019. To sort out posts in their profiles, the content analysis method was used to answer questions, whether the profiles of the three selected political actors for this paper, where used for the promotion of their political positions, the type of image they use to shape in online environment and in what kind of nature their posts on social networks. The categorization of monitored posts is divided into three areas: political, social and personal.
2. OPTIMISTIC AND PESSIMISTIC THEORY

There are two theories in the literature regarding the use of social networks, optimistic and pessimistic theory. According to optimistic theory, social networks provide opportunities to compete for power. Theorists of this theory of using social media think that in the digital age, we are witnessing the transformation of information and the audience that uses them. According to them, the global success of social media has made it possible for everyone to connect directly to his audience through the platforms offered. With the use of these platforms, politicians gain attention and at the same time build a symmetrical or asymmetric relationship with their followers. Pessimistic theory, however, blames the social media for the use of false promise, and a pseudomodernization of modern society. Studies believe that involvement in social networks and political actors at the same time implies a greater engagement of the audience that absorbs the information disclosed and affects the democratization of political competition.

Using the tools like Facebook and Twitter they see new intriguing ways to avoid structured and mediated interactions from traditional media such as television and radio. The social network Twitter application applies the asymmetric communication model, which allows the user posts to be public and visible to all members and non-users, while at Facebook, two users can see each other's profile only if they agree to privacy settings, to exchange information, thus setting a symmetric communication model. Political actors as social network users are well aware of the communication patterns and the functionality of these platforms, as they are simply not just simple websites where information can be placed.

3. USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS AS AN INFORMATION PLATFORM

Currently social networks present a wide audience. According to Internet World Statistics, 3,675,824,813 people in the world use the Internet. In Kosovo, the internet is used by 76.6% of the population. Of this figure, 73.3% are Facebook users. According to research conducted by the Association for Information and Communication Technology in Kosovo, Facebook’s use is one of the four activities that is liked by the community of Kosovar Internet users. While Twitter’s social networking research shows that it is often used by politicians and celebrities in Kosovo.

3.1 Posts on the Facebook social network

Posts in social media profiles of Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj, President Hashim Thaçi and Assembly Speaker Kadri Veseli show how and why they use social networks Facebook and Twitter. At the time of monitoring, Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj had 206,250 followers on his official Facebook page and received 206,085 likes. From May 1 to May 31, he has made 79 statuses, 7 videos, 7 live streams and posted 56 photos.

From the statuses and posts made during this period, Haradinaj has promoted participation in various political activities, official agenda meetings with national and international political protagonists, participation and speeches at commemorative academies for those killed in the massacres committed during the war in Kosovo. Another focus of his posts are investments in Kosovo, the inauguration of the highway with North Macedonia, meeting and support to sportists and visits outside Kosovo. Particular importance on the posts as noted in the monitoring period of time, was dedicated to the questions of Berlin summit, dialogue with Serbia, and the country’s expectations for visa liberalization regime.

Kosovo President Hashim Thaçi on his Facebook page has 337,039 followers and 334,578 likes. During the monitoring period in his profile 61 posts were made. Of these 33 statuses, 62 photos, 8 videos and 18 live streams. From these posts we find out that the information shared with the audience is mainly related to his political activity, the topics of the war mainly from his participation in commemorative academies for those fallen in the war, then particular emphasis on meetings with international partners, as well as investments in the country and the rule of law by promoting mainly the work of the Kosovo Police actions.

Kosovo Assembly Speaker, Kadri Veseli, on Facebook's social network appears to have 170,441 followers and 170,490. In the monitoring period in Facebook, it turns out that Veseli has made 57 posts. Of the 57 posts made by

135 Grunig, James. Four Models of public relation, Interactive Media lab Florida
136 http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm/
138 https://www.facebook.com/pg/RamushHaradinajOfficial
139 https://www.facebook.com/HashimThaciOfficial/
Kadri Veseli on Facebook, there are 40 statuses, 81 photos, 9 videos, 4 live streams. From these posts, Veseli promotes his political activities, participation in the memorial academies for war victims and heroes, promotion of the political party to which he belongs Democratic Party of Kosova PDK, and social concerns.\footnote{https://www.facebook.com/kadriveseliofficial/}

From the analysis of the content of the posts, we see that for issues of national interest, the three of them have distributed valuable information and expectancies, such as the Berlin summit.

All of three, have conveyed the message about the importance of holding this summit for Kosovo. Then, participation in commemorative arrangements for the war victims and heroes, as well as the promotion of the new highway connecting Kosovo with Northern Macedonia.

All three reacted against a case of violence perpetrated against a woman of the Roma community in two Kosovo cities. And two of them promoted their political parties activity (Haradinaj and Veseli).

The most active with the posts emerges to be Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj, who posts all his activities in this social network. He has posted up to ten posts per day (31 May).

Follows with the posts of President Thaçi. Thaçi has the largest number of live streaming from his political activities. Particular importance in his posts has been given to recent interviews in the electronic media and press conferences that are broadcast live on Facebook, thus challenging traditional media. For many activities and feedback, the three leaders have communicated directly with the audience through Facebook's social network, thus resorting to traditional media.

3.2. Posts in the social network Twitter

Posts in the social network Twitter of Haradinaj, Thaçi and Veseli differ significantly from posts on Facebook. Partly because of the nature of the network and the use of hashtags, we see almost three other political figures on this network.

A different image of Kosovo's prime minister comes to his posts on Twitter, where he appears to have opened profile since May 2017 and has 3,372 and 118 likes.\footnote{https://twitter.com/haradinajramush}

During the monitoring period of Twitter posts, the Prime Minister has made 38 posts. In the content of the posts, Haradinaj focuses on disseminating information on Kosovo's image and its European perspective, Serbia's policy towards Kosovo, and education issues. His posts reflect mainly Prime Minister's activities with international political actors.

On Twitter, President Hashim Thaçi, has 67,000 followers, while is liked by 247 people.

His Twitter profile was opened in November 2011.\footnote{https://twitter.com/HashimThaciRKS} From the posts monitored in this period, we find that the president has almost shared the same information with users like in Facebook. In May, the president had 7 posts. Most of them reflect his presidential activity, while there are three congratulations to the international political actors. Congratulation to the election of the new Panama president, and congratulation to the elections held in Northern Macedonia and the last congratulation to the journalist in the day of press freedom.

In the Twitter network, the first man of the Assembly of Kosova, Kadri Veseli, has 5,439 followers and 65 likes. His profile was opened in April 2016. During the monitoring period of his posts, in May 2019, he did not have any posts at all.\footnote{https://twitter.com/KadriVeseliKS}

3.3. Facebook vs Twitter

Posts in the social network profiles of the prime minister, president and speaker of the Assembly show that they are a useful tool in the hands of politicians. Facebook and Twitter are being used by them to promote online politics, to mobilize voters in the elections, to counter political opponents, to address citizens about issues related to the interests and problems that the country is going through, as well as to build an image of a politician who creates the impression that they are committed to solving problems that concern the audience.

The analyzed posts categorized in three areas, of political, social and personal nature, reveal that the majority of posts in both networks are of a political nature, a considerable part of the social nature, while during the monitoring period there are post of personal nature, showing that political actors are family people, lovely fathers and parents.

Concerning post quantity we encountered the difference between two social network. In In this period of time premier Haradinaj had 93 posts in Facebook and 38 in Twitter. President Hashim Thaçi had 59 posts in Facebook and 7 in Twitter, meanwhile speaker of the Parliament Kadri Veseli had 70 posts in Facebook and none in Twitter.
CONCLUSIONS

Posts in the social network profiles of the prime minister, president and speaker of the Assembly show that they are a useful tool in the hands of politicians. Facebook and Twitter are being used by them to promote online politics, to mobilize voters in the elections, to counter political opponents, to address citizens about issues related to the interests and problems that the country is going through, as well as to build an image of a politician who creates the impression that he is committed to solving problems that concern the audience.

The analyzed posts categorized in three areas of political, social and personal nature reveal that most of the posts in the two networks are of a political nature, a considerable part of the social nature, while during the monitoring period there are also enough posts of personal nature.

LITERATURE


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