THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN ROMANIAN POLITICAL MARKETING

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Abstract: *The arrival of new media and of the Internet in particular, has completely transformed the classical interactions between politicians, voters and the media. For politicians, creating the appropriate networks meant to keep on exercising an influence over the debates is now vital: the applications of Web 2.0 are, for this purpose, a new opportunity. Facebook, Twitter, social networks allow politics to be also done on the Internet. A new essential type of media after the European referendum of 2005 has shown to what extent it should henceforth count on this new democratic space. A space of anonymity and free speech is born, which disrupts the habits of elected officials and often undermines elaborate communication strategies. And, of course, this is on the verge of attracting the hostility of some political figures and communicants. The goal of this paper is to examine the connection between Romanian politics and the use of social media, and give suggestions on how the use of social media in political marketing could be further advanced.*

Keywords: *Social media, politics, marketing, Romania*

1. INTRODUCTION

The online environment can change easily, according to our actions. The branding and rebranding of the country are not just ideas arising from political headquarters. The actions taken by Romanians in the online medium after they found out *what Google thinks about us* changed the ranking.

However not all Romanians see the social media as a source of worry or as a means of espionage. Increasingly more people accept the technologization and the evolution of social and IT movements. More and more countries are connected to the internet and this can be seen in the social media.

Facebook, twitter, LinkedIn, google+, YouTube, Flickr, Pinterest, all these social media facilitate the access to information and in the same time help create a perception of reality.

The information and analysis given henceforth are not meant to influence any reader, nor do they express the political opinions of the authors.

2. THE EXTENT TO WHICH SOCIAL MEDIA MATTER IN POLITICS

The last few years have shown that the online political marketing is not a necessity anymore, but a must for the politicians.

As demonstrated by the election of 2008 when Barack Obama used the social media to attract young people to vote.

Social media are online platforms and tools through which people share contents, profiles, opinions, experiences and it facilitate the online interactions between groups.

Even though this might be disturbing for some, politicians are actually products like Dacia or Orange.

There are no differences between a Facebook page of a politician and that of a company.

As a consequence, politicians are hiring sociologists, psychologists and other kinds of specialists in order to take care of their image online, in order to "sell" themselves to the "consumers".

Nowadays, politicians create social media strategies in order to be more popular, more visible, more trustworthy and influent upon public opinion.

The politicians share their messages quickly and easily.

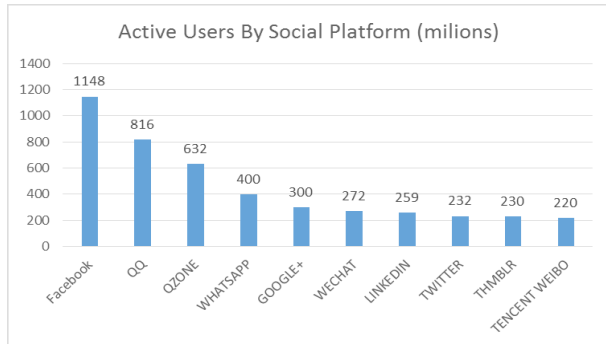Billions of people worldwide use the Internet and social media regularly.

Fig. 1: Active users by Social Platform (millions) [1]

3. POLITICAL MARKETING USING SOCIAL MEDIA: ROMANIAN CASE

Nowadays, in Romania, 10 million people have access to the internet and 7.2 million of them have a Facebook account.

Since more and more people are using Facebook, politicians that want to win a vote, companies that want to sell their products, journalists that want to share their opinion every moment etc. are using Facebook as a marketing tool.

Facebook offers a more direct connection with the targeted audience, it is more convenient, cheaper and easier to use.

The first time the social media had a big influence in the Romanian politics was in 2012 during the referendum on the impeachment of President Traian Băsescu.

This was a sign for the Romanian political scene that understood the power of the social media. "I think that the 2014 campaign will be crucial on the internet, not only for the European elections, but for the presidential elections.

The politicians that will not have a strong basis on the internet will not be able to communicate with the electorate efficiently.

Not to mention what will happen in 2016." – Traian Băsescu.

The following graphs, show the number of followers on Facebook of the most important Romanian political parties and their presidents.

In general, the presidents are the ones who have a greater support than the political party they represent.

Therefore the whole political view of a party is represented by a person, which can be a good thing because it is easier to manage the message to the citizens but any mistake can be a big image disaster for the whole party.
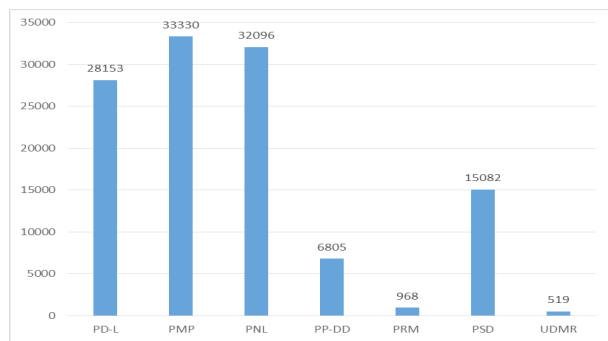

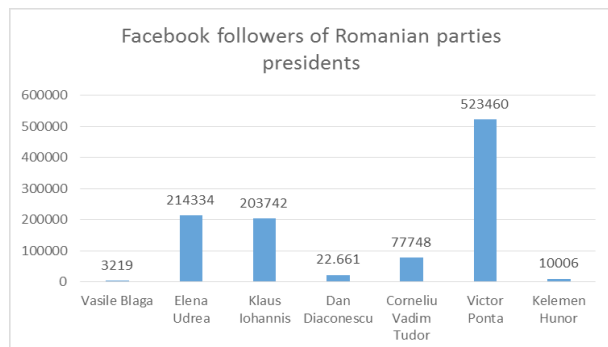Fig. 2: Facebook followers of Romanian political parties [2]

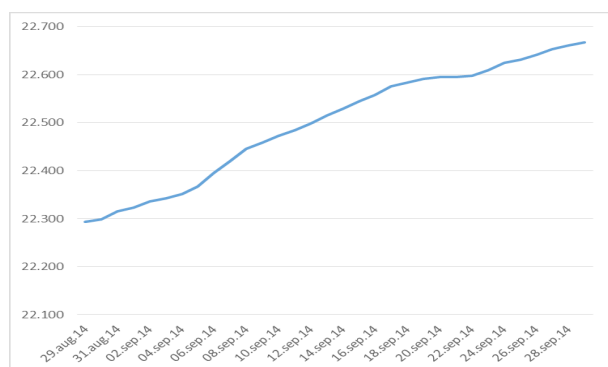Fig. 3: Facebook followers of Romanian political parties' presidents [2]

Fig. 4: Evolution of Facebook followers – Dan Diaconescu. Joined Facebook January 12th, 2012 [2]
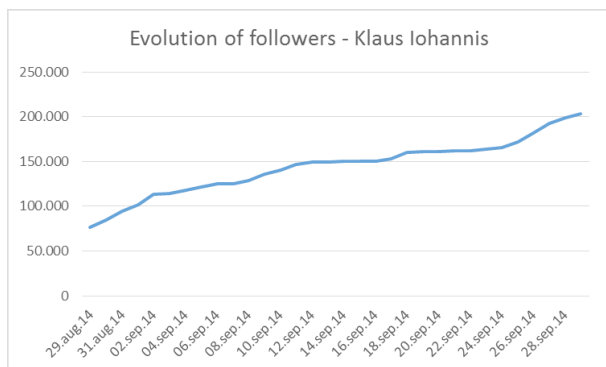
Fig. 5: Evolution of Facebook followers –
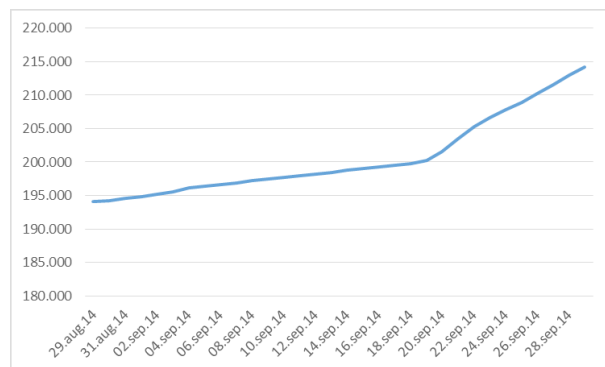Klaus Iohannis. Joined Facebook may 28th,
2014 [2]
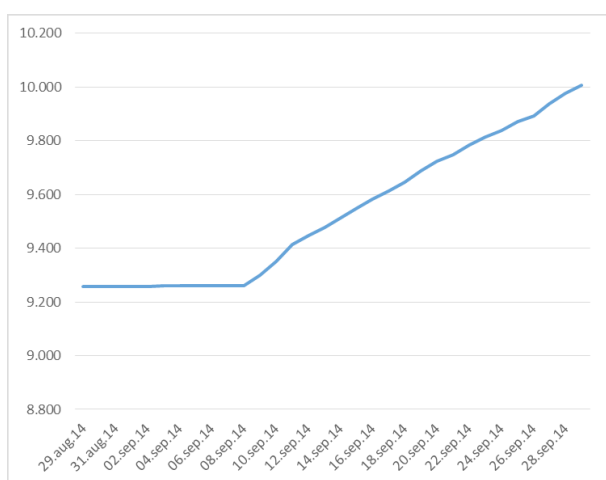

Fig. 6: Evolution of Facebook followers –
Kelemen Hunor. Joined Facebook December
11, 2010 [2]

Fig. 7: Evolution of Facebook followers –
Corneliu Vadim Tudor. Joined Facebook may
18, 2010 [2]

Fig. 8: Evolution of Facebook followers
– Elena Udrea. Joined Facebook march 9th,
2010 [2]

Fig. 9: Evolution of Facebook followers
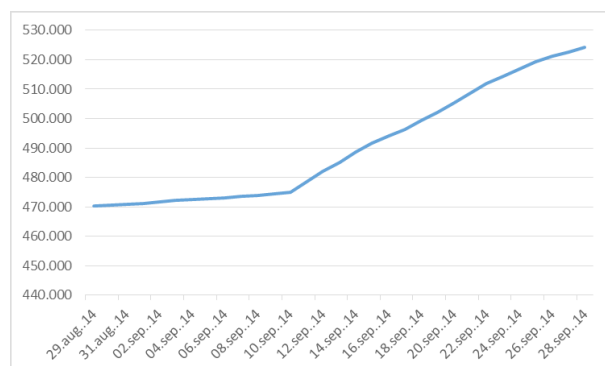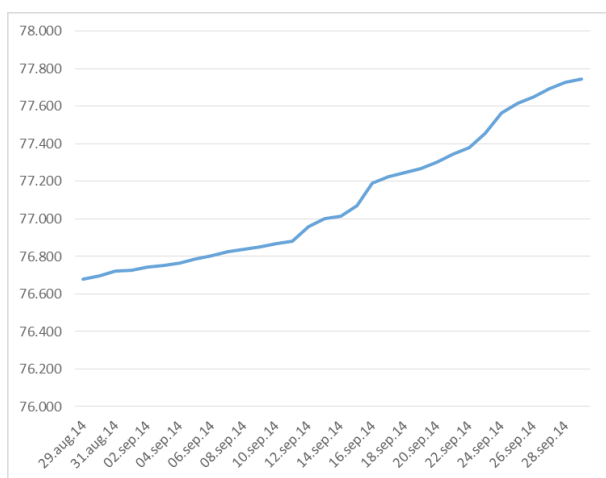– Victor Ponta. Joined Facebook march 9th,
2010 [2]

4. CONCLUSIONS

People are using social media to interact and to communicate with others.

All politicians are using the social media to share their messages faster and to interact with a larger group of people in a new and modern democracy, the so called e-democracy.

The social media are used by governments and involve citizens and the decisions makers.

However, the social media can also be used by the people in order to impart idea with the politicians.

This communication policy is commonly used during election campaigns.

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