

ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTY'S WEB PAGES IN ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN FOR SLOVENIAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 2004

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In this paper, the author analyzes the internet's role in the campaigns for the Slovenian parliamentary elections 2004. He compared web sites of all 23 political parties and independent candidates in three main categories: technical, content and participatory potential. He argues that the quality of mentioned categories goes in the same order. If web sites are technically more or less satisfactory, there is a greater problem providing additional relevant content and almost no possibility of expecting to get an e-mail answer, even though 80% of the analyzed pages had a valid e-address. However, Slovenia in this sense is not an exception according to the situation worldwide. In this manner we can argue that the internet became another information channel during electoral campaign time, but it still does not have the same role as traditional media such as newspapers, radio and television (despite the fact that it has characteristics of all). According to the analysis results, the path towards participative democracy will be even more difficult than achieving equality of the internet and the traditional mass media in the electoral campaign.

Key words: Slovenia, elections, political parties, internet, electoral campaign, participative democracy



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POLITICAL COMMUNICATION AND INTERNET IN SLOVENIA

In the following article we will try to show the basic characteristic of internet use in the electoral campaign for the Slovenian parliamentary elections in 2004.

The development of modern communication technologies is becoming more of a reality also in the Slovenian public administration and politics. Electronic forms, electronic characters and electronic personal income tax are just a few of the most influential examples of the growing importance of using new information technologies in Slovenia. However, there is also a large amount of small changes that are just as important as large projects and they also have great impact on the understanding of information technologies in Slovenian administration and politics. There is a growing number of people using computers at their work who have the opportunity to collect information and communicate with others via electronic media, such as the internet and e-mail. On the other hand, such a situation puts great pressure on the public administration and politics to deliver information via contemporary communicational channels. At the same time such pressure is also directed at a more effective and economic flow of information.

The sole nature of the internet pre-supposes active citizenship, where the search for information is one of the main activities if not the pre-condition for other activities. The most important characteristic of the internet in this case, according to other media, such as newspapers, radio, television, seems to be its ability for a two-way communication flow with political party members and also other participants. Consequently, in different social circles many wishes, ideas and also serious plans regarding the so-called electronic democracy are more and more present. In this context not only are the possibilities of e-voting at hand, but also those of cooperation in policy-making processes (Pinterič, 2003: 346). But we have to stress that competent electoral or policy preferences can be made only on the basis of transparent and valid information and that only a two-way communication flow enables representative democracy (Norris, 2001: 169-170).

Norris (2001) in her book discusses the double role of internet which is producing the so-called digital divide and seems to be the result of differences among different societies and also differences inside of each society. We can see that the internet is defined as an accelerator of political participation and availability of political and administrative space to the broader circles of citizens in a sense of the Athens democracy model. However, Athens democracy was limited to the very narrow segment of free, male of age citizens of Athens. The same problem is also present in all the attempts of spreading political

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participation through the use of internet. Political willingness is just not enough; there must be also satisfactory coverage with information technology (IT) infrastructure, which is still not spread evenly throughout the world. This is just one of the most important reasons why the internet is still only an additional channel of political communication and preserver of status quo apart from being the accelerator of political participation (see Norris, 2001). In the case of Slovenia, we have to pay some attention to researches cited by Norris (2001: 43-64), where this country is represented as especially successful in the process of maintaining necessary IT – internet infrastructure in Central and East Europe as well as in the world. According to this fact and optimistic estimation that the presence of necessary technology automatically accelerates political participation one could expect that, in Slovenia, the internet as a channel of political communication is widely used.

Glancing through the space of Slovenian political parties we can say that political parties, especially those more active are learning very quickly how to use the internet and its potential in contemporary public relations. According to this, they use the internet mostly for informing citizens about current events and other information that could not be communicated to people via traditional information channels such as newspapers, radio and television. Another important fact is, that internet can provide much more egalitarian access for citizens to different political parties, while traditional media exclude smaller parties, because of the quite high expenses of publishing information (Norris, 2001: 170). However, we have to stress, for effective use of the internet for political campaign purposes, an active public that is able and willing to get informed via internet is a necessary condition. This could be seen as an obstacle for the optimistic estimation that the presence of IT automatically accelerates political participation in contemporary information society.

According to the aforementioned presumption the use of the internet in political communication, this article analyzes one of the segments of electronic political communication. The main concern is about mediation of information to the active public via the World Wide Web which is more influential despite the fact that it is only a supplementary source of information in contemporary information society. Vreg (2004: 103) in this context understands the internet as an additional source of information for the active public and not as a typical communication tool in the electoral campaign. However, he (Vreg, 2001: 291-292) does not deny that the internet is also becoming a more and more important information channel in electoral campaigns in Slovenia as well as in the world. As an example we can give the Australian "One Nation" Party which,

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despite a lack of clear policy alternatives, sets the basics of effective political communication via internet (see Meikle, 2002: 51-55). Another important case in the use of the internet in political communication, especially in electoral campaigns is the USA, where the first attempts were made in 1996, when the republican candidate for president invited the public to visit his website (Ferfila, 2002: 389). After that point, websites of different politicians were exponentially growing and Wall Street Journal even ranked and published a list of web pages. However, the first use of the internet in a US presidential electoral campaign was in 1992, when Clinton and Gore published their speeches, and attitudes toward different issues, but at that time the use of the internet was just at the beginning and there was no greater impact, in contrast to 1996.

Ferfila (2002: 394-398) defines six important functions of web pages in an electoral campaign that can be accepted for the US as well as for Slovenia. First of all, web pages could be understood as candidates' or party's status symbol (of being more advanced according to those who do not have web pages), the second function and absolutely most important is informing voters. Web pages can be also a tool for measuring public opinion and strengthening of peoples' political beliefs. Interactivity is the fifth important function that is helping connect candidates to voters with special discussions and additional information. The last function, which is more specific for the American electoral campaign and not well developed in Slovenia, is the possibility of supporting candidates or party with finances or human resources (see Ferfila, 2002: 394-398).

According to the presumption on the growing role of internet in contemporary electoral campaigns we analyzed political parties and independent candidates' websites during the electoral campaign for Slovenian parliamentary elections in 2004. Special attention was paid to three components of political communication. The first component is a pure technical view of the website, the second deals with the content of the website and the last one was based on political participation possibilities. The last component is strongly connected with the theoretical concept of participative democracy and the use of contemporary IT (see Lukšič, 2003; Oblak, 2003). Simultaneously, only the participative component can really connect the political party with its electoral base and enables better communication. However, we have to be aware of the fact that today's political parties have a two-faced relationship with their electoral bases, when they are searching mostly for financial resources and much less for the support of the broader public.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Research on the role of political parties' websites in the electoral campaign for Slovenian parliamentary elections 2004 is based on empirical analysis carried out on September 27th 2004, namely about one week before the elections, when all the activities should have been in full progress. We have to be aware that websites are a very dynamic category and that their outlook or functioning could dramatically change a few minutes after our visit. Analysis was carried out for all political parties and independent candidates who run for seat in the Slovenian parliament, on the aforementioned basis of three components that represent together an effective and working website. First, the technical component was defined as graphical diversity, as an element of attraction. The second technical element is the number of website levels. We argue that pages with more than four levels of sub pages are not very lucid, especially if every level contains a lot of different additional links. Another technical component is regular updating, where the critical point was set on two days. If the webpage was not updated more than two days or it was not evident when it was updated, it was labeled as less useful in the process of informing daily voters and was consequently technically weaker. Another important technical element was the functioning of the WebPages, where we tested sub-pages, different banners, pictures, and links. The last technical element was the dynamics of web pages, where we were searching for any kind of animated element such as animated banners, randomly changing pictures, rolling texts, etc.

The content component was analyzed on the basis of presence of four main elements. Absence of each element means a website of lesser quality. In all cases we checked if the website contained a party electoral program, basic documents (statute and short presentation), updated news on party activities and if there were party relevant links.

Finally, the participative component was measured through the presence of web polls, forums and working e-mail address on party website. In the case of e-mail address, it was not enough that it was written on the party web page, but we checked also if it was active. We did it by sending the same question to all about the role of the growing number of unemployed young political scientists in Slovenia. We sent the question to addresses published on the analyzed websites on September 29th 2004, between 5 and 6 p. m.

The described method presents a step forward from previous websites analyses during Slovenian electoral campaigns (see Pinterič, 2003: 337, 343-345). We developed more precise criteria, which can be compared to those of the "Elections around the World" survey cited by Norris (2001, 162-163).

RESULTS OF SURVEY

In the electoral campaign for Slovenian parliamentary elections for 2004 there were twenty political parties and three independent candidates in eight electoral units.

The list of political parties and independent candidates running for Slovenian parliamentary elections 2004 and addresses of analyzed websites:

Political parties:

- Liberalna demokracija Slovenije – www.lds.si (Liberal Democracy of Slovenia)
- Slovenska demokratska stranka – www.sds.si (Slovenian Democratic Party)
- Združena lista socialnih demokratov – www.zlsd.si (United List of Social Democrats)
- Nova Slovenija – krščanska ljudska stranka – www.nsi.si (New Slovenia – Christian People's Party)
- Slovenska ljudska stranka – www.sls.si (Slovene People's Party)
- Slovenska nacionalna stranka – www.sns.si (Slovenian National Party)
- Stranka mladih Slovenije – www.sms.si (Party of Slovenian Youth)
- Demokratična stranka upokojencev Slovenije – www.desus.si (Democratic Party of Slovenian Pensioners)
- Demokratska stranka Slovenije – www.sgn.net/~zorand/ds/ds.htm (Democratic Party of Slovenia)
- Slovenija je naša – www.sjn.si (Slovenia Is Ours)
- Aktivna Slovenija – www.aktivnaslovenija.com (Active Slovenia)
- Za podjetno Slovenijo – www.lista-zaps.org (For Enterprising Slovenia)
- Združeni za samostojno pravično Slovenijo – www.zdruzimo-slovenijo.com (The United for an Independent and Just Slovenia)
- Stranka slovenskega naroda – www.ssn.si (Party of Slovenian Nation)
- Naprej Slovenija – no web page (Advance, Slovenia)
- Socialna liberalna stranka – no web page (Social Liberal Party)
- Zeleni Slovenije – www.zeleni.si (Greens of Slovenia)
- Glas žensk Slovenije, Zveza za Primorsko, Zveza neodvisnih Slovenije, Nova demokracija Slovenije – www.glaszensk.si (Women's Voice of Slovenia, Association for Primorsko, Union of Independents of Slovenia, New Democracy of Slovenia).
- Junjska lista – www.junij.si (June List)
- Stranka ekoloških gibanj Slovenije – www.seg.si (Party of Ecological Movements of Slovenia)

List of independent candidates:

- Štefan Hudobivnik – www.stefan-hudobivnik.org
- Marko Brecelj – www.markobrecelj.org
- Mihael Svanjak – no web page

On September 27th we searched for all the above mentioned 23 subjects on most important Slovenian browser www.najdi.si. We were able to notice, that one independent candidate (Mihael Svanjak) and two smaller parties (Social Liberal Party and Advance, Slovenia) did not have their own presentations on the World Wide Web. It means that 87% of the electoral campaign participants used the internet for their own promotion during Slovenian parliamentary elections 2004 (see also Table 1).

TABLE 1
Presence of
candidates' websites

	Frequency	Percentage
No	3	13
Yes	20	87
Total	23	100

According to the data that was used from the web pages during the electoral campaign, we can argue that in Slovenia there is a high level of consciousness regarding the role of informing and communication via contemporary media. However, a more detailed analysis showed us a much more concerning situation, especially in the field of contemporary theories of participative and virtual democracy implemented in Slovenian practice.

The analysis of technical components already discovered some deviations from the expected at the peak of the electoral campaign activities. The technical component was analyzed based on the five aforementioned criteria. All analyzed pages were working perfectly (in the sense of functioning, links, complete downloading pages, pictures and other elements of websites) and so they fulfill the first criteria. But the other criteria were much harder satisfy. The second criteria was graphic, where the situation was still satisfactory and most of the analyzed subjects used rich graphics with pictures and other elements (party logos, etc.) which make websites attractive for visitors. A relatively low percentage of analyzed pages had dynamic objects, such as animated banners, changing pictures, rolling texts, etc. but we cannot say whether this is good or bad. However, it seems that obtaining dynamic elements should be positive, because they are mentioned to attract visitors' attention. The criteria on the number of levels or sub-pages are first where a significant percentage of parties made more than four levels of sub-pages as maximum for lucidity. The last and

probably second most important criteriam (following the functioning of websites alone) was regular refreshment of websites at least every two days. This was too high a barrier for half of the analyzed websites. A few pages had no data with common information on the electoral campaign, most of them obtained information older than two days, and one political party was even so ignorant that there was no information on the approaching Slovenian parliamentary elections but only some data from the European Parliament electoral campaign which took place almost half a year before.

➔ TABLE 2
Technical component of
political parties' web-
sites (Sept. 29th 2004)

	Working	Graphic	No. of	Last	Dynamics
	Yes	Rich	sub-pages Less than 4	updated Less than 2 days	
NSi	+	+	+	+	+
SNS	+	+	+	-	+
SDS	+	+	+	+	+
ZLSD	+	+	+	+	+
LDS	+	-	+	+	+
SLS	+	+	-	+	+
SMS	+	+	+	+	-
DeSUS	+	+	-	+	+
AS	+	+	+	-	+
SJN	+	+	-	+	+
Glas žensk ¹	+	+	+	-	-
Junijska lista	+	+	+	+	+
SSN	+	-	+	-	+
SEG	+	+	-	+	-
Za podjetno Slo.	+	+	+	-	+
Naprej Slovenija	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.
Zeleni Slovenije	+	+	-	-	-
Združeni	+	+	+	-	+
Soc. Lib. stranka	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.
DSS	+	+	+	-	+
Hudobivnik	+	+	+	-	+
Svanjak	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.
Brecelj	+	-	+	-	+
<i>Total</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Total %*</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>85</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>80</i>

* Percentages in tables 2, 3, 4, are for analyzed websites with exception of first column in Table 2, where not available pages are understood as not working.

As we can see in Table 2 most of the parties decided to use graphically rich websites intending to attract visitors, with the evident exception of LDS who decided to use unattractive graphics.² Three fourths of the analyzed websites did not exceed four levels of sub-pages as maximum for lucidity of web-

site. This means that political parties are mostly aware of the need for graphic attractiveness and transparency of websites. The worst result was perceived for regular updating of websites. In 50% of the cases there was no evidence that websites were updated in the two days' period before September 27th 2004. However, all political parties, sitting in parliament from 2000 – 2004, except SNS regularly updated their websites. We have to be aware of the fact that it is possible that some parties updated their websites in the two days' period, but this was not evident from the websites (there was no date of the last update or there was no dated news). If we look at different animated elements, it seems to be perceived as an unnecessary luxury.

The technical component can be summed up in findings that all parties and candidates who decided to use websites as a means of electoral campaign took care that those pages were perfectly functioning, that they are aware of the need for lucidly arranged and graphically attractive web pages. On the other hand, political parties and independent candidates seem to be far less aware of the need for regular updating of web pages and quick informing of the electoral base. The problem with regular updating is more evident for smaller parties and independent candidates, who are trying to get elected for the first time.

The content component is, in contrast to the technical one, more interesting for potential voters, who are actively searching for information on political parties to shape their voting preferences. As the main content indicators we analyzed the presence of general presentation of party or candidate, their electoral programs, regularly updated news on party activities. As the last indicator, we used the presence of different links that could be useful for the voter to get a clearer picture of the party's environment.

Table 3 is an exact overview of the content component of political parties and independent candidates' websites. To a great extent political parties are aware of the need for presenting their program and also presenting themselves. Three quarters of the analyzed websites were also equipped with news on party electoral activities. It is important to stress again, that parties with previous parliamentary experience more usually publish their presentations, programs and news on websites than those parties who are competing for their first election. The most problematic indicator seems to be the presence of links to the party's environment. A lack of these links can be understood as a form of self-sufficient closure in a hermetic environment. On the other hand, this can be also a sign of absence of institutional background for some political par-

ties' programs. 50% of the political parties, which had different links, paid almost no attention to links to European institutions (with some exceptions) and completely no attention to links to national institutions. A little better was the situation in the field of regular informing of the electoral base on electoral activities, but it seems that some parties still did not pay enough attention to informing potential voters on their activities or they were in fact not really active. LDS was again a special case with its arrogance. It was impossible to find LDS's electoral program and presentation of the party itself.

➔ TABLE 3
Content component of
political parties'
websites (27. 9. 2004)

Political party/ independent candidate	Party presentation	Political program	Updated news	Links
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
NSi	+	+	+	+
SNS	+	+	+	+
SDS	-	+	+	+
ZLSD	+	+	+	+
LDS	-	-	+	+
SLS	+	+	+	+
SMS	+	+	+	+
DeSUS	+	+	+	+
AS	+	+	+	+
SJN	+	+	+	-
Glas žensk	+	+	+	-
Junjska lista	+	+	+	-
SSN	+	+	-	-
SEG	+	+	+	-
Za podjetno Slovenijo	-	-	-	-
Naprej Slovenija	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.
Zeleni Slovenije	+	+	+	+
Združeni	+	+	-	-
Socialna liberalna stranka	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.
Demokratska stranka Slovenije	+	+	-	-
Stefan Hudobivnik	+	+	-	-
Mihael Svanjak	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.
Marko Brecej	-	-	+	-
<i>Total</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Total %</i>	<i>80</i>	<i>85</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>50</i>

The last component of political parties' and independent candidates' websites analysis during the Slovenian electoral campaign for parliamentary elections in 2004 was participative. In this part we defined three basic indicators, where the first means finding more possibilities for participation and the second presents the shift from one-way to two-way communication between voters and political parties/independent candidates. In this sense the internet poll was defined as a typical one-way communication, where the final result means new in-

➤ TABLE 4
Participative compo-
nent of political
parties' websites
(27. 9. 2004)

formation for the author of the poll. The second indicator is the internet forum, where indirect two-way communication exists on the basis of posting comments. The highest level of two-way communication in our case is active electronic mail, which enables focused questions and direct answers between two subjects.³ This part of analysis is of special importance because of its connections to participative democracy theories, which argues that IT should to greater extent provide active and effective participation of citizens in politics and policy processes.

Political party/ independent candidate	Electronic poll	Forum	E-mail
	Yes	Yes	Yes
NSi	+	+	-
SNS	-	-	+
SDS	-	+	-
ZLSD	+	-	-
LDS	+	-	No contact
SLS	+	+	-
SMS	-	-	+
DeSUS	+	-	+
AS	+	-	-
SJN	+	+	-
Glas žensk	-	-	-
Junjska lista	-	-	-
SSN	-	+	Wrong e-address
SEG	+	+	-
Za podjetno Slovenijo	-	-	No contact
Naprej Slovenija	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.
Zeleni Slovenije	-	-	-
Združeni	-	-	No contact
Socialna liberalna stranka	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.
Demokratska stranka Slovenije	-	-	-
Stefan Hudobivnik	-	-	+
Mihael Svanjak	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.
Marko Brecej	-	-	-
<i>Total</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Total %</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>20</i>

If we were quite optimistic about the use of IT in the case of Slovenian electoral campaign for parliamentary elections 2004 in the first two parts of our analysis, the situation is much more pessimistic in the last part. Internet poll as a minimal form of political participation was added to only 40% of the analyzed political parties' and independent candidates' websites (see Table 4). It has to be said that the internet poll of LDS was in fact an internet quiz on the political-economic situation in Slovenia, where the right answers were those which

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supported the positive role of the LDS in the 2000-2004 parliamentary term. Such answers seem to be quite an arrogant form of their promotion for anyone who has at least some information on the political and economic situation in Slovenia. It is even worse with internet forums, which were provided only on 30% of the analyzed political parties' and independent candidates' websites. Half of the forums were on websites of parties that were trying to get elected into the parliament for the first time.

A working electronic mail of a political party is a real privilege. To our question,⁴ sent to all electronic addresses published on analyzed websites, we got only four answers in a one-week period. Three of them were received from small political parties running for reelection in parliament and the fourth was from an independent candidate. Three political parties did not publish their electronic address on their websites and one party published the wrong address. All other twelve political parties considered our question of too low importance to answer, despite the fact that it was stated in the mail that we are still in doubt which to support, and that we will make our decision based on their answers. DeSUS answered in less than one hour and independent candidate Štefan Hudobivnik answered in less than five hours. SNS sent its answer in less than 24 hours and it was the best in terms of quality, because they engaged their parliamentary group advisor. The last answer was obtained from SMS, after five days and after the elections, but we consider it correct practice, which classifies SMS among those political parties who know the basic behavior rules of electronic political communication.

It is interesting that internet applications such as polls, forums and e-mails were present in the opposite order of their functioning. The internet poll is a relatively demanding application compared to e-mail (today, every child with basic knowledge can create and use his/her e-mail while for creating one's own internet poll or forum one will need at least basic knowledge of internet programming languages). All analyzed internet polls worked perfectly. Forum application was also perfectly functioning on all analyzed websites. E-mail as the simplest internet application was properly working only in 20% of the cases although we collected electronic addresses on 85% of the analyzed pages. The world average in 2000 was 79% (see Norris, 2001: 162). One out of those 85% of electronic addresses was not correct, which can be considered as very incorrect behavior toward potential voters and the active public.

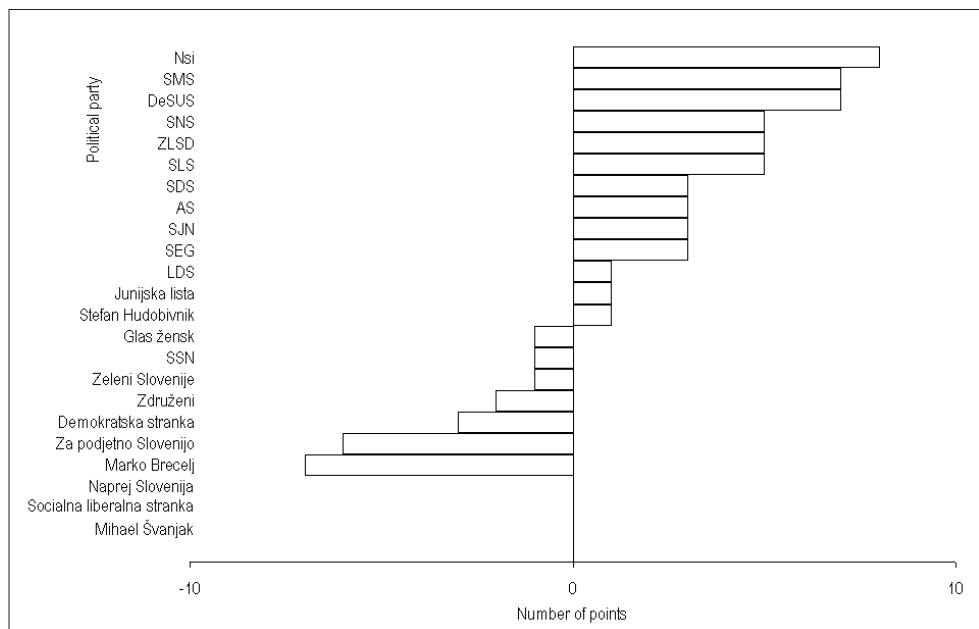
In the following part of our analysis we will try to evaluate the indicators and range of analyzed websites and political parties/independent candidates from the point of using

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internet in electoral campaigns. We excluded the indicator of dynamics, because there is no valid argumentation if and why dynamic websites are better than static ones. For every indicator websites can get one point if it is present and working and minus one point if the indicator is not present or not working. The only exception is e-mail, where working e-mail is evaluated with one point, wrong electronic address is evaluated minus one point, unpublished electronic address is evaluated minus two points and non-answer minus three points (because we understand it as arrogance toward voters, discouraging them from active participation). Every evaluated website can gain 11 points for a perfectly done job and -13 points for failing to do anything else than appearing on the world wide web.

GRAPH 1
 Classification of political parties' websites



Graph 1 shows the arrangement of political parties and independent candidates according to the aforementioned criteria of evaluation of their websites. According to the set criteria the best position belongs to the NSi with eight points, followed by SMS and DeSUS, with seven points and SNS, ZLSD and SLS with five points. Only NSi was able to avoid the influence of negative points for not answering our mail. Because the next three positions belong to parties that answered our mail. The graph shows us that the first seven positions belong to parties that were in parliament from 2000 – 2004. The only exception is LDS, which was the major party from 2000 – 2004, but it was overtaken by three parties running for first term in parliament. According to the role of LDS

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in the 2000-2004 term, the position in the middle of the IT use scale seems to be a consequence of arrogant behavior towards voters, which got punished by loss of elections. This arrogance is even more evident if we compare the analyzed LDS party website, with the analysis of Drnovšek's (LDS) website in the electoral campaign for Slovenian presidential elections in the year 2002, where he used a large number of different applications, such as video clips, forum and even computer game (see Pinterič, 2003: 344-345).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The electoral campaign in Slovenia has in recent years been more and more present in different IT technologies, especially on the internet (another aspect was sending short messages over cell phones).

Formally, 87% of all the included political parties and independent candidates used web pages in their electoral campaign for the 2004 Slovenian parliamentary elections. Such a number means formally a very high percentage in using internet for such purposes. However, just presence on the internet is far from enough. It is necessary to offer also some attractiveness, relevant content and also possibilities for participation of the public. Only in this way, theoretical ideals on participative democracy can become reality. We can argue that all analyzed websites were working properly; although in some cases they were not too attractive for visitors. This shows the secondary role of internet as a political channel of communication in the electoral campaign or in some cases even arrogance towards potential voters, who next to the traditional media followed the electoral campaign also via internet. Here we are not allowed to skip the fact that 50% of the analyzed websites at the peak of the electoral campaign were not updated for more than two days or that this information was not clearly presented. Content is an even greater problem. Many websites lacked links to the social environment of the party or candidate. We especially missed links to the European and national political institutions. In some cases there was even no electoral program and party/candidate presentation.

According to Meikle's (2002: 43-45) findings, we can also agree that Slovenian political parties and independent candidates in the 2004 parliamentary elections had their electronic addresses more or less just for decoration. Even though 80% of the analyzed websites contained valid electronic address (the percentage is quite similar to the world average, Norris, 2001: 162), we can be much less satisfied with the percentage of answers. We get only ever fourth expected answer.

Based on this analysis we can argue that the role of internet as additional media in the electoral campaign is growing,

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or at least that most of the involved parties are aware of its role. However, it is hard to say that political parties and independent candidates treat it the same as traditional media. But even here we can see some differences between stronger parties (those who spent the previous term 2000-2004 in parliament) and those who were trying to win some parliamentary seats for the first time. But even among parties running for reelection there is evident difference; especially between the biggest two (especially LDS) and others. The biggest two seemed to be much more arrogant in communication with voters via internet than others.

In the following period, we can expect further development in the use of internet for political campaigns, which will occur simultaneously with the spreading internet infrastructure in Slovenia. On the other hand, political apathy or participation will additionally hold back or accelerate this process. Therefore, in this research field in Slovenia much more attention will have to be paid to relations between political participation and information in the Slovenian political-administrative space.

NOTES

¹ Glas žensk – Women's Voice is a label for a preelectoral coalition of a few smaller parties listed above. After the election we found a new official web page: www.zveza-zns.si

² LDS was the biggest party in the Slovenian Parliament from 2000 – 2004 with more than 35% of seats.

³ Real-time internet chat rooms as two-way communication were not present on any of the analyzed political parties' or independent candidates' websites.

⁴ See Methodological framework above.

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Uloga web stranica političkih stranaka u izbornoj kampanji za slovenske parlamentarne izbore 2004.

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U radu autor analizira ulogu interneta u kampanji za slovenske parlamentarne izbore 2004. Uspoređuju se web stranice 23 političke stranke i nezavisnih kandidata u tri glavne kategorije: tehnički, sadržajni i participacijski potencijal. Autor tvrdi da kvaliteta navedenih kategorija ide istim redoslijedom. Ako su web stranice tehnički manje ili više zadovoljavajuće, tada postoji veći problem u pružanju dodatnog važnog sadržaja i nema mogućnosti dobivanja odgovora e-mailom, usprkos činjenici da 80% analiziranih stranica ima odgovarajuću e-mail adresu. Ipak, Slovenija u tom smislu nije iznimka u usporedbi s ostalim svijetom. Stoga možemo tvrditi da je internet postao još jedan informacijski kanal u vrijeme izborne kampanje, ali još nema istu ulogu kao tradicionalni mediji, poput novina, radija i televizije (premda ima značajke svih tih medija). Prema rezultatima analize, put ka participacijskoj demokraciji bit će još teži nego postizanje jednakopravnosti interneta i tradicionalnih masovnih medija u predizbornoj kampanji.

Ključne riječi: Slovenija, izbori, političke stranke, internet, izborna kampanja, participacijska demokracija

Webseiten politischer Parteien und ihre Rolle während des Wahlkampfes zu den slowenischen Parlamentswahlen 2004

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Der Verfasser analysiert in seiner Arbeit die Rolle des Internets während des Wahlkampfes zu den slowenischen Parlamentswahlen 2004. Zu diesem Zweck vergleicht er die Webseiten aller 23 politischen Parteien und unabhängigen

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Kandidaten anhand von drei Hauptkriterien: dem technischen, inhaltlichen und Wahlbeteiligungspotenzial. Nach Meinung des Verfassers ist die Qualität der angeführten Kategorien in ebendieser Reihenfolge von der jeweils vorherigen abhängig. Sind die Webseiten in technischer Hinsicht auch mehr oder weniger zufriedenstellend, ist das Angebot an zusätzlichem wichtigen Infomaterial mangelhaft; auch besteht keine Möglichkeit, auf Fragen per E-Mail eine Antwort zu bekommen, ungeachtet der Tatsache, dass 80% der analysierten Seiten eine entsprechende E-Mail-Adresse anführt. Trotzdem ist im Vergleich zu anderen Staaten Slowenien in dieser Hinsicht keine Ausnahme. Daher kann man behaupten, dass das Internet einen weiteren Informationskanal während des Wahlkampfes darstellt, der jedoch noch immer nicht dieselbe Rolle innehat wie die traditionellen Medien Zeitungen, Radio und Fernsehen (selbst wenn es dieselben Merkmale aufweist). Gemäß den Analyseergebnissen ist die Verwirklichung der Partizipationsdemokratie noch schwieriger als die Erzielung von Gleichberechtigung zwischen dem Internet und den traditionellen Massenmedien im politischen Wahlkampf.

Schlüsselwörter: Slowenien, Wahlen, politische Parteien, Internet, Wahlkampf, Partizipationsdemokratie