

Bartłomiej Machnik

THE PLACE OF TWITTER IN THE PROCESS OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

Keywords:

political communication, McNair, Twitter, politics 2.0

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Political communication. Deepening mediatization of politics

In the beginning one should systematize the knowledge concerning the issues connected with political communication and indicate a few important aspects which will help to direct the flow of the ideas presented in the text. Broadly understood communication constitutes the basis for establishing and maintaining human relations. It is difficult to find one – universal definition of this process on the account of its interdisciplinary character³.

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

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

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

social and political relations, political culture, and processes realized by politics⁵. Political communication is a process of mutual interaction on the level of information between political entities, connected by relations of power, competition, and cooperation. One should understand communication as a space where groups that present their opinion on political issues are able to meet. One of the first definitions of political communication was formulated by H. Eulau, S. Eldersveld, and M. Janowitz. During their research, the authors were interested in three issues⁶:

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

At first, political communication (the beginning of the 1950's.) was understood as an one-sided process of transmission of political messages from the government to the electorate. With the passing of years and with the development of different communication techniques, as well as the Internet (particularly the idea of Web 2.0⁷) the process gradually became perceived as bidirectional. It included political elites, the media, citizens, as well as techniques supporting communication (political marketing, advertisement, opinion polls, and a recent addition in the form of social media, etc.). Today, political communication, apart from traditional "face to face" meetings, is also a conversation of a politician

⁵ Ibidem.

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

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

with the society via modern means of communication. They perform the role of an intermediary between the sender and the recipient⁸.

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

Name	Characteristics	Researchers
Behavioural approach	Attention is paid to the effect of communication, i.e. changes in attitudes and behaviour of the recipient.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H. Lasswell • C. Shannon • W. Weaver
Structural – functional approach	The main element is the process of interaction, which occurs between the elements of a political system and its surroundings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K.W. Deutsch • G.A. Almond • J. Coleman • R. Perloff
Interactive approach	The approach characterizes political communication as a strategic action in which there is a confrontation of the actor with his opponent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E. Goffman • M. Edelman • E.G. Borman
Dialogue approach	The approach is based on the idea of a consensus which is hammered out during a public debate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • J. Habermas
Market approach	Political actors are a product which should be produced (created) as cheaply as possible and then sold (win support). In this approach a politician, or political parties are the sellers and voters are purchasers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R. Denton • G. Woodward • B. McNair

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

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

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

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

At present (largely due to Twitter), we are dealing with a combination of structural-functional approach and market approach. The existence of politicians in the social media requires a broadly understood conversation (interaction) and an exchange of views. A lack of an answer or a reaction is to the disadvantage of the image of a politician. One should also remember about the continuously progressing process of mediatization⁹ and actions aimed at the possibly most effective way of adapting oneself to the convention and expectations of mass media, which still remain the primary source of information about politics.

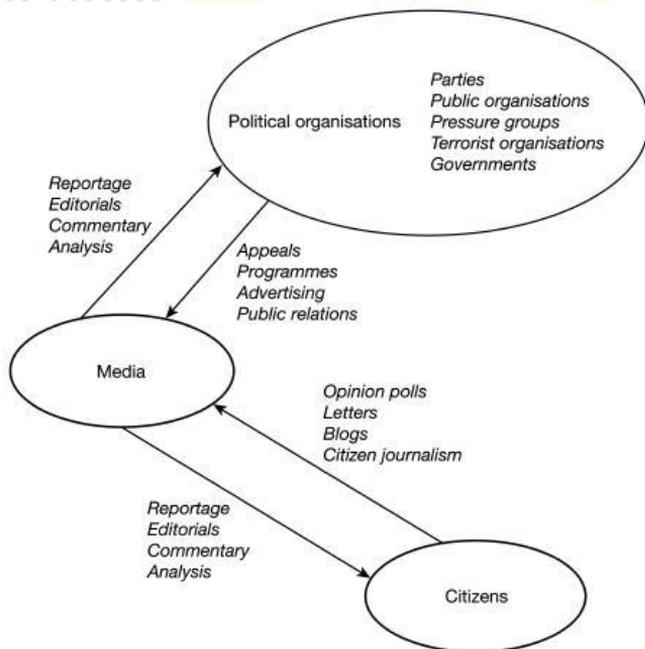
Therefore, in order to correctly design the direction of deliberations and argumentation of the present article, a more thorough analysis of several models of the process of political communication is required. These are the concepts of Brian McNair and Richard Perloff. In both cases, the role of mass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

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

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

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

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



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

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

and institutional channels. In the broad meaning, political parties, governments, public organizations, pressure groups, etc. are all political actors¹⁰. All of the abovementioned categories of political actors in communication use similar techniques such as: using the mass media, applying the principles of political marketing, political advertisement, and public relations.

Citizens (potential voters) are the second element in the process of political communication. They are simultaneously an audience of the media broadcast. From a theoretical point of view, it is the citizens (recipients of media broadcasting), who are the major object of persuasion used in political communication. Most of all, the main goal is to influence political behaviour and shape public opinion¹¹.

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

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

¹⁰ B. McNair, *Introduction to Political Communication*, London 2011, p. 5.

¹¹ B. Dobek-Ostrowska, *Komunikowanie polityczne...*, p. 150.

¹² *Ibidem*.

for citizens in the context of participation in the public debate¹³. Here he pays particular attention to the emergence of civil journalism, blogs, and independent services (e.g. Wikileaks), which allow to comment on political issues. The researcher also notices that the development of social media (Twitter, among others) allowed fast sharing of information on the events that take place at any particular moment.

Another approach to the research on the process of political communication is the concept of Richard Perloff called the “golden triangle” (1998). The researcher in his deliberations treats political communication as the process of exchanging and interpreting political messages between three elements: national leaders, the mass media, and citizens¹⁴ as illustrated in the figure below:

Fig. 3. Perloff's golden triangle



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

Following Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska, it is possible to divide Perloff's definition into four parts¹⁵:

¹³ B. McNair, *Introduction...*, pp. 11-13.

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

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

1. Political communication is a process – it consists of an integrated and dynamic activity of all participants, who exert mutual influence on one another. Here there is a cooperation on the line politician–the media¹⁶. Perloff (similarly to McNair) locates the media in the centre of the process, as an institution constituting an essential element of the process of communication. Moreover, the model does not include feedback between the citizens and leaders.
2. Three chief actors are placed on the public arena – the researcher notices a distinct internal diversity amongst the participants of communication, which is significant to the process of communication itself.
3. Political communication is an exchange and interpretation of messages – the researcher pays attention to the fact that each participant in political communication interprets the messages differently. It results, in most cases, from their different roles in the political system. The researcher noticed that today the knowledge about political leaders does not come from direct contact, but rather from the media (television, press, radio, and, increasingly, from the Internet).
4. Messages concerning the government or ways of conducting public affairs – political communication is not exclusively limited to the period of the election campaign. In general, it is a permanent dialogue on the subject of public affairs, the interest of the citizens, as well as decisions and actions of the political elites.

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

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

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

Undoubtedly, a very important component, which at present is critical to the process of political communication, is the Internet and, in particular, the new possibilities opened by the new media¹⁷. Studying academic literature on this topic it is possible to notice the differences in the approaches as to which places are occupied or should be occupied by the new media (the social media) in the process of political communication. Admittedly, the abovementioned authors paid attention to the growing role of the Internet in political communication; however, they failed to unambiguously set it in the context of their theories.

Politics 2.0

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

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

they exist in the power game through and by the media, in the whole variety of the increasingly diverse media system that includes computer-mediated communication networks. The fact that politics has to be framed in the language of electronically based media has profound consequences on the characteristics, organization, and goals of political processes, political actors and political institutions¹⁸.

For politicians, the new media (the social media) are becoming one of the most important fields of activity. Most of all, communication via the new media means reaching particular social groups. This equals a greater ability to influence traditional media, which treat the new media as one of the primary sources of information (as it is the case with Twitter nowadays). Essentially, the new media are perfectly adaptable for communication with voters. Sara Bentivegn paid attention to this aspect, showing six features, which in her view influence the attractiveness of such a form of communication¹⁹:

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

Moreover, Steven Mcnutt and John Hick presented four reasons (motives), why political organizations should become involved in the virtual space for constructing their own image²⁰:

¹⁸ M. Castells, *Spółeczeństwo sieci*, Warszawa 2007, p. 473.

¹⁹ B. Brodzińska-Mirowska, *Internet w komunikowaniu politycznym* [in:] M. Jeziński (ed.), *Nowe media we współczesnym społeczeństwie*, Toruń 2011, pp. 207-208.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 208.

1. Economic motive – cutting the cost of political activities connected with coordinating. The Internet, in many respects, is cheaper and more efficient.
2. Motive associated with distance and the possibility of decentralization – it is possible to hand over the power of autonomy to lower-ranking authorities; due to a reduction of distance voters can organize themselves to act with regard to matters important to them, as well as exchange experience and ideas.
3. New opportunities not only in the scope of organization of particular public actions but also in the field of educating and obtaining necessary information.
4. Moreover, netizens are potential voters; therefore, it is worthwhile to manage this space.

The Internet became also another arena of fighting for political issues²¹.

Przemysław Maj enumerates five ways of using the Internet in order to meet political objectives²²:

- the Internet becomes a tool in the fight for the electorate, it is used for polarization of supporters and opponents;
- tool of political rivalry, which occurs as a result of the so-called “band wagon effect”;
- using the Internet for axiological and programme rivalry;
- tool of propaganda and “semantic struggle”;
- it serves to “destroy the opponent” (due to negative campaigning).

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

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

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

The place of Twitter in the process of political communication

One of the most popular tools of politics 2.0, both for Polish and foreign decision-makers is the Twitter microblog. The first time Twitter rose to prominence during the presidential election in Iran in June 2009. With its help the Iranian opposition informed the world of electoral frauds²³. Twitter came into being in 2006 and was the result of work of Jack Dorsey, Noah Glass, Evan Williams, and Biz Stone²⁴. It provides a service for microblogging – reading and sending so-called *tweets*, brief messages up to 140 signs. The message is shown on the user's site (the so-called *timeline*).

From the point of view of the process of political communication, there is one important aspect that Paul Levinson noticed. Twitter is a connection of interpersonal communication with mass communication, which interlock with each other. The essence of interpersonal communication is that one person sends a message to another person, who can then easily change his/her role from the recipient to the sender. An example of this can be a face-to-face conversation, written correspondence, or a phone call²⁵. In mass communication, one person sends the message to many recipients simultaneously. The recipi-

²³ M. Lakomy, *Demokracja 2.0...*, p. 209.

²⁴ Ibidem.

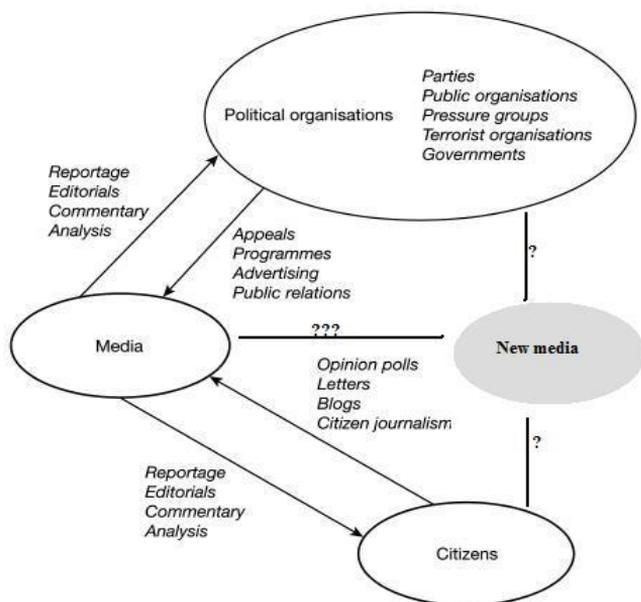
²⁵ P. Levinson, *Nowe nowe...*, p. 210.

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

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

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

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



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

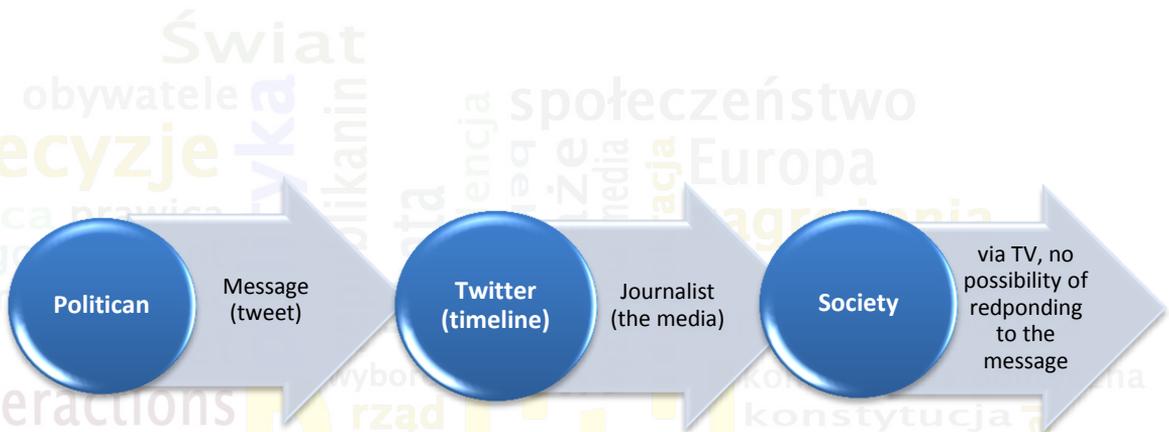
Analysing the above figure, one should clarify two basic issues. Firstly, what are the relations between traditional media and the new media? Do these channels complement each other, or are they perhaps separate communication channels? Secondly, what does the communication between politicians and citizens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

The number of Twitter users in Poland – in comparison with other countries – is relatively small²⁶, therefore Twitter needs an intermediary in the form of the traditional media (mainly television, more and more often radio, rarely press). The majority of Polish society learns about the content of particular tweets of politicians via the traditional media. Thus, it is necessary to

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

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

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



Source: own study.

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

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

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

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

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



Donald Tusk @premiertusk

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

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

Later the public opinion received subsequent messages from the Prime Minister on the progress of the negotiations via television news bulletins²⁷. After some time, the Twitter profile of the Prime Minister started to draw more and more attention of the traditional media. As it turned out, it was not press conferences, or brief statements in front of cameras, but the brief tweets on the microblog that have been the sources of information.

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

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

To sum up, the example above can be construed as a confirmation of the earlier suggested model and the thesis. During the negotiations in Brussels, the primary source of information for the mass media (most of all television news bulletins) was Twitter. The mass media were dominated by the information available on the microblog²⁹. Even the correspondents in Brussels in the overwhelming majority based their information on the sources available on Twitter.

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

Summary

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

²⁸ The Government's Press Spokesman wrote on Twitter: *SMS właśnie otrzymany od premiera: Załatwione!!! [SMS just received from the Prime Minister: It is done!!!]*, <https://twitter.com/pawelgras/status/299902906730176512> , 10.02.2014.

²⁹ See: EU summit in Brussels live, <https://www.premier.gov.pl/wydarzenia/aktualnosci/szczyt-ue-w-brukseli-relacja-na-zywo.html> , 11.02.2014.

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

It is possible to suppose that Twitter (and wider, the social media) amplified the actions for everyone involved. On the one hand, politicians have tools for rapid communication and expressing their own views; on the other hand, they also have a place for exerting influence and shaping media transmissions. The media have a possibility of obtaining information in a swift manner and present it to the public. Politicians accommodate themselves to the principles of cooperation with the media, which results in an increased coverage of their public image [the interest among recipients – author’s note]. Today such a situation brings benefits to both sides. The media can receive “cheap” information via Twitter and politicians, who “sell” information (not necessarily concerning the essential facts) can have a certainty that it will be passed to a wider public. Such a cooperation is also justified for this reason that current surveys demonstrate a distant dominance of television over the Internet as the main channel of entertainment and a source of information³¹. Also, the citizens themselves benefit. They are

³⁰ A. Bielan, *Nowe media wymuszają w polityce zmianę generacyjną*, “Nowe Media” 2013, No. 6, p. 124.

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

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

In the course of these deliberations, the hypothesis presented in the introduction to the article proved to be true. The presented example confirmed that, at present, the new media and the traditional media in the context of the process of political communication complement each other. Such a situation is a confirmation of a “moderate” scenario of mediatization proposed by W. Schulz. He thought that the integration of diverse conventional media technologies with multimedia applications and digitization of media signals leads to the convergence of the media – where the “old” and the “new” media become alike³².

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

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

³² W. Schulz, *Reconstructing Mediatization as an Analytical Concept*, <http://ejc.sagepub.com/content/19/1/87> , 11.02.2014.

³³ W. Pisarek, *Wstęp do nauki o komunikowaniu*, Warszawa 2008, p. 147.

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

Bartłomiej Machnik – PhD student, Opole University

Abstract

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

