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**MEDIATIZATION OF LITHUANIAN POLITICS ON SOCIAL
NETWORKING SITES AND ITS COMPATIBILITY WITH SOCIAL MEDIA
LOGIC**

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IR JOS ATITIKIMAS SOCIALINIŲ MEDIJŲ LOGIKAI**

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SUMMARY

Given the novelty of political campaigning on social networking sites in Lithuania and the critique, it has received from social media experts, the object of the master thesis encompasses mediatization of Lithuanian politics on Facebook, when social media logic becomes adapted in political campaigning and integrated into the political agenda.

Accordingly, the MA thesis developed its aim to define in what ways mediatization of Lithuanian politics manifests on Facebook and if public-relations oriented Lithuanian political communication culture, characteristic to political communication on mass media, and negativity, as its culture-specific aspect, are transported to the platform.

The research was carried out in several stages. Firstly, using secondary data analysis the study aimed at determining social media logic. Accordingly, the requirements for successful exploitation of social media logic in political campaigning on Facebook were identified – popularity building, connectivity, personalization and interactivity. Thirdly, aiming to determine if the politicians complied with social media logic and transported public-relations oriented political communication culture and negativity to the platform, the research used quantitative and qualitative content analyses. It covered a two-weeks period (from April 02 to April 15, 2014) political campaigning on Facebook run by the seven candidates' to Lithuanian President's Office. Fourthly, using the obtained empirical data the study ascertained in what ways mediatization of Lithuanian politics manifests on Facebook and if it further cultivates negativity as the major feature of Lithuanian political communication culture.

In this respect, the two main hypotheses were raised: 1) the Elections of the President of the Republic of Lithuania 2014 shall steer the candidates' activity for boosting their popularity on Facebook; and 2) with respect to public-relations oriented political communication culture in Lithuania, the use of negativity as its specific feature shall be integrated into political campaigning on the social networking site.

The study found that mediatization of Lithuanian politics on Facebook is already present, thus confirming the first hypothesis. The politicians put effort to boost their popularity on the platform by timely, active and routine posting, relevant content production and capability to increase public engagement, as well as, by integrating Facebook in other political communication channels, attempting to run person-centered campaigning and exploiting Facebook visual affordances. Yet, the candidates to President's Office tended to lack the key elements of political campaigning on social media - personalization and interactivity.

With regards to public-relations oriented Lithuanian political communication culture and negativity, as its specific aspect, the research confirmed the second hypothesis that Lithuanian

politicians tend to adopt negative campaigning developed on mass media on Facebook, which does not have a positive impact on public engagement. Therefore, it is suspected that the future political communication on social media may cultivate more positive Lithuanian political communication culture.

SANTRAUKA

LIETUVOS POLITIKOS MEDIATIZACIJA SOCIALINIUOSE TINKLUOSE IR JOS ATITIKIMAS SOCIALINIŲ MEDIJŲ LOGIKAI

Nors Lietuvos politinė komunikacija socialiniuose tinkluose yra gana naujas reiškinys, jis jau sulaukė socialinių medijų ekspertų kritikos. Šio magistro baigiamojo darbo tyrimo objektu pasirinkta Lietuvos politikos mediatizacija socialiniame tinkle *Facebook*, kuomet politinių kampanijų metu politikai adaptuoja socialinių medijų logiką ir ją integruoja į savo politinę dienotvarkę.

Darbe siekta nustatyti, kokiais būdais Lietuvos politikos mediatizacija pasireiškia internetiniame socialiniame tinkle *Facebook*. Taip pat buvo svarbu išsiaiškinti, ar Lietuvos viešųjų ryšių (ang. *Public-relations oriented*) politinės komunikacijos kultūra, ugdoma masinėje žiniasklaidoje, ir jai būdingas negatyvumas perkeliama į *Facebook* platformą.

Tyrimas atliktas keliais etapais. Pirmojo etapo metu, naudojant antrinių duomenų analizę, buvo įvardyta socialinių medijų logika. Tokiu pat būdu nustatyti reikalavimai, leidžiantys išnaudoti socialinių medijų logiką politinių kampanijų metu, t. y., populiarumo didinimas, socialinių ryšių išnaudojimas, personalizacija ir interaktyvumas. Trečiojo etapo metu, siekiant atskleisti Lietuvos politikų komunikacijos atitikimą socialinių medijų logikai ir galimą viešųjų ryšių politinės komunikacijos kultūros bei negatyvumo perkėlimą į *Facebook* platformą, tyrime naudojama kiekybinė ir kokybinė turinio analizė. Ištirtos septynių kandidatų į 2014 metų Lietuvos Prezidento postą dviejų savaitių laikotarpio (balandžio 02–15 dienomis) politinės kampanijos socialiniame tinkle *Facebook*. Gauti empiriniai duomenys atskleidė, kokiais būdais Lietuvo politikos mediatizacija pasireiškia *Facebook* platformoje, ir ar ji toliau ugdo negatyvumą, kaip pagrindinę Lietuvos politinės komunikacijos kultūros savybę.

Magistro darbe iškeltos dvi hipotezės: 1) 2014-ųjų metų Lietuvos Respublikos Prezidento rinkimai paskatins kandidatus didinti savo populiarumą kanale *Facebook*; 2) remiantis viešųjų ryšių politinės komunikacijos kultūra Lietuvoje, negatyvumas, kaip jai būdinga savybė, pasireikš politinėse kandidatų kampanijose socialiniame tinkle *Facebook*.

Tyrimu nustatyta Lietuvos politikos mediatizacija *Facebook* kanale, kuri patvirtina pirmąją hipotezę. Kandidatai stengėsi didinti savo populiarumą platformoje nuolat, tam tikru nustatytu laiku

ir aktyviai rašdami į savo *Facebook* paskyras, kurdami aktualų turinį, skatinantį visuomenės dalyvavimą. Politikai integravo *Facebook* platformą į kitus politinės komunikacijos kanalus, stengėsi vykdyti į asmenį orientuotą kampaniją (ang. *person-centered campaigning*) bei išnaudojo socialinio tinklo *Facebook* vizualumą. Vis dėlto tyrimas atskleidė, kad kandidatams į Prezidento postą, komunikuojant su savo sekėjais/gerbėjais *Facebook* kanale, pritrūko personalizacijos ir interaktyvumo.

Atsižvelgiant į viešųjų ryšių politinės komunikacijos kultūrą Lietuvoje ir jai būdingą negatyvumą, tyrimas patvirtino antrąją hipotezę – Lietuvos politikai savo komunikacijoje *Facebook* kanalu yra linkę taikyti masinėje žiniasklaidoje naudojamą negatyvią kampaniją, kuri, deja, nesukelia visuomenės susidomėjimo. Dėl šios priežasties kyla prielaida, kad ateityje politinė komunikacija socialinėse medijose turėtų išugdyti labiau pozityvią Lietuvos politinės komunikacijos kultūrą, siekiant įtraukti daugiau aktyvių potencialių rinkėjų į kandidatų politines kampanijas.

INTRODUCTION

Media have totally entrenched our lives. Be they textual, audio or visual, they bring us daily experiences and shape our views. Despite their technological affordances allowing communicative actions to bridge space and time (McLuhan, 1964, Schulz, 2004), the media serve as a social institution mobilizing dispersed populations, providing information, explaining relevant social issues, shaping social reality and safeguarding democratic functioning (Norris, 2004). Here, when we come to our relations with each other, society or the state at large, it is media, which make this binding possible, leaving no part of institutional activity independent from their complicity (Krotz, 2009).

In just few previous decades the European media became amongst the strongest determinants of how various societal institutions and bodies – such as governance, health, science, sports, family, religion, and many others – are defined and valued. Consequently, the media's active presence in societal change and transformation processes, as well as, their growing significance and domination increasing mediatization of social practices and institutions has appeared amongst the top prized foci of analysis within the European Mediascape (Hepp, Hjarvard, Lundby, 2010). Thus, mediatization should be viewed as a process, which is extensively shaped through media-centered logic, through its attempts to set political agendas, to frame messages, and to dominate all other aspects of contemporary politics.

Today media and politics operate in a competitive environment regulated by market rules, which steer political communication dependency on mass media's commercial standpoints (Fog, 2004; Bardoel & Haenens, 2004). As the diversification of media means forced them to compete for public attention, gaining publicity and communicating politics turned as never before sophisticated. Fragmented audiences and consumerist preferences enhanced the media's twist towards entertainment format, where earlier formal top-down interaction to audiences was replaced by soft news, sensations and scandals (Wang, 2012). As a consequence, the integration of user-oriented mass media's attitudes and their logic - methods and rules of news coverage - into the political agenda changed the way politicians engage their publics (Hallin & Manicini, 2004a). Accordingly, the decreasing autonomy and growing dependency in its central functions on mass media turn the contemporary politics into a media-subordinate or mediatized institution continuously shaped by interactions with mass media (Mazzoleni & Schultz, 1999: 248).

Mediatization is mostly regarded as a product of the television era (Schulz, 2004: 94), since no other medium had ever been able to present news in such an exoteric manner, as TV did. Decreasing the distance between the public and the 'heroes' on the broadcast, television introduced informality to political communication process (Pečiulis, 2006) and steered political

transformations. With public fragmentation, when the economic segregation causes social polarization, political ideologies vanish, yielding to populism (Balčytienė, 2009). Accordingly, as ideological cleavages are no longer significant, the personalized lifestyle politics enters the stage, where political elites, prioritizing individual life details over political substance, undertake responsibility for party representation (Butkevičienė et.al., 2009). Withal, the need for permanent campaigning puts the importance of professional consultancy to the fore (Norris, 2004), where negativity towards opponents, accusations and scandals become the highly adopted political marketing strategies ensuring publicity (Nevinskaitė, 2014).

Mediatization of Lithuanian politics embraces structural transformations the media and politics undergone while attaining democratic traditions and hitherto the culture-specific political communication these two social systems have cultivated. The absence of democratic experience and rising competition brought by commercialization developed public relations-oriented political communication culture, where media and politics hold pragmatically estimated proximity and the dominance of media logic in the process of communicating politics (Pfetsch, 2004). Hereby, *negativity* against the ruling powers inherited from the Soviet epoch (Linkevičiūtė-Rimavičienė, 2009) and combined with negativity brought by media commercialization turns into a significant cultural feature of Lithuanian political communication resonating in the whole public sphere (Bielinis, 2005).

However, nothing is constant as a temporary, since the mass media's reign in determining political reality has been challenged by the rise of computer-based interaction and social media especially. Built on ideological and technological foundations of the Web 2.0 they allow individual self-presentation, social networking, setting and maintaining social relationships (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Most importantly, the unregulated nature of social media provides the politicians with possibilities to circumvent mass media's agenda-setting functions and missions and instantaneously convey messages to the public.

Global political experience showed successful political communication results via social networking sites (e.g., Barack Obama's victory in 2008 presidential campaign on *Facebook*, *Twitter*'s influence on Italian Parliament elections in 2013), proving social media are able to impact civic engagement, mobilization and public return to political life (Carlisle & Patton, 2013, Vaccari et al., 2013, Yamamoto et al., 2013). Withal, social media use is beneficial in targeting segmented audiences, reception of direct feedback and dissemination of political messages to the public at minimal cost (Krueger, 2006).

In many ways, it seems that social media compensate mainstream media drawbacks. As they gain prominence among global societies and share qualities necessary to the functioning of representative democracy, they intercept the social liabilities, which the prevailing mass media

logic in political communication seem to have given away (Jafarkarimi et al., 2014). Hereby, serving as public arenas and mobilizing agents they may encourage the secularized and politically alienated Lithuanian public to rediscover the contact with the government and consolidate democracy.

But, social media are run by their own logic, whereas, the efficacy of political communication via social networking sites depends on politicians' ability to understand their logic and to exploit the communicative tools the social media platforms provide. For example, President Grybauskaitė has more than 140400 followers on *Facebook*, whereas, the former President Valdas Adamkus – a bit above 7500. It need not be concluded that Grybauskaitė is more admired by the citizens than Adamkus. Here, it is necessary to talk about the interdependence between political campaigning on social networking sites and its compatibility with the logic of the new media.

Though the lack of determination of social media logic remains an issue, José van Dijck and Thomas Poell's (2013) study provides with insights on their technological, economic and socio-cultural elements - *programmability, popularity, connectivity and datafication* -- which are able to transport media's views outside the platforms. Similarly to traditional media, social networking sites are profit-oriented institutions. The neutrality of their platforms, which earlier provided the users with opportunities to gain attention among their networked communities, have gradually been replaced with the market-principled conditions encoded within the sequences of algorithms, where one receives more attention than the other, whereas, the publicity is constantly estimated by pragmatic considerations (ibid., 2013).

Politics as any other business enterprise is concerned with 'selling ideas' to electorate through the most convenient communication channels (McNair, 2011). Thus, when social media become the unregulated political marketing platform, here one cannot talk about democracy on social networking sites, which may have profound implications for shaping social traffic, prioritizing certain (corporate, public, or private) values over others. This is an important point, which many proponents of e-democracy (e.g., Jafarkarimi et. al., 2014, Yamamoto et. al., 2013, Vaccari et. al., 2013) simply forget or do not emphasize as important.

Nevertheless, *mastering the modus operandi* of social media may have an impact on politicians' professional success. President Obama is considered to be the pioneer of political campaigning on *Facebook*. However, *the problem arises*. Even though global political campaigning on social media showed positive results, Lithuanian politicians paid insufficient attention to the advantages provided by social networking sites. For instance, when Barack Obama won presidential election in 2008, where social media played a decisive role in engaging the electorate, Lithuanian presidential candidates in 2009 did not consider social networking sites as a serious channel for campaigning (Šuminas, 2009). Only three out of seven candidates communicated on social media

whereas their activity on them was erratic. Likewise, the politicians' need for permanent campaigning did not incorporate social networking sites, as their communicative activities on them stopped right after the presidential election ended (ibid., 2009).

Moreover, Lithuanian experts highly criticized political communication on social networking sites claiming it was unprofessional and straightforward, lacking interactivity and personalization (Jakubonytė, 2012). Assumingly, due to the inconsistencies the politicians exposed in 2009, mediatization of Lithuanian politics on social networking sites or the politicians' adaptability to social media's logic and its integration into political agenda were insufficient.

Regarding the media proliferation and diffusion of media technologies in Lithuania, five years are considered to be a long period, which might have brought changes in political campaigning on social media. As five years ago national social networking sites www.one.lt and www.frype.lt were highly used by Lithuanians, now more people regardless of age and place of residence join *Facebook* (TNS, 2012), which has turned into the leading social networking site in Lithuania (Balčiūnienė, 2013). Likewise, the politicians' migration to social media platforms is much visible, especially during electoral period.

On 11 May 2014, Lithuania is holding Elections of the President of the Republic of Lithuania. In this respect, the candidates' campaigns on *Facebook* may provide with useful information on the presence of Lithuanian mediatization of politics on social networking sites, as well as, the politician's regard to social media logic and its integration into their agendas.

Taking into the account all the preceding arguments and ideas, it appears significantly **important to identify the ways of how social media modify political communication; in other words, it becomes crucial to understand how contemporary politics is shaped by the social media (and its logic), and which cultural particularities of such process appear as dominant for the selected context (i.e. Lithuania).** This rather general question may indeed be narrowed to a number of smaller issues, specifically addressing contextual and cultural peculiarities of such process.

Thus, with the reference to José van Dijck and Thomas Poell's study (2013) on the elements of social media logic and international social media experts' advice, the research shall conduct secondary data analysis *seeking to define*:

RQ1: What generally can be regarded as social media logic?

RQ2: What requirements should politicians follow to exploit Facebook in political campaigning and adapt to its logic?

Hereafter, quantitative and qualitative content analyses shall be developed, which will allow analyzing:

RQ3: If the candidates' to Lithuanian President's Office campaigns on Facebook comply with social media logic?

While political communication culture plays an important role in campaigning, content analyses shall aim at ascertaining if:

RQ4: Political campaigning on social networking site further promotes negativity as the major feature of Lithuanian political communication culture?

Hereby, using the obtained data on the politicians' exploitation of social media and their compliance with social media logic, the study shall be able to determine:

RQ5: In what ways does mediatization of politics manifest on Facebook in Lithuania? In other words, what, specifically, constitute the mediatization of the Lithuanian politics?

RQ6: Does mediatization of politics on the social networking site foster negativity, as the major feature of Lithuanian political communication culture?

In this respect the *hypotheses* arise:

H1: The Elections of the President of the Republic of Lithuania in 2014 shall steer the candidates' activity for boosting their popularity on Facebook.

H2: With respect to public-relations oriented political communication culture in Lithuania, the use of negativity as its peculiar feature shall be integrated in political campaigning on the social networking site.

1. FROM MEDIATION TO MEDIATIZATION OF POLITICS: DEFINITIONS, PROCESSES AND MODELS

As media had gradually become an integral part of people's lives, the prominent American philosopher - Marshall McLuhan (1964) - noticed their growing influence in the social domain, distinguishing their "pervasive political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical, and social consequences" (p.26) within societies. The technological diffusion as more modalities of media emerged changed the whole communicative action. The new media means extended communication abilities bridging time and space, substituted social activities, which earlier took place face-to-face, and by combining the actual interaction with mediated one, they amalgamated them both (Schulz, 2004).

According to **technological determinism theory**, media and technology have been the key movers of social change, since the development of media technology and media proliferation are conditioned and produced by societal dependence on technology once it has occurred (Kunz, 2006). Sociologist B. Thompson requires the media as an integral part of the evolution of modern society (1995). For instance, when mobile and Information and Communications technologies (ICT) entered social, political and economic domains, the interaction and socialization seem merely impossible without mobile carriers or the Internet connection. As a result, increasing public reliance on information and communication technologies left no part of humans untouched, unaffected and unaltered by the diversified means of media (Livingstone, 2009).

The more people used the media in their interactive activities, the more these intermediaries became integrated into **social reality construction** (Habermas, 1989). With respect to human innate need for communication and the feeling of togetherness, the supporters of **social constructionism theory** saw the media as the contributors to **social networking and political socialization**. Robert Merton saw them as 'social glue' or the agency of national community building (Peters, 1999: 28). Hannah Arendt considered unconstrained interaction to be the means of agreeing upon a common course of action (Habermas, 1977) or a disclosure of the political potentials of human association, whereas, Emanuel Levinás took it as an ethical obligation to the otherness of others (Peters, 1999: 28).

With respect to **mass communication theory**, news media occupy an important and exclusive locus within social systems. Despite their focus on delivering news to the general public, their credibility and objectivity tend to remain the unquestionable qualities, which establish them as an authority within societies (McQuail, 2005). Here, the news media act as gatekeepers as their selection of facts, agenda setting and framing affect the proximity and relevance of issues among the public. The more attention the news media draw to certain information, the more they involve it

into different contexts, the more mass media entrench the public agenda-setting process (McCombs, 2005). Hereby, mass media and their influence on collective action became one of the most prominent categories in discussions about their influence on democracy (Peters, 1999: 7).

Since **modernization** process, marked with economic, social, political and technological shifts in history (e.g. industrialization, urbanization and societal rationalization), dispersed populations (ibid., 1999: 11), the government by the people appeared to be a headache for many of the former Western political leaders. Winston Churchill claimed, ‘democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried’ (from a House of Commons speech on 11/11/1947).

The problematic of his statement resides in its basic principles, such as freedom, equality and consensus, not to mention the conditions under, which a smooth democratic functioning is possible - pluralism (economic, social, political and ideological), tolerance and publicity (Norris, 2004). Each of the enlisted democratic characteristics resembles the complex nature of democracy, as the principles and objects tend to vary across populations. Everyone has his/her needs, problems and desires projected to the state’s jurisdiction, whereas, politics or the business of government need to set a certain principal or object, in order to manage and control the people living together (Jenkins, 1900: 2).

Pursuing a common goal appears to be even a greater hardship both to the government and to the public in late modernity, which is characterized by the entrenchment of globalization, the dispersion of unifying cultural frameworks and growing individualization among societies (Svensson, 2011). According to **modernization theory**, the diffusion of the **Western lifestyle** and media diversification initiated highly selective types of communication and **the superiority of secular, materialist and individualist culture** within democratic countries (Schramm, 1964). Therefore, political socialization turns into the aspiration hard to achieve, especially in nowadays.

The public sphere or the realm of social life, where public opinion takes its form (Habermas, 1977) have been impinged by public political alienation (Kepplinger, 2000), whereas, consumerism, popular culture and public secularization speak of the weakening social ties and the decay of political public sphere. This is a new reality, which happens as a result of modernization processes, where individualistic preferences encourage lifestyle politics to enter the stage and entertainment format governs political views. “Give us Bread and Games,” these are the human wants and needs prevailing in today’s *consuming* societies (Bauman, 2007).

As citizens’ political participation and cognition decreases, mass media or intermediaries between politicians and the electorate play a crucial role in maintaining political communication and constitute the backbone of democracy (Fog, 2004), whereas democracy almost never flourishes without the **independent media’s** (Dennis & Snyder, 1998: xv) active performance. Their

imperative **democratic functions** include:

- Informing citizens on affairs of public life and supporting them with objective information on common matters, thus, initiating critical and reasoned public debate.
- Educating them and contributing to free and autonomous public opinion formation.
- Serving as a public forum, which allows the plurality of ideas being exchanged.
- Monitoring and controlling the power holders and keeping them aside from spreading their influence incoherent with public interests (Norris, 2004; Trappel, et. al., 2011).

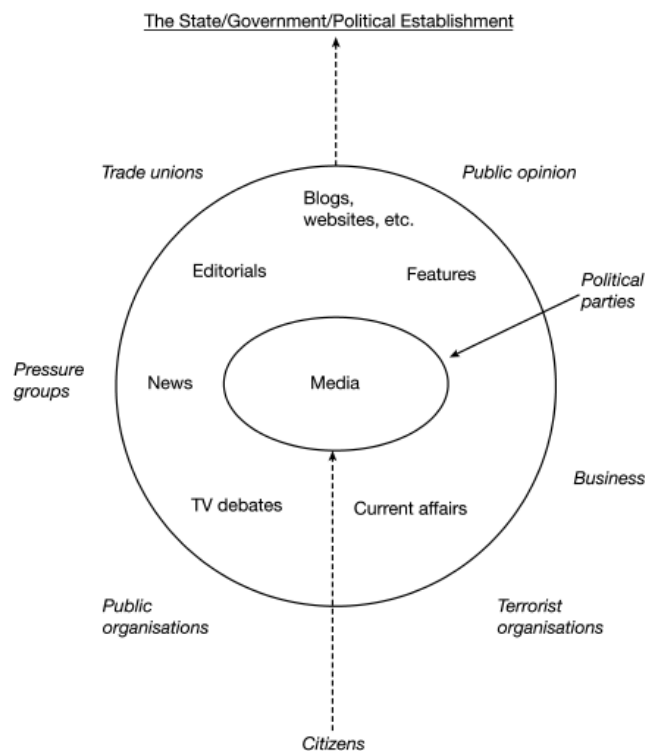


Figure 1. **Public sphere (McNair, 2011: 19)**

Hereby, news media take the helm of the public sphere in today's democracies. A rare citizen meets politicians or has an opportunity to have eye-to-eye interactions with them. Therefore, the majority of news on politics is being gathered from the news media, which shape our values and political views, whereas the latter we express in votes when legitimizing the democracy. Here, politics, media and the public are inseparable players in political communication, as media need politicians to present exclusive information, politicians use media as the most sufficient means of influencing masses, whereas, the power dynamics among media and politics affect constituencies' behavior and democracy at large (Tresch, 2009).

A key objective of political communication is to set public agenda, whereas, an effective political communication occurs, when it reaches legitimization (McNair, 2011: 4). But, the **media are agenda-setters** in their own capacity highlighting some issues and neglecting others, for

reasons, which are often beyond the capability of politicians to influence significantly.

Since liberal media are inseparable from commercialization, which ensures their democratic functioning, the power on public opinion they have and systematic bias upon political reality formation have contributed to the ways politicians engage their publics. The **selective sample of political news coverage**, such as, newsworthiness criteria, determines the choice of news, its setting and framing, which is usually pragmatically estimated (Lippmann, 1998). Thus, politicians put considerable energies to attract mass media's attention and meet their market-driven requirements. Therefore, politics is no longer an independent institution, but has turned into media-subordinate or mediatized politics, since "it has lost its autonomy and become dependent in its central functions on mass media and is continuously shaped by interactions with them" (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999: 248).

Mediatization of politics can be traced as politicians have been integrating mass media's methods and rules of political news coverage into their agenda – the priorities they determine, issues they consider worth addressing and their decision-making process (Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006). Nowadays, both politics and media are operating in a competitive environment prioritizing market-rules and user-oriented approaches originating from public fragmentation, secularization and popular culture dominating the public sphere.

As a consequence, the process of pursuing political goals has been much dependent on media's commercial standpoints, as well as, politicians' competition in gaining media's attention. As sensationalism, entertainment and negativity have been integrated into newsworthiness criteria, former formal political discourse transforms into personalized confessions, based on the format rather than the substance, whereas, scandalous behavior and the negativity turn into an imperative to stay visible (Wang, 2012). Hereby, the need for permanent campaigning and news management (Norris, 2004) decreases parties' importance leaving space for political personalization (Zeh & Hopmann, 2013). Getting in the news is therefore seen as a question of 'life and death', which replaces political logic with **mass media logic** (Van Aelst et. al., 2008) defined as:

the form of communication; the process through which media present and transmit information. Elements of this form include the various media and the formats used by these media: how material is organized, the style in which it is presented, the focus or emphasis on particular characteristics of behavior, and the grammar of media communication, whereas format becomes a framework or a perspective that is used to present as well as interpret phenomena (Altheide & Snow, 1979: 10).

Here modern mediatization becomes 'the principal engine' (Caglia, 2013) running political communication process and the one, which shapes and frames political discourse. As liberal media are struggling with market pressures, populism becomes a necessity raising public attention. Accordingly, political powers rather than maintaining political ideologies are floating around the center, aiming at gaining everybody's acknowledgement (Bimber, 1998) rather than targeting their

audiences. As a consequence, the high political dependence on media in the Western world has attained the level, when political and other social actors not only adapt to the media logic and the predominant news values, but internalize these and allow the media logic standards to become a built-in part of the governing processes manifesting in permanent campaigning, the professionalization of politics and incessant demand for “going public” (Strömbäck, 2008: 235-241).

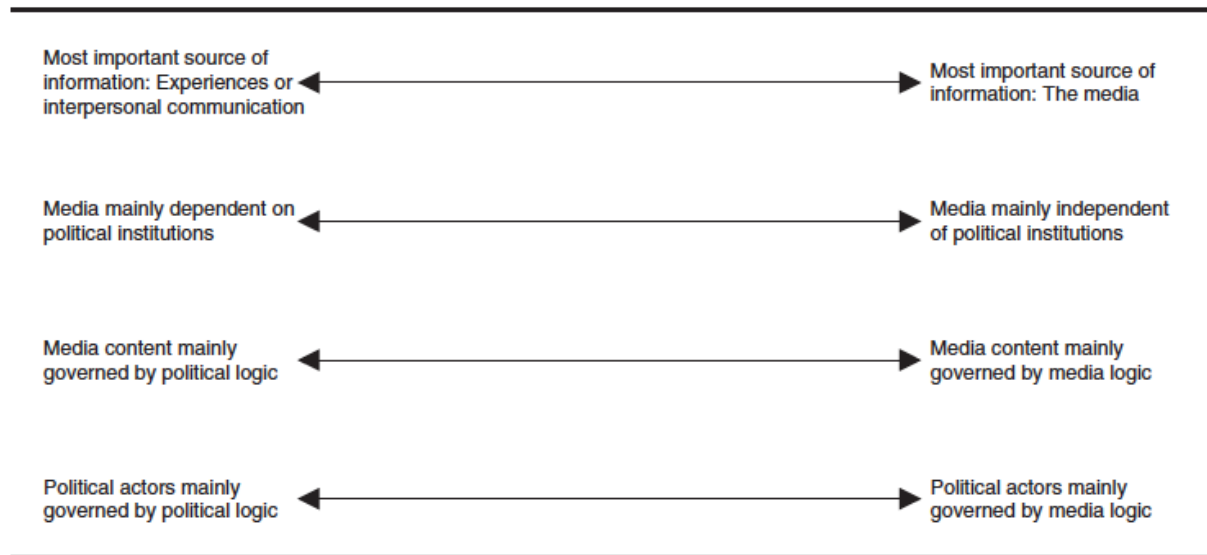


Figure 2. **A Four-Dimensional conceptualization of the Mediatization of Politics (ibid. p. 235)**

Accordingly, the dominance of **mass media’s logic** in political communication establishes the mediatized context, where media (M) embrace not only the communication between political institutions (P) and the citizens (C), but also how political forces interact with each other by reacting to mass media’s news. For instance, “opposition responds to bad news that attributes blame to the government in order to politicize government incompetence, whereas the government responds to good news that reflects positive developments in social problems politicizing policy success” (Thesen, 2013: 186). Here, the openness of politics is subordinate to this mediatic arena. Therefore, the forms and content of communication among the actors are modified accordingly (Mazzoleni, 2002: 23).

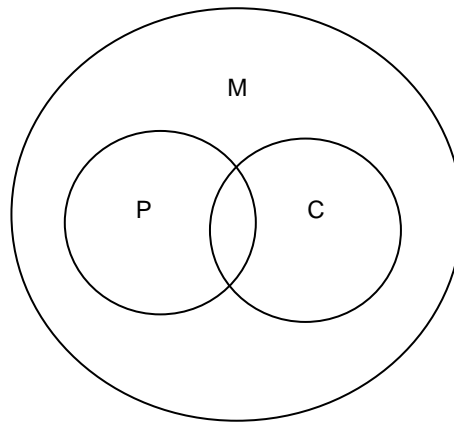


Figure 3. **Media-driven model of political communication (Mazzoleni, 2002: 23)**

Since there is more evidence surfacing that the commercial interests tend to overshadow media's social liabilities, there are more **discussions about media's logic interference with democratic consolidation** (Fog, 2004). As the media shift off state intervention, they get stuck with financial pressures. Here, the functions the media undertook, such as, surveillance, identification of relevant issues, and forum for public debate, pluralism, public information and education and secession from outer interests (Gurevitch & Blumler, 1990), have been replaced by gossips, the absence of serious debate, political propaganda and meaningless slogans, private lives of politicians, hunt for scandals and exaggerated fears, fostering public disintegration and cynicism (Fog, 2004). Therefore, the media make use of media logic "to take advantage of their own medium and its format and to be competitive in the ongoing struggle to capture people's lives" (Strömbäck, 2008: 233).

As a consequence, the media's entrenchment in political communication process has been changing the way constituencies perceive political life, the production of political news content, consequentially, political performance. And even though the media proliferation was supposed to extend the possibilities of supporting plurality and public opinion formation among dispersed populations, the emergence of consumerist culture (Bauman, 2007) brought by capitalism have established a homogenized mass consciousness consuming politics rather than participating in it.

1.1. Mediatization of Politics in Lithuania

Mediatization or the dominance of media logic in social and political spheres is present in each of the modern democracies, including the old and the young ones. When media penetrate the stage, where social bonds are created maintaining public life, we, as the members of different societies, are no longer independent from their activities and the influence they exert on our understanding of how we relate to one another and the state at large. Therefore, by becoming an integral part of social institutions the media "achieve a degree of self-determination and authority that forces other institutions, to greater or lesser degrees, to submit to their logic" (Hjarvard, 2008:

106).

Evidently, mediatization of Lithuanian politics has gained momentum, as now a politician is not the one who has control over the political situation, now he/she is dependent on public opinion and media. Thus, by taking decisions, he/she needs to have a will, perception and skill to explain them to the society and highlight their appropriateness and utility. This way, the media, become of special importance while communicating politics to the population, since now the mass media are politicians' direct channel to acquire authority and acknowledgement within Lithuanian society. Here, they have come to realize that politics is the result of communicative action, whereas, a silent politician stops to exist within the modern political arena (Bielinis, 2005). Today without communication on media, the presence of politics and politicians is just impossible.

1.1.1. TV as the Arena for Political Representations

During the 20th century TV has turned into a widely used means of information and political reality constructor and become the preeminent source of national and international news for the majority of populations (Wang, 2012). Due to the extent American and European TV broadcasters were able to establish the connection with the publics and entrench in mass media landscape, **“mediatization of politics has traditionally been required as the product of the television era”** (Schulz, 2004: 94).

Likewise the Western counterparts, Lithuanians represent a TV-saturated society. Though new media cause conventional media outlets to turn digital, television remains the most popular means of media in Lithuania. The audience survey shows that in 2013 TV viewing increased more rapidly than in the rest of the Baltic countries (TNS, 2013), whereas, more than half of Lithuanians (55%) considered television to be the best home entertainment and news provider, thus, switching on the TV to watch a movie (69%) or news (59%) (*Skaitmeninė TV*, 2012).

The viewers admit that the television plays an important role in forming their opinion. Withal, it is the most popular means of mass media among the elderly, who constitute the majority of Lithuanian electorate (Jackevičius, 2013). Therefore, political powers have paid close attention to Lithuanian TV broadcasters as one of the major media means for campaigning and communicating politics.

There have been aims at distinguishing the cause of TV entrenchment in public life. One the most eminent TV researchers in Lithuania - Žygintas Pečiulis (2006) - claims that the simplicity of presenting information plays a crucial role in television appeal. It reduces emotional stress and keeps the distance from the viewer and most importantly, allows approaching the heroes like common people (2006: 174).

As market powers enhanced the popularity of commercial broadcasters among the public, as

well as, media competition and social fragmentation, TV got rid off its earlier monologue type and intellectual style of setting and framing news and took the audience's needs into account. As a result, the 'new' television aims at collating social groups and regards the demand for equal possibilities (Pečiulis, 2005). Thus, TV is concerned not only with elites' interests, but also with the experiences of the common. It is more interactive now than it has ever been.

The turn towards commodification Lithuanian TV broadcasters took arose from the audience's segmentation and polarization. News became consumer-oriented and sensational, whereas the decline of the costly investigative journalism resulted from the overall dominating public disengagement from politics and public affairs (Balčytienė et. al., 2012). The changing conditions for news coverage modified the way politicians communicate politics to TV reporters and behave surrounded by cameras, thus emphasizing the imperative of implicating media logic in their discourse and conduct. **Therefore, television works as a convenient platform for the determination of mediaticization of politics in Lithuania.**

As the former formal TV significance, when television performed as an educator of Soviet societies and advocate of the ruling forces, the liberation of Lithuanian broadcasting system was supplemented with commercial informal attempts to relate political, civic and private spheres. Consequentially, contemporary political communication on television was complemented with the manifestations of **familiarity, simplicity** and revelation of personal life details. Following media logic and the new rules of political life initiated by the civic right to Know, Lithuanian politicians reject their privacy (Pečiulis, 2005: 30). Now they are obliged to reveal their income, family issues, sexual orientation and addictions. And those, who want the publicity, voluntarily disclose their struggles with alcohol, domestic violence or belonging to minorities.

Moreover, television prefers individual players giving rise to **personalization of politics**, when party leaders or vivid politicians take part in TV discussions or other shows, where their personal traits are prioritized to party ideology. Therefore, television promotes **lifestyle politics** by moving from the political arena to the private sphere (Gurevitch et al., 2009).

TV brings prodigy or 'showmanization' to the forth, when political transparency revolves about **image building and entertainment** (Pečiulis, 2005). **Political professionalization** has been the impetus for the competitive behavior to occur among Lithuanian politicians, where the parties employ catchall political campaigns and populism in order to appeal the broadest range of political opinions and the greatest number of voters. Here the **permanent campaigning and populism** become the imperatives to stay visible. Since Lithuanian political power highly depends on a transitory voters' opinion, a continuous communication with them, culture of image management and spin has come to dominate political leaders' discourse (Vinciūnienė, 2009). The Speaker of the Seimas – Loreta Grauzinienė can work as an exemplary case, when the promotion has transformed

an ordinary woman into an ‘Iron Lady’.

The evidence of Lithuanian politicians’ response to mediatization process can be found in their **scandalous behavior** (Balčytienė, 2009). The newsworthiness criteria, such as exclusivity are irreplaceable aspects of active politicians’ agenda. The ones run over an illegally parked car with a tank; the others discredit Lithuania by raising minority issues not only on the national, but also on European level. Probably, the greatest TV celebrity and the king of scandals within Lithuanian political arena is Petras Gražulis – the member of the faction “Order and Justice”, whose radical anti-gay position has been his savor since 2010. Therefore, commercialism dominating in Lithuanian media’s logic and the imperatives to stay visible at any cost further promote personalities over political substance going beyond the bounds of decency.

Though sensationalism on TV news has been highly criticized for its contribution to public political apathy, it has been proven that, over the course of evolution, the human brain has become adaptive to noting information, which triggers reflexes of surviving and basic needs and instincts. This sensitivity explains why both journalists and their audience accept bad news (Vettehen et al., 2008: 319). Consequentially, when political communication combines with commercial media values infusing sensationalism into editorial decisions, political news coverage has been centered on conflicts (Nevinskaitė, 2014). Here, the quantity of viewers/reader/listeners turns into a superior factor affecting political news coverage, both its content and character. Hereafter, TV news on politics revolving on horse race steers **negativity** against the governing powers, among politicians and establishes in the public sphere.

Hereby, politicians’ discourse on TV is usually based on negatives and accusations. The negativity in politicians’ pronouncements manifests on various levels by objective direct and neutral identifications of maladies (e.g. legal immunity, confusion between private and public interests) and subjective negativity (e.g. black bookkeeping, volatile coalition unity) (Marcinkevičienė, 2008).

Politicians’ communication skills are basically confined by interruptions, voice lifts and equivocations, whereas, rational and restrained political discussions are rarely visible on Lithuanian commercial televisions. Sometimes, the accusations turn physical, for instance, when discussants pour water over rivals. Here it turns less possible to comprehend political agenda or discern political messages from the personal repugnance. As a result, television encourages misunderstanding rather than consensus (Pečiulis, 2009), thus fostering ‘videomalaise’ or public cynicism towards politics.

Since the independence of Lithuania, where television specifically played a crucial role in public mobilization, TV broadcasters have been recognized as the supporters of democratic values. Consequentially, the mass media, apparently, receive higher public trust compared to Ministry, the

Seimas or the political parties (*Vilmorus*, 2014). Therefore, the political reality the mass media portray and TV particularly, turns easily saturated among the Lithuanians.

Compared to other post-Soviet countries, Lithuanian media means enjoy one of the highest independence from state intervention. Therefore, the existing conditions allow **TV getting actively involved in agenda setting**. Aleknonis' (2010) study revealed that Lithuanian media enjoys the greatest impact on state's agenda-setting process among Central Eastern European countries (*ibid.* p. 17). The influence television exerts may interfere legislation process, e.g. the annunciation of Midsummer Day as a day-off, or destroy trust in Lithuanian legal system, the pedophilia scandal as an instance. Thus, different political and public events and issues set and framed by television are placed at the center of public attention, and the more TV prioritizes certain issues, the less independent the politicians are in setting and implementing their own political agenda. Accordingly, the mediatized reality portrayed takes the dominating role in communicating politics, leading political actors to follow mass media logic not only when campaigning, but also when governing and policy making (Strömbäck, 2008: 239).

Thus, when the whole society becomes political consumers, social and ideological engagements lose their importance and are replaced with political competition, which efficiency is based on communication management. The instances in Lithuania, when political marketing has fused political cleavages, can be found in the expansion of left-right spectrum (Augustinaitis, 1999). This case represents how Lithuanian political parties turn populist while adapting to market pressures in the search for the fragmented constituencies' support. Hereby, a politician becomes a policy entrepreneur, following information demands, balancing among media means and consumerist electorate.

Logics of the News Media / Causes of Mediatization	Adjustments of Politics / Effects of Mediatization
1. News values such as personalisation and conflict shape news selection and prioritisation	Media constructed reality seeps incrementally into political actors' perception of the process and influences their communication/behaviour for the purpose of publicity gain
2. Agenda-setting and building assign relevance and meaning to issues/problems	Political actors shift attention and resources to the most publicised topics and frame them in a similar way
3. Production process requires predictable, cost-efficient and continuous news supply	Political actors employ more public relations techniques (event-staging, pre-packaging, sound-bites) and adjust decision-making to promote 'good' and de-emphasise 'bad' news
4. Partisanship and investigative journalism use critique of political actors to sharpen their profile and gain exclusivity	Political actors attempt to reduce vulnerability through stricter confidentiality and gate-keeping regimes as well as relationship-building with sympathetic media organisations (politicians as journalists, proprietors/editors as politicians)
5. Aggregate effect of 1-4 & feed-back loop	Political actors professionalise and upgrade public communication services, thus contributing to arms-race dynamics

Table 1. Causes and Effects of the Mediatization of Politics (Meyer, 2008)

Hence, the emergence of liberal conditions in Lithuanian media landscape gave rise to the dominance of television among the public and built horizontal relationships between the television broadcasters and audience. Here, the **public preferences for familiarity** with the 'heroes' on TV transformed the earlier formal political communication into soft, entertaining and sensational political confessions. The new logic for communicating politics on the most influential and popular media means initiated the **professionalization** to enter the political arena, where weak party ideologies lost their sense succumbing to **personalized** and lifestyle politics. Withal, the political personalities on the TV show low level of communication skill, where **negativity**, accusations step to the fore of any discussions. The heroes turn into clowns giving up to **populism**, while media logic guide political **agenda**. **Political discourse** resembles of chatting, while the public struggles to perceive the political reality portrayed by the television. Wherefore, commercial televisions are assumed to be the primary mediatizers of Lithuanian politics, where ethical, political rhetoric and solid image building seem to be outdated.

2. NEGATIVITY AS CULTURE-SPECIFIC ATTRIBUTE OF LITHUANIAN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Mediatization hit Lithuanian politics with the rise of democracy, when media and political systems were establishing their democratic norms and roles of their own profession. And even though media logic and market pressures make media and political relationship similar, especially in European Union context, yet, there are certain cultural factors, which account for the divergence. Accordingly, when democratization process began, the establishment of new democratic culture within Lithuanian political and media systems was not that quick as had been anticipated. The former Soviet societies, unfortunately, were not tabula rasa, having cultural traits embedded by pre-communist and communist eras (Gross, 2004). As a result, the former interrelation between media and politics combined with the new democratic capitalist environment these social systems found themselves in 1990s created political communication culture resembling both Soviet experience and adjustment to liberal conditions.

2.1. Historical Perspective: Democratic Transformations of Political and Media Systems

In fact, the third wave of democratization in 1990s was not the first attempt to grant the people with governing power in Lithuania. The period between 1920 and 1926 is considered to represent the reign of classical democracy, which, unfortunately, **was impotent to foster democratic traditions in media and political sphere.**

Neither political parties were able to cultivate clear ideological markers nor journalists a strong professionalism. Here **historical absence of value divisions** on the left-right scale in the party system **and partisanship traditions in media**, which would discuss, explain and defend those leanings (Balčytienė, 2012), contributed to the tension in Lithuanian political and media systems in 1990s, which diffused negativity to the whole public sphere.

With the fall of the Communist regime Lithuania faced difficulties transforming the political system, which required liberal democratic values and capitalist market economy to enter. While radical changes dominated the state, the first Lithuanian political parties established having no clear social and structural outlines. Separate **political leaders** initiated their establishment, whereas, political polarization they expressed were borrowed from the West (Butkevičienė et. al., 2009). Therefore, the main political divergences have been revolving around ex-communist-anticommunist divide (Ramonaitė, 2007), causing **conflicts** among the former Communist figures aiming to pursue their career in democratic Lithuania and the proponents of democratic *Sajūdis* movement.

Thus, in the rise of democracy there was not any clue that the newly formed government

was ready for the changes or had a pre-prepared plan for the consolidation of the new regime. Accordingly, **opposition among the parties** so far has remained the generally used communicative strategy to attract constituencies.

At the time, when Lithuanian political system was acquiring multi-party characteristics, the parties turned more competitive fostering **negativity towards rivals**, rather than maintaining the sustainability of political system (Bielinis, 2005). Accordingly, it has been gradually evolving into **extreme pluralism**, which is characterized by:

- The existence of anti-establishment parties, which aim at changing the whole political system,
- Mutual opposition, when the parties of different ideologies (Right Wing, Liberals and Left Wing) oppose the party in power (coalition).
- Center orientation, which initiates centrifugal rebounds, when radical political powers gain public sentiments.
- The maximal distribution of opinions, which results in the lack of consensus and low systemic legitimacy.
- Ideological competition among parties missing pragmatic reciprocal competition.
- Irresponsible opposition, when the rivals to ruling parties take unconstructive path.
- Non-binding policy, which undertakes the increase of populism, irresponsible promises, and lacks long-term political vision (*Pilietinės visuomenės institutas*, 2004: 7).

With respect to media, the introduction of democracy in Lithuania opened possibilities to end the long-term censorship, which had been regulated by various controversial laws challenging the free exchange of information and the right to Know. After the breakdown of Communist rule, mass media faced privatization, new media outlets occurred, whereas the journalists emerged as practitioners of independent reporting (Balčytienė, 2012).

The **deregulation of media market** in 1996 and **commercialism** within its activity seemed to offer the circumstances for cultivating free, responsible and objective journalism. But, with the growing media competition, as well as, low self-regulation and accountability more evidences signal about the increasing subservience to “everyone’s” low tastes, demoralization and the cult of money within Lithuanian media performance (Lauk, 2008; Balčytienė, 2008). In this respect, market demands have caused competition, which increased aggressiveness among media market players and drew their **focus on political conflict**.

However, the **media’s authority as counter-politics** among Lithuanians had been built during Soviet times, when journalists manipulating the censorship, received public acknowledgement as the fighters for the truth, whereas, the politicians – brainwashing egoists (Linkevičiūtė–Rimavičienė, 2009). Accordingly, media’s transition to Liberal system did not encourage them to banish the former attitudes to the government, thus further reinforcing public frustration and mistrust with the “wicked” politicians.

Withal, the attention to issues, which would bring tangible financial benefits – conflicts,

sensations and scandals – built clientele relationships, so much characteristic to the Soviet financial and political systems (Kaminskas & Marcinkevičienė, 2009: 118) as pragmatically set agreements determined media outlets' solidarity towards one political force or the other.

Regarding the outcome of both politics and media **democratic transformations**, the final result of their interrelation both symbiotic and antagonistic is manifested by the public cynicism and alienation (Linkevičiūtė-Rimavičienė, 2009). The negativity in news coverage has contributed to the absence of civic society in Lithuania (Laurėnas, 2003). In this manner, the media take responsibility for failing to provide the people with circumstances of learning political cognition and the societal democratization, which are of a high importance to a well running political system (Krupavičius & Šarkutė, 2004).

What concerns **the indicator of mediatization of politics brought by sensationalism and user-oriented media approaches – negativity in news coverage and political campaigning** (Zeh & Hopmann, 2013) – it seems that the lack of democratic tradition in democratization of Lithuanian political and media systems and the transfer of contra-political attitudes to democratic environment were the determinants for negativity to flourish in the public sphere. Therefore, it can be concluded that with the rise of democracy the interaction between Lithuanian political and media systems already demonstrated the signs of mediatization of politics resulting in obscure political ideologies, populism and political competition, the tension in political communication process and the uncertainty, hatred and passivity in the public sphere.

2.2. Explaining Negativity via Political Communication Culture

Lithuanian political culture is regarded as the result of the relationship between subjective civic attitudes, prevailing value codes and political system. Since Lithuanian conflict based **political culture is essentially subordinate to communication among its political actors, the relationship between politics and the media plays as a central factor** in setting the style, quality and manner of political discourse lingering among the public. Here, when mass media dominate the political communication process focusing on conflicts, they are expected to have contributed to the conflictual culture Lithuanian political communication process has cultivated.

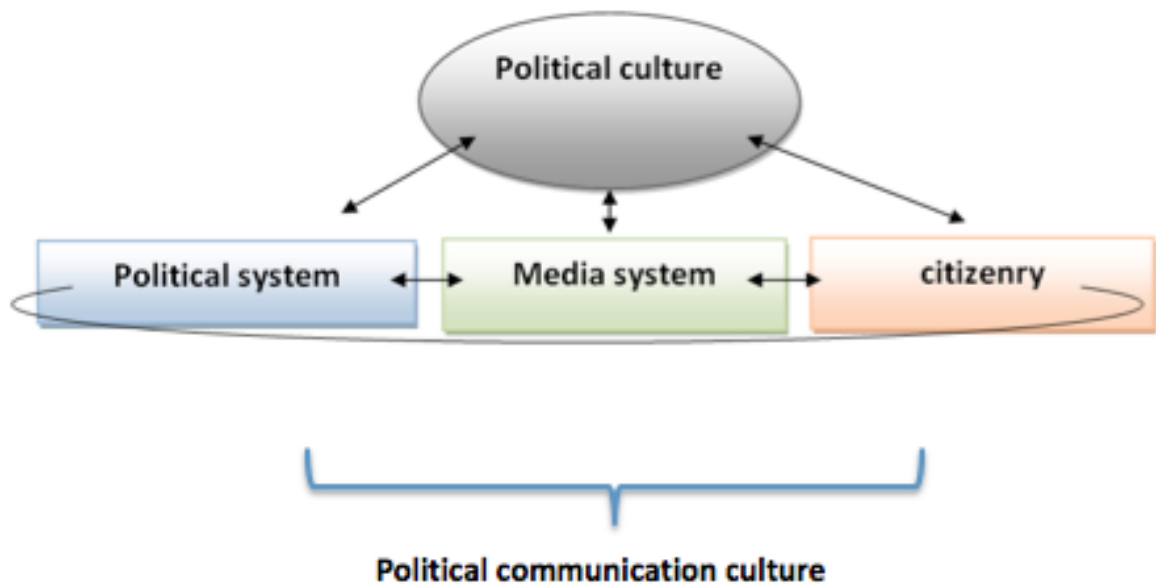


Figure 4. **The interrelation between political culture and political communication**

According to Barbara Pfetsch (2004), political communication culture develops through the lasting exchange relationship between political spokespersons and journalists. Their proximity or distance results from the tension between these groups, which is determined by norms and roles of one’s own professional action – self-image – whereas, either media or party logic gears the output of their interaction (ibid., p. 352).

		<i>Self-Image (communication roles and norms)</i>	
		Great distance between political spokespersons and journalists	Small distance between political spokespersons and journalists
<i>Communication Output (orientation toward political public relations)</i>	Dominance of media logic (media attention as primary goal)	Media-oriented political communication culture	Public relations-oriented political communication culture
	Dominance of political logic (political rule as primary goal)	Strategic political communication culture	(Party) political communication culture

Figure 5. **Types of political communication culture (ibid., 353)**

“Despite the liberation of media market in Lithuania, which creates conditions for liberal values and journalistic professionalism to manifest in political news coverage, journalists and political spokespersons hold the proximity while communicating politics to the public,” claim *Transparency International*. It can be explained by the low accountability among Lithuanian media

means and the inefficient self-regulatory system, which manifests in concealment of ownership, absence of information policy and managerial ethics. This is ironic, since the media require transparency from state institutions, business structures and public organizations, while the information about their activity is kept secret (*TILS*, 2009).

Since Lithuanian media and political systems lack transparency, there are many cases when they develop a symbiotic relationship allowing political parallelism to govern their interaction (Jastramskis, 2011). It strengthens elite-to-elite communications, media's benevolence to certain political powers, block of public debate or influence on policy decisions by leaking information (Örnebring, 2011). For instance, the "voluntary" **proximity of media and politics** was evidenced in the initial phase of political system transformation. Rimvydas Valatka holding the position of vice-editor of one of the most popular daily in Lithuania, participated in the Parliament foundation during the period of 1990-1992 and in the establishment of the Liberal party (Matonytė, 2008: 124).

With respect to the former considerations (see Section 1.1.), the beginning of Lithuanian independence promoted political elites to compete for public support. But, their political goals, unfortunately, did not revolve about the consolidation of democracy in Lithuania, but rather about their own financial and power interests causing public frustration and hatred. Here, the public's trust in media, but not in the government (*Vilmorus*, 2014), provides conditions for the media to dominate political communication. Accordingly, they have turned into a convenient instrument for gaining political goals and creating vertical structures of communication within politics and media (Kaminskas & Marcinkevičienė, 2009). Thus, public relations specialists are encouraged to find ways of getting closer to journalists and seeking active involvement in news management.

Here media's logic becomes an integral part of politicians' agenda. Political elites are highly interested to appear on media means rather than prepare political programs, whereas media-saturated behavior further disturbs the party logic to unroll while communicating politics. Hereby, the secretly close relationship between Lithuanian media and politicians and the accelerated mediatization of politics show that Lithuanian political communication culture is public relations oriented (see Figure 5).

Respectively, many researches assigned the closeness of the media and political systems in Lithuania to Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralist model, defined by Hallin and Mancini (2004b). It manifests in low journalistic professionalism, late development of the press and high political parallelism and state intervention (Spichal, 1996; Jakubowicz, 2008).

With regards to the public, which is a common unit of reference in political communication system, the mode of relationship and proximity between the media and politics affect the political discourse in the society. In this respect, the **structural conditions, which determine, how media organizations position themselves in the public sphere, the political influence on them and**

norms of journalistic professional orientation affect negative political news coverage, political campaigning and public attitudes accordingly (Pfetsch, 2004: 356). Here, referring to mediatization of Lithuanian politics, Soviet negative experience combined with structural transformations media and politics underwent in the rise of democracy have cultivated Lithuanian political communication culture leaning towards conflicts and impeding democratic consolidation.

3. SOCIAL MEDIA AS THE ALTERNATIVE CHANNEL TO RESTORE LITHUANIAN POLITICIANS' RELATIONS WITH PUBLICS

But today's Lithuanian media landscape is extremely colorful and tends to change due to the entrenching forces of globalization and media digitalization, where social media platforms have been establishing themselves as one of the main places holding mediated communication and socialization in Lithuania. Therefore, mainstream media have been challenged by the pervasiveness of social networking sites among Lithuanian public, which not only distract the audience's attention to political reality constructed by the mass media, but also allow the politicians to find direct ways of communicating politics to the public.

The World Wide Web has turned into an indispensable part of people's lives in Lithuania. Each year the Internet attracts more users to enjoy the immense capacities for interactive communication and browsing for information. Though Lithuanian economic and technological development was long impeded by the Soviet regime, with the rise of independence the Internet entered Lithuanian information market and over time developed the maximum speed in the world.

Since 2008, the Internet audience increased from 53,1% to 72% of Lithuanians (*TNS*, 2013). As earlier the age and residence were those demographic indexes affecting Internet usage, recent studies show that this is not the case anymore. In 2013, 40-59 years-old adults formed the fastest growing Internet audience, whereas, the age difference among Internet users is decreasing (*TNS* 2014).

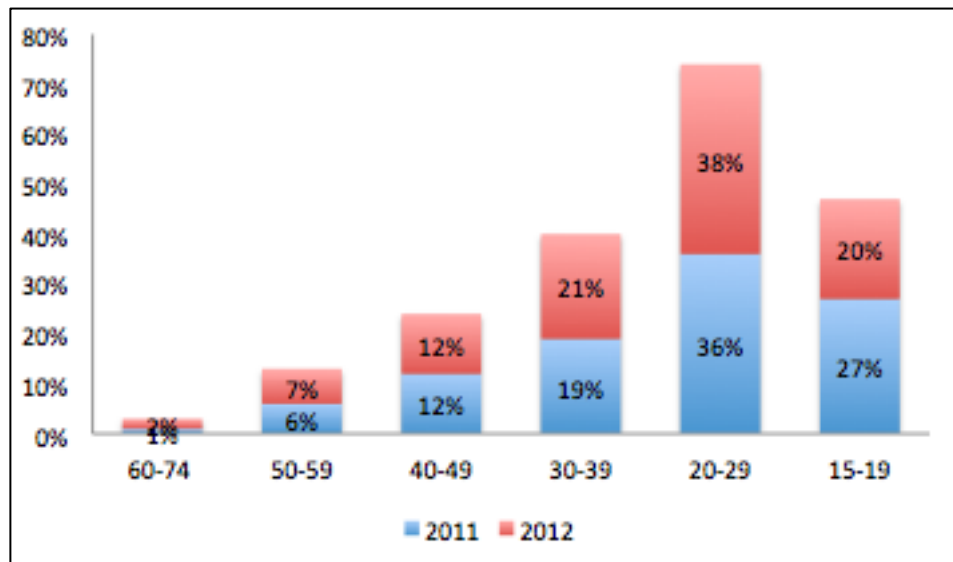


Figure 6. Audience's on social networking websites structure by age (TNS, 2012)

Likewise, the people living in towns and rural areas did not show a significant difference on the Internet usage.

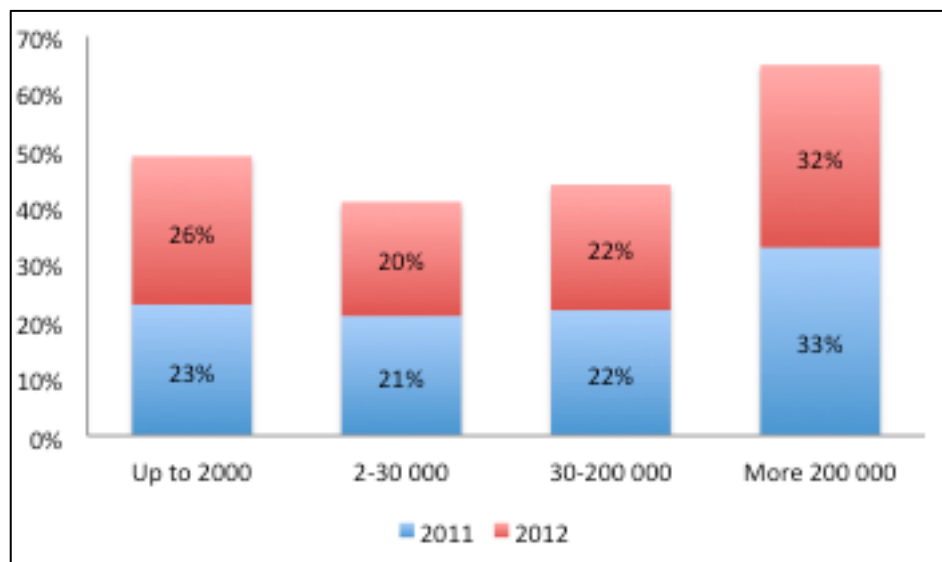


Figure 7. Audience's on social networking websites structure by place of residence (ibid., 2012).

The latest tendencies display the convergence of old and new media, as more readers prefer online versions of media means (TNS, 2012). As the digitalization era has entrenched Lithuanian media landscape, more people despite age and residence surrender to technological penetration, growing volumes of audiovisual content and e-commerce.

Browsing for information remains a common demand among Lithuanians. While using search engines, reading Internet portals or comments, they receive information in news format (ibid., 2012).

Here, with the rise of social media "the Web 2.0 is now globally turning into a vast interactive platform, where people discuss, comment or share pieces of information and are

creating, to a certain degree a new Agora" (*TNS Global*). There are many different technologies that social media encompass, e.g., blogs, forums, microblogging, podcasts, image-sharing sites, which main goal is to encourage communication. But social networking websites remain the most popular social media in the world and Lithuania, as well.

They are defined as closed Internet communities,

Which allow individual self-presentation, social networking and setting and maintaining social relationships. Social networking websites provide with web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd & Ellison, 2007: 211).

There are many reasons, why social networking websites become widely used media, but among the most important grounds of their popularity is the need for free expression and exchange of ideas, views and experiences, which have been required as the prerequisites for e-democracy. With respect to their permeable nature of transferring public experiences and issues to the fore of public discussions, decision makers have been paying their attention to spontaneous pronouncements on political reality, policies or programs conveyed on social media.

In fact, the growth of the Internet and specifically Web 2.0 diffusion, prompted many speculations about their capacities to open a new era of electronic governance. With their interactive nature, they might connect constituencies with government and steer information and service exchange among them (Thomas & Streib, 2005). Here, assumingly, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) may work as the fosterers of e-democracy, in which all the citizens, who have access to the Internet, are eligible to equally participate in political deliberation. Accordingly, the following outcomes are expected:

- Better government decisions.
- Increased citizen trust in government.
- Increased government accountability and transparency.
- Ability to accommodate the public will in the information age.
- New ways of meeting public challenges (Jafarkarimi et al., 2014: 645).

With respect to societal secularization and growing individualization, new media technologies also contribute to the increasing degree of self-selection and self-determination in the search for news (Schulz, 2004: 94). Giving the possibility not only to consume, but also to produce news, they leave gatekeeping and filtering functions characteristic to mass media outside the platform.

The new media technologies enabling their users to retrieve messages corresponding to their individual interests and needs seem to intensify audience's fragmentation and individualization, but at the same time, they bring opportunities to network like-minded people and build virtual

communities. Therefore, apart from providing direct communication channels, they allow politicians to address their target constituencies and increase their social networking with potential voters.

Moreover, it is assumed that ICT provides with solutions for a variety of governmental problems: increased productivity, decentralization, reduced advertising costs, increased revenues of investment (ROI) and integrated services, just to name a few (Helbig, et. al., 2009).

Withal, virtual social networking sites level the opportunities of competing political powers to address vast audiences (Šuminas, 2009). The minimal investments on social ads ensure equal possibilities to each of politicians to disseminate political views.

Here, since mass media's dominance in the public sphere seems to have cut the bond between Lithuanian citizenry and politicians in political communication process, social media may revive conversational patterns among them. As interactivity enhances political communication both at a distance and in local communities, politicians rather than having to search for public concerns covered by mass media can gather direct information on social issues and present the answers to social sore subjects. Accordingly, mass media's dissemination of information holding the power of shaping and framing news and setting the public agenda, has been accompanied by public communication on social media (Brants & Voltmer, 2011), where users, including politicians, become active news producers and participants in political life.

3.1. Interconnectedness and Similarities Manifested by Social and Core News Media

Though news media and TV, specifically, maintain their firm impact on political reality, the growing popularity of social networking sites among Lithuanians may provide with greater volumes of different attitudes and angles towards various political and social issues than the homogeneous mass media's content. Thus, by sharing different approaches and information, conventional mass communication and new communication means may put mutagenic impact on politics and public sphere.

The interconnectedness among the media is evident, as news media have progressively drawn their attention to politicians' pronouncements on social networking sites. In accordance to this phenomenon, Roy Morejon the President of *Digital Marketing Agency* provides with empirical evidence that social media have become one of the top news sources in the U.S (2012). According to his study, social media account for over a quarter of all sources used by mass media. *Facebook* leads the way with almost 60% of all news traffic, whereas 57% of Americans who get news on a digital device, login to *Facebook* or *Twitter* to get the news very often.

Moreover, it has been a general trend for news media's outlets to create their own *Facebook* Pages in order to promote their products on the platform. Therefore, on the one hand, social media abolish news media's gatekeeping and agenda-setting roles in political communication, when politicians independently convey messages and prioritize their own agendas. But, on the other hand, news media become communicators on social networking sites, thus further promoting their agenda. Hereby, they both work as complementary intermediaries for transmitting political information (Vaccari et al., 2013).

Though mass media's logic has caused much attention (Altheide & Snow, 1979; Schulz, 2004; Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999, Thesen, 2013), where high effort was put to define its impact on political communication process, only recently social media's participation in politics has been recognized. Following the classic example of the successful campaigning on social networking sites exerted by President Obama social media's influence on civic participation, public mobilization and necessity in today's political communicative practices were ascertained. Therefore, the initial concerns relating the rise of social networking sites within the political arena to the possible end of mediatization of politics do not find support, as social media regardless of their neutral nature are capable of shaping private, corporate and state forces (van Dijck & Poell, 2013).

According to van Dijck and Poell (2013), social media are able to transport their views outside the platforms. Referring to the political professionalization caused by mediatization of politics, when political powers adopt business strategies (PR, political advertising and marketing), concerns have recently occurred that political communication on social media may steer power abuse and deception, which may be harmful to democratic functioning.

In the first glance, the political communication on social networks reflects more an egalitarian and democratic ethos: all participants are on an equal footing with each other, allocated equal time, space and opportunities to speak. However, the advertising possibilities provided by social media might tend to twist around manipulation, whereas, the democratic goals may be overwhelmed by personal interests.

Accordingly, as social media allow interactive and instantaneous communication between voters and officials, there is a chance of unprincipled politicians to find an easier way to manipulate public opinion and build public consensus among the people who share political illiteracy and usually constitute the majority of populations. Hereby, populist attitudes and opinions on social networking sites may further promote the declining party identification and political elites' interests (Brants & Voltmer, 2011).

Apart from the possible empowerment of political manipulations, social media can serve as **a channel for the dissemination of radical approaches fostering and promoting discrimination, bigotry and hatred** (Allen, 2014). The unregulated nature of social media platforms allowing a

user-generated content and free speech, as well as, networking like-minded communities, can transfer verbal virtual insults to offline practices. Therefore, the freedom of speech found on social networking sites not necessarily promotes democratic values and tolerance to minorities, which is an important aspect e-democracy proponents tend to “overlook”.

Due to the general commercialization of culture, social networking sites blend with the “established” news media logic of selling audience’s attention to demographically associated customers (van Dijck & Poell, 2013: 5). In this respect, it might be assumed that, despite its neutral nature, social media share similarities with the logic of core news media.

For instance, both means of media are concerned with commercial pressures, thus focusing on “celebrities”, which may boost their popularity and bring income. They are both interested in users’ demographic indexes, which allow targeting and advertising. But, social media provide a greater instantaneity, allowing a speedy content production and interaction, connecting people and receiving a datafied feedback, reflected in their weekly page updates (ibid., 2013) – everything what politicians may need in order to pursue their interaction with constituencies.

Therefore, mediatization of politics on social networking sites, similarly as on mass media, has a direct relationship with the efficacy of political communication on them. For example, politicians who adapt to mass media’s modus operandi, e.g., news format, receive the required publicity, whereas, those who do not – remain on the margins of mass media’s attention. Likewise, an effective communication via social networking sites depends on politicians’ ability to understand their logic and exploit the communicative tools social media platforms provide. Therefore, mediatization of politics on social media manifests, when politicians integrate social media rules into their agendas and attempt to get the most out of their usage, while this adaptability brings changes to individual politicians and politics at large.

3.2. Social Media’s Successful Exploitation in Political Campaigning: Foreign Experience

Though the changes are taking over our lives brought by media technological diffusion, which strengthens fluidity of connections and a sense of temporariness, impeding the consolidation of democracy in Lithuania (Balčytienė et al., 2012), yet, foreign political experience has shown social media’s contribution to the consolidation of relations between political powers and their publics.

Since the United States of America have played as the forth runners in steering global trends within political campaigning, so the 2008 U. S. presidential campaign stands out as the pioneer of social media usage for gaining political goals. Here, *Facebook* had been highly exploited in the presidential debate, where the users could actively participate before, during and after the debate

and give their feedback, which was of special importance in anticipating potential crises and/or preparing specific communication strategies (Rutledge, 2010).

Empirical research done on President Obama's victory on *Facebook* showed that the social networking site served as a diffuse cultural medium, which caused more than 100 million users' attention, including major political parties, candidates and national media outlets (Carlisle & Patton, 2013). Above all, the research provided with proof that it managed to **mobilize** the Americans in the presidential election, which strengthens the necessity of social media exploitation in communicating politics in immature democratic countries.

The research on political campaigning on *Twitter* during Italian parliament elections in 2013 revealed another positive social media's outcome in **public engagement** with politics (Vaccari et al., 2013). The authors proved that political information and discussions provided online circulated in the offline debates; whereas *Twitter* played as an engine for public **deliberation on politics** and a catalyzer of **civic participation**, which appeared to be even more powerful than mass media.

But most importantly, the research has neglected the outcome of the earlier studies (Baumgartner & Morris, 2010) about social media's inefficiency in fostering political debates among the users. Therefore, Vacarri's et al. research demonstrates (2013) the evidence that, in a short time, the penetration of social media has taken pace within societies and now they are capable of serving a **public forum**, when the youth, who is globally considered losing any interest in politics (Soon & Soh, 2014), is encouraged to participate in the discussions about politics.

Another study on social media's influence on American young adults' political participation adds up that, with respect to cognitive and behavioral aspects, the possibility to express one's political views and opinions online brings citizens and young adults into politics (Yamamoto et al., 2013). But, the authors signal that only those, who express political views online by commenting and content sharing, tend to participate in politics offline. These findings explain that the engagement with political information through expressive, communicative activities online fosters political cognition (ibid., p. 3). Thus, social media may work as an **educator**, when these frequent online expressions of political opinions help the users extract political information and appropriately use it in political discussions, as well as, draw closer attention to information sources.

Moreover, social media have gained acknowledgement among Italian minorities, the disadvantaged one's, who appear on the margins of political concern and usually are discouraged to participate in public deliberation on affairs, thus move to the back of the public agenda. It has been proven that social networking sites promote the **plurality** of views (Vaccari et al., 2013) and social issues, attracting a very peculiar subset of citizens, who may differ from the population in demographic characteristics. Therefore, in regards to social media's affordance of providing an arena to express different ideas, supports the assumptions that political participation online may

improve minorities' political self-expression and move their issues to the fore of public and political agendas, thus promoting **equality**.

So, when social media gain prominence among global societies and share qualities necessary to the functioning of representative democracy, such as, breadth, intensity and equality of citizens' participation, they **take over the social liabilities, which the prevailing mass media logic in political communication seem to have given away**. Hereby serving as public arenas and mobilizing agents they may encourage the secularized and politically alienated Lithuanian public to rediscover the contact with the government and consolidate democracy.

3.3. Lithuanian Political Communication on Social Networking Sites

Meanwhile, the researches on Lithuanian political communication on social media remain scarce. Though the entrenchment of social networking sites in Lithuania represents high indexes (TNS, 2012), unfortunately, social media as a political communication channel have not gained recognition within Lithuanian scientific arena yet.

Only five years ago a researcher Andrius Šuminas' (2009) study on the candidates' to Lithuanian President's office communication on social networking sites provided with important data about Lithuanian political communication aspects on the media. According to him, politicians regarded social media to be a channel for unconstrained political discussions, as well as, sharing views and propositions. However, their interest in exploiting both international and national social media, for campaigning was rather low.

	Facebook	MySpace	One.lt	Frype.lt
Algirdas Butkevičius	+	-	-	-
Loreta Graužinienė	-	-	-	-
Dalia Grybauskaitė	+	-	-	-
Česlovas Ježerskas	+	-	-	-
Kazimira Prunskienė	-	-	-	-
Valentinas Mazuronis	-	-	-	-
Valdemar Tomaševski	-	-	-	-

Table 2. **Candidates' to Lithuanian President's office communication on social networking sites (ibid., 2009: 32)**

The politicians did not show significant activeness in campaigning on them. Only three out of seven candidates communicated on social media, but their activity showed incoherence, vice versa to their campaigning on TV. Not to mention their ignorance of permanent campaigning possibilities on social media, as their communication on them stopped right after the presidential election ended (ibid., 2009).

Thus, in 2009 Lithuanian political mediatization on social networking websites was not detected. In other words, five years ago social media did not occupy an important place in the

politicians' agenda. They did not exploit the personalization provided by social media, which allows politicians' engagement with target audiences, building personal relationships with constituencies and expressing their own authenticity.

However, over time social media show significant interest among Lithuanians. Once Lithuanian technological development from the Western leaders was estimated to lag two years, globalization processes have decreased the gap, especially in social networking websites usage. Now Lithuanians are going hand in hand with the developed countries (Balčiūnienė, 2013).

Besides, globalization had its effect on national social networking sites. Like five years ago www.frype.lt and www.one.lt were highly popular among Lithuanian Internet users, now they have totally surrendered to international social media and *Facebook* especially (ibid., 2013).

Facebook the leader of social networking sites has gathered the audience of 1,2 million, which constitutes a third of the whole Lithuanian population. More than half of *Facebook* users actively follow news about their friends, elites or institutions. Despite that they show their activeness, by pressing "like" button, commenting, sharing videos and creating their content. Only 7% of *Facebook* users claim to be passive (ibid., 2013).

With respect to Lithuanian politicians' campaigning on social networking sites, unfortunately, until very recently various media articles have been mocking their incapability of exploiting social media platforms for communicating politics. For example, A. Šuminas criticizes their late campaigning on social networking sites, while their performance is usually way too straightforward and unprofessional. Likewise, the manager of *Socialusis marketingas* – Arijus Žakas – is surprised by the relatively delayed politicians' attention to social media platforms attracting vast audiences. In accordance, Lina Auškalnienė, the lecturer at Communication department of Vytautas Magnus University, believes that Lithuanian politicians fail to define their audiences' composition and their needs on social media platforms. Their generated content is usually irrelevant, lacking interactivity and personalization (Jakubonytė, 2012), which are, in fact, the most important elements of online political campaigning. Withal, the politicians' performance on social media showed the absence of campaigning objectives, research and targeting as well as expected outcome.

Having in mind that social media use for Lithuanian political campaigning started not earlier than 2009 Presidential elections it might be assumed that in five years period politicians' competence and adoption of social media modus operandi has improved. Therefore, it is important to detect if mediatization of politics on *Facebook* has taken pace within a five-year period? In order to find this, it is necessary to define, what specifically social media logic is and what requirements it poses for effective political campaigning?

4. THE WAYS IN WHICH MEDIATIZATION OF LITHUANIAN POLITICS ON *FACEBOOK* CAN BE TRACED

Web 2.0 interactive nature attracts political parties and candidates to enter virtual spaces, opening them opportunities to communicate and collaborate with online communities, receive feedback and perform as creators of political content. Hence, political communication on social networking sites not only increases the reach of dispersed communities, but also enables to start a dialogue with potential voters in a convenient manner most appropriate to the contemporary society.

Here, traditional media-driven model of political communication (see Chapter 2), surrenders to user-powered model (see Figure 8), when classical forms of communicating politics via mass media loose their affect as citizens (C) move away to alternative interaction spaces. Here, they either perform as news producers or select news according to their individual preferences, thus initiating both politicians (P) and mass media (M) to find ways of gaining public attention (Mazzoleni, 2002).

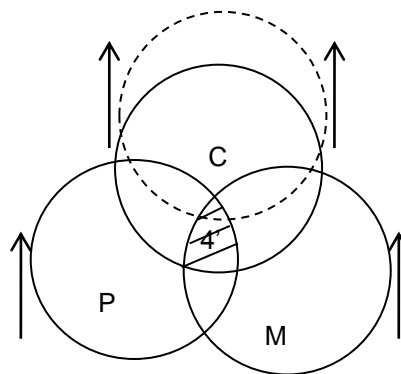


Figure 8. **User-powered model of political communication (ibid., 2002)**

However, the new possibilities for communicating politics on social networking sites cannot avoid terms and conditions, in other words, social media logic implicated in their architecture. Similarly to traditional media, social media are profit-oriented institutions. There is no place left for democratic ethos on social media anymore (Bucher, 2012), as they turn into a huge marketplace selling news, things, views and other abyssal social issues. The neutrality of their platforms, which earlier provided the users with opportunities to gain attention among their networked communities, have gradually surrendered to the market-principled conditions encoded within the sequences of algorithms, where one receives more attention than the other, whereas, publicity is constantly estimated by pragmatic considerations.

Unfortunately, the mystic around the media's modus operandi has followed along the way, probably due to the scarcity of scientific researches defining the 'hidden' rules of social networking

sites performance, hereby, leaving the nature and elements of social media logic underestimated.

Nevertheless, there have been aims at distinguishing the elements of social media logic expressed by van Dijck and Poell’s analytic prism (2013), which may be helpful in understanding the nature of communication and information processes in the networked conditions of social life on the platforms (p. 11). **The authors deconstructed social media logic into four contrivances – programmability, popularity, connectivity and datafication – by which the current research shall try to generalize, what social media logic is and how it presides political communication process.**

4.1. Defining Social Media Logic

The first and seemingly the most important element of social media logic determined is programmability, which the authors define as “the ability of a social media platform to trigger and steer users’ creative and communicative contributions while the users’ interaction with these coded environments, may in turn influence the flow of communication and information activated by such platform” (ibid., p. 5). In other words, programmability is the collaborative activity performed by users and platform owners/coders represented by Web 2.0 two-way traffic, when users post content and steer information and the coders tweak their platform’s algorithms and interfaces to influence data traffic.

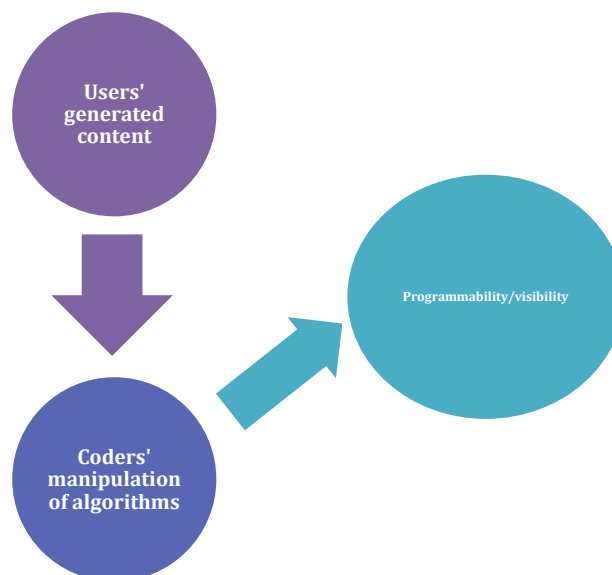


Figure 9. **The Process Stipulating Programmability**

Here, **programmability designates whose content gains greater public visibility on social networking sites**, for instance, which politician’s status update or recent activity on *Facebook* appear on a particular user’s News feed. It is worth noticing **that social media likewise**

mass media are interested in giving publicity to more popular users, e.g. politicians, who generate greater traffic, thus creating value, which may be sold to advertisers.

The second element of social media logic – **popularity** – is exactly that factor, which **influences programmability or visibility of a specific political actor among virtual communities**. Earlier *Facebook* resembled egalitarian qualities, yet, as it matures, its techniques for filtering out popular posts (e.g., Top stories, Recent stories) and influential people become gradually sophisticated. Like mass media set their agenda and push specific people to the center of public attention, social networking sites are concerned to push forward people, who will leave resonance within the networked public sphere. Therefore, the more active a politician is and the more tempting content he/she creates, the more interesting and authoritative he/she becomes to the public. Hereby, the more valuable he/she turns to social media in estimating programmability, which in turn creates a constant flow of information and steers users' experience to stay logged on. So, here, the politician's capability of gaining public attention with his/her content and causing reactions within virtual communities makes him/her popular on social media platforms.

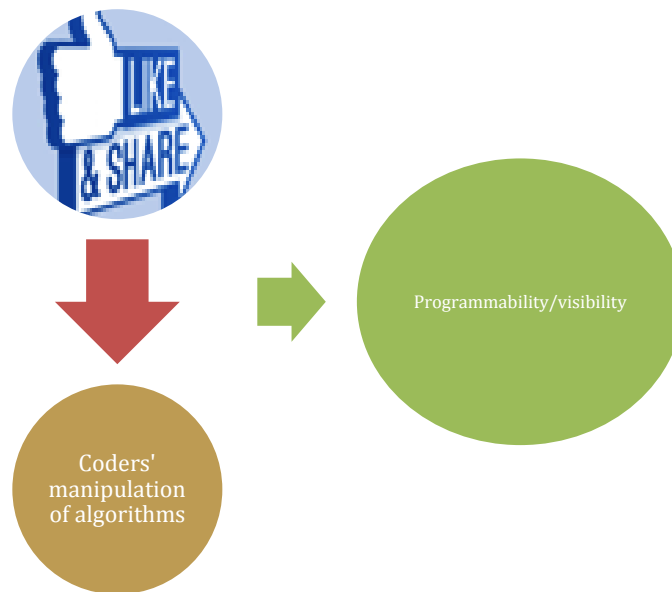


Figure 10. **Popularity as the Factor Stipulating Programmability**

Concerning **the popularity as the element of social media logic, the users, who succeed in building their 'likeability' on *Facebook* by creating their content, push themselves forward to the center of public attention**. Thus, human agency plays a bigger role in building popularity on social networking sites than the platform owners do. Though buying an ad on *Facebook* costs not that much compared to TV advertisements, yet the thing that really matters on social networking sites is content and its uniqueness, which, will build the politician's authority or popularity on social media. Social ads will never help one turn authoritative or promote him/her on social networking sites, unless the politician does well in creating good content.

The other element, which plays a crucial role in social media performance and constitutes their logic, is **connectivity**, which, in fact, was the first imperative to begin networking communities online. However, as initially *Facebook* owners initiated to connect college students, who shared the same residence and social status, now the criterion, by which it **networks the users is their activity and interests**. With the reference to the sociologist Barre Wellman, van Dijck and Poell (2013) reckon that sociality on *Facebook* shifts from densely knit groups to loosely bounded **networked individualism**. **It presupposes that people directly connect to other people with whom they are involved in specialized relationships of common interest rather than ‘classical’ friendship** (ibid., 2013: 8).

So, as mass media logic of connecting content with users and thus connecting users with advertisers, the sociotechnical affordance of **social networking sites allows connecting content with users’ activities or interests and further with advertisers**. Moreover, connectivity embraces a two-fold logic, when the networked individualism **encourages networked customization or automated personalization, where online content is verified by implied users’ needs and platform owners’ or advertiser’s interests** (ibid., 2013).

This connectivity largely creates target audiences through automated groups’ formations. Therefore, when a newcomer politician fills in his/her personal details and starts likening different pages according to his/her own interest, the platform uses this data and recommends various Pages and persons who share one’s personal preferences. In turn, he/she becomes a member of a like-minded group of people, which opens to him/her new opportunities to relate to new people. Therefore, by joining different groups and discussions, a politician may boost his/her popularity and visibility among geographically unconnected populations, as well as, receive information necessary to his own well performance. **Therefore, the more networked he/she turns, the greater possibility for him/her to ascertain the dominant social issues and open the gates to greater target audiences, initiating both communitarian potential and customizable advertising.**

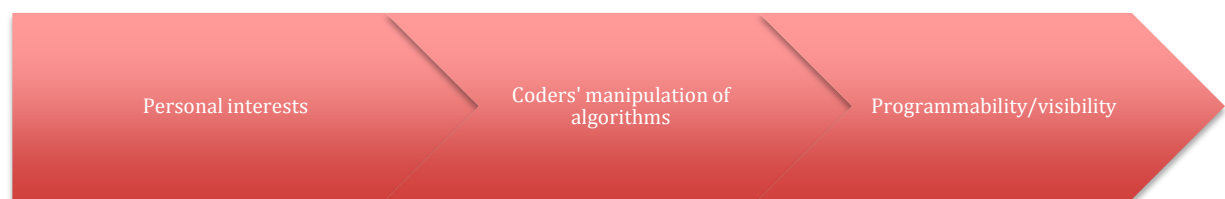


Figure 11. **Connectivity as the Factor Stipulating Programmability**

Lastly, when connections on social networking sites allow relating users' interests to advertisers, so they enhance the last element of social media logic defined by van Dijck and Poell – datafication. **Knowing users' profiles and tastes enhances programmability decisions and advertising effectiveness.** So datafication allows social media predicting and repurposing user needs and the same time nursing their own real-timeliness (ibid., 2013: 9). Accordingly, the aspects of real world like friendship turns into data, whereas, programmability, popularity and connectivity rely on datafication.

The pragmatics rooting in modern communication, when people relate to one another according to their **ego-centered preferences**, manifest on social media platforms, when such indicators like friending specific people, liking specific topics become grounded in payback. Thus, the people you know, the things you love doing **become monetized via social media platforms**, which program **the News Feed accordingly making you feel content with the experience you get while being logged on.** Here the politicians having this data in mind can create content according to **TOP topics, activities and issues of public concern thus boosting their connectivity and popularity among social media users.**

Following the elements identified by van Dijck and Poell (2013), **social media logic [RQ1] can be identified as their affordances of datafying social connections and online activities, building customized relationships and shaping them by prioritizing the ones over the others with a constant, customized flow of information.**

In terms of political communication on social networking sites which focuses on expanding and strengthening relations with the electorate, **the interconnectedness of the elements of social media logic is cyclical, when politicians' popularity itself or combined with connectivity triggers programmability/visibility, which in turn further promotes his/her popularity among**

social networking communities (see Figure 12). Hereby, boosting politicians' popularity on social networking sites generally resembles their compliance with social media logic.

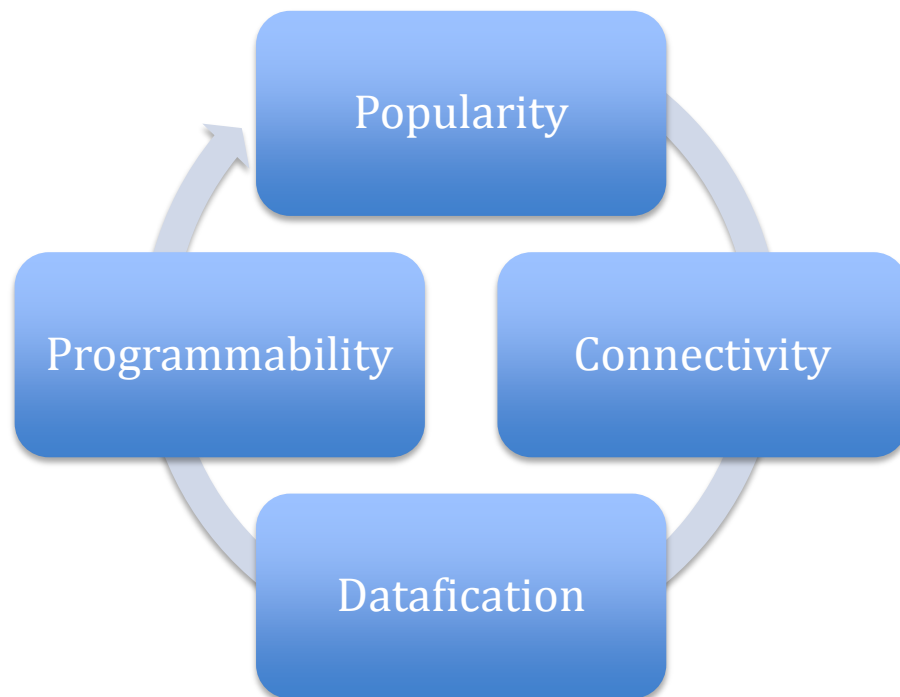


Figure 12. **The interconnectedness of the elements of social media logic**

4.2. Requirements for Effective Political Campaigning on Social Networking Sites

Politicians' engagement with media as a channel for communicating politics and pursuing political goals have always required effort while adapting to newly emerged media logic transforming political campaigning accordingly. Since media's proliferation and diversification tend to increase over time changing communicative practices among politicians and their voters, three models of political campaigning have been identified (Norris, 2000). In the pre-modern political campaigning direct face-to-face communication dominated the stage, which was replaced by modern political campaigning increasing the importance of advertising. Yet, with the rise of interactive communication brought by the rise of ICT in 1990s post-modern campaigning returns the importance of instant communication characteristic to the pre-modern campaigning model, yet maintaining essential differences rooting in social and economical changes:

- Distrust of traditional advertising and marketing.
- The overuse of intrusive advertising techniques such as television and radio commercials, pop-up Internet ads, and billboards.
- Fragmentation of audiences and constituencies.
- Competition for consumers' time and attention.
- The power of the Internet to efficiently transmit opinions from one person to many other people.
- Decreasing confidence and trust in politics and politicians.

- The prohibitive cost of television advertising for many campaigns.
- The rise of “single issue” voters who require micro-targeting and mobilization (Fay, 2006: 7).

Since the Internet allows conveying political messages directly to a diverse audience it further promotes modernization and professionalization of election campaigns (Zittel, 2009), and emphasizes the need for permanent campaigning, as the voters’ loyalty requires a constant reinforcement and motivation (Vergeer et. al., 2013). By employing and exchanging political consultants and implementing communicative online tools, parties and candidates seek to generate attention to increasing their competitiveness, rendering an image of modernity and meeting users’ rising expectations of e-campaigning (Schweitzer, 2011: 312).

The enormous growth of micro-blogging platforms, such as *Facebook*, steers candidate-centered (the politician as a professional) and personal-centered (the politician as an individual) campaigning. Putting to the fore the personalization of politics it is assumed “to create a stronger bond with people, to go beyond the professional one, that will lead to closing the psychological distance between politician and citizen” (Vergeer et. al., 2013: 481).

Moreover, **personalization** on social media contributes to social identity building, where personal identity turns into a fixed and orderly fact, which defines one’s preferences and activity influencing social networking (connectivity) and News Feed optimization (programmability) (Grossman, 2007).

Since communicating oneself to virtual communities embraces multimodal aspects of communication, the visuality (e.g., photos, videos) contributes to personal identity building (Goodings, 2012). For instance, politician’s profile picture works as a passport photograph identifying the profile owner. Besides, through the organization of visual and textual information, e.g. the inclusion of a photo to one’s post, users are more able to personalize themselves on social networking sites (ibid., 2012: 487). Therefore, political campaigning on social media should embrace the personalization both textual and visual as a tool for increasing proximity with constituencies and networking with relevant social categories (Bennett, 2012), which may result in favorable attitudes towards the politician.

This way, the exploitation of personalization on social networking sites promotes the growth of institutional ranks in the era of fading ideological identifications. Consequentially, personal identifications and belongingness to social categories become highly important in contemporary campaigning on social media, which puts individuals at the center of their own customized networks (ibid., 2012). Here, the incorporation of politicians’ personal traits, their familial bonds, hobbies, interests, concerns and other individual properties become even of greater importance in political communication on social media than on TV.

The Internet plays an increasingly important role within political campaigning shifting towards more interactive, multidirectional form of communication during elections (Lilleker & Malagòn, 2010: 26). Here Web 2.0 has returned **interactivity** to political campaigning and communication processes, allowing politician-citizen instantaneous engagement online. However, there have been claims about a one-way political campaigning remindful of Web 1.0 or TV era (Schweitzer, 2011). As the success of politicians is now linked to reputation, Internet communication tools and attention to users' activity online become crucial, thus prioritizing an open dialogue in political communication process (Lilleker & Malagòn, 2010).

Social networking sites allow from one-to-one to many-to-many communication, which empowers users' ability to perceive the experience of interaction online as a simulation of interpersonal communication (Kioussis, 2002: 372). Accordingly, the interactivity, as Web 2.0 property, promotes symmetrical communication model, when individuals, organizations, and publics use communication on social media to deliberate on ideas and behavior rather than to control how others think and behave (Grunig, 1992). According to **dialogic communication theory**, negotiation of ideas denotes a dialogic relationship encouraging participation and arousing mutual users' efforts to engage in conversation (Phillips, 2011). Here, as the bonds between constituencies and politicians are extremely volatile due to interaction nature mass media and politics have maintained, it is necessary to integrate dialogic communication in political campaigning on social media, which will help strengthening the ties with the electorate.

“Consumers today are less responsive to traditional media. They are embracing new technologies that grant them with more control over how and when they are marketed to. They are making purchase decisions in environments where marketers have less direct influence,” said Jim Stengel, the chief marketing officer at *Procter and Gamble* (Stengel, 2004: 2). As a consequence, marketing on social media exploits Web 2.0 interactivity and adapts word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing by which the customers are engaged in an informal dialogue with sellers “about the ownership, usage, or characteristics of particular goods and services and/or the sellers” (Gremler et. al., 2001: 44). This communication arouses consumers' excitement or anticipation about a service or product, builds brand awareness and increases sales accordingly.

Due to mass media diversification and diffusion, when there are literally thousands of radios one can listen to, or thousands of TV channels one can watch at any given moment, why one should listen or watch the commercials? It is a headache for contemporary marketers to make customers talk about one's product, drive sales and accomplish marketing objectives. Likewise, in political campaigning case, marketers today face many difficulties in advertising politics, since receivers of political messages tend to perceive them as either propaganda, or media's partiality (McNair, 2011: 118). Therefore, the integration of WOM marketing strategies in one's campaigning on social

media, where users enjoy sharing information and feeling connected with other users, brands and institutions (Kerpen, 2011: 4), is of special importance, as the conversation between two constituencies about a politician may ultimately lead to conversations among thousands of voters.

Accordingly, today a politician appears on a constant pressure to keep up with the fast-changing media landscape and fast-moving agenda, e.g. rapid information collection in a diversity of subject areas, multiple contacts, information summaries and presentations, not to mention, media appearances, visiting constituencies, etc. Here, social networking sites provide the politician with a possibility to replace eye-to-eye contacts, but simultaneously – they expand their agenda with no extra time resources (Davis, 2010). Withal, each of the media means requires extra knowledge of its modus operandi, which define the politician’s publicity, thus the need for professional assistance comes to the fore.

With respect to the preceding arguments, **[RQ2] the incorporation of Web 2.0 properties – personalization and interactivity – which help expressing the human aspect of the campaign on social networks, is necessary for exploiting one’s connectivity and boosting the popularity on the media, whereas, the regard to each of the dimensions confirms the compatibility with social media logic.**

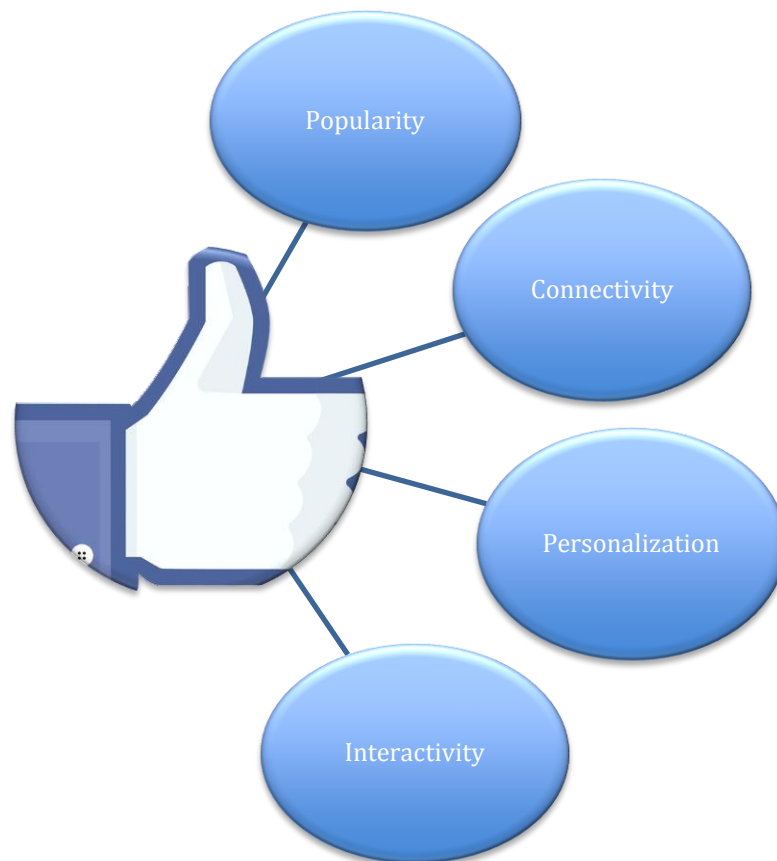


Figure 13. **Requirements for the effective social media exploitation**

4.3. Measuring Lithuanian Politicians Adaptability to Social Media Logic

Unfortunately, a universal methodological framework has not been created yet, which would help determining the concordance of political communication to social media logic. Given the novelty of political campaigning on social networking sites, the deficiency of scientific deliberation on mediatization of politics on social media is much perceptible. There have been aims at determining the elements of social media logic (van Dijck & Poell, 2013), production, consumption and use on social media (Klinger & Svensson, 2014) and the architecture of algorithms, which may influence one's visibility on them (Bucher, 2012). These are, yet, theoretical approaches, which support with insights, but lack empirical grounds.

Probably the initial cause of the absence of empirical data lies in the social media's architecture of algorithms, which are the main factors impacting users' visibility in virtual communities and tending to be changed over time and kept in secret.

Withal, business expertise of branding on social networking sites provides with positive results in sales and relationship with customers (Kerpen, 2011). But, again one's success can be the other's failure since branding on social networking sites possesses culture-specific aspects.

Despite the aforementioned concerns, the study aimed at creating a mundane research design, which would help assessing political communicative action on social networking sites and its pursuance of the advice given by social media consultants (ibid., 2011; *Socialbakers*, 2012; *Facebook*, 2012). Here, the research did not include extra data, such as public reach of politicians' profiles, since this information remains private.

Lastly, the literature overview defined negativity as the dominating feature of Lithuanian public-relations oriented political communication culture. Thus, the study aimed at determining if political campaigning on social media further promotes **negativity** or, vice versa, reduces it.

Aiming to achieve its goal and answer the raised questions the survey applied **content analysis** method. According to S.C. Herring (2004) there are two approaches towards content analysis: the traditional, and non-traditional. The study employed the classical approach, which lays out a five-step process: articulation of the research question(s), selection of computer-mediated data sample, operationalization of the key variable(s), method(s) application for the analysis of data sample and the interpretation of the results.

According to Creswell, J. W. (2003), there are two research paradigms: qualitative and quantitative. Here, both paradigms were applied by the study using content analysis method.

Statistical data analysis used SPSS 17.0 software package and descriptive statistics methods for the data assessment. Pearson correlation coefficient was applied for the detection of possible relations selecting $\alpha = 0,05$ as the level of significance.

4.3.1. Sample

In order to trace if Lithuanian political campaigning on social networking sites is compatible with social media logic the study selected the following candidates' to Lithuanian President's office campaigns on social media:

- Zigmantas Balčytis – nominated by Lithuanian Social Democratic Party.
- Dalia Grybauskaitė – self-nominated candidate
- Artūras Paulauskas – nominated by Labour Party
- Naglis Puteikis – self-nominated candidate
- Bronis Ropė – nominated by Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Party
- Valdemar Tomaševski – nominated by the Electoral Action of Poles
- Artūras Zuokas – self-nominated candidate (*The Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Lithuania*, 2014).

Since voters' turnout is higher during presidential elections than the Seimas elections (Petrauskienė & Žilinskas, 2013), it may be assumed that the electoral turnout should steer the candidates' to Lithuanian President office campaigning activity on all the possible means of media.

No.	District	Types of elections						
		Seimas			Municipal Councils			Presidential
		2008	2012	Change	2007	2011	Change	2009
1	Alytus	46.99	52.16	5.17	43.55	49.94	6.39	51.16
2	Kaunas	49.92	54.63	4.71	38.94	42.76	3.82	53.86
3	Klaipėda	44.78	47.32	2.54	36.01	37.94	1.93	47.69
4	Marijampolė	45.56	48.93	3.37	40.13	41.81	1.68	51.25
5	Panevėžys	50.33	52.39	2.06	40.57	40.96	0.39	53.37
6	Šiauliai	47.6	51.87	4.27	38.87	42.37	3.5	49.84
7	Tauragė	46.74	50.65	3.91	45.01	48.35	3.34	46.94
8	Telšiai	47.81	48.36	0.55	39.28	41.33	2.05	48.65
9	Utena	49.54	51.84	2.3	45.98	49.27	3.29	49.91
10	Vilnius	50.25	56.99	6.74	45.4	47.55	2.15	54.08
	Total	48.59	52.92	4.33	41.3	44.08	2.78	51.76

Table 3. **The 2007-2012 Electoral turnout in Lithuania by districts (ibid., 2013: 56)**

Therefore, due to social media's growing popularity among the public, the research chose to analyze the candidates' campaigning on the most popular social networking site among Lithuanians, *Facebook*, attracting 40% of the citizens (*TNS*, 2012).

Each of the candidates has had his/her *Facebook* account:

- Zigmantas Balčytis – since 2013.
- Dalia Grybauskaitė – since 2009.
- Artūras Paulauskas – since 2012.

- Naglis Puteikis – since 2014.
- Bronis Ropė – since 2013.
- Valdemar Tomaševski – since 2011.
- Artūras Zuokas – since 2009.

Though Artūras Zuokas possesses three accounts (Artūras Zuokas personal account, Meras Zuokas – mayor’s of Vilnius city and Artūras Zuokas as a community), the research shall use the community page, holding his presidential campaign. Artūras Paulauskas owns 2 *Facebook* accounts – a personal and political – thus the later was used for the study. Likewise, Bronis Ropė possesses two accounts; thus the research employed his political account as a case for Ropė’s campaigning analysis. The rest of the politicians communicate via a single *Facebook* account, which were invoked by the study.

The research on political campaigning on *Facebook* analyzed all the politicians’ posts in two-week’s period (from April 02 to April 15) – a week before and after the candidates’ for President’s Office official announcement. It may provide with information about the politicians’ communication practices on *Facebook*, specifically, their regard to social media logic and campaigning models they use.

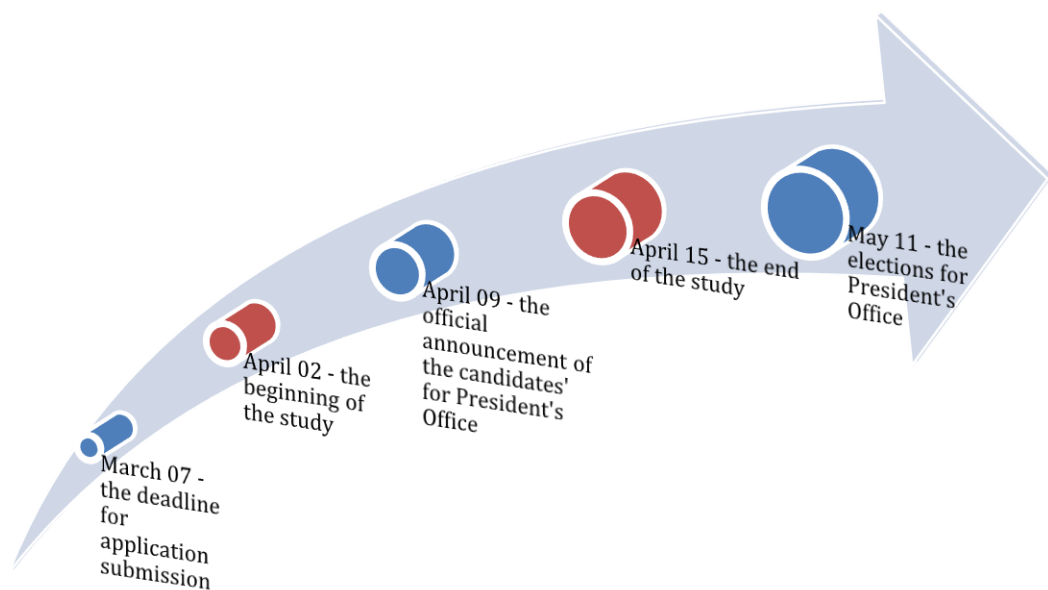


Figure 14. Study location within the period of 2014 Lithuanian presidential elections

4.3.2. Popularity

Each of the media means represents key mechanisms, which sort, classify and rank the social field. Thus, the visibility has been regarded as framing (emphasizing facts, selecting sources), gatekeeping (information filtering for dissemination) and agenda setting (influencing the salience of issues) (Bucher, 2012). In the case of social media – **popularity** – is exactly that factor, which influences platforms’ programmability and visibility of a particular political actor or issue among virtual communities (van Dijck & Poell, 2013). When mass media, TV for instance, shape and frame news and establish it on the public agenda using editorial decisions, social networking sites allow users becoming news shapers and framers, while the agenda setting or visibility of content remains the result of the collaborative activity performed by the users and platform owners/coders.

Concerning political visibility on *Facebook*, those political actors, who succeed in building their ‘likeability’ on *Facebook* by creating their content, push themselves forward to the center of public attention.

To define the candidates’ effort on content creation, the research used **Engagement Rate formula** created by social media analytics platform *Socialbakers* to trace posts’ relevance among *Facebook* users. With respect to the deviating candidates’ activity on *Facebook*, each of their post between April 02nd -15th was assessed using Engagement Rate formula.

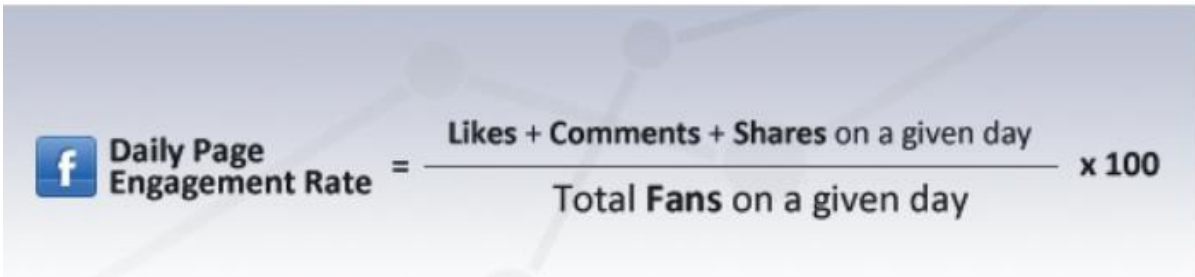

$$\text{Daily Page Engagement Rate} = \frac{\text{Likes + Comments + Shares on a given day}}{\text{Total Fans on a given day}} \times 100$$

Figure 15. **Engagement Rate formula** (*Socialbakers*, 2012)

According to the social marketers, *Facebook* page attracting less than 10 000 fans, Engagement Rate of 1% is considered as an average one. For instance, Bronis Ropé’s message on *Facebook* exceeding Engagement Rank of 1% means that the post is satisfactorily relevant to his 3586 followers. But, if it exceeds 1,11% (see Figure 16), it means that the post caused a greater resonance, increasing politicians’ authority on *Facebook* and thus impacting his better visibility on News Feed.

Here, the **popularity of posts** resembles the candidates’ visibility on their followers’ News Feed, which is the first page users access when they log on the site (Bucher, 2012).

With respect to the gradually growing number of the candidates’ supporters on the social networking site, specifically, general supporters, as well as, users, who talk about the candidate, the study captured followers’ number (see Appendix 1) as the representative quantity for the further

research on April 16th, 2014, between 5 and 6 PM.

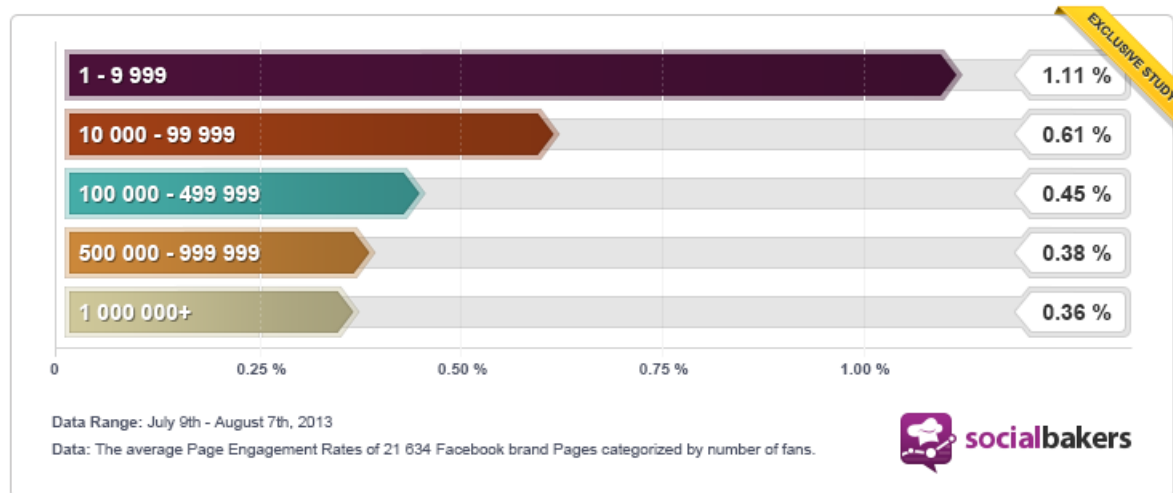


Figure 16. Average Page Engagement Rate by Size (Socialbakers, 2012)

Apart from content production, the candidate's agency in popularity building embraces content scheduling, which plays an important role in their visibility on the platform. Here, using quantitative content analysis, which helped to trace the candidates' **content scheduling**, the research followed *Facebook* owners' guidelines for efficient campaigning online. According to them, it is advisable to post messages every day at 9-10 PM. But, users' activity on social media tends to vary across countries, therefore, the best time to post content to Lithuanian virtual communities is approximately around 1-4 PM (*balsas.lt*).

Thus, in order to evaluate the candidates' effort on popularity building the dimension was categorized accordingly:

- Content popularity.
- Content scheduling.

The variables for content scheduling were coded as follows:

- Posting everyday (1), non-routine posting (0).
- Posting from 1-4 PM (1), untimely posting (0).

4.3.3. Connectivity

Connectivity as the second element of social media logic, which is subordinate to users' manipulation, allows targeting audiences through automated groups' formations (van Dijck & Poell, 2013). Therefore, the more the candidates are connected to different Pages, the more they expand their networked connections, which improve their popularity and visibility on *Facebook*.

Despite networking on social media, the politicians may attract new followers by inserting a hyperlink to their *Facebook* accounts in all possible online communication channels they use. Respectively, Dave Kerpen (2011) appends that the optimization of one's results from social media

use depends on the integration of social media across diverse groups and departments of one's organization (p. 166). Therefore, the inclusion of social media into the entire constituencies' experience may not only expand one's social networks, but also consolidate them.

In accordance, aiming to determine the candidate's efforts on *Facebook* connectivity exploitation, the research categorized the dimension into:

- The expansion of network connections.
- Consolidation of actual network connections.

The study on the first category included the following variable, which using quantitative content analysis was coded yes (1), no (0):

- Hyperlink to *Facebook* account in personal websites.

Likewise, to assess, if the candidates reinforce the current connections, the single and most credible index, which resembles their connectedness with the actual followers is the buzz they arouse among their virtual communities. This can be resembled by these variables:

- The number of followers
- The number of people talking about a politician.

Both of the variables are indicated on the right corner of each of the candidates' Page.

The first is the actual number of people who "liked" the page, whereas the second is made up by people who liked a Page, posted to a Page's Wall, liking, commenting or sharing a Page post, answering to questions, responding to an event, mentioning a Page in a post and photo tagging a Page (Finn, 2011). Worth noticing, the number of people who talk about the Page does not necessarily resemble the amount of active followers, but it may also involve the secondary audience, which saw the post and reacted to it.

With respect to the growing candidates' audience on *Facebook*, on the 16th of April the study recorded the number of followers and people talking about the politicians, which was used in the analysis (see Appendix 1.).

4.3.4. Personalization

Though personalization was not included in van Dijck and Poell's study (2013) on social media elements, yet, it works as certain social networking sites' genre worth incorporating in the study.

The modernization of global political campaigning on social networks manifests in the "growing either candidate-centered or person-centered political campaigning model changing the focus of politics from topics to people and from parties to politicians" (Herman & Vergeer, 2012). Therefore, the proponents of word-of-mouth marketing call personalization as the authorization of one's voice, when the candidates create personal and humanly image, which promotes valuable

interaction and decreases divisions between politicians and the constituencies (Kerpen, 2011: 95).

It is beyond the scope of this study to discuss the dimension of politicians' personalization in its all complexity. Therefore, with the reference to Herman and Vergeer's research (2012) on e-campaigning using both quantitative and qualitative content analysis the study explored the candidates' posts according to the categories identified by the authors:

- Candidate-centered campaigning.
- Person-centered campaigning.

The content analysis of personalization embraced texts, photos and videos, which routine use is highly recommended by *Facebook* owners, as well as, hash tags (the indicators of politicians' content preferences (Price, 2007)), and politicians' likes and shares of stories. Each of the variables, except their personal likes, were allotted as follows:

- Text referring to the candidates' political activity.
- Photo referring to the candidates' political activity.
- Video referring to the candidates' political activity.
- Sharing stories referring to their political activity.
- Hash tags referring to political activity.
- Text referring to personal activity.
- Photo referring to referring to personal activity.
- Video referring to personal activity.
- Sharing stories referring personal activity.
- Hash tags referring to personal activity.

The candidate's either personal or professional likes of other *Facebook* pages were coded: if occurred (1), if did not (0). In order to resemble, in what ways either candidate-centered or person-centered campaigning manifested in their communicative activities on *Facebook*, the variables were coded in the same manner: if occurred (1), if did not (0).

4.3.5. Interactivity

Likewise, personalization, so interactivity is not included in the list of constitutive elements of social media logic (van Dijck & Poell, 2013). But, regarding the nature of Web 2.0, which allows social networking sites exercising communicative action among its users, the affordance of *Facebook*, which returns the dialogic communication between politicians and voters, becomes one of the most important factors to campaign on the platform.

Interactivity on *Facebook* manifests in many ways. For example, it can be regarded as a politician's agency to involve constituencies in meaningful relationships, promoting his/her engagement. Other kind of interactivity can be regarded as encouraging the constituencies to

cooperate in sharing one's content. Lastly, interactivity may unroll in a simple dialogue between a politician and a voter (Blasco-Arcas, 2012, Kiouisis, 2002).

Therefore, in order to assess the candidates' interactivity on *Facebook*, the research distributed the dimension to such categories:

- Promoting constituencies' engagement.
- Involving constituencies in content distribution.
- Interaction with constituencies.

Accordingly, using quantitative content analysis the study employed Dave Kerpen's (2011) word-of-mouth strategies (variables) to analyze the candidates' interactive activities:

- Asking questions.
- Asking to do something (e.g. vote, support, participate and etc.).
- Inviting constituencies to share content.
- Answering to questions.
- Answering to good comments.
- Answering to bad comments.

In the case of the variables of dialogic interaction, specifically, answering to good comments, a single politician's answer to the comment under his post was coded (1), the absence of the answer was coded (0).

4.4. Measuring negativity in Lithuanian political campaigning on *Facebook*

Negativity as the dominant trait of Lithuanian political communication culture has been manifesting in different contexts, e.g., in the titles of media articles, politicians' discourse or public attitudes (Balčytienė et al., 2012; Baločkaitė, 2010, Bielinis, 2005).

According to Marcinkevičienė (2007), negativity occurs on different levels:

- Direct – when the negative aspects are accurately expressed.
- Neutral – when the present is portrayed in a negative nature.
- Indirect – when the negativity is expressed via metaphors and figurative meaning (pp. 112-113).

Following Lau and Pomper's (2002) assumptions, negativity in political campaigning manifests while talking about deficient nature of rivals' programs, accomplishments, qualification and. etc. (p. 73). Likewise, the opposite strategy to negative campaigning – positive - occurs when parties engage acclamation or self-praise (talking about one's own accomplishments, qualifications, programs and, etc.) to appear more desirable than their opponents (Walter & Vliegthart, 2010).

With respect to negative campaigning in Lithuania, considered as the result of mediatization

of politics and long-term conflictual political communication culture, the degree of negativity refers to the ratio between positive and negative campaigning in politicians' pronouncements. For instance, appeals of critique towards the opponent in contrast to appeals of self-praise (Elmelund-Præstekær & Mølgaard Svensson, 2014). Therefore, the analysis employed Marcial Losada's (2004) critical positivity ratio, which allows determining the nature of the politicians' campaigning on *Facebook*. Here, the ratio between positive and negative campaigning ranging between 2.9013 and 11.6346 ratio shows the decreasing negative competition among the candidates.

Withal, political campaigning on media does not necessarily involve only negative communication strategies or positive ones. For example, when a politician talks about the negative aspects possessed by the opponents, he/she may include self-praise in the message in order to appear superior to the rivals. Moreover, political campaigning tends to vary in tone, when neutral messages occur, e.g. talking about honorable people (Lau et. al. 2007).

Therefore, in order to investigate negativity in Lithuanian political campaigning on *Facebook* the dimension fell under the following categories:

- Negative campaigning.
- Positive campaigning.
- Both negative and positive campaigning.
- Neutral campaigning.

According to John G. Geer (2006), negativity in political campaigns manifests in attacks directed towards competitors or self-praise, which causes the contrast between the rivals' and their own skill or one's correctness for the President's Office. Both negative and positive campaigning usually refers to the opponents' or personal political values, attitudes toward relevant issues, as well as, individual traits. Accordingly, the following variables were determined and coded when present (1), and absent (0):

- Person.
- Value.
- Issue.

	Categories	Variables	Methods
Popularity	Content popularity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of likes, • Number of shares, • Number of comments, • Number of followers 	Engagement Rate Formula
	Content scheduling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posting everyday • Posting from 1-4 PM 	Quantitative content analysis
Connectivity	The expansion of network connections.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hyperlink to Facebook account in personal websites. 	Quantitative content analysis
	Consolidation of actual network connections.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of people talking about the candidate. • The number of followers. 	Ratio
Personalization	Candidate-centered campaigning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text referring to the candidates' political activity. • Photo referring to the candidates' political activity. • Video referring to the candidates' political activity. • Sharing stories referring to their political activity. • Hash tags referring to political activity. 	Quantitative and qualitative content analysis
	Person-centered campaigning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text referring to personal activity. • Photo referring to referring to personal activity. • Video referring to personal activity. • Sharing stories referring personal activity. • Hash tags referring to personal activity. 	Quantitative and qualitative content analysis
Interactivity	Promoting constituencies' engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking questions. • Asking to do something. 	Quantitative content analysis
	Involving constituencies in content distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inviting constituencies to share his/her content. 	Quantitative content analysis
Negativity	Interaction with constituencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answering to questions. • Answering to good comments. • Answering to bad comments 	Quantitative content analysis
	Negative campaigning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person • Issue • Value 	Quantitative and qualitative content analysis
	Positive campaigning/self praise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person • Issue • Value 	Quantitative and qualitative content analysis

Table 4. Research design

5. RESULTS

Basing on van Dijck and Poell's (2013) considerations on the elements of social media logic, the secondary data analysis aimed at defining what specifically social media logic is and what requirements it poses to politicians who seek for effective political communication and campaigning on social networking sites. Accordingly, the study identified social media logic as its *modus operandi*, which monetize social connections and activities on the platforms and build and shape relationships with a constantly customized flow of information, which meets the users' individual needs.

The secondary data analysis revealed that social media elements – programmability, popularity, connectivity and datafication -- are interconnected and create a certain cycle, when users' popularity and connectivity on social networking sites provide the platform owners with data, which trigger the users' visibility on social media. Here, the more users connect to virtual communities and carry the ball on social networking sites, the better their visibility turns, thus building their popularity online. Therefore, it was settled that those politicians, who build their popularity on social media, conform to social media logic.

Withal, the analysis of secondary data pursued on identifying the general demands social media claim for those who seek popularity on the platforms. It must be noted that, with respect to the lack of determination of the principles, which set algorithmic sequences influencing programmability, empirical analyses on social media rules and methods remain absent. Therefore, the research embraced international social media experts' pronouncements and advice expressed online and in publications, as well as, *Facebook* owners' tips for election campaigns. Accordingly, the research determined that Web 2.0 properties – personalization and interactivity allowing the human aspect to unroll play an important role in building one's connectivity and popularity on social media.

Though studies on Lithuanian politicians' exploitation of social media affordances while campaigning and communicating politics remain scarce, not to mention the absence of research on mediatization of politics on the platforms, a single study, which provided with insights about the candidates' to Lithuanian President's office campaigns in 2009 (Šuminas, 2009) revealed the lack of the politicians' attention to social media, since three out of seven candidates used them as a channel for communicating politics.

Nevertheless, after five years, the Elections of the President of the Republic of Lithuania show that politician's regard to social media has changed as all the 7 candidates use *Facebook* as a platform for political campaigning.

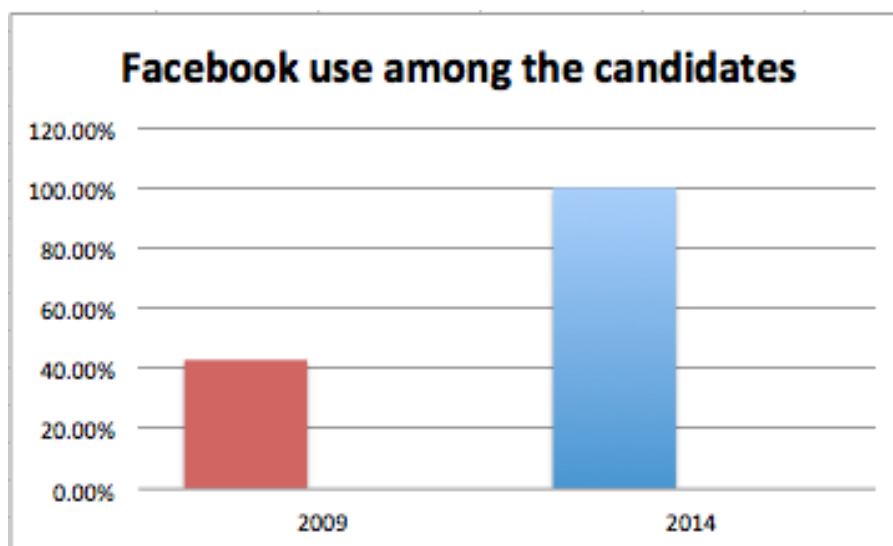


Figure 17. *Facebook use among the candidates for President's Office in 2009 and 2014*

In 2009, the candidate's activity on *Facebook* was estimated as low (ibid., 2009). Unfortunately, the author did not indicate the exact number of posts each politician had made in 1-month campaigning period, which would provide the precise information about their activity on social media. But, the study revealed that in 30 days D. Grybauskaitė by making 38 posts was the most active among the rest of the candidates.

However, the research on the candidates' to President's Office campaigns in 2014 showed that, in two weeks period, one politician – N. Puteikis – surpassed D. Grybauskaitė by posting 46 times in 14 days.

Notwithstanding, the politicians' persistence in increasing their visibility on *Facebook* is much dependent on content scheduling – routine and timely posting. Accordingly, the research revealed that one out of seven candidates - A. Zuokas – posted every day, whereas, the politicians' routine performance on the platform conformed 66,32% of the required periodicity. But, timing remained the issue, as 22,55% of posts were made between 1-4 PM.

Candidates	Everyday (14 days period)	1-4 PM	The amount of posts
Z. Balčytis	5	1	9
D. Grybauskaitė	10	7	15
A. Paulauskas	8	0	16
N. Puteikis	12	11	46
B. Ropė	9	3	13
V. Tomaševski	7	1	12
A. Zuokas	14	7	22
Total:	65	30	133

Table 5. *The candidates' activity on Facebook during the Elections for President's Office 2014*

With respect to the critique expressed in 2012 by Lithuanian social media experts on respectively late politicians campaigning on social networking sites (Jakubonytė, 2012), the research revealed that, in 2014, each of the candidates to the President's Office started their campaigns not later than 100 days left until the Elections. It shows their timely regard to *Facebook* guidelines beneficial to political campaigning (*Facebook*, 2012).

Moreover, the study revealed the changes in the politicians' content relevancy, which earlier was considered to be absent (*ibid.*, 2012). However, the current candidate's efforts on content production showed remarkably good results. The analysis estimated that the mean Engagement Rate of all 133 posts made by the politicians in two-weeks period was 2,92% (Standard deviation 7.36229). With respect that six out of seven candidates attract less than 10 000 *Facebook* users, the mean Engagement Rate signifies the high relevance of the posted messages.

The candidates to President's Office exploited connectivity as the second element of social media logic, which is subordinate to their manipulation. Six out of seven politicians (85,71%) expand their social networks by inserting the *Facebook* hyperlink in their campaigning websites, which provides potential voters with information, where they can get into contact with the politicians.

Since their relevant activity on the platform plays an important role in the consolidation of social networks, so the number of followers shows the candidates' connectedness to *Facebook* communities and the support they receive online. Respectively, all the politicians attracted 166477 followers, whereas, their number tended to grow. For instance, at the beginning of the study (on April 16th) Z. Balčytis was followed by 9413 *Facebook* users, whereas, in two weeks the amount increased in 383 fans, which, basing on foreign examples, raises a presumption that the growth of online supporters may lead to the growth of actual voters offline (Vaccari et al., 2013; Yamamoto et. al., 2013).

The number of actual followers varied from 1786 to 140400 of *Facebook* users. It can be related to the politicians' capability to enthuse *Facebook* virtual communities to "Like" them. But, there is another important component of *Facebook* connectivity – "people talking about this", which identifies the resonance the politicians' activity on *Facebook* causes. The research revealed that this number ranged from 29 to 16254 people who had reacted to the politicians' posts or to him/her personally.

With regards to the number of people who talk about the Page, it may not be necessarily connected with the primary audience, who supports the politicians. The buzz the candidates arouse may reach the secondary audience, who may not favor them. However, basing on the Engagement Rate formula, any kind of reaction, be it bad comment, mocking the post or any other bad review,

strengthens and expands the politicians' social networks and, most importantly, their popularity on *Facebook*.

Candidates	Hyperlink	No. of followers	No. of people talking about the politician
Z. Balčytis	1	9413	577
D. Grybauskaitė	1	140400	16254
A. Paulauskas	1	5166	473
N. Puteikis	1	1809	898
B. Ropė	1	3621	788
V. Tomaševski	0	1786	29
A. Zuokas	1	4282	3211
	Total: 6	166477	19019

Table 6. **The candidates' to President's Office connectivity on *Facebook***

With regards to content production and its influence on the candidates' visibility on *Facebook*, different studies emphasized the need for personalization in political communication on social media (Grossman, 2007; Kerpen, 2011; Bennett, 2012), which, according to Lithuanian experts, was absent in 2012 (Jakubonytė, 2012). Above all, social media require flexibility, as potential voters expect politicians to communicate in the individual manner. In other words, campaigning on social networking sites need to integrate personalization as the specific social media genre, as sensationalism on TV as an instance.

Nevertheless, the research revealed that the candidates still struggle with building a human image on *Facebook*. The analysis showed that candidate-centered campaigning overwhelmed any other attempt to promote personal traits, preferences, likes and dislikes. Only A. Zuokas drew attention to personalization so much promoted by the platform, thus being the single candidate running a person-centered campaigning.

Out of 133 posts 116 (87%) were related to professional achievements (e.g., favorable results in the national survey), professional agenda (e.g. arranged events) and political programs, while 17 posts (12 posts made by A. Zuokas) resembled the facets of person-centered campaigning. They revealed some personal information about the candidates, e.g., the place of birth or their admiration to sports, just to name a few. Withal, the research detected the positive correlation between person-centered campaigning and Engagement Rate ($p=0.02$), which means that the exploitation of human image on *Facebook* had influence to the candidates' popularity.

The research proved that content visuality (e.g., photos and videos) has a positive correlation with politicians' popularity among Lithuanian virtual communities ($p=0.02$). The visual material presented by the candidates contributed to personal identity building whereas the candidates' regard to the visual material as facilitators of communicating oneself to virtual communities manifested by 36 photos and 11 videos in candidate-centered campaigning, and 14

photos and four videos in person-centered campaigning. As a result, the research found that the more candidate-centered campaigning occurred, the less visual content turned, leading to lower Engagement rate and popularity.

One of the most common ways of building the candidates' image on *Facebook* was sharing stories by using hyperlinks to news portals or other information sites, which described their professional traits or their agenda and highly increased candidate-centered political campaigning on *Facebook*. Thus, sharing stories as the expression of the candidates' professionalism resulted in 36% of all the posts made in two-weeks period.

However, hash tags, which help the politicians assign a special meaning to their messages, group them accordingly and join their messages to the hash tag metadata world, thus, improving their visibility in search results, remains a scarcely used tool for expressing their personalization. Only four occurrences were detected in 14 days of campaigning. Nevertheless, hash tagging is considered to be the practice of writing style for *Twitter* posts. Hereby, the candidates' insignificant regard to it can be justified by the recent trend of using hash tags on the *Facebook* platform.

Likewise, the politicians did not put much effort in "Liking" other *Facebook* Pages. Two of them liked Pages, which were associated with their profession, e.g., A. Paulauskas - 6 Pages and N. Puteikis - 3 Pages, whereas the single candidate to the President's Office - A. Zuokas - expressed his preferences by liking 4 Pages related to his personal assets.

Therefore, the variables of the candidates' personalization on *Facebook* manifested accordingly (see Figure 18):

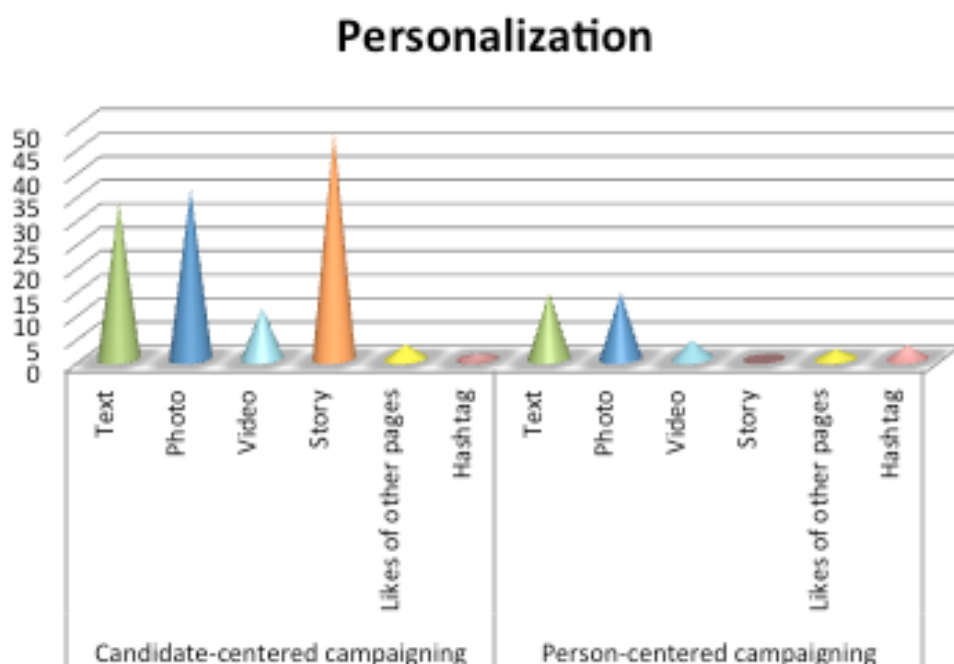


Figure 18. The candidates' to President's Office personalization

The rise of interactive communication brought by Web 2.0 returns the instantaneous and dialogic communication between politicians and constituencies, which provides with opportunities to build close reciprocal relationship important to the consolidation of Lithuanian democracy. By asking questions, the politicians may receive feedback on the issues of social concern, by answering questions and reacting to comments on social media they may express their empathy to the public, whereas, by crowdsourcing the users online the politicians may boost the popularity and visibility of their content.

Similarly to political campaigning in 2009, after five years the candidates' to President's Office interactivity on *Facebook* did not show high frequency, yet the interactive occurrences tend to appear. During the two-weeks period, the candidates' efforts in promoting constituencies' engagement resulted in four times asking questions and 19 times the politicians encouraged the users to do something, e.g. vote for them or watch their debates on TV. The involvement of the constituencies in content distribution appeared only once. Meanwhile, their interaction with *Facebook* users was evidenced by 5 answers to questions, 6 answers to good comments and 7 replies to bad comments.

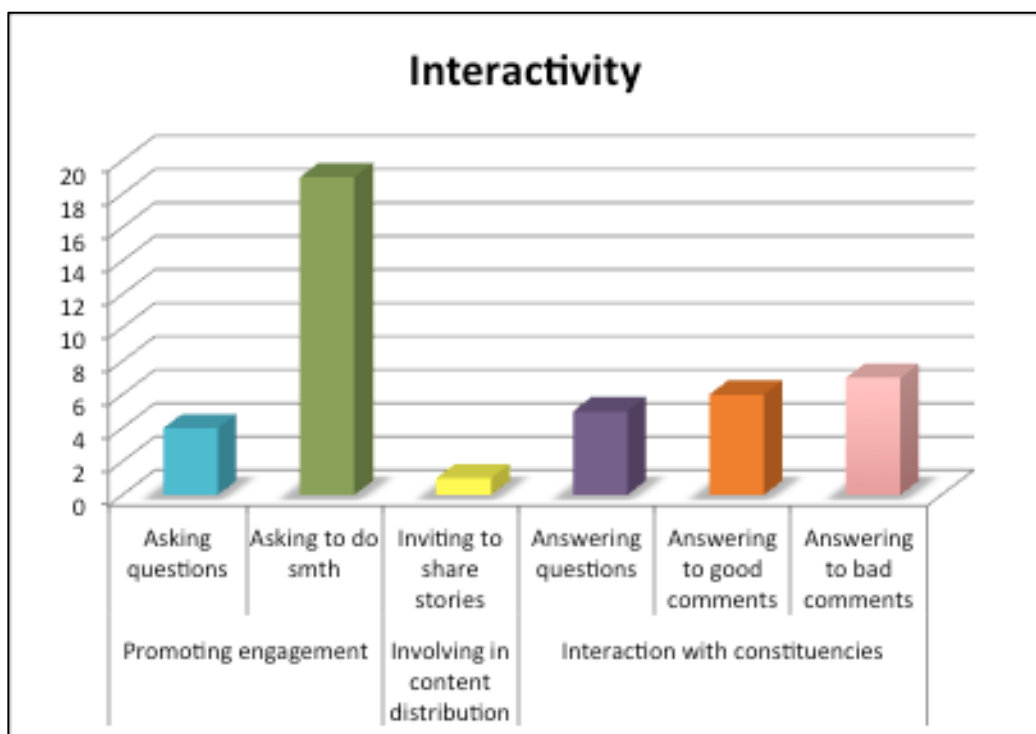


Figure 19. The candidates' to President's Office interactivity

It suggests that the candidates tended to maintain Web 1.0 one-way communication, where their habitude to communicating politics via mainstream media escape dialogue or discussion with constituencies or such awkward situations as answering to accusations expressed by voters. Nevertheless, those, who did integrate interactivity in their political campaigns, received greater audience attention ($p=0.034$), thus increased their popularity and visibility on *Facebook*.

With respect to the purpose of examining how negativity as country-specific trait of Lithuanian political communication culture is integrated in the candidates' to the President's Office campaigning on *Facebook*, the research analyzed 133 posts made in two-weeks period. The analysis showed that 21,1% of all the posts resembled the characteristics of negative campaigning. These included 30 pronouncements about the deficient aspects of the rivals' accomplishments, 28 indications of the opponents' incapability of solving social issues, as well as, 15 cases, when the candidates criticized political values of their rivals.

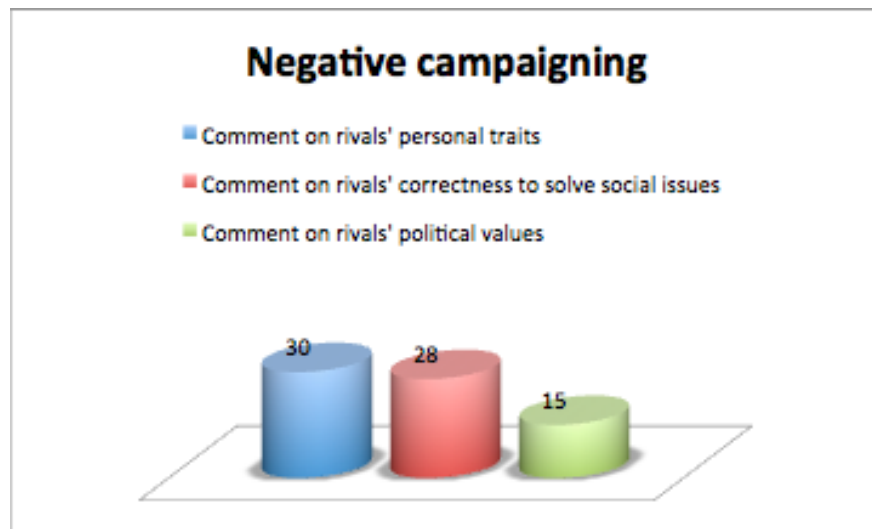


Figure 20. The candidates' to President's Office negative campaigning

Likewise, the positive campaigning unrolled in 27 self-praises about personal achievements, 20 comments on one's appropriateness to solve social issues and 15 self-praises about the correctness of ones' political values. It constituted 15% of all the posts made by the candidates.

Furthermore, the research detected positive relation between positive campaigning and interactivity ($p=0.04$), which leads to higher Engagement rate ($p=0.034$).

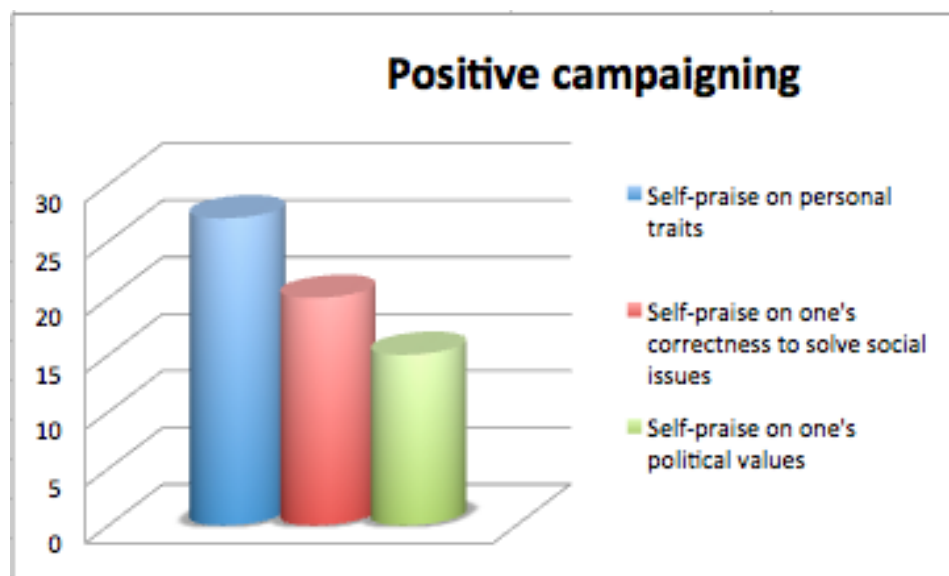


Figure 21. The candidates' to President's Office negative campaigning

Withal, some of the candidate's messages included the aspects of both negative and positive campaigns, e.g. "The President stated that there is no chance for NATO base to be established in Lithuania, and whereas, I say that there is a possibility!" (A. Paulauskas 08/04/2014). This combination of negative and positive campaigning constituted 13,5% of all the posts during the research period.

Lastly, 50,4% of all the campaigns to President's Office on *Facebook* resembled neutral nature, which means, they expressed neither negative aspects of the rivals' traits nor self-praises about the candidates' superiority to their opponents. For instance, "This is the house I lived in Pasvalys. I still remember the road to the apple garden." (A. Zuokas 05/04/2014).



Figure 22. **Communication strategies used by the candidates to President's Office on Facebook**

Since negativity occurs in more than a third of the candidates' pronouncements, the degree of it within Lithuanian political campaigns on *Facebook* resulted in 0.8493 critical positivity ratio, which means that negative campaigning still maintains its potential in building highly competitive relationship among the candidates on social networking sites.

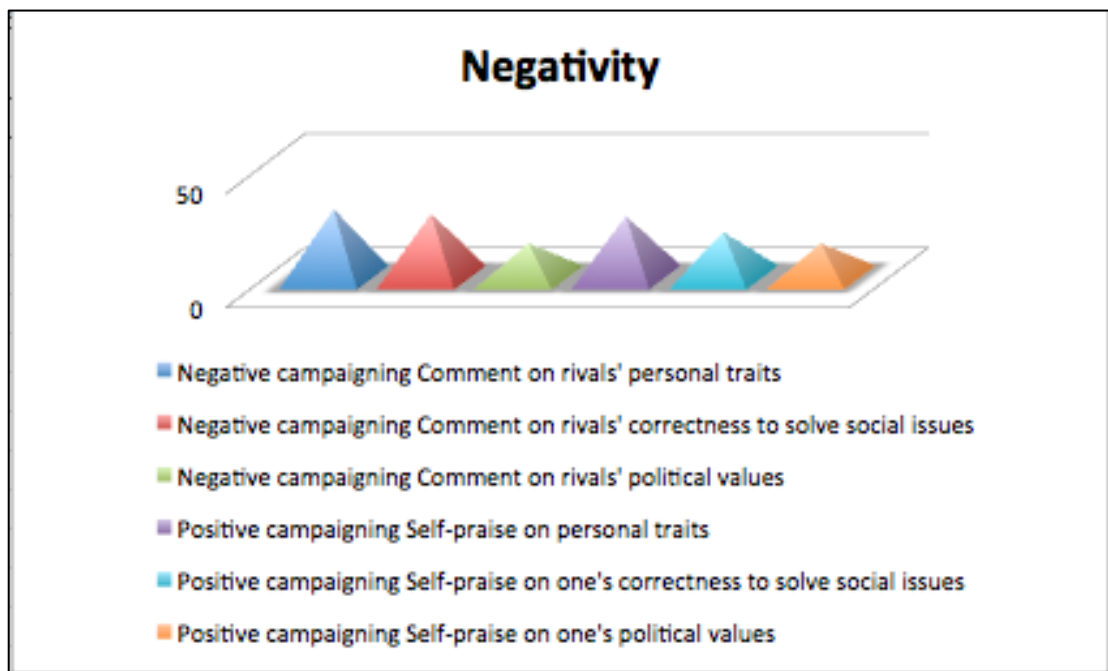


Figure 23. **Degree of negativity in the candidate's to President's Office political campaigns in 2014**

However, referring to conflict-based Lithuanian political communication culture and the negativity brought by mediatization process, the research detected no positive relation between negative messages online and public engagement ($p > 0.05$). On the contrary, the more negative campaigning occurred, the lower Engagement rate turned. Likewise, the research found a positive relation between negative campaigning and monologue communication ($p=0.04$), which means that negativity impeded interactivity, which in turn decreased public engagement and the politicians' popularity on *Facebook* ($p=0.034$).

Withal, the analysis on the politicians' campaigning on *Facebook* revealed other important data about their dependence on mainstream media. Among 133 posts, 50 of them were related to mass media. For instance, the candidates tended to promote debates on TV, comment articles on news portals or share them. The relation between candidate-centered campaigning and mass media was found positive ($p=0.046$), meaning that person-centered campaigning expressed less relation with mass media. Besides, the relation between interactivity and lower attention to mass media was found positive ($p=0.046$), whereas the greater regard to mass media decreased content visibility resulting in lower Engagement Rate.

Therefore, the most popular post among 133 messages publicized by the candidates to President's Office receiving 80,20% Engagement Rate, expressed the following features: person-centered campaigning, visibility, interactivity the absence of links with mainstream media, as well as, negativity.

<i>Boosting popularity</i>	<i>Decreasing popularity</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-sided communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person-centered campaigning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidate-centered campaigning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non visual content
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neutral campaigning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative campaigning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No links to mass media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links to mass media

Table 7. **The interconnectedness between the variables of social media logic and popularity on Facebook subject to Lithuanian political campaigning**

6. THE MANIFESTATIONS OF MEDIATIZATION OF LITHUANIAN POLITICS ON FACEBOOK

The 21st century marked with the Internet entrenchment within Lithuanian social domain as media and technology further promote societal dependence on them induced social media proliferation to step forward. Globalization impact on Lithuanian social media landscape steered competition among market players, which caused national social media to surrender to the global leader – *Facebook*.

Here its popularity is immense, which is evidenced by 40% of Lithuanians of different age and residence building their social networks on the platform. It can be associated with its affordances of constructing a public or semi-public sphere, where users are allowed to share connections within their bounded systems or expand them by viewing and traversing the list of connections made by their friends and associates on *Facebook*.

Its acceptability for social reality construction resides in the conversational opportunities Web 2.0 provides, when one-to-one communication is expanded to many-to-many promoting social networking. And even though the diffusion of the Western lifestyle and materialist and individualist culture brought by modernization manifests on *Facebook*. As users' personalization is prompted to unroll, its affordance of connecting like-minded people revives the possibility to promote Lithuanian political socialization, which has been long disturbed by the culturally ingrained adverse attitudes towards governing powers and mass media's entrenchment in political communication process.

Mediatization process, when core news media overtook political reality shaping and framing, turning politics into a media-subordinate institution and public into a media-saturated society, has been receiving negative connotations. Lithuanian mainstream media and TV especially have been criticized for their selective commercial nature in news production, sensationalism as their particular genre, as well as, opacity in their interrelations with political elites governing

political news coverage. Withal, their contribution to public-relations oriented political communication culture has been associated with their long-term contra-political pronouncements.

However, democracy is inseparable from capitalism, where market rules lead institutional activities and the interrelations they build. Despite ideological grounds, competition and pragmatic imperatives guide each media means and politicians. Accordingly, those who provide the service (media) raise their conditions for those who need it (politicians).

Since media businesses strive for public attention, it is not surprising that politicians follow and integrate mass media logic - the process through which media present and transmit information – and combine their agenda with the media's operational principles. Therefore, mediatization of politics seemingly appears as a self-evident result of the media and politics' conjoint attempt to draw public attention in pursuing their goals.

Likewise, social networking sites are run by their own pragmatically estimated affordances encoded in algorithmic sequences, which allow building customized relationships and shape them by prioritizing the ones over the others with a constantly customized flow of information. Sharing similarities with mass media's logic of selling audience's attention to demographically associated customers, social networking sites' owners focus on social connections and politicians' activities on the platforms and increase visibility of those, who may bring tangible results.

But, this editorial decision is the result of the politicians and platform owners' collaborative activity as the media owners do not create and diffuse their own generated content. It is politicians, who are responsible for the ideas gliding within virtual spaces. Here, they are journalists who shape and frame political reality online, whereas, their activity sets agenda on social networking sites. Therefore, each of the practices on social media, no matter if it is content production, preferences expressed by reactions to others' pronouncements (likes, shares, comments) or expansion and amalgamation of social networks, contributes to politician's visibility on social media. Consequentially, his/her individual efforts in boosting personal popularity are basically regarded as politician's compliance with social media logic.

Though the analysis of the seven candidates' to President's Office campaigning on *Facebook* does not cover all the peculiarities Lithuanian political communication on social media embraces, as many political elites are left beyond the scope of the study, yet, Presidential elections work as a representative context, which allows determining the exploitation of social media affordances exerted by the politicians, their effort in boosting their popularity on the platform, as well as, the changes social media bring to Lithuanian politics.

Since social networking sites level the opportunities for the rivals to address vast audiences, the candidates' activity on *Facebook* evidences the competitive environment political campaigning is operating in. By active posting they seek for public support, distinguish their supremacy over the

rivals and increase their popularity on the platform. Accordingly, their effort receives public appreciation as the posts the candidates made received relatively high or very high public engagement.

Though the relation between public political participation online and the voting turnout in Lithuania has not been determined yet, basing on foreign experience (Carlisle & Patton, 2013, Vaccari et al., 2013, Yamamoto et al., 2013), the possibility persists that political communication on *Facebook* may trigger public participation in national elections. Withal, social media and their affordances are highly embraced by younger generations (18-34 years old) (*TNS*, 2013), whose political participation is low (*veidas.lt*, 2014). Therefore, with the customized campaigning enthralling *Facebook* audience to get involved in politics may improve youth's interest in political reality and the probability of Lithuanian democratic consolidation on social media.

Accordingly, despite TV popularity among the elderly, who constitute the majority of Lithuanian electorate (Jackevičius, 2013), the politicians integrate social media into their agendas in order to encourage younger generations to enter politics. And even though not each of the candidates considers the youth in their content production, yet a few manifestations are enough to grasp the trend towards far-sighted politics.

ICT and Web 2.0 promote post-modern campaigning on social networking sites, which allows building close and dialogic relationship with constituencies (Norris, 2000). But social media users are less responsive to traditional strategies of political communication used in mass media. Consequentially, the research evidenced that mass media's inclusion in the candidates' posts resulted in lower public engagement and support. Therefore, the authenticity of own voice turns into the imperative for the politicians to stay visible on *Facebook*.

Here personalization comes to the fore of any communicative action on the platform, which, apparently, challenges Lithuanian politicians. Though the revelation of one's personal traits on television has helped different politicians become political celebrities, yet, political communication on *Facebook* tends to promote candidate-centered campaigning model prioritizing professionalism rather than personality. It raises the assumption that the unconstrained communicative possibilities on social media platforms inspire the politicians to cut the long-term political personalization fostered by mainstream media, as here they are the ones who build their political image.

The trend towards the revival of serious political image and the turn to direct objects of political communication may result in greater political literacy among Lithuanian *Facebook* users. However, consumerism and entertainment remain the driving forces guiding virtual audiences' preferences as personal candidates' life details resulted in greater public engagement. Here, political communication objects tend to oppose as politicians lean to professional representation, whereas, the audience expects lifestyle politics to unroll. This mismatch of interests may be the cause of the

social experts' critique on the lack of targeting in Lithuanian political campaigns on social networking sites (Jakubonytė, 2012).

Nevertheless, though the audiences' engagement with private peculiarities reaches heights, Lithuanian *Facebook* users react to the political agenda presented by the politicians as the mean Engagement Rate shows remarkably good results. Instead, content visuality plays like an important trigger in public engagement with hard political news presented on social media.

The customization of political campaigning depends on the candidates' ability to connect to virtual communities, expand their connections and consolidate them. Likewise, Lithuanian politicians put effort in integrating social media in constituencies' experience. Hyperlinking turns into a highly manifesting political practice. Likewise, the number of the candidates' followers on *Facebook* tends to grow as Lithuanian virtual communities embrace the political buzz and more people are reacting to the politicians' pronouncements on the platform.

This amount would be even greater if politicians maintained a stronger interactivity on social media. Even though Western political leaders have been highly exploiting *Facebook* in electoral debates, which allow them determining issues related to their political agenda, which may be beneficial in anticipating potential failures (Rutledge, 2010), Lithuanian politicians tend to maintain a monologue on the platform.

Here, as the bonds between Lithuanian constituencies and politicians are extremely volatile resultant from public secularization and communicative nature mass media and politics have maintained, it is necessary to integrate dialogic communication in political campaigning on social media, which will help strengthening the ties with the electorate (Phillips, 2011).

However, the politicians' interactivity on *Facebook* promotes public engagement by asking to do something, but ignoring public interrogations. It shows that one-sided communication characteristic to modern (TV era), but not to post-modern political campaigning (Norris, 2000) is yet a strongly manifesting communicative strategy in Lithuania. Thus, the exchange of ideas, views and experiences between Lithuanian politicians and citizens strengthening e-democracy on *Facebook* is yet in its early stage.

Withal, the politicians transport public relations oriented Lithuanian political communication culture (Pfetsch, 2004) to social media, where mass media's logic still manifests in the politicians' pronouncements on *Facebook*. And even though social networking sites provide with opportunities to escape mainstream media's intervention in political communication process, yet, mass media's agenda tends to appear on social media. In this manner, Lithuanian politicians not only perform as mass media subordinate political actors, but also as the promoters of their agenda, thus transporting mainstream media's news shaping and framing on the social networking site (Vaccari et al., 2013).

Likewise, negative campaigning as a result of sensationalism ingrained in mass media’s political news coverage moves to the platform as nearly a third of posts invoke negative attitudes towards the rivals’ personal traits, political values or their incapability of solving public issues.

But, apparently neither mainstream media’s agenda and neither their logic nor the tension between politicians is relevant to Lithuanian *Facebook* community as the occurrences of negativity and the politicians’ regard to mass media tended to decrease public engagement and interaction between the politicians and constituencies. Therefore, the assumption arises that public-relations oriented political communication culture is unsuitable for political campaigning on *Facebook*. Accordingly, the future of effective political communication online is expected to bring changes to the long-term conflict-based Lithuanian political culture.

Here as Lithuanian politicians adapt to social media logic putting their effort to build their popularity online, strengthen social connections, interact with virtual communities and build their human image introduce mediatization of Lithuanian politics on social networking sites.

Logics of the Social Media/ Causes of Mediatization	Adjustments of Politics/Effects of Mediatization
1. Politicians’ popularity and connectivity on social media platforms shape their visibility.	Popularity building and social networking gradually seep into politicians’ perception of the process and influence their communication and connectedness for the purpose of gaining visibility.
2. Politicians’ popularity determines agenda-setting and framing and gives relevance to issues/problems.	Politicians shift their attention to more personalized, interactive and visual communication strategies to influence their popularity.
3. Production process requires active content promotion.	Politicians employ social media communicative tools (likes, shares, comments, hash tags, photos, videos, sharing stories) in their content promotion.
4. Social media are concerned with users, who arouse resonance within platforms.	Politicians put effort to enthuse their audiences by interactive pronouncements, visual material, person-centered campaigning.
5. Social media require continuous news supply.	Politicians run permanent campaigning on social media

Table 8. **Causes and Effects of the Mediatization of Politics on *Facebook***

Despite the changes social media bring to politics providing unconstrained forum to pursue political goals, inspiring political authenticity to step forward, the politicians or their public relations specialists’ exploitation of social media modus operandi does not necessarily fully grasp social media logic. Withal, the acquired communicative skills and campaigning models compliant with mainstream media logic fall out from the users’ needs on social media requiring extra politicians’ effort to stand out on *Facebook*.

In this respect, the modern politicians are constrained with multiple media logics. In order to pursue political goals, they are required to be successful professionals: “technically proficient, flexible and adaptable, able to learn new skills, regularly change to new work environments, able to

sustain weaker social ties, seen to increase personal and organizational productivity, and be able to promote oneself and one's products" (Davis, 2010: 54). Therefore, Lithuanian political dependence on diverse media attains the level, when politicians are forced to adapt to various logics and internalize the plurality of modus operandi in their campaigning (Strömbäck, 2008).

Most important source of information: Politics	→	Most important source of information: The media
Media mainly dependent on political institutions	→	Media mainly independent from political institutions
Media content mainly governed by political logic	→	Media content mainly governed by media logic
Political actors mainly governed by political logic	→	Political actors mainly governed by media logic
Political actors mainly governed by political logic	→	Political actors mainly governed by multiple media logics

Figure 24. A Five-Dimensional conceptualization of the Mediatization of Politics (Strömbäck, 2008) (appended by the author)

CONCLUSIONS

1. **The Elections of the President of the Republic of Lithuania 2014 work as the representative context to show how contemporary Lithuanian politics is shaped by Facebook and which cultural particularities of such process appear as dominant in Lithuanian campaigning:**

Though electoral campaigning to President's Office does not embrace the majority of the eminent Lithuanian politicians who do not stand for the elections, yet, the presidential elections work as the typical context exposing the peculiarities of Lithuanian political campaigning on social media. This can be justified by relatively high voter's turnout during the presidential elections, which surpass the Seimas elections. Therefore, the tendencies the candidates' campaigning reveal may be assigned to the whole political communication characteristic to Lithuanian politics.

2. **Facebook holds a prominent place in Lithuanian political socialization:**

Globalization processes steered by the Internet entrenchment in Lithuanian households have been the preconditions for national social media to surrender to the global leader of social networking sites – *Facebook*. With the rise of Web 2.0 it is now turning into a vast interactive platform, where a bit less than a half of Lithuanian population discusses, comments or shares pieces of information. Here, the loosely bounded individual society finds place to network and establish specialized relationships of common interest, follow news and involve in political deliberation. Accordingly, Lithuanian *Facebook* users tended to react to political agenda presented by the politicians. Thus, when it comes to interrelations among Lithuanian society members or the state at large, *Facebook* affordances of public mobilization makes this binding possible.

3. **Facebook has turned into an important Lithuanian political communication and campaigning channel:**

Lured by the growing virtual communities on *Facebook* and the possibilities of a free expression and exchange of ideas, Lithuanian politicians mobilize their communicative forces on *Facebook*. Since 2009 the platform has gained prominence in political campaigning as the politicians have been joining the virtual communities to find support, transfer political issues to the fore of public discussions and test the acceptability of their political views. As politics is concerned with sharing ideas with the electorate through the most convenient communication channels, *Facebook* works as a platform to engage secularized Lithuanian audiences, such as the youth, who shows low interest and participation in politics. Therefore, permanent communication and campaigning on the platform may not only enhance the present pursuance of political goals, but also ensure political career stability in the future.

4. Political communication on Facebook is released from editorial bonds:

Though *Facebook* as any other medium is concerned with the continuous audience's attention, which can be sold to demographically associated advertisers, it does not participate in content production. Therefore, unlike on mainstream media, political communication, political reality construction and image building on *Facebook* is subordinate to the politicians' agency.

5. Popularity building is the most influential element of social media logic and the most important end of political campaigning on Facebook [RQ1]:

Social media logic is determined by algorithmic sequences, which turn social connections and activities on platforms into data, which build and shape customized relationships and prioritize the ones over the others according to pragmatic imperatives. The pragmatism has a direct relationship with the politicians' popularity on social media. Here their connections and online activities on *Facebook* trigger the politicians' visibility on the medium and consequentially promote their popularity. Therefore, building popularity on social media is operating in a cycle, when the more popular the politicians turn, the more visible they become on *Facebook* and the greater possibility the politicians receive to transport their views outside the platform and pursue their political goals. Accordingly, the effort the politicians put in boosting their popularity shows their regard to social media logic.

6. The politicians' popularity on Facebook depends on the incorporation of personalization and interactivity in routine content production and the exploitation and consolidation of their connections on the platform [RQ2]:

Since ICT and Web 2.0 promote post-modern campaigning, which returns the importance of instant interaction, the authentication of the politicians' own voice and interactivity in political communication allows building close and dialogic relationship with constituencies. Lithuanian *Facebook* users have turned less responsive to traditional communication strategies used on mass media and prefer informal political communication, revealing the politicians' human nature and responsiveness to social concerns. Despite this, *Facebook* connectivity steering social networking of like-minded people demands for the incorporation of social media in each of the politicians' communicative activities. Therefore, in order to boost their popularity on the platform, the politicians are firstly obliged to expand their social networks by integrating *Facebook* hyperlink in other communication channels and then consolidate them by drawing public's attention with their personalized, visualized and interactive content.

7. Lithuanian politicians tend to put effort in boosting their popularity on Facebook, thus showing their compliance with social media logic [RQ3]:

With early campaigning on *Facebook* and active posting Lithuanian politicians follow the guidelines imposed by the platform owners and social media experts. They tend to routinely

produce relevant content, which receives sufficient public engagement. Connectivity is highly exploited, as the politicians tend to insert *Facebook* hyperlink in personal websites. Likewise, they are able to enthuse virtual communities by generating visual content and from time to time engaging in interactive activities, thus consolidating their social networking connections. Consequentially, the number of the politicians' followers and people interested in their *Facebook* activities tends to grow. Therefore, the hypothesis [H1] that the Elections of the President of the Republic of Lithuania in 2014 steer the candidates' activity for boosting their popularity on *Facebook* is confirmed.

8. The disregard to social media logic is evidenced by the politicians' low personalization and interactivity:

The dominance of candidate-centered campaigning on *Facebook* prioritizes professionalism over personalization of politics, as politicians tend to publicize their political agenda, professional achievements and political values, which, unfortunately, does not meet *Facebook* audience's expectations for lifestyle politics to be carried out on the platform. This reveals a paradoxical side of Lithuanian political communication, as personalization of politics on mainstream media is highly embraced by the politicians, whereas, the revelation of personal traits on *Facebook* causes the politicians' struggle. Likewise, the politicians tend to maintain one-way communication as they rather promote public participation by asking to do something rather than answering to public interrogations. This way they ignore the key possibility to directly engage in political discussions with constituencies and impede democratic consolidation on *Facebook*.

9. The politicians tend to adapt mass media logic on social media:

Yet, mainstream media logic tends to manifest in the politicians' campaigning on *Facebook* as the media's agenda and political news shaping and framing are being integrated in the candidates' content production. In this manner, Lithuanian politicians do not exploit social media as the direct platform to escape from mass media's intervention in political communication and fail to identify their own voice, which is important in popularity building on *Facebook*. Therefore, their turn to mass media's integration in their campaigning on the platform indicates their discrepancy in meeting social media logic.

10. Negative campaigning as culture specific aspect of Lithuanian political communication tends to appear on Facebook [RQ4]:

The politicians tend to transport the tradition of adapting negative campaigning on mass media to *Facebook*. This can be associated with sensationalism highly used by mass media. Withal, negativity culturally ingrained in the public sphere and fostered by close and pragmatically determined interrelations Lithuanian politics and media have sustained since Soviet times possibly contributes to the negative nature of political campaigning on *Facebook*. Accordingly, the

hypothesis [H2] that public-relations oriented Lithuanian political communication culture and negativity as its specific aspect should be integrated in political campaigning on *Facebook* has been confirmed.

11. Political communication and campaigning on social media require new political communication culture to be cultivated:

Negative campaigning does not find public support on *Facebook*, as negativity tends to decrease public Engagement Rate and, accordingly, the politicians' popularity on the platform. Moreover, the habitual candidates' integration of mass media to their political campaigning on social media fail to enthuse Lithuanian virtual communities, thus impeding the candidates' popularity building on *Facebook*. Thus, apparently, public-relations oriented Lithuanians political communication culture stimulating the politicians' proximity with mass media and negativity as the specific aspect of Lithuanian political communication, is unsuitable on social media. Accordingly, the permanent campaigning on social media and the growing politicians' regard to social media logic and public demands should transform the conflict-based Lithuanian political culture online to a more positive one [RQ6].

12. Mediatization of Lithuanian politics on Facebook in 2014 manifests in the greater politicians' effort to build their popularity on the platform compared to 2009, which is:

- Increased activity on *Facebook*.
- Timely regard to *Facebook* as the platform for campaigning.
- Routine content production.
- Relevant content production.
- Capability to increase public engagement.
- Manifestations of person-centered campaigning.
- The exploitation of *Facebook's* visuality.
- The effort in promoting public engagement.
- The integration of *Facebook* in other political communication channels.

13. Yet, mediatization of Lithuanian politics on social media does not necessarily comply with social media logic:

Though Lithuanian politicians tend to apply permanent campaigning on *Facebook* and integrate the elements constituting social media logic, the way they follow social media logic and integrate it in their agenda does not necessarily resemble their compliance with it. This can be evidenced by their ignorance of public demands, e.g., lack of personalization and interactivity on *Facebook*, as well as, the integration of mass media's agenda and negativity in their campaigning on the platform.

14. Mediatization of Lithuanian politics on Facebook accompanies the mediatization on mass media:

Since political campaigning on *Facebook* constitutes only a part of the overall candidates' campaigning for the President's Office, Lithuanian politicians need to adapt to diversified media logics characteristic to separate media means and integrate the plurality of *modus operandi* into their agenda. Therefore, mediatization of Lithuanian politics is constituted by mediatizations emerging from political communication on different media means.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1.



del šeimos apibrėžimo.
Jei galvoji taip pat, rinkimuose savo balsą patikėk man – Ignalinos žmonių merui – Broniui Ropėi.


Bronis Ropė
3,621 likes · 788 talking about this

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LVŽS kandidatas į LR Prezidentus. Ignalinos meras. Viešosios politikos, savivaldos ir regioninės plėtros profesionalas. www.ropė2014.lt

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www.balcytis.lt

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4,282 likes · 3,211 talking about this

Community
www.zuokas.lt

About - Suggest an Edit

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Dalia Grybauskaitė
140,400 likes · 16,254 talking about this

Politician
Lietuvos Respublikos Prezidentė/The President of the Republic Of Lithuania. Oficiali svetainė: www.prezidente.lt. Oficialus YouTube kanalas:

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Kaip paremti D. Grybauskaitės rinkimų kampaniją?




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Kandidatas į LR Prezidentus. Seimo narys, Seimo Nacionalinio saugumo ir gynybos komiteto pirmininkas, Darbo partijos pirmininko pavaduotojas.

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Tapkite patikėtini
Kviečiu prisijungti
mano patikėtinių!
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Photos Likes Events

1,786

Naglis Puteikis
1,809 likes · 898 talking about this

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Politician
Kandidatas LR Prezidento rinkimuose 2014.
Oficiali rinkimų kampanijos paskyra.
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APPENDIX 2.

Correlations

		Engage ment rate	Negative_ positive	Interactive_M onologue	Professional_ Personal	Related to mass media_Un related to mass media	Viuals_No nvisual
Engagement rate	Pears on Correl ation Sig. (2- tailed) N	1 133	-.227 .067 66	.185 .034 132	-.261** .002 133	-.087 .318 133	.201 .020 133
Negative_Pos itive	Pears on Correl ation Sig. (2- tailed) N	-.227 .067 66	1 .067 66	-.250* .044 65	.159 .203 66	-.196 .115 66	-.159 .202 66
Interactive_M onologue	Pears on Correl ation Sig. (2- tailed) N	.185 .034 132	-.250* .044 65	1 .044 132	-.084 .339 132	-.174* .046 132	.149 .088 132
Professional_ Personal	Pears on Correl ation Sig. (2- tailed) N	-.261** .002 133	.159 .203 66	-.084 .339 132	1 .004 133	.251** .004 133	-.326** .000 133
Related to mass media_Unrela ted to mass media	Pears on Correl ation Sig. (2- tailed) N	-.087 .318 133	-.196 .115 66	-.174* .046 132	.251** .004 133	1 .000 133	-.341** .000 133
Visual_Nonvis ual	Pears on Correl ation Sig. (2- tailed) N	.201 .020 133	-.159 .202 66	.149 .088 132	-.326** .000 133	-.341** .000 133	1 .000 133