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TWITTER IN COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES OF THE LEADERS OF THE POLISH POLITICAL PARTIES

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Introduction

The dynamically increasing number of Internet users, including potential voters, especially of the young generation, is undoubtedly an important factor influencing the decisions of the politicians about the use of the Internet potential in communicative marketing strategies. In Poland, according to data from the mid-2013, the Internet is regularly used by 60% of adult citizens (although in 2002 it was only 17%), of which 60% declares that they have an account on the social networking site. The largest group of the network users systematically using the Internet includes people in the age range of 18-45, however in the case of owners of the accounts on social networking sites the age limit is slightly lowered (18-35), which may be caused by the fact that the *network is a natural environment of young people, who have digital skills almost independent of the level of their education or economical status*¹. However, it should be stressed, which is not only the Polish specificity², that the

¹ More: CBOS, *Internauci 2013*, BS/75/2013, Warszawa, June 2013.

² J. Nielsen, *Participation Inequality: Encouraging More Users to Contribute*, http://www.useit.com/alertbox/participation_inequality.html 15.09.2013.

vast majority of Internet users uses the network in a passive way, while people publishing their own contents are still a relatively small group³.

Among the main goals of using the social networking sites Internet users most often indicate keeping in touch with friends/groups of friends (50%), restoring old acquaintances (41%), listening to music, watching films/looking at photos, reading texts (39%), conducting discussions (27%)⁴. The latter of the listed goals seems to be especially important from the point of view of seeing the sphere of politics, in which social networking sites are often perceived in the category of a new discussion platform. The Internet allows the politicians to initiate and spread the specific messages without journalists. As a result, the use of the politicians in the communication strategies of the social networking sites creates possibilities to build interactions with the potential electorate, in order to gain its favour⁵.

The participation of the politicians in the social and political debate in the form of a virtual agora is becoming a way to interest especially young voters – the group characterised by the highest ratio of the electoral absence⁶ not only in the current social, political matters, but also through the auto-creation of the positive image, its privatisation, also in the politician's personality. Observing the diversity of the contents offered by the network, it is difficult to talk about the similarity of Internet users' interests, hence the recipient of the contents posted by the political actors in the pages of social media, blogs or

³ In mid-2013 only 5% of the Polish Internet users had a blog or own Internet website, a much greater activity was observed on the Internet forums and social networking sites – 32% of the respondents admitted that they made regular entries; see: CBOS, *Internauci 2013...*

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ More: D. d'Alessio, M. Allen, *Media bias in presidential elections: a meta-analysis*, "Journal of Communication" 50/2000, pp. 133-156.

⁶ See: *Wyborca 2.0*, D. Batorski et al. (ed.), Warszawa 2012.

micro blogs seems to include the interested people and also people engaged to a various degree and at various levels in the political life⁷.

Social networking sites (including Twitter) were considered by Paul Levinson as an exemplification of “new new media”, creating for Internet users almost unlimited communication tools adequate to their liking⁸. In this context, Christine Rosen formulates a concept of egocasting⁹. Among the features distinguishing the social networking sites, most often there is indicated not only their functionality, the possibility to interact, but also the initiation of conversation (among others thanks to the function of blogging or micro blogging), so the swapping of roles of the sender and recipient in the communication process¹⁰.

The bottom-up desire of Internet users to create the virtual communities on one hand can be (and often is) “a threat” exposing the image created by the politician, but on the other – a chance to design and accomplish the *de facto* more effective political campaigns. The sharing of the latest information or thoughts of the politicians with Internet users, undertaking the attempts for social consultation, initiating and joining the conversations serves the creation of relationships. Thanks to the functionality of social media, the voter can see not only the communication efforts undertaken by the political entity, but also the real interests of the politician in the daily problems of the citizens.

The activity undertaken by the politicians within social media marketing is aimed not only at the interest of Internet users with the specific subjects and their activation thorough the inclusion and/or initiation of conversation, but

⁷ More: P. Dahlgren, *The Transformation of Democracy?*, [in:] B. Axford, R. Huggins (eds.), *New Media and Politics*, London 2001, pp. 73-83.

⁸ See: P. Levinson, *New new media* [Polish Edition], Kraków 2010, pp. 12-13.

⁹ See: Ch. Rosen, *The Age of Egocasting*, “The New Atlantis” 2004/2005, No. 7, pp. 51-72.

¹⁰ More: P. Levinson, “Nowe...”, pp. 7-13 and iab. *Social Media Ad Metrics*, <http://www.iab.net/media/file/SocialMediaMetricsDefinitionsFinal.pdf>, 25.01.2014.

also (and perhaps most of all) the external promotion of the political entity. It is worth noting that the important part of Internet users following or commenting the actions of the politicians on the Internet is constituted by the political rivals and journalists, for whom social media are also becoming the source of quick acquisition of the direct information and opinions.

The co-creation in the virtual space of the community in order to maintain the impression of the permanent dialogue with potential voters seems, thus, in the era of new media, the key element of the communication strategies of the politicians. The effectiveness of this type of actions is proven even by the results of the presidential campaigns in the USA¹¹.

The purpose of the article is an attempt to capture the ways to use the potential of the social media in communication strategies of the leaders of the political parties. Due to the breadth of the research in this scope, the article presents the research results concerning only the micro blog Twitter.

The main research questions concentrate around the answers to the questions of whether and how the leaders of the Polish political parties use the official accounts on Twitter to communicate with potential voters. The detailed research questions concerned the activity (frequency of entries) of the politicians within the examined accounts and the contents of these accounts, and so the type and subject of the posted tweets. In the research the attention was also paid to the degree of involvement of both the Internet users and the politicians into the emerging discussions within the given tweet/account.

The effect of the preliminary analysis of the research material are two research hypotheses. According to the first hypothesis, the leaders of Polish political parties are still discovering the potential of Twitter, treating it similarly

¹¹ See for example: *Social Media and Democracy: Innovations in Participatory Politics*, B. D. Loader, D. Mercea (eds.), London-New York 2012.

to the existing mass media (press, radio, television), which can be evidenced even by the dominance of the one-way communication. The second hypothesis suggests that Twitter plays an important role in the communication strategies of the leaders of parties enjoying the lowest social support, this way seeking new ways to reach and interest the youngest voters in their offer.

The detailed empirical study included the randomly selected one month – January 2014. It is worth adding that it was the period preceding the official electoral campaign to the European Parliament planned for the end of May 2014¹². In the study of the collected material, the method of the content analysis, both quantitative and qualitative was used. This method seems justified, especially with regard to the communication field, in which the analysis includes the most significant elements shaping its content and form¹³.

Twitter as a platform of information and exchange of opinions

In Poland, Twitter, despite the growing interest of Internet users should still be counted as the niche medium in terms of registered users. Research of the media monitoring show, however, that this niche medium has an oddly significant influence on the media, and thus the public opinion.

The greatest popularity in the Polish society among the social networking sites is enjoyed by Facebook (about 11 million users), however, the rapidly growing number of Twitter users (in November 2013 it amounted to 2.5 million of Polish users, including about 500 000 active ones)¹⁴ places it in the top

¹² Official dates of the elections to the EP (25 May 2014) were announced by the President of the Republic of Poland on 19 February 2014.

¹³ More: J. H. Parmelle, S. L. Bichard, *Politics and the Twitter Revolution. How Tweets Influence the Relationship between Political Leaders and the Public*, Lanham, MD, 2012, p. 29.

¹⁴ Still in 2012 the research showed that the number of the real users of Twitter was approx. 1.2 million; see: A. Kawik, *Pierwszy raport o polskich użytkownikach Twittera*, <http://socialpress.pl/2013/05/pierwszy-raport-o-polskich-uzytkownikach-twittera-zobacz-o-czym-cwierkamy/> 25.01.2014 and Socialpress.pl, *Polacy w Internecie, dłużej, intensywniej*,

ten of the most often quoted media in Poland. Interestingly, studies show that the politicians most often are the authors of quotations in the media¹⁵. In this situation it is not surprising that Twitter is used by the politicians for the public relations purposes. Functionality and specificity of Twitter makes it a source of a variety of current information (relations from the current events, comments on the given topic) coming both from the politicians, voters or journalists.

According to the study of the public relations agency Hill + Knowlton Strategies conducted in November 2013, despite the relatively small popularity among the Polish society of the micro blog Twitter, almost half of the Polish parliament members have official accounts on this site. The most numerous on Twitter, among the members of the political parties, are the representatives of Your Movement (TR) –72% of them has established individual official accounts, then the politicians of the Civic Platform (PO) – 41%, Polish People's Party (PSL) – 39%, Law and Justice (PiS) – 38% and the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) – 35%. It is noteworthy that in the ranking of 20 most active politicians, 19 of them publishes tweets at least once a week, while 15 –use all options offered by Twitter in the communication (e.g. @, hashtags)¹⁶.

Tweets are perceived by the politicians in the category of a tool of almost direct and immediate communication with the environment (both with journalists, public opinion, as well as other politicians). As it turns out, the accounts most frequently observed by the politicians include the accounts of other politicians (especially those most active and/or being the part of the

mobilnie, <http://socialpress.pl/2012/12/polacy-w-internecie-dluzej-intensywniej-mobilnie/#> 25.01.2014 and Hill+Konwlton Strategies, *Najpopularniejsze konta na Twitterze obserwowane przez polskich parlamentarzystów: raport Hill+Konwlton Strategies*, <http://hkstrategies.pl/raport-politycy-twitter-2013>, 25.01.2014.

¹⁵ See: Instytut Monitorowania Mediów, *Najbardziej opiniotwórcze... social media w Polsce*, http://www.instytut.com.pl/IMM/o_firmie/raport_cytaty_social_media_06.2012.pdf, 25.01.2014.

¹⁶ Hill+Konwlton Strategies, *Najpopularniejsze konta na Twitterze...*

Council of Ministers, including the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland) and the accounts of journalists of the main opinion forming media. In the forefront of the observed media are the around-the-clock information television stations (commercial – TVN24 and public – TVP Info), opinion weeklies (“Newsweek Polska”, “Wprost”, “Polityka”), Internet opinion websites (“300 Polityka”, “Gazeta.pl”), information radio station (TOK FM) and the largest opinion dailies (“Gazeta Wyborcza”, “Rzeczpospolita”)¹⁷.

The preliminary analysis of the empirical material showed that four (Civic Platform – PO, Law and Justice – PiS, Your Movement – TR, Democratic Left Alliance – SLD) out of five governing parties on the Polish political stage¹⁸ have accounts on Twitter¹⁹. The greatest number of followers is enjoyed by two biggest political parties on the Polish scene, competing with each other, PO and PiS (see Table 1).

Assessing the activity of the Polish parties on Twitter (bearing in mind the date of creating the account), it should be noted that two parties are dominating in this respect (TR and SLD). The clear disparity in the activity in the studied month was noticeable on the account of PiS (only 76 tweets).

Given the sender of the tweets posted on the accounts of the parties, it can be clearly seen that there is an advantage of the “anonymous” entries marked only by the party’s logo. In the context of the personalisation of politics, it is worth noting that in the case of almost all analysed accounts, the

¹⁷ *ibidem*.

¹⁸ As a result of the parliamentary elections on 9 October 2011, the greatest number of votes went to the parties: Civic Platform (PO), Law and Justice (PiS), Palikot’s Movement (RP) (from 6.10.2013 as Your Movement - TR), Polish People’s Party (PSL) and Democratic Left Alliance (SLD). See: PKW, *Wybory 2011 do Sejmu i Senatu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, <http://wybory2011.pkw.gov.pl/wsw/pl/000000.html> 15.09.2013.

¹⁹ PO, https://twitter.com/Platforma_org; PiS, <https://twitter.com/kppis>; TR, https://twitter.com/TwojRuch_; SLD, <https://twitter.com/sldpoland>, 10.02.2014.

tweets were posted also by the selected politicians of the party including, (with an exception of the account of PiS), leaders of the parties.

Tab. 1. Activity of the Polish political parties on Twitter as of 31 January 2014.

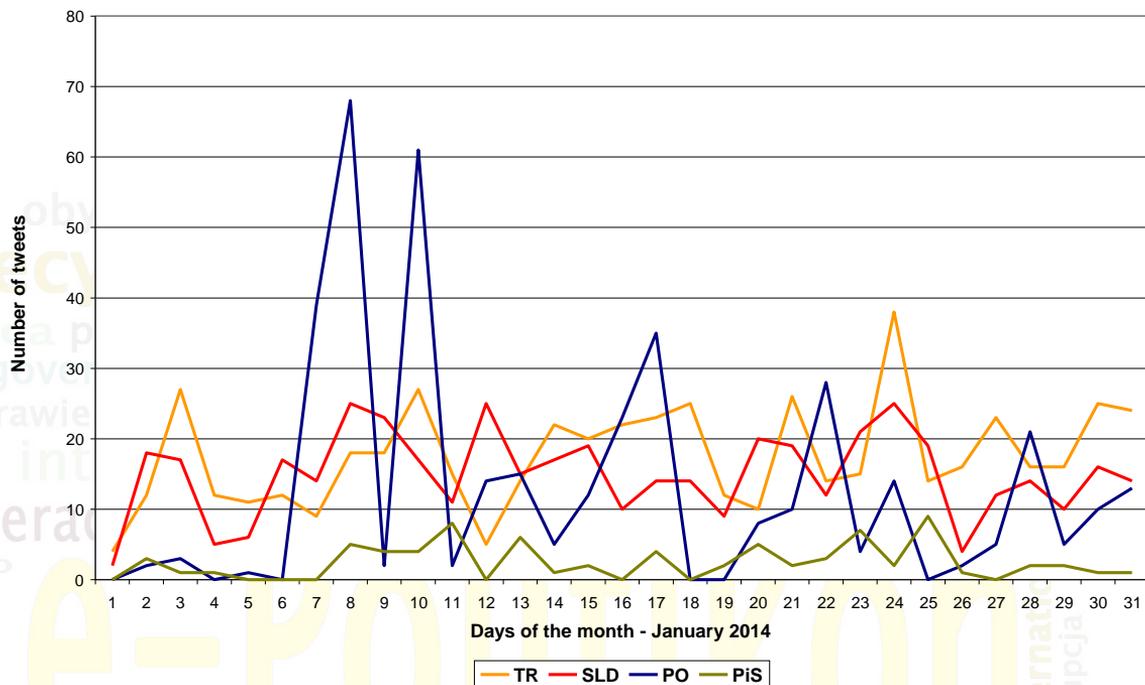
Political party/ Tweets	PO	PiS	TR	PSL	SLD
Date of the first tweet on the account	1 June 2010	15 December 2010	6 October 2013 ²⁰	absence	18 March 2011
Total tweets	3 600	3 582	2 156	-	3 167
Number of tweets in January 2014	402	76	545	-	464
Following	416	1 091	140	-	287
Followers	19 000	13 500	2 005	-	4 308

Source: Twitter and own study.

The voice was taken (in the studied period) by not more than 3-5 politicians of the given party. SLD was dominating against the actions of the political rivals, whose total of 11 members headed by the leader Leszek Miller posted at least one tweet. The parties systematically publishing tweets were TR and SLD. In tactics, especially of PO, the asymmetry of actions in stream was clearly visible, which in consequence could cause in the recipients the sensation of the rapid “flow” of various information and opinion every now and then (see Figure 1). Examining the subject of tweets numerously published by PO, especially in the period of 7-8 and 10 January (respectively: 30, 68 and 61 tweets), it is impossible to resist the impression of the opportunistic use of Twitter by the politicians. The contents of tweets in the mentioned period were almost exclusively the quotations speaking for the Prime Minister and minister during the ongoing press conference of the government on the plans of the development of Poland for the incoming years.

²⁰ The party Palikot’s Movement (RP) in October 2013 (6.10.2013) changed its name to Your Movement (TR) and opened a new account on the Twitter. The old account has been blocked.

Fig. 1. Activity of the Polish political parties on Twitter in January 2014.



Source: Own study.

A slightly different situation is in the case of accounts of the leaders of the political parties – officially, the accounts are also run by four leaders of the parties, who are: Donald Tusk (PO), Janusz Palikot (TR), Janusz Piechociński (PSL) and Leszek Miller (SLD)²¹. The only leader who does not have an account on Twitter is Jarosław Kaczyński (PiS). However, the mere quantitative analysis of the politicians in terms of data concerning the number of the posted tweets (in this studied month) showed that the study will de facto include three leaders: Janusz Palikot (TR), Janusz Piechociński (PSL) and Leszek Miller (SLD). Donald Tusk (PO) at the same time exercising the function of the Prime Minister of the

²¹ Donald Tusk, <https://twitter.com/premiertusk>; Janusz Palikot, <https://twitter.com/PalikotJanusz>; Janusz Piechociński, <https://twitter.com/Piechocinski>; Leszek Miller <https://twitter.com/LeszekMiller>, 10.02.2014.

Republic of Poland on his official account, from the beginning of its establishment, has posted 216 tweets, including only 1 tweet in the studied month²². Tweet on the account of D. Tusk saying: *We support the Ukrainian democrats in their efforts to achieve a fair and wise agreement. The conflict and repressions are the road to disaster*²³ was published on 26 January in relation to the turbulent political events in Ukraine and was commented only by 3 people (including the former Prime Minister in the government of Donald Tusk), but it was liked by 93 people, and forwarded – 100 (see Table 2), which indicated that the activity of the politician on Twitter is not always consistent with the popularity of his account.

Tab. 2. Activity of the leaders of the Polish political parties on Twitter. As of 31 January 2014.

Leader (party)/ Tweets	Donald Tusk (PO)	Jarosław Kaczyński (PiS)	Janusz Pali-kot (TR)	Janusz Piecho-ciński (PSL)	Leszek Miller (SLD)
Date of the first tweet on the account	10 December 2012	Absence	21 January 2010	28 January 2013	23 October 2012
Total tweets	216	-	2 485	5 137	1 243
Number of tweets in January 2014	1	-	183	294	74
Following	96	-	156	118	143
Followers	114 000	-	193 000	16 500	33 500

Source: Twitter and own study.

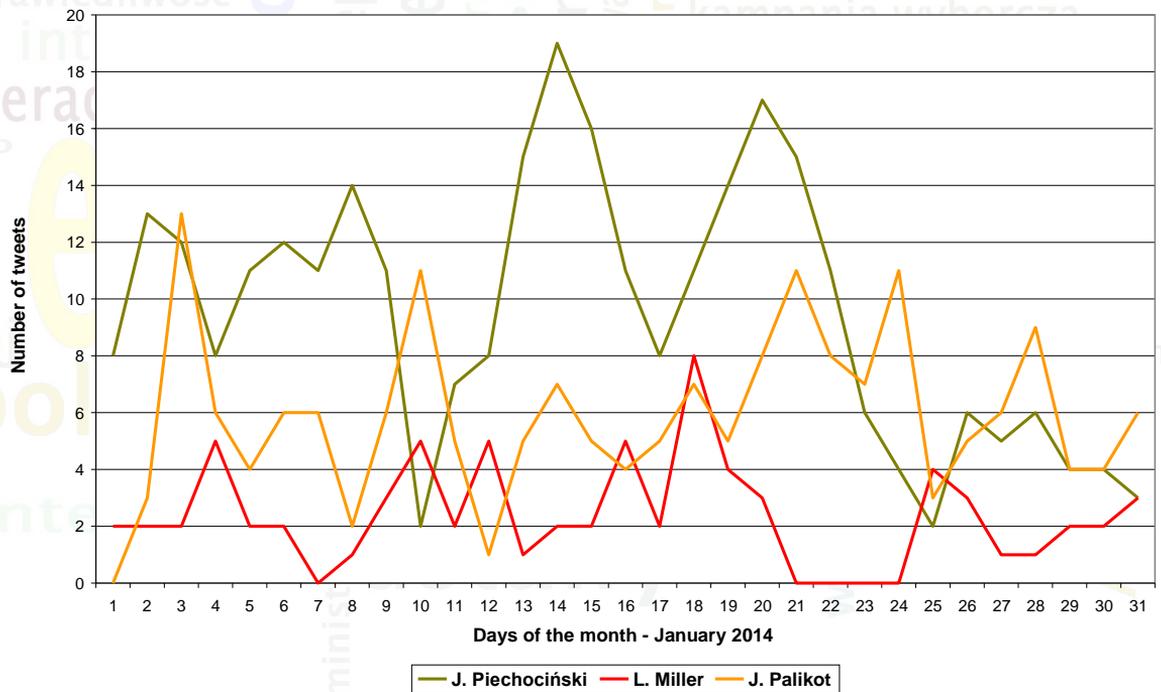
The quantitative study of the accounts of the mentioned leaders of the political parties shows that the most active politician is J. Piechociński, however, the

²² The analysis of the account of D. Tusk from the moment of its establishment indicates the disproportion in the prime minister's activity, e.g. in December 2013 he posted 19 tweets, while 15 – on one day (on Christmas Eve – 24 December).

²³ Donald Tusk@premiertusk, Twitter, <https://twitter.com/premiertusk>, 25.01.2014.

qualitative analysis of the published tweets provides the ground for somewhat different conclusions. It turns out that almost every tweet of J. Piechociński was published twice (!), which made Internet users draw attention of the politician in the comments several times (in various time intervals). Their remarks, just like all comments to the tweets of J. Piechociński, were notoriously ignored by the politician. J. Palikot regularly posted tweets on his account (see Figure 2).

Fig. 2. Activity of the leaders of the Polish political parties on Twitter in January 2014.



Source: Own study.

The analysis of the collected research material allowed to distinguish and divide the tweets posted by the leaders of the parties in terms of their construction into several types, while in the speeches of all politicians a significant place was taken by the tweets constructed on the model of the announcement

of an event, additionally with a link (see Table 3). The study results show that both J. Palikot and L. Miller use Twitter not only through the prism of a new dissemination platform of news, but also to share their opinions and reflexions on various topics with Internet users. For J. Piechociński, Twitter is almost exclusively the place to promote the official blog conducted by the politician in the Polish blog service blog.onet.pl²⁴ – tweet in this case acts mainly as a function of announcement (being at the same time a part of the material posted and expanded on the politician’s blog) with a link (see Table 3). As a result, the content of the politician’s account on Twitter gives the impression that it is run by the machine²⁵.

Tab. 3. Type of tweets - January 2014 [%].

Leader (party)/ Type of tweets	Janusz Palikot (TR)	Janusz Piechociński (PSL)	Leszek Miller (SLD)
Announcement	1	0	8
Announcement with a link	24	58	19
Mention	7	0	14
Mention with a link	9	18	18
Comment	35	0	31
Comment with a link	15	22	7
Other (including greetings/congratulations, thanks, wishes, questions)	9	2	3

Source: Own study.

It is worth adding that some tweets (approx. 10%) of both J. Palikot and L. Miller were additionally equipped with visual materials, moreover 2% of tweets of J. Palikot had audiovisual materials. These materials were even to a greater

²⁴ blog.pl, *Janusz Piechociński, Prezes PSL, Minister Gospodarki*, <http://piechocinski.blog.onet.pl/>, 25.01.2014.

²⁵ For example Twitterfeed, see: <http://twitterfeed.com/> 25.01.2014, and R. Niles, *So why aren't you Twittering yet?*, "OJR: The Online Journalism Review" 2009, <http://archive-org.com/page/1027716/2012-12-21/http://www.ojr.org/ojr/people/robert/200901/1616/>, 25.01.2014.

degree created to attract attention of Internet users to a particular tweet/message.

As a result of the analysis of the research material for the dominance of the specific topics, there were distinguished the following content categories: current events in the country (mainly the road infrastructure, social matters); reports of the proceedings of the government/parliament; economic politics; religious politics; foreign politics (including the EU, events in Ukraine); political competitors; proposals from the election program; electoral campaign to the European Parliament; parties' politicians in the media; direct meetings with the parties' politicians (including press conferences and meetings with voters); media reports; surveys/polls; cultural events; the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity; others (see Table 4).

Tab. 4. Topics of tweets – January 2014 [%].

Leader (party)/ Topics of tweets	Janusz Palikot (TR)	Janusz Piechociński (PSL)	Leszek Miller (SLD)
Current events in the country	8	5	5
Reports of the proceedings of the gov- ernment/parliament	0	9	0
Economic politics	2	30	0
Religious politics	8	0	0
Foreign politics	1	14	10
Political competitors	40	1	23
Proposals from the election program	8	9	8
Electoral campaign to the European Par- liament	3	2	5
Parties' politicians in the media	14	10	8
Direct meetings with the parties' politi- cians (including press conferences and meetings with voters)	2	9	5
Media reports	2	1	10
Surveys/polls	1	1	3
Cultural events	0	0	11
WOŚP²⁶	1	2	1
Other	10	7	11

Source: Own study.

²⁶ The Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity (WOŚP) – yearly nationwide charity action.

The results of the qualitative analysis prove that in the communicative strategy of J. Palikot, Twitter is a tool used most of all to criticise the political competitors (40% of all tweets). This use of Twitter also plays an important role in the strategy of L. Miller (23%). In turn, for J. Piechociński, acting not only as the President of PSL, but also the minister of economy, the micro blog is a place used to publish the latest reports on individual facts/events in the field of the economic politics, thus taking on mostly the formula of the announcement with a link, referring the Internet user to more information to the already mentioned official blog of the politician²⁷. Moreover, Twitter (in the case of all leaders) plays a significant role in promoting the speeches or interviews of the politicians of their own party in traditional media (press, radio, television). Tweets of this type are usually published a day before or the same day and they contain accurate information about who of the politicians from the party, where and what time can be seen/heard, often there is also provided a program, which will be covered by the media.

The content analysis of the tweets indicated that each of the studied politicians undertakes on Twitter not only the popular current topics, but also issues with which he would like to be identified and through the prism of which he would like to be perceived by Internet users.

Characteristic for J. Piechociński (and possible thanks to his function of the minister) were the tweets informing Internet users up to date about the progress and decisions or topics of discussions conducted during the meeting of the Council of Ministers (see Table 4). Specific only for J. Palikot was the relatively often occurring negative attitude of the politician and his party to the way of implementation by the Polish country of the religious politics.

²⁷ Blog.pl, Janusz Piechociński...

The subjects undertaken in the analysed period only by L. Miller were the cultural events (mostly the cinema premieres).

Twitter, which was shown by the study, became (to a similar degree) a place of the inauguration of the electoral campaign to the European Parliament for the politicians, which was manifested mostly in reminding the potential voters the slogans from the electoral program of the party (8-9% of all tweets) and the official presentation of the leaders of the electoral lists. While interpreting the analysis results, it is worth paying attention once again to the important role of Twitter for the leader of the PSL party J. Piechociński for the announcements and mentions of direct meetings (including these with the potential voters and journalists) and PSL leaders (9% of all tweets). In turn, the review and correction of the media reports (with special reverence of the passages, in which media referred to SLD or its members) was almost a permanent element of the tweets by L. Miller (see Table 4).

From the perspective of the researcher of social media, interesting is not only the way of communicating of the politicians with Internet users or the topics undertaken by them, but also the degree of involvement in this interaction of their fans. Such indicators in the case of Twitter may include, apart from the already mentioned “followers”, also the functions “favourite”, “retweet” and most of all “reply”.

The marking of tweets, as favourites, on one hand is to help the user to archive the selected entries, preventing the situation in which the given tweet is lost among a thousand others, generated by the observed people, and on the other hand – it becomes an indicator of popularity among the Internet users of the selected tweets. A little “broader range” characterises the retweet function, through which Internet users by sharing, and thus recommending their friends the selected tweets, at the same time publicise and

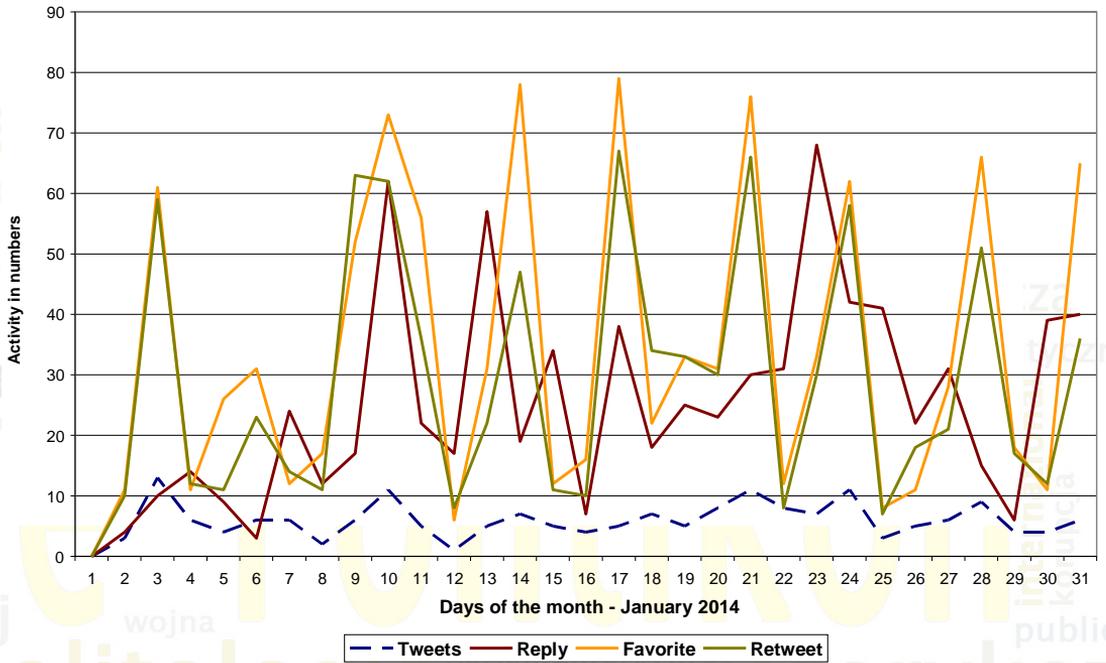
promote them. It seems that both functions (requiring from the Internet user a small commitment) can be perceived in the category of more effective (in comparison to, e.g., data concerning the followers) indicators of the real popularity of specific tweets, and even the given account on Twitter. The latter one – the reply function, without a doubt requires from the Internet user a much greater commitment to communication (here the mere “clicking” is not enough, like in case of two previous functions), but because of it the politician may get to know not only the opinions of Internet users, but also react to them through a response or joining the discussion.

Analysing the accounts of the parties’ leaders in terms of involvement in their popularisation by Internet users, it can be observed that only occasional tweets did not raise any reactions of the audience in the studied period (see Figure 3-5). The greatest number of tweets, which were most willingly marked by Internet users as favourite, appeared on the account of L. Miller (40%) and J. Palikot (38%). Less often marked as favourite were the tweets of J. Piechociński (27%), however in comparison to the entries of the competitors, his tweets were systematically commented (48%), in case of L. Miller and J. Palikot these values were similar (respectively: 34% and 29%). While it is worth noting that more often the most numerous discussions among Internet users took place on the account of J. Palikot. In turn, L. Miller was actually the only leader who undertook the conversation with the Internet users; the other politicians, if they responded to Internet users at all, did it in single cases.

In the use of the retweet function by Internet users, a kind of consistency of its use with the favourite function can be observed – often tweets marked as favourite were at the same time shared to the groups of friends of the Internet users (see Figure 3-5). In total, the largest number of the Internet users in the researched period forwarded the tweets of J. Palikot (887 re-

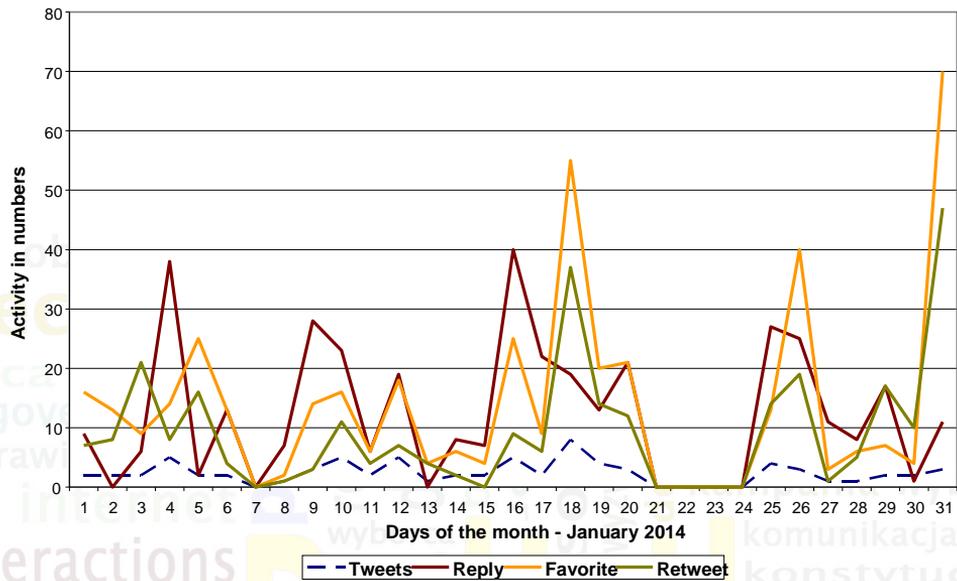
tweets), followed by L. Miller (287 retweets) and J. Piechociński (145 re-tweets).

Fig. 3. The use of the Twitter function by Internet users with respect to the politician's tweets – account of Janusz Palikot (TR).



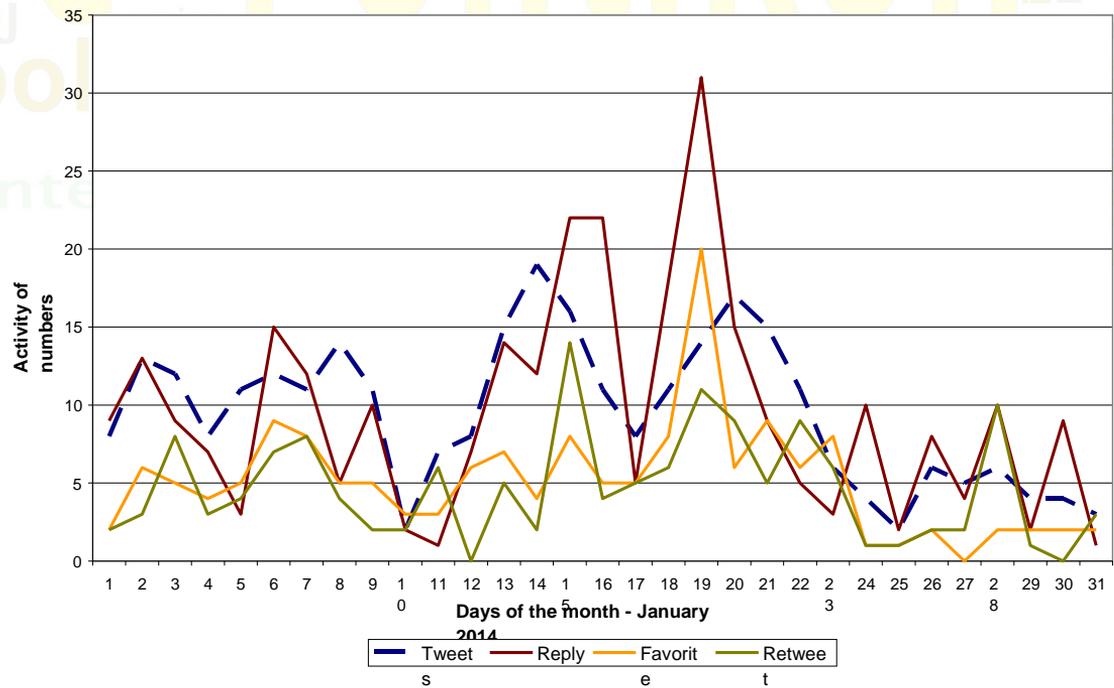
Source: Own study.

Fig. 4. The use of the Twitter function by Internet users with respect to the politician's tweets – account of Leszek Miller (SLD).



Source: Own study.

Fig. 5. The use of the Twitter function by the Internet users with respect to the politician's tweets – account of Janusz Piechociński (PSL).



Source: Own study.

Conclusions

Twitter gives the possibility to the politicians of direct (without the participation of the journalists) reaction to current events, to inform and respond to the questions of Internet users, a rapid reaction to the words of the political rivals or finally to deny the media reports. Characteristic for Twitter are also conversations conducted at the level of politicians of the same or “befriended” party or on the line politicians-journalists. The greatest activity is shown, however, by Internet users themselves, both the supporters and the opponents of the given party, often leading the substantial polemics.

The conducted analysis leads to the conclusion that from the point of view of senders (Polish politicians), the gradation of the recipients of tweets is as follows: leaders of the public opinion, journalists, political competitors, party colleagues and politicians of other countries. It is worth noting that the recipients of tweets are the Internet users interested in (although to a different extent) the socio-political life, also often following the action of the politicians, so Twitter is a micro blog directed de facto at the profiled target groups.

Establishing and running, both by the leaders of the political parties, and the parties, accounts on popular social networking sites encouraging the Internet users to active participation in the political life definitely serves integration, mobilisation and polarisation of the electorate. Examining the degree of involvement of Internet users, especially in terms of their active participation in the discussion caused by the publication by the politician of a given tweet, a phenomenon of the creation of the leaders of the public opinion (people regularly commenting tweets and undertaking the discussion with other Internet users²⁸) can be observed. The leaders of the public opinion

²⁸ This observation seems to verify the previous observations of the researchers of the behaviours of Internet users actively joining the discussion groups, i.e., on the one hand the party creating the over-representation of the participation of the narrow group de facto formulating

should also include the Internet users not necessarily joining the conversation, but spreading, thereby promoting tweets thanks to the use of the favourite and retweet function.

Observing the influence of the created network communication structures on the shape of the contemporary political debate, Henry Jenkins cites the concept of Pierre Levy on the collective intelligence. According to this concept, the active participation of the members of a given community in the network, the exchange of opinions (e.g. blogosphere, on social networks) at the same time increases the knowledge and competence of the Internet users, in effect contributing to their greater involvement in political life²⁹.

The increasing popularity of social media takes the traditional media (press, radio, television) the monopoly to shape the subject and direction of the socio-political discussion. Twitter became a new source (both for the leaders of the public opinion, journalists and politicians) of obtaining various information, a service allowing to follow the events “live” and the irreplaceable place of conversation (including the sharing of one’s opinions or thoughts). Specificity of Twitter (tweet = max 140 characters) forces the senders to construct synthetic communications with the possibility to equip them only with a graphic or audiovisual file. Enrichment of the tweet of this kind with a message is a procedure more often applied by the politicians (the only exception here is J. Piechociński), which in the era of video rhetoric seems to be a natural and accurate action.

a majority of comments of the users, on the other hand – a numerous auditorium, usually passively following the discussion. See e. g.: L. Porębski, *Elektroniczne oblicze polityki. Demokracja, państwo, instytucje polityczne w okresie rewolucji informacyjnej*, Kraków 2004, pp. 60-61.

²⁹ More: H. Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, New York - London 2006, pp. 26-27.

Social media ensuring freedom of communication (which is clearly visible at the level of the language used) serve the “shortening of the distance”, and thus the warming and/or strengthening the created images of the politicians. The conducted study indicates, however, that Polish politicians are still exploring the potential of Twitter, treating it similarly to “traditional media” (one-way communication), which is evidenced by the meagre involvement in the discussion with Internet users, and even the lack of reaction to their “technical” remarks (e.g. the already mentioned multiple remarks of the Internet users directed to J. Piechociński and concerning the erroneous publishing of each tweet twice by the politician).

It is worth noting that in the case of the leaders of Polish political parties, the greatest role is played by Twitter in communication strategies of the politicians and parties enjoying the lowest social support. The politicians creating the accounts on social websites are searching for new channels to reach and interest in the youngest, often not yet politically shaped voters, for whom social networks are not only the source of information, but also integration and entertainment. The use of Twitter, therefore, contributes to the strategy of searching for new forms of reaching the potential electorate with the message.

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Abstract

The purpose of the article is an attempt to capture the way of using in the communication strategies the potential of social media on the example of the

micro blog Twitter by the leaders of the Polish political parties. The main research questions concentrate around the answers to the questions of whether and how the leaders of the Polish political parties use the official accounts on Twitter for the communication with the potential voters. The detailed analysis included the activity (frequency of entries) and type and subject of tweets posted by the politicians (Donald Tusk - PO, Janusz Palikot – TR, Janusz Piechociński – PSL and Leszek Miller - SLD) on their official accounts. The study also highlighted the degree of the involvement of both the Internet users and the politicians into the emerging discussions within the given tweet/account. The detailed empirical study included the randomly selected month – January 2014. It is worth adding that it was a period preceding the official electoral campaign to the European Parliament planned for May 25, 2014. In the study of the collected material the method of the content analysis was used, both quantitative and qualitative.

TWITTER W STRATEGIACH KOMUNIKACYJNYCH LIDERÓW POLSKICH PARTII POLITYCZNYCH

Abstrakt

Celem artykułu jest próba uchwycenia zjawiska wykorzystania w strategiach komunikacyjnych potencjału mediów społecznościowych na przykładzie mikroblogu Twitter przez liderów polskich partii politycznych. Główne pytania badawcze koncentrują się wokół odpowiedzi na pytania o to, czy i w jaki sposób liderzy polskich partii politycznych wykorzystują oficjalne konta na Twitterze do komunikacji z potencjalnymi wyborcami. Szczegółowej analizie poddano aktywność (częstotliwość wpisów) oraz rodzaj i tematykę tweetów zamieszczanych przez polityków (Donalda Tuska – PO, Janusza Palikota – TR, Janusza Piechocińskiego – PSL oraz Leszka Millera – SLD) na swoich oficjalnych kontach.

W badaniu zwrócono również uwagę na stopień zaangażowania zarówno internautów, jak i polityków w rodzące się dyskusje w ramach danego tweeta/konta. Szczegółowym badaniem empirycznym objęto losowo wybrany jeden miesiąc – styczeń 2014 roku. Warto dodać, iż był to okres poprzedzający oficjalną kampanię wyborczą wyborów do Parlamentu Europejskiego planowanych na koniec maja 2014 roku. W badaniu zgromadzonego materiału posłużono się metodą analizy treści, zarówno ilościowej, jak i jakościowej.

