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SOCIAL MEDIA AS PART OF THE POLITICIANS' COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

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The growing popularity of the use of social networking sites has significantly transformed political crisis communication. Social networks have reduced the distance between politicians and the audience, created new forms of political presence. Today, politicians use social networks not only to campaign but also to build a positive business reputation and assess their popularity. Social platforms also expand the capabilities of the audience, which has the opportunity not only to perceive political messages but also to correct them by expressing their views on a situation. Social media has narrowed the communication gap between the politician and the audience, increasing the importance of each participant in the political debate. Unlike traditional media, social media allows politicians to address voters directly. The possibility of two-way communication provides feedback, which is an important criterion for effective communication. The fragmentation of today's audience requires politicians to create unique messages to get the necessary feedback from each user group. Social media allows politicians to maximize audience segmentation and shape a unique communication strategy for each group. Informality and personality of communication in social media blur the boundaries between the participants of communication and emotionally bring politics closer to the audience. Ongoing audience communication helps to build long-term relationships between politicians and the electorate. Blogs, microblogs, social networks, photo, and video sharing portals provide politicians with new opportunities to attract and mobilize their supporters. However, the active use of social networks in political communication increases the risk of a crisis, as politicians lose absolute control over the information disseminated on their behalf. The

availability of information on social networks complicates the process of forming and maintaining a positive image of politicians. Therefore, interactive means of disseminating information require politicians to be as honest and open as possible. The crisis in the political sphere can be caused by both internal and external factors. Social media also serves as a platform for competitive attacks, which is greatly facilitated by the possibility of anonymous dissemination of information. At the same time, the latest media are an effective tool for overcoming the crisis. They allow the collection and dissemination of information on a large scale, involving the public in creating a unique scheme of anti-crisis measures.

Politicians today are quite active in using a socially mediated model of crisis communication. Systemic communication significantly increases the loyalty of the audience and provides politicians with the necessary credit of trust for an effective way out of a crisis.

To identify the features of communication strategies in the political sphere, we propose to analyze the profiles of key politicians in the social networks Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, which are the most popular in the Global Index 2021 [1].

According to research by Burson-Marsteller [2], a global public relations organization, 87 heads of state, 70 prime ministers, and 55 foreign ministers have profiles on Facebook.

Barack Obama is considered the first political leader to move political communication into the social media space. Today on his official Facebook page he has 57 094 341 followers, on Twitter – 590 594, on Instagram – 34 950 128. The peculiarity of political communication is the high level of informality and the presence of an emotional message.

The Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi is building an active communication strategy with the audience on social networks. The politician has 46 015 840 followers on Facebook, 69 555 58 – on Twitter, and 56 838 183 on Instagram. A feature of his communication with the audience is the distribution of "behind-the-scenes" photos, which emotionally bring politics closer to users of social networks. In addition, Narendra Modi publishes family photos on his pages, which significantly humanizes his image. The Prime Minister's profiles on social media combine family stories with charitable and political activities. During the escalation of relations with neighboring Pakistan in 2015, Modi did not turn to traditional media, focusing on establishing communication through social media – Twitter. In this way, the politician demonstrated maximum transparency and openness to the public.

Donald Trump, the former President of the United States, also actively uses social networks in his professional activities. The politician has 32 831

755 followers on Facebook, and 24 041 760 followers on Instagram. But his account on Twitter has been suspended in January 2021, because of the permanent rules violation. Before that, we could see the highest level of activity on the politician's Twitter page. Donald Trump is known for sharp and scandalous tweets, which sometimes contain criticism and dissatisfaction of politicians with a particular situation. The president's communication strategy on social networks is a logical continuation of his political image. Impulsiveness, sharpness, and intemperance are necessary components of the politician's socio-media image. Actively using emotions, Donald Trump demonstrated his maximum closeness to the people.

Donald Trump also demonstrated that the social media Instagram can be a political tool. Initially, the politician used the network for personal publications, distributing family photos. In 2015, he used a social platform to spread political advertising against his opponent Jeb Bush. After Donald Trump was elected as the President of the United States, he took personal control of the White House's official Instagram page and turned it into a tool for building his political image.

In December 2017, information appeared on the Internet about Donald Trump's accusations of sexual harassment. On NBC, the women shared stories about the harassment of the current US president. Similar accusations were made against the politician during the election campaign but were not actively spread on social media. After the TV program was released, Donald Trump posted a post-response to the accusations on his social media page, saying that the news was completely fabricated by opposition political forces. We consider the crisis to be imminent, as similar accusations have been made before. The incumbent President has chosen a strategy of denial and reduction that is characteristic of his crisis response. Although the strategy is not effective in most cases, it is part of the general socio-media behavior of the politician and therefore does not cause a wave of public outrage.

Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, also uses social networks in his professional activities. In China's largest social network, Sina Weibo, the politician's first post went viral, garnering about 300,000 likes and 48,000 comments. Since then, Xi Jinping has published only official messages. In addition, he banned the use of the image of Winnie the Pooh on social media due to the possible similarities between the character and the politician, thus demonstrating that social media platforms can be a mirror of the country's political regime [3].

Jordan's Queen Rania al-Abdullah is actively using social media to create a personal brand. It positions itself as one of the most famous consorts in the world. The Queen has 17 365 814 followers on Facebook, 10 436 009

on Twitter, and 6 378 098 on Instagram. The Daily British Telegraph called the woman "the virtual queen of Jordan." On social media, Rania al-Abdallah regularly distributes publications, sharing with the audience moments from his personal life. She also organized an online political campaign to fight for women's rights. The growing number of supporters of the Queen demonstrates that social media is an effective tool for building a personal brand.

Thus, key politicians today are increasingly using social media to build long-term public relations. In general, we can identify the following trends in the use of social networks by politicians:

- the presence of an emotional message as a tool to attract attention;
- humanization of the image through the publication of moments from personal life;
- informality of communication to get closer to the audience;
- the use of social networks as a tool for building a personal image.

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