

## USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN CREATING THE IMAGE OF A LEADER IN A LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Katarzyna CZAINSKA<sup>1\*</sup>, Daniel BIERNAT<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> General Tadeusz Kościuszko Military University of Land Forces, Wrocław; katarzyna.czainska@awl.edu.pl,  
ORCID: 0000-0001-5863-8638

<sup>2</sup> SGH Warsaw School of Economics, Warsaw; daniel.biernat@gmail.com, ORCID: 0009-0005-3440-5406

\* Correspondence author

**Purpose:** presenting the possibilities of using social media and artificial intelligence in creating the image of a leader in the local government election campaign in Poland.

**Design/methodology/approach:** triangulation of research methods; the election campaign of the candidate for the mayor of Lubin, Lower Silesian Voivodeship in 2024 was analyzed; then a survey of the opinions of Lubin residents was conducted (March–April 2024); the survey was complemented by obtaining the candidate's opinion, and therefore an interview was conducted with him.

**Findings:** significant information was obtained related to the perception of the elections and candidates as leaders conducting the campaign in social media; in addition, 56.60% of respondents confirmed that information posted on social media has an impact on their voting decisions; 44.34% of respondents trust information about candidates in social media; posts and video materials were indicated as the most engaging content in social media. Regular and frequent publications allow for maintaining the interest and involvement of voters, which is crucial for an effective election campaign. Artificial intelligence can be effectively used during the campaign, among others for the analysis of election data, personalization of the message, automation of responses to comments, creation of newsletters, e-mail marketing, generation of films, images and graphics, and optimization of advertising campaigns.

**Research limitations/implications:** the study concerns only one election campaign of a specific candidate in local elections in Poland; in order to verify the obtained results, further research could be conducted on the comparison of campaigns of other candidates at the same level of power, other levels of power, or even the comparison of campaigns of candidates from different countries.

**Practical implications:** conclusions were drawn that were important for election teams and individual candidates, according to which social media are an important tool for attracting voters' attention.

**Social implications:** indicating modern methods of conducting political campaigns and their impact on local democracy.

**Originality/value:** previous publications concern mainly presidential campaigns; the value of this article is the analysis at the level of local government elections.

**Keywords:** image, leader, social media, artificial intelligence, local government elections.

**Category of the paper:** research paper.

## 1. Introduction

Image creation is of key importance in economic, social and political activity. This activity concerns organizations (e.g. the image of enterprises), people (i.e. personal branding), brands or events. Creating the image of a leader in local government activity additionally combines issues of leadership and political marketing. Research indicates that in the modern world, social media, including the use of artificial intelligence, play a key (positive and negative) role in creating an image (positive and negative, true and false) (Park et al., 2024). Therefore, work was undertaken to examine the use of social media and artificial intelligence in creating the image of a leader during the local government election campaign in Poland in 2024. The article describes a selected case of the campaign of a candidate for the mayor of Lubin, in the Lower Silesian Voivodeship. The research methods were as follows: a case study covering the candidate's activity in social media, surveys conducted with residents of Lubin and an interview with the candidate. Interesting results were obtained, presenting the discussed topics from the perspective of voters, candidates and the election crowd. An important value of the conducted research is to draw attention to local elections as a field of activity in which artificial intelligence solutions are used. It is therefore indicated that the mechanisms (methods, techniques and tools) of creating a political image used in global and nationwide campaigns are also used at the local level. It is emphasized that the advantages, disadvantages and threats related to the influence of artificial intelligence on the opinion of people (voters) also apply to small communities located in specific regions of the country. This is extremely important, especially since, in addition, 56.60% of respondents confirmed that information posted in social media has an impact on their voting decisions, and 44.34% of respondents trust information about candidates in social media.

## 2. Creating the image of a political leader in social media – literature review

Local government leadership is a type of political leadership. According to Hartliński, when analyzing the image or characteristics of a leader in politics, it is important to distinguish the concept of political leadership from a political leader. Political leadership concerns the relationship between a political leader and his or her followers and the environment in which they function. On the other hand, the concept of a political leader concerns an individual (a specific person) who leads (Hartliński, 2012). It should be specified that the subject of leadership in this case are large structures or social communities such as: the state, political parties, local community, etc. The main feature of a leader is the ability to inspire the activities

of other people (Bankowicz, 1996). The attributes of a political leader also include: a) the lasting nature of leadership, b) the strategic nature of the decisions he makes, c) having an appropriate political base, d) occupying the highest position in a given political system (Sielski, 2011a). When analyzing the characteristics of a political leader, one should not forget about the universal features attributed to modern leaders, namely: a) interpersonal skills including: communication skill, inspiring and motivating a team, shaping trust, relationships and cooperation with people; b) personal predispositions, which may include: specialist and expert competencies; c) problem-solving skills, taking initiative and personal development are also important here; d) focus on outcomes; e) mastery of change, which includes skills to develop a strategic perspective, connecting the group with the external world, also including its cultural aspect (Balcerzyk, Žukovskis, 2024).

Important from the point of view of creating the image of a political leader is the voluntary nature of the relationship between the political leader and his supporters; the supporters submit to his authority because they consider him to be the only person capable of achieving their common goals (Hartliński, 2012). Additionally, seven factors determining the functioning of party leaders were distinguished:

1. affiliative – becoming a party leader as a result of an agreement within party elites;
2. power – holding positions (party, state or local government);
3. situational – social support;
4. media – media popularity;
5. professional – expert in a given field; union – acquiring trade union leaders;
6. organizational – acquiring leaders of social organizations (Sielski, 2011b).

The fourth attribute is particularly important, according to which the media popularity of a candidate indicates the perception of him as a leader, and not the other way around. The election campaign period is a time of intense competition for the attention and trust of voters. Regardless of whether it concerns a local government, parliamentary or presidential campaign. The main role is played by leaders, who are a kind of political leaders of the groups they represent. Their task is precisely defined, they are to be the "face" of their election committee, and at the same time its driving force. As Grusell and Nord (2023) pointed out, the visual components of political communication are a consequence of the personalization of politics, i.e. focusing attention on candidates and leaders. A characteristic feature of local government leaders in Poland, however, is their declared political independence. Swianiewicz even emphasizes the uniqueness of Polish local governments, which deserve to be called the most partisan in Europe (Swianiewicz, 2024).

Creating an image and message is therefore becoming a complicated undertaking. The ability to effectively reach potential voters through the use of new media and technologies is key in this respect. Building an image on the Internet is an important element of marketing, public relations and, in this case, political strategies. This is particularly important and is gaining in importance in the digital age in which we currently live. Both the Internet and social

media are becoming the main communication channels in the 21st century. According to data presented by DataReportal in cooperation with Meltwater and We Are Social (Digital, 2023), 88.4% of the Polish population are Internet users, and 66.3% of the entire population uses social media; Polish Internet users spend 6 hours and 42 minutes online per day, of which 2 hours and 2 minutes are devoted to social media. The data shows the potential and power of Internet media.

Social media can be an effective tool for marketing communication, provided they are used properly. Individual campaign teams and election committees are increasingly using this tool and are doing so more and more professionally. According to Leszczuk-Fiedziukiwicz (2011), the Internet is the cheapest way to spread information, without time or place limits, in the form given by the content sender. Stoppel (2020), on the other hand, believes that political competition is a specific form of political communication that requires the use of various instruments to achieve the intended goals.

Perloff stated that political communication is primarily the exchange of information between political leaders, the media and citizens. This exchange of information must be attractive and reach a specific recipient. It is therefore not surprising that in the current times, the use of social media in creating the image of a politician or political leader has become an indispensable element of modern communication strategies. Increasingly, election campaigns and candidates themselves reach for new tools and technologies to conduct agitation and present their vision of the world. These tools include, among others:

- Websites – these days, they are a “must have” for every leader. Professionally prepared and designed websites are essential. They provide a lot of important information about the leader, and also serve as a hub for all online activities.
- Blogs/Vlogs – they are an important part that not only serves to self-present a person, but can also build their position as an expert in a given field, as well as attract an interested audience.
- Social media – a powerful tool for promoting your ideas, ideals, self-presentation and contact with voters. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tik-Tok, LinkedIn and YouTube are used to build relationships with recipients. They are also used to communicate key messages and interact with the audience.
- SEO (Search Engine Optimization) – optimization for Internet search engines. A very important tool for websites and blogs to be easily found by users of interest to us.
- Content marketing – creating interesting, diverse and valuable content that attracts and engages a specific audience.
- E-mail marketing (newsletter) – creating personalized information and messages for specific people, sent directly to the recipient's e-mail address.

- Online advertising paid advertising campaigns in search engines (e.g. Google Ads) and on social media platforms (e.g. Facebook Ads) can effectively increase recognition and attract traffic, e.g. to a website.
- Data analysis and media monitoring – a very important thing, although quite often overlooked. Analytical tools and social media monitoring (e.g. Google Analytics, Brand24, SEMrush) allow you to track the effects of online activities. They allow you to understand the behavior of recipients and adjust your marketing strategy in real time.

When it comes to the use of social media in the election campaign, Barack Obama's campaign was a pioneer in 2008. The candidate's modern website included links to 16 sites, including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube. In this case, the profile of the then little-known senator from Illinois was exposed on a very large number of sites that reached various social groups. In 2024, it is difficult to find an election committee or candidate who does not use social media to a greater or lesser extent during the election campaign or simply to display their image and contact voters. What is new, however, is the use of artificial intelligence in the election campaign.

According to Deng and Lin (2023), one of the most promising artificial intelligence technologies is ChatGPT, a natural language processing system that can generate human-level conversations. It was developed by OpenAI. It is used, among other things, to understand the context of conversations and generate appropriate responses. Since ChatGPT was launched in 2022, automatic generation of any text has become easy; it also takes much less time than writing a text by a specialist and is much cheaper. The basic version of ChatGPT in version 3.5 is free. However, the extended version ChatGPT 4.0 costs \$20 per month, so such a powerful tool, used in the right hands, can really be very helpful, including in broad marketing activities. It is therefore not surprising that the new technology has entered our lives very strongly and dynamically, including broadly understood politics. Of course, the use of language models such as ChatGPT is not the only novelty. A number of AI-based tools have been created that are key to streamlining various aspects of election campaigns. These solutions include:

- using modern tools to generate content, e.g. posts, photos, videos, graphics or audio generation,
- using various data, including demographics, which allow for adapting the campaign message to specific groups of voters,
- improving communication by integrating chatbots with platforms such as Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp or campaign websites to automate interactions and increase engagement,
- personalizing communication and content, e.g. by adapting the content of advertisements, social media posts and emails to the specific needs and interests of different groups of voters,
- implementing tools for continuous monitoring of campaign effects, thanks to which the strategy can be adjusted in real time, increasing its effectiveness.

There are many advantages to using social media by politicians, including:

- no need for specialist knowledge to use them,
- relatively low financial outlays for running them,
- short time needed to publish content compared to traditional media,
- easy and quick way to edit content,
- the ability to establish direct relationships with users,
- building long-term relationships.

However, it is important to be aware that artificial intelligence also involves significant threats. The most important potential risks associated with the use of artificial intelligence in the electoral context include:

- Deepfake and audiovisual manipulation – increasingly used technology, which involves creating realistic and difficult to distinguish fake video or audio materials. These manipulations most often depict public figures saying or doing things they never said or did.
- Data manipulation – unauthorized use of personal data for political purposes, such as targeting voters to manipulate their preferences and voting behavior.
- Impact on access to information – inequalities in access to information can affect the level of public awareness and equal opportunities to participate in the democratic process, algorithms summarizing specific content for voters, difficulty in determining the credibility of information and its source.

The above-mentioned features still arouse fear and distrust among conscious media users (Balcerzyk, Czainska, 2024).

Artificial intelligence in election campaigns is a relatively new phenomenon. At the moment, there are no clear legal regulations that could supervise and shape its use in a responsible and safe manner. Although the first positive premises are emerging in this regard.

### **3. Methodology**

Before starting the research, the following research question was formulated: *how do modern information and communication technologies affect electoral decisions and the creation of political image?* The main research objective of the work was to assess how social media and artificial intelligence affect the effectiveness of election campaigns in the local context and how these technologies can be used to improve political communication and citizen engagement. Two specific objectives were also adopted:

- analysis of the use of social media and artificial intelligence by candidates during elections,
- study of the impact of social media on the voting behavior of residents.

In addition, two research theses were also formulated:

T1: Social media as a tool for shaping opinions: *social media have a significant impact on the outcome of election campaigns in local government elections, by shaping the perception of candidates and their programs by residents.*

T2: The role of artificial intelligence in election campaign strategies: *Artificial intelligence is actively used by candidates in local government campaigns to personalize communication and analyze election data, which contributes to increasing the effectiveness of their election activities.*

The study used a translation of techniques, namely the following were carried out: case study, survey and interview. The presented case study analyses Piotr Borys's activity in social media during the election campaign for the mayor of Lubin, from the moment of announcing his candidacy on 19 December 2023 to 8 April 2024, when the results were announced by the National Electoral Commission; the analysis includes the number, type and frequency of published posts, as well as an assessment of the effectiveness of the forms of content used; the main goal is to understand how and with what effect social media is used to create a political image and engage voters by the candidate for the mayor of the city of Lubin. Second step of research project was the survey among Lubin residents. 106 residents of the city took part in the survey during the election campaign; the survey was conducted at the turn of March and April 2024, using the PAPI (Paper and Pen Personal Interview) technique, i.e. information from respondents was obtained in the form of a direct interview conducted by an interviewer using a paper form; the subject of the survey was the behavior of voters on social media, their interactions with content published by the candidate and the impact of these interactions on the perception of the candidate and his program by respondents. The last part of the study was an interview with the candidate and his campaign staff. The interview with the candidate and members of his campaign team took place at the candidate's campaign headquarters, which provided an excellent opportunity to gain a first-hand understanding of the strategies and tools used by the team during the campaign; the purpose of the interview was to gain detailed information about the use of AI in the election campaign, understand the benefits and challenges associated with its use, and determine the campaign's future plans for AI technology; six key open-ended questions were asked; the interview lasted approximately 45 minutes, allowing for a comprehensive discussion of the topic and obtaining valuable information for analysis.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Analysis of the selected candidate's campaign on social media

The candidate focused his promotional activities mainly on the Facebook platform. The candidate's communication strategy included using two different profiles - a private one, which had 4.9 thousand friends and an official one - with 12 thousand followers. Piotr Borys also ran a campaign on Instagram, Tik-Tok, YouTube and Twitter.

During the campaign, which was officially conducted by the candidate from the announcement of his participation in the elections, which took place on December 18<sup>th</sup> 2024, over 175 posts were posted on Piotr Borys' private FB profile, which translates to an average of about 1.56 posts per day. The politician's official profile published 97 posts regarding the local elections, with the intensity of publications increasing only from the second half of February 2024. It is worth noting that only those posts that were directly related to the election campaign and posted directly by the candidate were analyzed, omitting posts tagging the candidate made by other users or strictly related to Piotr Borys' work. The campaign lasted 112 days, during which time the candidate published 175 posts on his private fanpage on Facebook. On the public fanpage, his electoral activity lasted from February 15, 2024 to April 8, 2024. During this time, 97 posts were published, which is an average of 1.83 posts per day. On the private fanpage, the structure of published posts was as follows:

- Video posts: 61 posts (34.9% of all posts).
- Reels: 13 posts (21.3% of all video posts and 7.4% of all posts).
- Podcast – 4 posts (2.3% of all posts).
- Live coverage – 7 posts (4.0% of all posts).
- Other posts: 90 posts (51.4% of all posts).
- Video posts: 47 posts (48.5% of all posts).
- Reels: 11 posts (23.4% of all video posts and 11.3% of all posts).
- Podcasts: 3 posts (3.1% of all posts).
- Live coverage: 5 posts (5.2% of all posts).
- Other posts: 42 posts (43.3% of all posts).

The number of video posts added on both FB accounts indicates that both the candidate and his campaign team have focused strongly on this type of content, which is undoubtedly one of the key elements of modern election campaigns. They enable direct communication with voters and engaging them with dynamic and visually appealing content. Video materials enjoyed great interest and were most frequently published and promoted on the candidate's fan page. The most attention was drawn to materials in which the candidate was supported by well-known figures from public life (e.g. the support of the mayor of Warsaw, Rafał Trzaskowski, generated 48,000 views, 140 reactions and 18 comments). The candidate also used paid advertisements



on Facebook and Instagram (Facebook Ads). It should be noted that paid advertisements in the case of elections can only be placed by verified candidate accounts and paid for by individual campaign teams. Each advertisement must be marked in social media as financed by a given election committee. Therefore, only the candidate's public profile was analyzed in this work. From 18.12.2023 to 08.04.2024, 24 paid social media campaigns were created.

The candidate's paid campaigns on Facebook and Instagram reached an estimated audience of around 1,134,800 people (based on the sum of the average values of the estimated audience). The total number of views was around 800,000. The total cost of the advertising campaigns ranged from PLN 8500 to PLN 10,400. The above data indicates a significant level of visibility of the campaign in social media. These campaigns were a key element of the marketing strategy, aimed at increasing voter recognition and engagement. Piotr Borys' advertising campaigns on Facebook and Instagram were well-organized and effective, achieving wide audience reach and high engagement at moderate costs. Additionally, during the campaign, 52 posts appeared on the candidate's Instagram. These were the same posts that the candidate posted on his Facebook fanpage. On Twitter (X), on the other hand, only two posts related to Piotr Borys' run for mayor of Lubin appeared throughout the campaign. The YouTube channel was not used in the election campaign even once. A similar situation occurred on TikTok.

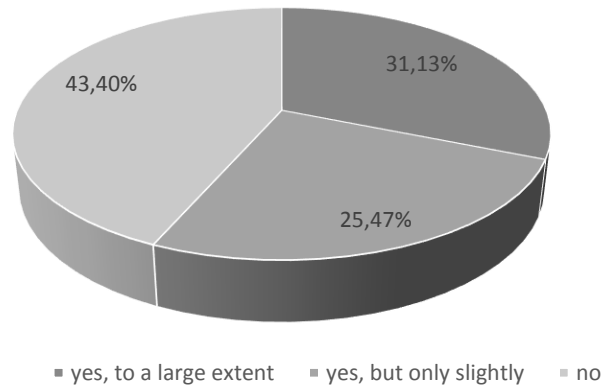
## **4.2. Survey research**

The distribution of respondents by gender was as follows: 55 women and 51 men. In the study group, 18.87% of respondents were people aged 18-29, 19.81% were people aged 30-39, the largest age group was made up of people aged 40-49 (21.70%), the same number of people (19.81% each) were in the age group of 50-59 and 60+. In terms of education, among the survey participants, 21.70% had primary education, 38.68% secondary education, 33.02% higher education, and 6.60% declared other forms of education.

The majority of respondents (65.09%) took part in the recent local elections in Lubin, while 34.91% responded that they did not take part. The next question, in which more than one answer could be selected, concerned the social media platform that respondents use most often. The most popular was Facebook, which was indicated by 74 respondents. Instagram came second, (53 people). Tik-Tok (42 people), Twitter (31 people) and LinkedIn (28 people) came next.

The next question concerned the amount of time spent by respondents on browsing social media. Most respondents (38.68%) spend 1-2 hours per day browsing social media, 29.25% spend less than an hour, 18.87% 3-4 hours, and 13.21% more than 4 hours. Let us recall that in a report prepared by DataReportal in cooperation with Meltwater and We Are Social, it was found that Polish internet users spend 6 hours and 42 minutes online (Digital, 2023). More than half of respondents among Lubin residents (55.55%) spend from 1 to 4 hours browsing social media every day.

The next question concerned the information posted on social media and its influence on voting decisions. The results show that the majority of respondents (56.60%) believe that information found on social media has some influence on their voting decisions, although only 31.13% state that this influence is significant. On the other hand, 43.40% of respondents believe that social media has no influence on their voting decisions (fig. 1).

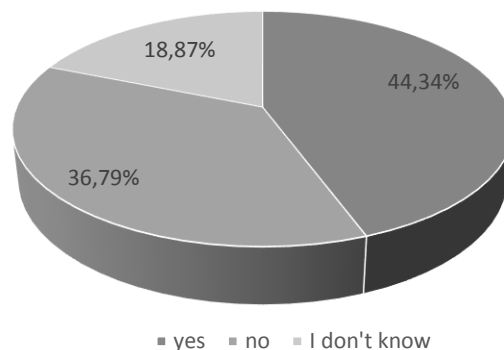


**Figure 1.** The influence of social media on voting decisions.

Source: own study based on conducted research.

It can be stated that the respondents perceive the role of social media in making electoral decisions in different ways. However, it is worth emphasizing that for more than half of the respondents, social media play a fairly significant role during the election campaign and have an impact on their decisions.

The results of the next question regarding whether respondents trust information about individual candidates posted on social media are also interesting. In this case, as many as 44.34% of respondents trust information about candidates in social media, 36.79% do not trust it, and 18.87% do not have an opinion on the subject (fig. 2). These results can be interpreted as meaning that almost half of respondents trust content published on social media that is directly related to candidates in the elections.

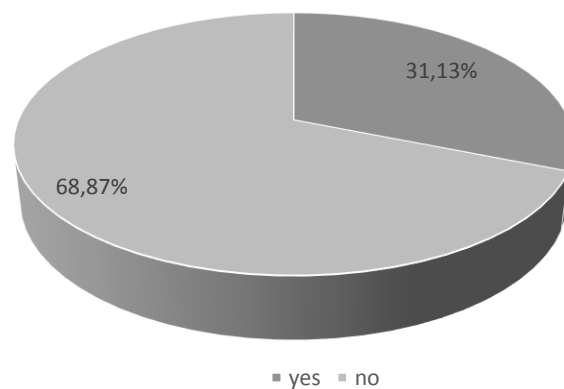


**Figure 2.** Trust in information about candidates on social media.

Source: own study based on conducted research.

The next question was whether social media have a positive impact on the electoral process. The largest number of respondents, i.e. (46.23%), answered this question in the affirmative. On the other hand, 40.57% believe that social media have a negative impact on the electoral process. 13.21% have no opinion on this issue. It is worth adding that people in the age group of 50+ (73%) have a negative opinion on this subject.

The answers to the question about changing one's mind about a candidate based on information from social media are also interesting. The majority of respondents (68.87%) indicated that this type of information did not influence the change of mind about a given candidate. Only 33 respondents admitted that this information influenced the change of their perception of the candidate. The obtained results may suggest that despite the fact that social media, as a place of distributing information about candidates, are a popular channel for this purpose, their influence on changing the opinion about candidates is quite limited (fig. 3).



**Figure 3.** The influence of social media on changing minds about candidates.

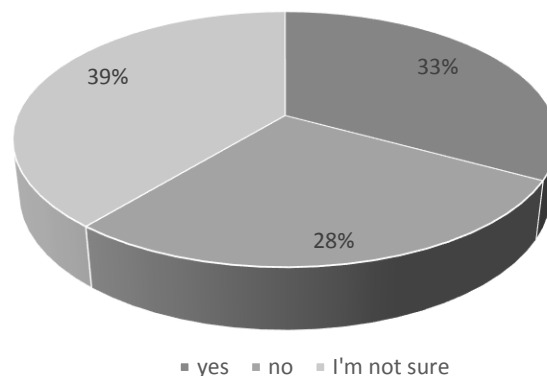
Source: own study based on conducted research.

The survey also asked respondents about the frequency with which they interact with political content on social media. This included "liking", commenting or sharing posts. The results show that users' activity in this type of interaction varies greatly. The largest number of respondents, 34.91%, rarely engage in such activities, which may indicate occasional interest or limited willingness to publicly express opinions on political topics. 29.25% of respondents never interact with political content on social media. This may suggest a lack of interest or a conscious decision to avoid politics on social media. On the other hand, 19.81% of participants often interact, showing regular interest in the topic. The fewest people answered that they very often interact with political content (16.04% of respondents). This answer may indicate the strong involvement of this group in current political discussions.

The next question determined how often respondents engage in following candidates' political profiles on social media. The largest number of respondents, 34.91%, responded that they rarely follow political profiles. This may indicate limited interest in politics or selective engagement only when the subject seems important to them. "Never" was indicated by 32.08%, or 34 respondents. This answer may be a clear signal that this group avoids politics on social

media for various reasons. 24.53% of people responded that they follow political profiles on social media, but only during the election campaign. This answer confirms seasonal interest in politics. On the other hand, the fewest, only 9 people, responded that they regularly follow candidates' political profiles. This is the group that is most involved in political events. However, this question clearly shows that most respondents engage in following political profiles sporadically or not at all.

Respondents were also asked whether they had ever noticed false information about candidates or elections on social media platforms (fig. 4). One third of respondents answered this question affirmatively, which may indicate, on the one hand, a fairly high awareness of the presence of disinformation and fake news in the area of social media. On the other hand, this may have a negative impact on the perception of social media as a place of credible information. 28.30% of respondents stated that they had never noticed false information about candidates or elections. On the other hand, the largest number of respondents, 38.68%, are not sure whether they have encountered information in social media that was or could be false. From the answers provided, it can be concluded that the problem of false information in social media is significant and affects a large number of users. Almost one third of respondents are aware of manipulation and disinformation, and almost 40% of people are not sure about the authenticity of the information they have come across.



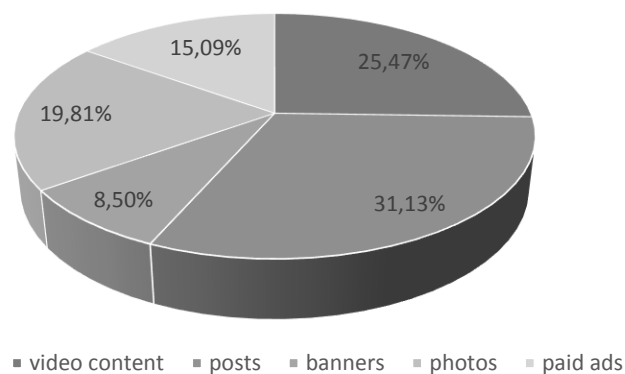
**Figure 4.** Awareness of fake news on social media.

Source: own study based on conducted research.

The survey also asked whether respondents believed that social media should be more closely monitored during election campaigns. 48.11% of participants did not have a firm opinion on the subject. This may indicate that the indecision in this case may result from a lack of full understanding of the consequences of monitoring social media, especially during election campaigns, and what consequences it may entail. On the other hand, 29.25% of respondents did not support tightening monitoring. In this case, respondents may believe that stricter regulations could violate freedom of speech or limit the freedom to express opinions. The fewest, 22.64% of respondents, were in favor of increased supervision. And here we may be dealing with people who may be concerned about the potential impact of disinformation and

manipulation on elections. Therefore, they tend to support more stringent regulations in social media.

The next question concerned the type of electoral content in social media that most attracts the attention of respondents (fig. 5). The largest number of people (31.13%) indicated posts as the most engaging type of content. Text or graphic posts can effectively attract attention thanks to their direct message and ease of interaction. 25.47% of respondents prefer video content. It is worth emphasizing that this format, especially in the digital era, is very attractive due to its dynamics and the ability to convey complex information in an accessible way. In third place were photos published in social media, this option was indicated by 19.81% of respondents. The visual presentation of information can be a strong magnet for the electorate. 15.09% of respondents pay attention to paid advertisements. Although they are often perceived negatively, they can effectively reach a large group of recipients with a precisely tailored message. In last place were banners, which were indicated by 8.49% of respondents. Currently, it is a less popular form of content, but it still finds its supporters who primarily value its visual appeal and conciseness of the message.

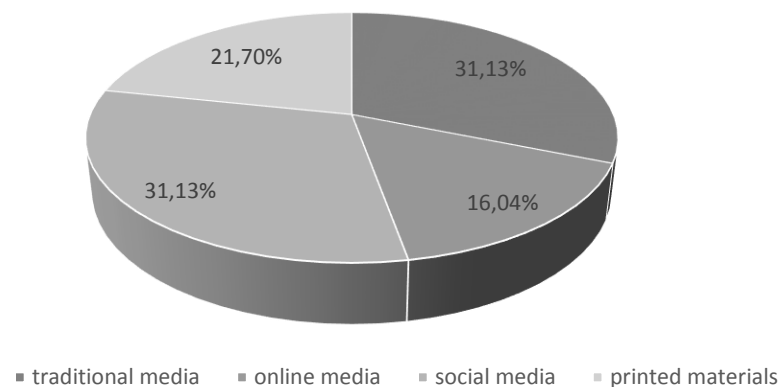


**Figure 5.** Social Media Electoral Content Preferences.

Source: own study based on conducted research.

In the next question, respondents were asked whether they believed that candidates presented themselves authentically on social media. As many as 38.68% of respondents answered negatively, claiming that candidates presenting themselves on social media are not authentic. On this basis, it can be concluded that candidates often create their images in a way that serves to gain popularity or votes, and does not reflect their true attitudes and beliefs. In turn, 33.02% of respondents believe that candidates present themselves authentically. This group perceives candidates' communication as credible and believes that information posted on social media is reliable and true. The answer "hard to say" was "difficult to say" by 28.30% of participants. In this case, the indicated group may have difficulty in clearly determining whether presentations and content posted on social media are authentic. Indecision may result from a lack of sufficient information or difficulties in assessing the authenticity of information posted by candidates on social media.

In the last question, respondents were asked where they get information about the current election campaign from. The largest number of respondents, 62.26% of respondents, indicated “Traditional media” and “Social media” as their main sources of information. This indicates that both traditional and modern content channels have a strong position in transmitting political news. This also indicates the complexity of the media landscape in which we live. The next place was taken by “Printed media (leaflets, posters, billboards)”, indicated by 21.70% of respondents. This means that despite digitalization, traditional methods of communication still have their place, especially in local election campaigns (fig. 6).



**Figure 6.** Sources of information about the election campaign among respondents.

Source: own study based on conducted research.

### 4.3. Interview with the candidate and the election team

The first question was whether artificial intelligence was used in Piotr Borys's election campaign. The answer was yes. The campaign team used AI technology in various aspects of the election campaign.

The next question was of a clarifying nature and concerned the areas in which artificial intelligence was used in the campaign. Piotr Borys's staff used AI in the following areas:

- video editing, which sped up the video content production process,
- Descript was used to transcribe text from video and add subtitles to reels,
- AI-generated voiceover database from ElevenLabs was used to create narration in various types of campaign spots and materials that were broadcast on the candidate's social media,
- ChatGPT was occasionally used to generate posts for social media; this tool was also used to correct the content of individual posts, including appropriate hashtags and emoticons.

The next question concerned what AI-based tools the candidate's campaign team used. The Descript program was most often used during the campaign, which was primarily used to transcribe text from video materials. Then, subtitles were automatically generated for short video forms, such as Facebook reels. Automatic subtitle generation increased the accessibility

and comprehensibility of the content for a wider audience. The possibilities offered by the ElevenLabs program were also used several times. This is a database of AI-generated narrators. All you need to do is enter the desired text and select the appropriate narrator, and within a few minutes you have a ready audio file. Thanks to this technology, it was possible to create professional narrations for election films, which increased the quality and attractiveness of the video materials. As the candidate's campaign team emphasized, this program first of all saved a lot of time and money. During the campaign, ChatGPT from OpenAI was also used to generate posts for social media. In this case, AI helped create engaging content, which contributed to increased interaction and engagement of the recipients.

The candidate and his campaign team were asked whether and what benefits they had noticed from using artificial intelligence in the election campaign. In response to this question, the most important thing was increased efficiency and speed. AI significantly sped up the processes of video editing, transcription and adding subtitles, which allowed for faster publishing of content. The greater professionalism of the published content was also emphasized, here as an example the generation of voice-overs by ElevenLabs, which ensured high quality of narration in video materials. The last issue that the candidate's campaign team paid particular attention to was the automation of creating posts, which allowed for better adaptation of messages to recipients, which translated into their greater engagement.

The final question asked whether the candidate and his campaign team intend to continue or expand the use of AI in future election campaigns. The answer was yes. Piotr Borys' campaign team expressed interest in continuing and expanding the use of AI in future election campaigns. There are plans to continue experimenting with AI tools to further increase the efficiency and effectiveness of their marketing activities.

## 5. Discussion

The conducted research yielded results confirming the conclusions formulated by other authors, according to which contemporary election campaigns effectively use social media and artificial intelligence in creating candidates' image and influencing voters' opinions. This also confirms the thesis that *AI is actively used by candidates in local government campaigns to personalize communication and analyze election data, which contributes to increasing the effectiveness of their election activities* (T2). It has not been unequivocally confirmed that the use of new technologies by election staff raises voters' concerns; the results obtained, for example, in terms of the level of trust in published content indicate a significant polarization of society. Therefore, the first thesis (T1) cannot be confirmed either, because social media obviously have an impact on the perception of the candidate, but it cannot be stated that this is a "significant" impact and influencing the electoral decision.

The main research objective was to assess how social media and artificial intelligence affect the effectiveness of election campaigns in the local context and how these technologies can be used to improve political communication and citizen engagement. By understanding these mechanisms, the work aims to contribute to the theory and practice of modern political campaigning methods and their impact on local democracy.

The study is not without limitations, it concerns only one election campaign of a specific candidate in local elections in Poland; in order to verify the obtained results, further research could be conducted on the comparison of campaigns of other candidates at the same level of power, other levels of power, or even the comparison of campaigns of candidates from different countries.

## 6. Summary

The survey conducted yields interesting conclusions. Over 55% of people using the internet spend 1 to 4 hours a day on social media. This shows that most respondents spend a significant part of the day browsing content on social media. In addition, 56.60% of respondents confirmed that certain information posted on social media influences their voting decisions. Additionally, 44.34% of respondents trust information about candidates on social media. Respondents indicated posts and video materials as the most engaging content on social media. This is a clear signal to campaign teams and individual candidates that social media is a powerful tool for attracting voters' attention. Adopting an appropriate strategy for running an online campaign, or more precisely, in social media, can bring candidates tangible benefits.

It is worth emphasizing that the candidate used two separate fan pages (on Facebook) for election agitation: public and private, which could have caused some confusion among voters, because of different content, which could have led to disorientation and made it difficult to clearly perceive the election message. Such a strategy could, on the one hand, increase the reach of messages, but on the other hand, blur the coherence of the message, which is key to building a clear image of the candidate. A serious mistake was also to conduct the campaign at different times on both profiles. The campaign on the private profile began after the announcement of running in the elections on December 19, 2023, while the campaign on the public profile did not start until mid-February. Analyzing the content posted on social media, Piotr Borys's campaign team focused on publishing video materials and typical posts reporting on events from the election campaign, based on text and photo coverage. The main conclusion is that there was too little diverse content on social media. Only four podcasts and a few live broadcasts were definitely not enough. There was no possibility of asking questions to the candidate during live sessions on Facebook and more live reports from various types of events organized during the campaign. Another big mistake was posting several posts with similar content in a single



day, in short intervals, e.g. three video materials in a row. This led to a decrease in the reach of published posts. There was also a lack of interaction in comments with voters, including responding to posted comments.

On the candidate's Facebook profile, the so-called election-related materials enjoyed great interest from the audience. Posts about the candidate's life, for example a post in which the candidate played sports (running), generated a very large number of likes, shares and comments. Unfortunately, this type of content was posted very rarely. It is worth considering publishing posts about the candidate's life more often, thanks to which potential voters could get to know him better. They could see what he likes to do in his free time, whether he likes cooking, eating out, whether he prefers going to the cinema or the theatre, etc. There was also a lack of showing the campaign from behind the scenes. Posts and videos from backstage, such as the candidate's verbal blunders, moments before meetings with voters, or preparations for important speeches, could add authenticity and increase the audience's engagement. Such content helps build a bond with voters by showing the human side of the candidate and the hardships and challenges associated with running a campaign.

Despite the fact that Facebook enjoyed the greatest interest during the election, the candidate did not use the full potential of social media. Platforms such as TikTok, YouTube or Twitter (X), which could also attract a significant number of voters, were almost completely omitted. Each of these platforms offers unique opportunities to reach different audiences and amplify the election message. Apart from Facebook, content was published only on Instagram. Unfortunately, these were not unique materials, but the same ones that had previously appeared on Facebook. In total, the candidate posted 53 posts during the 112 days of the campaign, which is an average of 0.47 posts per day. This is definitely not enough to maintain constant engagement and interest of voters.

TikTok, with its short and dynamic videos, could help reach younger voters who often prefer quick and visually engaging content. YouTube, as the world's second largest search engine, offers the possibility of publishing longer videos that can provide an in-depth presentation of the candidate's campaign platform and achievements. Twitter (X), with its dynamic and direct form of communication, could be used for ongoing interaction with voters and quick response to campaign events. Integrated and thoughtful use of these platforms could significantly increase campaign reach and voter engagement, which is key to building a strong and coherent image of the candidate.

To maintain consistent voter engagement, it is recommended to increase the frequency of posting to at least 1-2 posts per day across all of the candidate's social media platforms during the election campaign. Regular and frequent posting will help to keep voters engaged and engaged, which is crucial for a successful election campaign. It is also important to create unique content across different social media platforms. Posting original content on each platform can attract a diverse audience and significantly increase the reach of your campaign. Expanding your presence on other social media platforms such as TikTok, YouTube,

and Twitter (X) is the next step. These platforms offer unique features that can be used to reach a wider group of voters and increase the visibility of your campaign. It is also recommended to increase interaction with voters by actively responding to comments, hosting live Q&A sessions, and engaging in discussions across platforms. Such interactions can significantly strengthen the bond with voters and build trust. Another important step is to increase the diversity of the content you post.

Another important issue is the use of paid advertising in social media. Piotr Borys and his team, as shown in this work, used this promotional tool, which provided the published content with measurable benefits, in the form of greater reach, more views and increased interaction with recipients. It is recommended to continue using paid advertising, e.g. Facebook Ads, which, above all, will allow for increased reach and visibility, the possibility of precise targeting and analysis and optimization possibilities practically in real time.

Finally, it is recommended to regularly analyze the results of publications on various platforms and adjust the strategy in order to maximize the engagement and effectiveness of the campaign. Continuous monitoring and optimization of activities will allow for better adaptation of the campaign to the needs and expectations of voters, which in turn will translate into better election results.

It is worth emphasizing that Piotr Borys's campaign team used various AI-based tools during the election campaign. However, they focused primarily on helping to create video materials for social media, and were occasionally used to generate post content. However, AI could be better used during the campaign, including for analyzing election data, personalizing messages, automating responses to comments, creating newsletters, e-mail marketing, generating videos, images, and graphics, and optimizing advertising campaigns. The candidate should consider integrating modern AI tools into his campaign to increase the effectiveness of his activities and better respond to the needs of voters. It is recommended to continue and expand the use of AI in future campaigns, especially in areas that have not been intensively used so far.

Candidates must constantly analyze their environment and follow new trends in online marketing. Creating an image in social media requires constant adaptation to changing user preferences. In addition, the election team should focus more and more attention on the use of artificial intelligence in the election campaign. Thanks to automation, AI can save time and money and significantly facilitate and accelerate contact with potential voters, which is crucial for an effective and modern election campaign.

## References

1. Balcerzyk, D., Czainska, K. (2024). Trust in Artificial Intelligence and the 5.0 leadership. In: I.M.M. El Emary, A. Brzozowska, P. Maśloch (Eds.), *Digital Synergy: Innovative Approaches of Management in ICT Era* (pp. 94-100). Boca Raton: CRC Press Taylor & Francis Group.
2. Balcerzyk, D., Žukovskis, J. (2024). Determinants of managerial competencies in the Leadership ecosystem 5.0. *Silesian University of Technology Scientific Papers. Organization & Management Series. no. 191*, pp 27-40, doi: 10.29119/1641-3466.2024.191.2.
3. Bankowicz, M. (1996). *Słownik polityki*. Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna.
4. Deng, J., Lin, Y. (2023). The Benefits and Challenges of ChatGPT: An Overview. *Frontiers in Computing and Intelligent Systems*. Retrieved from: <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/The-Benefits-and-Challenges-of-ChatGPT%3A-An-Overview-Deng-Lin/57be0eee785bbfd669c1f51e9a3681105b7f82be>
5. Digital (2023). *Digital 2023 – najnowszy raport dotyczący Internetu w Polsce*. Retrieved from: <https://www.znajdzreklame.pl/blog/kampanie-internetowe/digital-2023-najnowszy-raport-dotyczacy-internetu-w-polsce/>
6. Grusell, M., Nord, L. (2023). Not so intimate Instagram: Images of Swedish political party leaders in the 2018 national election campaign. *Journal of Political Marketing*, 22(2), pp. 92-107, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15377857.2020.1841709>.
7. Hartliński, M. (2012). *Przywództwo polityczne*. Olsztyn: Instytut Nauk Politycznych Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego w Olsztynie.
8. Leszczuk-Fiedziukiewicz, A. (2011). Internet jako narzędzie kreowania wizerunku polityka. *Nowe Media*, no. 2, pp. 31-54. <https://doi.org/10.12775/NM.2011.002>.
9. Park, P.S., Goldstein, S., O’Gara, A., Chen, M., Hendrycks, D. (2024). AI deception: A survey of examples, risks, and potential solutions. *Patterns*, 5(5), pp. 1-16. doi: 10.1016/j.patter.2024.100988.
10. Perlof, R.M. (1998). *Political Communication. Politics Press and Public in America*. New Jersey/ London: Routledge.
11. Sielski, J. (2011b). Liderzy partyjni we współczesnych polskich partiach politycznych. In: K. Kowalczyk (Ed.), *Partie i system partyjny III RP*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek.
12. Sielski, J. (2011) Teoretyczne ujęcie przywództwa politycznego. Studium przypadku – Polska. In: W. Konarski, A. Durska, S. Bachrynowski (Eds.), *Kryzys przywództwa we współczesnej polityce* (pp. 147-160). Warszawa: SWPS „Academica”.

13. Stoppel, A. (2020). *Nowe Media w Polityce na przykładzie kampanii prezydenckich w Polsce w latach 1995-2015*. Poznań: FNCE.
14. Swianiewicz, P. (2024). *Radnych gminnych portret własny (na tle europejskim)*. Łódź: Narodowy Instytut Samorządu Terytorialnego. Retrieved from: [https://archiwum.nist.gov.pl/files/texts/4787\\_17254554962053.pdf](https://archiwum.nist.gov.pl/files/texts/4787_17254554962053.pdf)