

The Use of New Media in Electoral Campaigns: Analysis on the Use of Blogs, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube in the 2009 Romanian Presidential Campaign

Paul Adrian APARASCHIVEI¹

The National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest

E-mail: paul.aparaschivei@infopolitic.ro

Abstract: *The use of new media and social media as tools of political and electoral communication represent a field not yet fully explored by the Romanian researchers. This paper aims to observe and analyse, using a systematical and empirical approach, to what extent the Romanian politicians have used their blogs, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube accounts in the most recent presidential race. The premise from which the research started is that the Romanian presidential candidates have included social media in their communicational strategy only as a mechanical reaction to the spectacular development of these networks. The paper aims at identifying to what extent we could speak of a winner of the presidential elections in the online environment, from the perspective of consistently sustained communication on the four online platforms (Facebook, Twitter, personal blog and YouTube) or, on the contrary, if no candidate for presidential elections had benefited from an integrated communication campaign on the Internet to set him apart from other political competitors.*

Keywords: *new media, social media, online political communication*

1 Beneficiary of the project “Doctoral Scholarships for a Sustainable Society”, co-funded by the European Union through the European Social Fund, Sectorial Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013.

I. Introduction

The emergence of the Internet and the development of new media have led to profound structural changes in the way the campaign teams of the candidates are relating to their electors. The present paper starts from a series of theoretical foundations and empirical studies which present the effects of the online political communication on the population in countries with tradition in the use of the Internet, and thus, it offers an up-to-date image of the latest theories regarding the role of the new media and their potential for the reshaping of the democratic process. In this respect, the United States of America, country acknowledged throughout the world as a benchmark in terms of political and electoral communication in the online environment, set a new example regarding the power of social networks in the promotion of a candidate in the election race in the most recent presidential elections of 2008.

Romania is no exception to the global trend of expansion of the new platforms of online communication. The increase in the number of Internet users, as well as the growth in the number of Romanians present on different online platforms were the main arguments on account of which the candidates' campaign teams in the presidential election of 2009 came up with the most diversified and integrated electoral campaign in the online environment observed so far in the democratic history of this country. The case study focuses on the first electoral context of major importance in Romania in which, apart from campaign blogs, the candidates also made use of platforms such as: Facebook, Twitter and YouTube in order to send their electoral messages.

The purpose of this research is to observe and then analyse the evolution of the online presence and activity of Romanian politicians, candidates to the presidential elections in the autumn of 2009. Consequently, an emphasis will be placed on the postings on Facebook, Twitter, personal blogs and the YouTube page of the subjects under analysis. At the same time, the case study will reveal a series of strategic and communication errors made on the Internet by the Romanian candidates running for the presidential position. At the end, this thesis will aim at discovering if one of the analysed candidates could be awarded the title of winner of the election campaign on the Internet based on their online postings.

II. Theoretical framework

The Internet user is the new decision-maker (van Dijck 2009, 42-43), self-made, able to intervene by means of the new communication platforms in the traditional relation of the type transmitter-receiver-transmitter which had existed so far between the political factor, mass media and the electorate. The 21st century brings about major changes in the power relationship between transmitter and receiver (Day 2001, 74), between the decision-maker and the doer, between the political actor and the voter (Winograd & Haise, 2008, 156-157). More and more studies and research are

talking about the influence of social networks on political attitudes and behaviour. Certain studies (Buffardi and Campbell 2008; Tufekci 2008) have tried to capture the characteristics of the users of such networks and, once the portrait of the person interacting socially through the Internet was drawn, the next step was to study the practical way in which a successful social network manages to produce visible changes in the behaviour and political preferences of its users.

There are studies that have examined the effects that the Internet has on political behaviour on a daily basis. A sociological survey conducted on a sample of 6330 young people from Belgium (Quintelier, Vissers 2009, 418-419) showed that even if they spent more time in front of a computer, young people did not get involved in political activities or discussions (88% of the respondents said that they had never forwarded emails of a political nature). Nevertheless, the study concluded that the use of blogs, reading online political news and sending emails with political content can positively influence the political participation of people offline (Idem. 424-425). In this context, it was a matter of time until the members of campaign teams introduced communication through various online platforms as part of the arsenal of campaign communication.

A. Internet Election Campaigns

In an attempt to identify the key moments in recent history when the Internet was used for political and electoral purposes, David Perlmutter (2008) identifies Bill Clinton, in his 1992 campaign, as the first candidate who had published his speech online, and “by 1994-1995, political parties, candidates, and groups were exploiting the Internet more quickly than any previous new communications technology” (Perlmutter 2008, 50). Yet, it was in the year 2000 that the Internet gained an important role in the U.S. election campaign, both in terms of the actions of the candidates and the funds raised from donations, by means of their own web pages and emailing campaigns (Bimber, Davis 2003, 28-38). Internet presence and electoral communication improved in the following years, but in the 2004 election, the campaigns of the Democrat and Republican candidates have not impressed anyone by innovations in their online communication, the two staff members preferred a traditional campaign, making use of the web page and email communication. Kaye D. Trammel and Andrew Paul Williams (2005) analysed the emailing campaign of Bush and Kerry and showed that, as far as the register of communication was concerned, both candidates used a type of direct speech, Bush in 82% of the messages sent, and Kerry in 92% of the emails. As regards interactivity, the researchers concluded that both email messaging campaigns did not come up to expectations, but insisted in pointing out that if they were to mark the viral nature of the communication, candidate Bush would be declared the winner for the simple reason that all his emails were created in an inviting manner for the readers, and also provided the readers with the opportunity to forward the message to at least five other communication actors. Thus, the campaign team anticipated a

domino effect of communication through which, eventually, they would gain a larger number of supporters. The message of support would come from friends, not the party or another entity, and would give, in this way, more credibility to the message conveyed by email (Trammel & Williams 2005, 567-568).

The year 2004 was, however, a turning point in reinventing the online election communication. During the primary elections in the U.S. a new medium emerged on the market of electoral communication channels, the political blog, which in the following years would become a “prodigy child of the web 2.0 revolution” (Sălcudeanu, Aparaschivei & Toader, 2009, 80). Used with a specific electoral aim, especially by candidate Howard Dean in the preliminary elections, the blog initially impressed by “the energy created by direct experience. Apparent awareness of an unfiltered flow of information had led the readers into believing that they took part from inside the actual event. Keeping the communication as «real» as possible has become the most attractive feature of the style of communication by means of blogs” (Lawson-Borders & Kirk 2005, 551).

David D. Perlmutter (2009) argues that only from 2006 onwards, one can speak about the predominance of the blog and other interactive social media in the political communication mechanism. These new media have largely come to the attention of the media, of politicians and common participants in the election show, reaching in 2008 the point when the question one asked was not if a team should introduce new media in the mix of electoral communication, but rather how to introduce them the most effectively so as to create a single, powerful social network that would ensure political participation on the Internet, but also in the real public space. At the same time 2008 should become, in the public perception, the year of a first attempt at turning the U.S. political blogosphere and also the entire political communication apparatus into a professional one, by the use of the Internet (Cetina 2009, 134).

In terms of online and offline involvement of the electorate, as a result of online communication, particularly because of the political blog, De Zuniga, Puig-i-Abril and Rojas (2009) brought evidence to the fact that the blog proves its importance in the online election communication mechanism, being equal in impact to the force of traditional media news on the campaign events of a candidate. Their sociological study conducted on 2,200 subjects aged over 18 years, of which 1,324 had access to the Internet, shows, at the same time, that the real potential of the blog cannot be estimated accurately. As there are more and more new social networks emerging and the blog is connected to each of them, it can become a very powerful political device, that would hold the role of nucleus in a complex network of the public sphere (De Zuniga, Puig-i-Abril & Rojas 2009, 564).

B. Web Campaigns as Sources of Electoral Funds

Dean’s staff was able to convey various feelings to the readers, by offering them, in real time, an unprecedented story of the electoral events in which he took part on

board his campaign bus, thus managing to raise approximately \$ 500,000 per day from their donations (Panagopoulos & Bergan 2009, 128; Guțu 2007, 114). The example of Howard Dean's campaign was used by Manuel Castells to illustrate the effectiveness of the Internet in a campaign (Castells 2004). He admits, however, that in the same preliminary campaign in which Dean was involved, there were other candidates who had powerful presence on the Internet, without getting the same results as those of the former governor of Vermont (Castells 2004, 371-373). The author's optimistic conclusion is that, while politics in traditional media force campaign staff members and the candidate to a sustained financial effort, the network politics represent a source of funds.

There are authors who have noticed significant changes in the attitudes of the public related to the political phenomenon and the electoral periods, in the first place as a result of the changes that have taken place in the traditional media in the last 30 years (Bartels and Rahn 2000). The Internet campaign of Barack Obama in 2008, another benchmark presented in the literature when discussing the use of online networks in the promotion of a candidate (Ford, Johnson and Maxwell 2010), is a good example which partially contradicts Castells' statement and shows that in order to gain financial capital on the Internet, the candidate is forced to resort to costly promotion actions in this medium as well. Promotion costs, although significantly reduced compared to those of traditional media, are particularly noteworthy and show a proportional relationship between investment in the Internet presence and the "profitability" of the investment, understood on the one hand as donations and activists, and won votes on the Internet, on the other.

Compared with John McCain, whose campaign of online promotion throughout 2008 cost 3.6 million dollars, the online advertising purchased by Barack Obama's staff cost 16 million dollars (Kaye 2009). We were witness to a process of "digital sales" of the candidate, based initially on an unprecedented marketing research effort in the history of electoral campaigns on the Internet (Kreiss 2009, 13). On the other hand, if we refer to the effects of this campaign in terms of online political participation of the American citizens, we see that 2008 represented only an intermediate stage in which ordinary citizens participated in relatively small numbers in the online political debate (only 10% and 8% of U.S. Internet users published information and political comments on the social networks, or blogs) (Fuchs 2008, 97).

C. The Context of New Media in Romania

At the time of the writing of this paper (March 2011), Romania was, in the European rankings of Internet users provided by Internet World Stats (internetworldstats.com), in the 9th position with 7.8 million Internet users and penetration rate of 35.5%. Belgium was in front of Romania with 8 million users, and the Czech Republic was a place behind, in the 10th position, with 6.7 million users. In the autumn of 2009 there were 7.4 million Internet users in this country. As far as the rate of Internet usage by

Romanians is concerned, a report regarding the Digital Agenda of the EU written by the European Commission shows that less than 30% of the Romanians Internet users indeed use the Internet daily. In this regard, there is a continuous decrease, evident in the last year's daily rate of use of the Internet. Also, the Romanians' level of digital skills is not well developed "compared with countries such as Denmark, Holland and Iceland, where over 80% of the population have digital skills, in countries like Romania and Bulgaria over 60% of people do not have any kind of knowledge and skills to participate in the digital era" (Europe's Digital Competitiveness Report 2010, 47).

The evolution that Facebook has had in Romania since 2008 makes this platform the most popular social network in the country. In June 2008, there were only 8,000 active Romanian accounts on Facebook. A year later, in August 2009, the number of active accounts in Romania reached 250,000, with the mention that in March 2010 the platform crossed the threshold of 1 million accounts (www.socialbakers.com). At the time of the writing of this paper (March 2011), there are 2.95 million accounts in Romanian and gender distribution is 50-50%. In February 2010, there were over 28,000 Twitter accounts registered in Romania, according to data provided by Zelist.ro, a system that monitors the Romanian sources (online media, blogs, Twitter). At present, there are 44,000 active accounts, and according to ZeTweety a dynamic ranking was made showing the influence that Romanians who have an account on this platform have on Twitter; in May 2010 Andi Moisescu was the most influential Romanian twitter, with 6,986 "followers" (Followers) and 790 "following" (Following). The first and only Romanian politician in top 50 ZeTweety in that period was Traian Băsescu, president of Romania, who was in the 25th position, with 2,859 Followers and 14 Following (www.zelist.ro/zetweety 2011).

In order for the political blogs in Romania to be analysed, a presentation of the Romanian blogosphere is required. First and foremost, the evolution of blogging as a national phenomenon since 2005 should be taken into account. From that year onwards there were annual studies conducted by Carmen Holotescu and Cristian Manafu, who presented an estimate of the number of blogs in Romania. The first study, conducted in 2005, offered the figure of 5,000 existing blogs by that year. The second study conducted in 2006, talks about 12-14,000 Romanian blogs, but points out that among these, only a third may be considered active.

The 2007 research of the Romanian blogosphere offers important data on the number of active blogs in Romania at that time, the profile of the Romanian blogger, and the dynamics of the blogosphere and the relationship of blogs with traditional media and advertising. As a result of the monitoring of blogging platforms such as weblog.ro, Blogger, WordPress and other social networks like 360.yahoo.com, Facebook, Netlog, MySpace and hi5, the initiators of the research in 2007 considered that they could speak of 100,000 Romanian blogs. All these estimates were presented with the emphasis that 12,000 blogs were active, with a life longer than six months and with entries made several times a week. Research suggests the tripling of the

Romanian blogosphere, as compared to 2006, which showed that 2007 was the starting point of this new communication medium, adopted by an increasing number of Internet users in Romania. If, until the year 2006, we spoke about an early stage in the development of blogosphere, 2007 represents the first step in the ripening of the Romanian blogosphere. At the time of the writing of this document (March 2011) ZeList monitors more than 60,000 Romanian blogs (www.zelist.ro/monitor).

D. Political Blogosphere in Romania

A first attempt to grasp the entire political blogosphere in Romania was made at the end of 2007 and it is called Codex Politicus: the Romanian Political Blogosphere. Codex Politicus is “an overview of the Romanian political blogosphere, which reached 250 blogs. It is a direct source of information for anyone who is interested in the trends of the political discussions on the Internet. Codex is automatically renewed and includes politicians, commentators, journalists and some generic bloggers. The application is very useful for those who want to grasp the image of the Romanian political blogosphere, to discover trends and topics of interest generated by Romanian bloggers, be they politicians, journalists or ordinary people with opinions about politics.” (Mihnea Dumitru 2010). In March 2008, the top of the online presence of political parties and their representatives offered interesting data. According to these statistics, the party that ran in the top of the presence in the Romanian blogosphere was PSD (The Social Democratic Party) (38%), followed by PNL (The National Liberal Party) (22%) and PD-L (The Democratic Liberal Party) (17%). The fourth party was PNȚCD (The Christian Democratic National Peasants’ Party) (13%), while at the bottom of the top there were parties such as PC (The Conservative Party), UDMR (The Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania), PIN (The Party of National Initiative) and independent politicians, together totalling 10%. Political commentators were the most numerous members of the Romanian political blogosphere, with a percentage of 36%. In second place there were the politicians and their parties (28%), followed by journalists (20%) and generic commentators (16%), i.e. people who are interested in political issues.

The evolution of the Romanian blogosphere in recent years is observed in Mihnea Dumitru’s analysis of January 2010, also related to political blogs: “In November 2007 we had around 100 political blogs, three hours ago the figure was over 1,000 registered blogs. After several election cycles, the figures were as follows: 408 blogs of party members, of which 151 for PSD-PC, 129 for PD-L, 99 for PNL, 5 for UDMR, 20 for PNȚCD, 5 for PNG, 2 for the Green Party, 2 for PIN, 1 for PRM and 1 for the Environmentalists; 325 commentators, certain people who were not party members, but willing to comment on political issues on more than 50% of the blog entries, 150 journalists” (Mihnea Dumitru 2010). This emphasises, however, that the actual number of active blogs differs significantly from the total number of political blogs identified over time. Thus, active Romanian political blogosphere, with articles written

in the past two months, consists of only 171 blogs, out of 408, and it is as follows: 65 PSD blogs, 49 PNL, 47 PDL, 2 UDMR, 7 PNȚCD and 1 for the Green Party. The disappearance of a number of political blogs is due to the fact that, after a period of electoral pre-campaign, campaign and post-campaign, many politicians did not consider it appropriate to maintain their online presence through blogs. Nonetheless, the researcher points out that “41% of the politicians who have developed online presence for the past two years, usually even before the election campaign, have also maintained it” (Mihnea Dumitru, 2010).

To conclude, Romania’s political blogosphere is constantly changing, and any new election campaign represents at the same time a reordering of the total number of blogs belonging to politicians. The alteration in the number of political blogs has not led to substantial changes in the ranking of blogging presence of parties in Romania. PSD remained, from 2007 until June 2010, the best represented party in the blogosphere, and the second place was contested by PNL and PDL, both parties having at the time of the writing of the present paper (March 2011) a number approximately equal of active blogs, whereas the blogs of the other political parties represent almost 6% of the total number of blogs belonging to certain politicians.

III. Case study

A. The Premise and the Methodology of the Analysis

The premise that represented the foundation stone of the research was that Romanian politicians, candidates for the presidential elections had begun to use the new media mentioned above only as a mechanical reaction to their spectacular evolution, without possessing a strategy for managing their online presence in the long or medium term, during the election campaign. The paper aimed at identifying to what extent we could speak of a winner of the presidential elections in the online environment, from the perspective of consistently sustained communication on the four online platforms (Facebook, Twitter, personal blog and YouTube) or, on the contrary, if no candidate for presidential elections had benefited from an integrated communication campaign on the Internet to set him apart from other political competitors.

The subjects of investigation were Romanian politicians who ran for the position of president of Romania, who had an online presence and more than 3% of voting intention (Fig. 1) in the election polls prior to the start of the electoral campaign itself, on the 22nd October 2009 (CURS - June 2009, CCSB - July 2009, Gallup - July 2009, CSOP - August 2009, BCS - August 2009, CCSB - September 2009 and CURS - September-October 2009). The time interval on which the analysis was based is of two months and two weeks. More precisely, it is the period of electoral pre-campaign and campaign for the presidential elections in November 2009, i.e. the interval between 21st September and 6th December 2009, when the second ballot of the latest Romanian presidential elections was held. The final list of candidates

for the presidential elections included in the case study consists of: Traian Băsescu (president in office, supported by the Democratic Liberal Party), Mircea Geoană (Social Democratic Party), Crin Antonescu (National Liberal Party), Sorin Oprescu (mayor of Bucharest, independent candidate) and Kelemen Hunor (the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania).

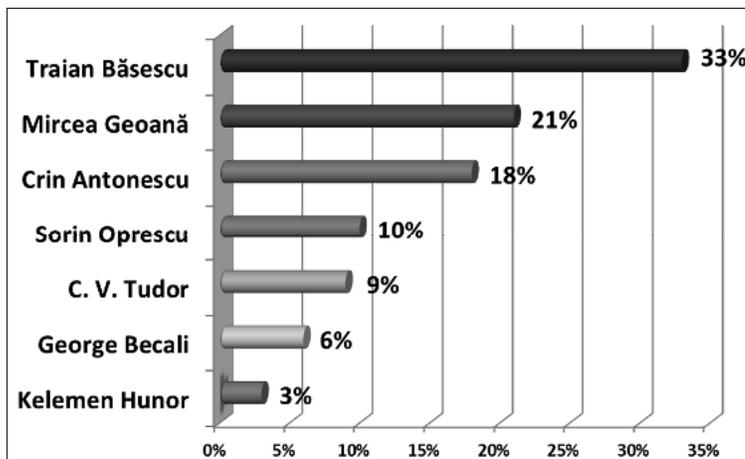


Fig. 1. The mean of vote intention in national opinion polls published during June-October 2009

The method of quantitative observation used in the case study, measured the presence and activity of the five candidates on the four online platforms. This method of research is relevant to this work because it is methodical, complete, systematic, repeatable and verifiable (Chelcea 2004). The paper made use of specially designed observation grids to be adapted to the characteristics of each online platform. The indicators included in each grid provided a clear picture of the presence and evolution of candidates at a certain time, on a particular platform.

The observation grids for the Facebook page included the following indicators: *Friends*, *Blog Entries*, *Photos*, *Photo Albums*, *Videos* and *Groups* and followed the numerical evolution of each indicator. Grids for Twitter were designed to follow the evolution of the number of *Followers*, *Following* and *Tweets* by each candidate on this platform. The activity on campaign blogs of the candidates was observed by using the grid consisting of the indicators *Blog entries* and *Comments*. Thus, it was possible to analyse the number of articles published each week by a candidate, but also the number of comments that those articles were able to get from blog visitors in key moments of the pre-campaign and electoral campaign. The grid used for analysis of the activity on the YouTube channel of the candidate aimed at quantifying indicators such as *Uploaded videos*, *Views* that each channel had on a weekly basis and the evolution in the number of *subscribers* to these channels.

B. Identification of General Aspects

Not all candidates were equally active in terms of maintaining a constant presence on Facebook during this period, as well as the fact that no candidate managed to be the best for all the indicators observed in this category of our analysis. It should be noted that the Facebook page of Traian Băsescu had not been officially recognised neither by the Romanian president, nor any member of his campaign staff, and it did not appear on the candidate's official site or on other official pages of PDL. Nevertheless, this page was active throughout the entire period of the campaign as a virtual meeting and communication space for all supporters of Traian Băsescu and the account administrator sent electoral pro-Băsescu messages through this page.

In terms of total number of friends, Crin Antonescu was top of the rankings from the start of the period under analysis (1,085 friends) until the first ballot (2,821 friends) and right immediately after the second election ballot (3,479 friends). Ranked second in this top was Sorin Oprescu, who although started on the 21st September from the last positions in the ranking (175 friends) managed to gain friends and to outrun Mircea Geoană by the end of October (1373 friends), so that, by first ballot, he managed to accumulate 2,324 friends and, at the end of second ballot, he had 2,596 friends. The holder of the third place in this ranking is Mircea Geoană who, in spite of his early presence on Facebook, as a result of which he reached a number of 867 friends at the end of September, counted for the first ballot on a number of 1,794 friends, and had 2,385 friends at the end of the second ballot. In fourth place came Traian Băsescu, with 405 friends, identified at the beginning of the analysis and 1,746 friends, respectively 2,065 friends around the 22nd November and 6th December. The Facebook page of Kelemen Hunor managed to pull together for the first ballot 282 friends, and at the end of the scrutinised period there were 322 friends identified as belonging to the UDMR candidate.

The ranking changes when it comes to the number of messages that the candidates for presidential elections launched on Facebook. Kelemen Hunor leads the ranking, totalling 37% (217 posts) of the total of messages sent by the candidates on Facebook. In the second place there is Sorin Oprescu, with 152 posts (26%), followed by Mircea Geoană - 133 posts (22%). Crin Antonescu is in the 4th position with 56 posts (9%) submitted until the 22nd November and in the last position Traian Băsescu, with 38 messages, i.e. 6% of the total entries on the Facebook accounts of the candidates under analysis.

The two week period between the two ballots showed a reversal in the rankings above. Thus, for the chapter messages sent through Facebook, Mircea Geoană goes first, with 86 of the messages sent on this platform in the last two weeks of the campaign, which represents 89% of the total number of messages sent by all candidates on Facebook during this period. The second place is occupied by Crin Antonescu, who by means of the six messages conveyed in those days accumulated 6% of the total posts, and the third position is held by Traian Băsescu, with 4 blog entries and 4% of

all posts. It is worth mentioning that Kelemen Hunor, the most active candidate in the first ballot on this platform, at least in terms of number of messages sent, submitted in the period between the two ballots only one single message to his friends.

In terms of ranking candidates by the number of photos uploaded on this platform, first place belong to Mircea Geoană with 397 out of 1,006 photos uploaded until the 7th December, followed by Kelemen Hunor with 372, and Sorin Oprescu with 141 photos. Crin Antonescu had 61 campaign photos and Traian Băsescu had 35 campaign photos, representing place 4 or 5 in this ranking. Video indicator places Kelemen Hunor on top of the list again, who appears the most frequently in videos on Facebook; from his pages there were links sent to 36 of the 52 video files identified as belonging to the candidates throughout the research. The UDMR candidate was followed by Mircea Geoană with 7 videos and Crin Antonescu with 5. Băsescu's page presented 3 videos that showed him holding office as president, and Sorin Oprescu's page showed the independent candidate in a single video. A preliminary conclusion regarding media content consisting of photos and video clips shows that, out of the total of photographs belonging to the candidates running for presidency in Romania, more than a third belonged to Mircea Geoană, and another third to Kelemen Hunor. Also Kelemen Hunor has reasons of pride as he posted on his webpage more than half of all videos uploaded on Facebook among the accounts of presidential election candidates of 2009.

The monitored activity on Twitter presents us with a different ranking of the most efficient candidates, according to which the followers they were able to attract during the pre-campaign and election campaign. The winning presence on this platform belonged to Traian Băsescu. The initial account belonging apparently to Romania's president ("basescu") disappeared after the 12th October, but in the week of 13th - 23rd November the campaign team of the President presented the official Twitter account "tbasescu". This microblogging page managed in a relatively short period of time, less than a month, to gather 1,973 people (45% of the followers of all candidates).

Second and third positions in this ranking were occupied, with a difference of only two followers, by Crin Antonescu (807 followers) and Mircea Geoană (805 followers). The ranking is completed by Sorin Oprescu with 550 followers and Kelemen Hunor with 108 people who read his 140-character entries on Twitter. The ranking based on people that the above mentioned candidates followed undergo important changes. In the first place when it comes to this indicator is Sorin Oprescu, a candidate following through his Twitter account 1,360 people, representing 58% of the total of all people followed by all candidates. The second place is occupied by Mircea Geoană, following 805 people (35%) and the third place is occupied by Kelemen Hunor, following 78 people with an account on Twitter. Crin Antonescu with 72 people followed (3%) and Traian Băsescu with the 14 people followed (less than 1%) complete the ranking.

Regarding the distribution of candidates by the number of "tweets" posted on Twitter, we have two top leaders, one before and one after the first ballot, on the 22nd November. Kelemen Hunor is top of the list, owing to the 155 messages (37% of all

messages sent by the presidential candidates on Twitter) submitted by the end of the first ballot. The PSD candidate, Mircea Geoană, ranks second with 111 posts (26%), most of which were sent after the first ballot, while the third place is occupied by Sorin Oprescu, a candidate who published 94 short entries (22%). The top is completed by Crin Antonescu with 41 posts (10%), respectively Traian Băsescu with 23 posts (5%). Between the two ballots of elections there was a sudden reversal in the ranking mentioned above. In the two weeks of the election campaign the candidates (former candidates or those still holding the battle) sent 99 messages on Twitter out of which 81 (82%) belonged to Mircea Geoană. Traian Băsescu has published 16 posts (16% of the total), and Crin Antonescu published two messages, the equivalent of 2% of the total electoral tweets of the analysed period.

The candidates' activity on the blog (Fig. 2) may be summarised broadly as follows: 150 entries posted on personal pages, to which the candidates received a total of 4,184 comments from readers. It should be mentioned that among candidates of the present analysis, the only one who did not have a personal blog during the election campaign was Traian Băsescu. The president of Romania will therefore be removed from all data related to the activity of candidates on their blogs during the election campaign.

The average of the posts submitted weekly by each candidate is 3.4. Sorin Oprescu's blog differentiated from the blogs of other candidates in terms of number of articles, on his blog there were 91 entries published, out of 150 identified in the period between September and the 7th December 2009. Over 60% of the blog entries belonged to the mayor of Bucharest, candidate in the election campaign. It is interesting to note that the 91 articles were published in a relatively short period of time, one month, between 21st October and 22nd November 2009. Sorin Oprescu's blog was followed by that of the candidate Mircea Geoană (37 articles, 25% of all blogs entries of the candidates) and that of Crin Antonescu (18 articles, equivalent to 12% of the total of articles). The UDMR candidate, Kelemen Hunor, published on his personal blog 3 articles throughout the analysed period. It should also be noted that the only candidates who published articles after the first ballot of elections were Mircea Geoană (7 entries) and Crin Antonescu (2 articles published shortly after the 22nd November).

The interest stirred among readers by the articles of the candidates can be seen in the evolution and distribution of the number of comments received by each candidate. The calculated average of 27.8 comments per article does not apply, as we shall see below, to the entries of all candidates. Thus, a ranking of candidates' blogs by number of comments received during the entire period of observation places on very close positions two candidates: Mircea Geoană (1,869 comments, 44.7% out of the total, an average of 50.5 comments per entry) and Crin Antonescu (1,843 comments, 44% out of the total, an average of 102 comments per entry). Sorin Oprescu's blog, in spite of the fact that he had the most published articles, totalled 448 comments (10.7% out of the total, with an average of 4.9 comments per item). As regards the response received by Kelemen Hunor on his blog, his entries had 24 comments (0.6% out of the total) and an average of 8 comments for each article published.

The presence of the candidates on YouTube (Fig. 3) evolved positively in the pre-campaign and election campaign period. Thus, if on the 21st September there were a total of 27 election video clips on all the channels of the candidates, at the end of the observation period, their number reached 410 videos uploaded. The number of total views multiplied by the end of the campaign by 15, all the video clips of candidates having been viewed by 30,616 people. YouTube channels managed to create a community around them. Thus, if at the beginning of the analysed period there were, in total, 65 subscribers to all channels, at the end of the observation period 567 Romanians had made the decision to subscribe to the video content of the candidates for the presidential elections.

There are, in the case of YouTube, positive examples of politicians who, on the one hand had a sustained activity on their own channel, with a large number of video and who, on the other hand, managed to attract a very high number of views of the campaign videos. As regards the total number of videos uploaded onto YouTube, Sorin Oprescu and Mircea Geoană are set apart by one single video. The independent candidate had at the end of the second ballot of elections 112 video clips (27%) and the PSD candidate had 111 (27%). The ranking is completed by Crin Antonescu, with 77 entries (19%), the Liberal being followed by Traian Băsescu (61 entries, 15%) and Kelemen Hunor (49 entries, 12%).

For the category total views, the ranking suffers again significant changes. Thus, Traian Băsescu's channel is top of the list as far as efficiency is concerned due to the 17,487 views (57% out of the total views). He is followed by Crin Antonescu, the Liberal candidate's videos were viewed for 7,498 times (24% out of the total) and by Mircea Geoană with 4,147 views (14% out of the total). Kelemen Hunor's channel ranks 4th according to the total views, with 1,303 people (4% out of the total) and Sorin Oprescu is the last position, with 181 views (0.6% out of the total). The same order is maintained when we talk about the number of subscribers that these channels attracted: Traian Băsescu - 53 subscribers, Crin Antonescu - 35 subscribers, Mircea Geoană - 8 subscribers, Kelemen Hunor - 2 subscribers and Sorin Oprescu - 1 subscriber.

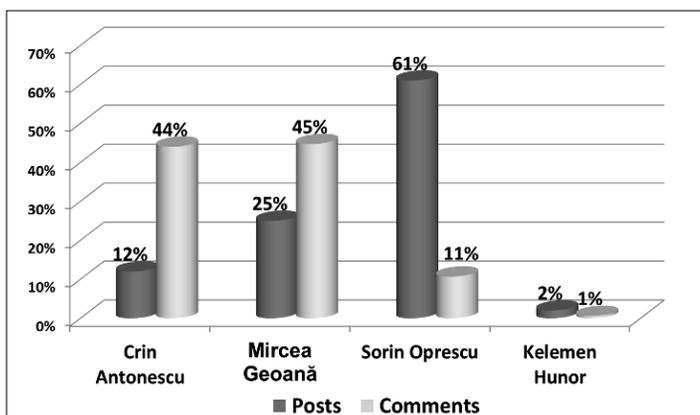


Fig. 2. The ratio of blog posts and comments of the Romanian presidential candidates in 2009

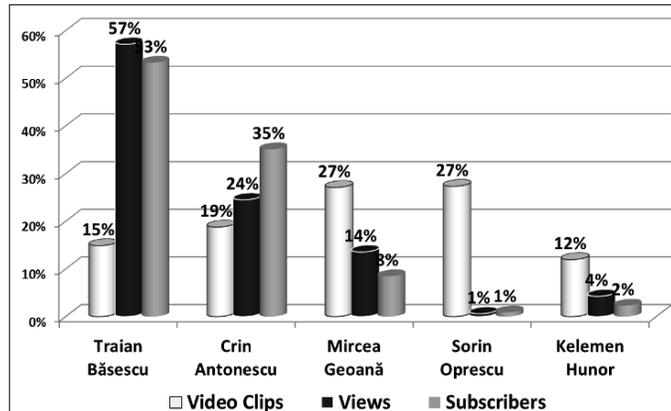


Fig. 3. The ratio of video clips, views and subscribers on YouTube channels in the Romanian presidential election campaign of 2009

C. Interpretation of the Results of the Analysis

The results of the research of the election campaign offer a comprehensive image of the dynamism that characterises this communication platform. Over 10,000 Romanian had focused on the presidential candidates by means of this page. The candidates for presidency, in turn, submitted almost 700 posts, over 1,000 photos and over 50 videos of the campaign. Taking into account the substantial activity on this platform, it is interesting to find out who is the candidate that managed, for electoral purposes, to turn to good account the power of Facebook.

It must be mentioned from the very beginning that Crin Antonescu's page managed to attract the highest number of Romanian on Facebook; he managed to have about 1,000 more friends than any other rival on this platform. The evolution in the number of Crin Antonescu's friends turned the Liberal candidate into the most visible presidential candidate on this page. Nevertheless, the presence of other candidates on this medium enjoyed a better management by the campaign teams. Mircea Geoană's page, that of Sorin Oprescu or even that of Kelemen Hunor were much better maintained, these candidates were much more active on this channel, compared with Crin Antonescu. The PSD candidate had, on the whole, the most cohesive campaign on Facebook: a relatively large number of friends - 2,385; a high percentage of messages sent - 22% and a monopoly of the messages sent between the two election ballots - 89%. If we also add the 397 photos of the election campaign included in 68 photo albums, we have the picture of the most consistent presence on Facebook in the presidential election campaign of 2009, that of Mircea Geoană.

For the same reasons as those presented in the case of Mircea Geoană, Sorin Oprescu ought to hold, according to the results of the research, the second place. Kelemen Hunor, on the other hand, was the most communicative of the candidates, sending nearly 30% of the total posts of the candidates to only 322 friends, that is

less than 3% of all registered friends in this study. Compared to the way the other candidates communicated, Traian Băsescu had the weakest presence on this platform. Although the number of friends (2,065) was a significant one, the staff that managed the presence of the President of Romania on Facebook did not show any real interest in promoting the candidate Băsescu on this platform. The total of messages sent by Traian Băsescu (42 during the entire campaign) equals the messages sent by his main rival, Mircea Geoană, in the interval 1st to 13th November.

Nonetheless, the president in office was highly visible on Twitter. As we have seen, this platform was the only one officially assumed by the campaign staff of candidate Traian Băsescu. Perhaps for this reason as well, namely the focus of attention on a single type of new media channel, the president's messages caught the attention of the other users, being followed by 1,973 of the Romanians on Twitter. The president of Romania had more followers than his main rivals (Crin Antonescu - 807 and Mircea Geoană - 838) together. However, the large number of people reading the entries of a candidate is not sufficient in order for the presence on the microblogging platform to be considered effective.

The number of people reached by the candidate's electoral message is of utmost importance, but, according to special rules imposed by Twitter, on this page what also matters is the degree of interaction that the account holder has with other users, namely the number of messages he/she sends in a given period of time. From this point of view, the candidate most open to interaction with other Twitter users turned out to be Sorin Oprescu. The ratio followers-following in Sorin Oprescu's case reached that of 1-4 at the beginning of November. Given that out of the 1,360 people whose activity Oprescu followed on Twitter, only 550 were willing to follow in their turn the posts of the mayor of Bucharest, it can be stated that the presence of the independent candidate on this platform was not a successful one. Furthermore, Oprescu's posts created an impression of aggressiveness, if we refer to the large number of messages written in a fairly short period of time (approximately 30 electoral posts published weekly). Sorin Oprescu's main mistake, visible also in the cases of the other analysed platforms, was that he approached the online relationship with the electorate in a manner which proved too aggressive. His staff kept announcing in a steady flow any type of information, often uninteresting, related to the election campaign of the mayor of Bucharest, such as "Oprescu, honked at the zebra crossing", "In Fetești, Oprescu received a pen as gift!" or "Sorin Oprescu prayed at Cozia Monastery".

The most balanced presence on Twitter, in terms of the ratio followers-following-text messages also belonged to Mircea Geoană. The PSD candidate has reached by the end of the campaign about the same number of followers (838) and following (805). At the same time he managed to outrun his opponent, Traian Băsescu, as far as messages are concerned after the first ballot and to publish no less than 66 messages, the equivalent to 79% of the total messages sent by the candidates during that period. The campaign staff of Mircea Geoană also managed to temporise communication effectively

on this medium and to post a large number of messages in the key moments of the campaign, i.e. around the date of 22nd November, respectively on 6th December 2009.

Crin Antonescu's account on Twitter was among the average recorded by the rest of the candidates on this platform. A sufficiently large number of followers (807 persons), a rather small number of following (72) and a small number of messages written on the page (28 messages in two and a half months). Even if on a significantly smaller scale, the Twitter account of the UDMR candidate should be appreciated for being better maintained than that of the Liberal candidate. With a ratio of two followers for a following, Kelemen Hunor had one of the best sustained election campaigns on Twitter, through the total of 155 posts made by the 23rd November. Nevertheless, a negative aspect of the presence on this platform of the UDMR candidate was the abandoning of all forms of communication on Twitter once the first ballot of elections was concluded. Kelemen Hunor suspended his activity on Twitter, and his last message, written on the 22nd November was "Thank you for your confidence".

In terms of the activity on the blog during the presidential campaign, although he published more than 60% of the posts among all the candidates' blogs, Sorin Oprescu's presence in the blogosphere was once again flawed as far as some key chapters were concerned. In the case of the independent candidate's campaign, his blog was used by members of his staff rather as a platform of dissemination of press releases. Entries were written in the third person and none of the published articles was written so as to provide the communication with a personal touch, the articles were purely informative and showed all the events that had occurred in the proximity of the independent candidate strictly during the election campaign. The second error of Sorin Oprescu's blogging was that his campaign team considered that on the blog, the same as on Twitter, they could post absolutely any information from the mayor's campaign. The reader found himself in the hardly agreeable position of reading on the blog, for instance, about the pen candidate Oprescu received in Fetești, from a person who supports him or other activities throughout the campaign that were of very little or no interest at all to the public.

The quality of the content posted on Crin Antonescu's blog, on the other hand, was very different from those of the other presidential blogs. Proof in this regard is the large number of comments that some of the articles of the liberal candidate managed to attract. If, in Sorin Oprescu's case the general rule on the blog was to write a lot without an aim, the campaign team of the Liberal candidate opted for fewer articles (18 items identified throughout the analysed period), constantly posted, presenting the programme of the political candidate Crin Antonescu, and not multiple instances of the candidate in his electoral campaign. This strategy brought to the Liberal the highest average of comments on each posting (over 100 comments) and the largest number of comments on the blog in total, compared to other candidates. The Liberal candidate had, at least until the 22nd November, the most effective presence on the blog among all the candidates.

Mircea Geoană caught up with Crin Antonescu as regards the blog, especially in the period following the first ballot of elections. The Liberal ceased to post articles in the week preceding the second ballot and the Social Democrat was the only candidate who, through his activity on the blog at that time (five articles posted in the last week of the campaign), attracted over 600 comments. The most experienced blogger of all the candidates, Kelemen Hunor, whose blog written in Hungarian had been active since November 2005, was a disappointment in terms of communication on the platform during the election campaign. If, in general, the UDMR politician had an extremely well-maintained online campaign, the three articles posted throughout the period under analysis turn him into the worst represented presidential candidate in the blogosphere. Among the initial initiatives Hunor had in the online environments, which were published on the blog, the idea to hold the first type of online user-generated content on his campaign site should not be forgotten. Thus, if in terms of the blogging indicator he did not have the expected success, the contest thought of by his campaign team was able to attract, until the 12th October 2009, 153 participants who had sent to the UDMR candidate, at least one variant of election poster imagined and executed by them. Perhaps also the stakes of the contest, an iPhone, played an important role in attracting a relatively large number of participants.

The efficiency of YouTube channel is primarily given by the total number of views a candidate had. From this point of view, the video channel of president Traian Băsescu was extremely effective. With a relatively large number of videos uploaded, the number of those who watched the candidate supported by PDL on YouTube exceeded that of all users who watched the videos of all the other candidates. Similarly, more than half of the Romanians who subscribed to the video stream of any of the presidential candidate chose Traian Băsescu's channel as source of information. Apart from the president, there was only one candidate who had a positive campaign in terms of the effectiveness of his presence on YouTube. It is the Liberal Crin Antonescu, who also had a well-maintained account; he succeeded in attracting the attention of the Romanians by the number and quality of his video clips. With 19% out of total number of videos uploaded to this page, the Liberal candidate managed to attract a good percentage (24%) of total views on YouTube and a satisfactory number of subscribers (35% of all subscribers to this type of channels).

The other three candidates had a negative presence on YouTube, none of them being able to reach a positive ratio between the number of videos uploaded and views, respectively the number of subscribers attracted through the official video channel. Mircea Geoană, for instance, had almost one third (27%) of all candidates' campaign videos, but failed to attract even a quarter (14%) of the Romanians' views. Likewise, Kelemen Hunor had a percentage of 12% of video content uploaded, but managed to attract only 4% of total views. Sorin Oprescu's YouTube activity was, in relation to that of his other opponents, ineffective. Although the logistic effort was significant, on his account there were about the same number of films uploaded with that of Mircea

Geoană (27% out of the total), and almost double as compared with Traian Băsescu, the total views of these videos barely reached 1% of the total views of the election campaign videos for the presidential election. Again, in the case of the online campaign of the independent candidate, it was easily noticeable that the tactics adopted by his staff regarding the content uploaded online, whose only condition had to do with the quantity and not the quality of the materials, did not have the expected results.

D. Conclusions

The answer to the question in our premise is a negative one. No candidate in the 2009 presidential elections in Romania managed to have a positive presence on all the online platforms under analysis. None of the online campaigns of the candidates succeeded in being designated the absolute “winner”, but there were candidates who had positive presence, compared with other candidates, on particular platforms. Also, there were candidates who, owing to some positive aspects of their presence on those pages were included in the list of winners in some areas investigated in the research.

Crin Antonescu and Mircea Geoană had the best sustained campaign on Facebook, the first is a winner on account of the large number of friends he had, and the second for consistency and constancy of the photo and video content uploaded and high frequency of postings. On Twitter, on the other hand, president Traian Băsescu had the most effective presence in terms of target audience reached, and Mircea Geoană managed again to be the most serious Twitter user among the candidates, maintaining constant activity on this page. Under the heading communication on the blog, there is a draw again, between Crin Antonescu and Mircea Geoană. In terms of the video campaign on the Internet, Traian Băsescu was on top throughout the entire period of research. All in all, the three main candidates for the presidential elections had also the most effective online campaigns, with the emphasis that, at least on Twitter and YouTube, the distancing of Traian Băsescu from the other candidates was more visible than in the case of the rankings made for the other online platforms.

The results of the research conducted cannot be rendered general so as to state that not even at the time of the writing of this material, none of the five politicians included in the analysis managed to develop an online presence to set them apart from the others opponents in 2009 on all the above mentioned platforms. Nevertheless, by analysing the online presence of candidates for the presidential elections in Romania, the study proves that the Romanian politicians through their campaign staff members, were not guided in their Internet activity by a coherent strategy to make them win, if not the presidential election, at least an “award” for the best election campaign in the Romanian online environment. The online electoral communication in Romania during the 2009 presidential elections showed some weak points for each of the candidate under analysis, the presence of the five politicians was not consistent and coherent enough in order for them to be declared absolute winners. Ranging from ignoring important platforms by some candidates, for

instance the absence of an official page on Facebook or a blog in the case of Traian Băsescu, to giving an exaggerated attention to the quantity of materials, regardless of feedback or the lack of it (the most striking case being that of the independent candidate Sorin Oprescu), the case study highlighted a number of deficiencies in the campaigns of each and every candidate.

Nevertheless, there are positive aspects worth mentioning, found on the online platforms and the online activity of the candidates. The same Traian Băsescu who completely ignored campaign blogging, managed, on the other hand, to transform the YouTube channel in a genuine mini-TV station. Although compared to the ratings of one single day of a single television station, the 17,000 views of his campaign videos may seem insignificant, his video campaign was nonetheless a promising start for the transfer of video election content from television to the Internet. Also, the nearly 2,000 followers on Twitter of the president represented in December 2009 approximately 20% of the total of Romanians present on this platform. An attractive posting from the President of Romania, taken over by 2,000 potential voices, could have led to the informing of the majority of Romanians on Twitter in a very short time.

The data produced by the case study shows that the analysed Romanian politicians and the online communication environment still require time to reach the level of maturity found in the Internet political communication of other democracies. Lack of interest in the establishing and maintaining of permanent and effective online presence could be attributed to the low number of people interested in politics in the online environment.

It is however worth mentioning that the case study was conducted during the first presidential election campaign in Romania when the social network Facebook and the Twitter microblogging platform were used as distinct channels of communication. Along with the development of the Romanian communities on these sites, but also with the emergence of other communication platforms, for the next presidential elections we may expect that the online presence as well as the online strategies proposed by campaign teams to differ very much from those of the elections in November and December 2009. For the time being, the Romanian politicians have not got the know-how to deal with these platforms and realise their full potential. Perhaps, over time and with the emergence of concrete examples of politicians who have made a name for themselves and engaged in politics on the Internet, the majority of candidates will chose an integrated approach to online communication.

References

- Bartels, L.M., Rahn, W.M. „Political Attitudes in the Post-Network Era”, *American Political Science Association*, 2000, unpublished, <http://www.princeton.edu/~bartels/postnet.pdf>, (accessed March 5, 2011).
- Bimber, B., Davis R., *Campaigning Online: The Internet in U.S. Elections*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

- Biroul de Cercetări Sociale – BCS, *Barometru Politic Național*, August 2009. http://media.hotnews.ro/media_server1/document-2009-09-1-6100209-0-sondaj-bcs-august-2009.pdf (accessed March, 2011).
- Buffardi, L.E., Campbell, K.W., “Narcissism and Social Networking Web Sites”, *Sage Publications, Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. 34(10), 2008: 1303-1314.
- Castells, M. (Ed.). *The network society: A cross-cultural perspective*. Northampton, MA: Edgar Elgar, 2004.
- CCSB, *Sondaj de opinie național*, July 2009. <http://www.ccsb.ro/down/sondajul-ccsb-iulie.pdf> (accessed March, 2011).
- CCSB, *Sondaj de opinie național*, September 2009; http://consultantapolitica.ro/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/CCSB_2009_09_Sondaj_Politico_ro.pdf (accessed March, 2011).
- Centrul de Sociologie Urbană și Regională CURS, *Sondaj de Opinie la Nivel Național*, June 2009. <http://media2.gruprc.ro/document/072009/8aa779282e2901d371ce72891834eb3d.pdf> (accessed March, 2011).
- Centrul de Sociologie Urbană și Regională CURS, *Sondaj de Opinie la Nivel Național*, September-October 2009. <http://www.tashy.ro/sondaj-de-opinie-curs-alegeri-prezidentiale-octombrie-2009/> (accessed March, 2011).
- Cetina, K.K. “What is a Pipe? Obama and the Sociological Imagination”, *Sage Publications, Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 26(5), 2009: 129–140.
- Chelcea, S., *Inițiere în cercetarea sociologică*, București: Editura Comunicare.ro, 2004.
- CSOP, *Actualitatea Politică*, August 2009. <http://www.tashy.ro/sondaj-csop---august-2009---alegeri-prezidentiale/> (accessed March, 2011).
- Day, R.E., *The Modern Invention of Information*, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2001.
- De Zuniga, H.G., Puig-i-Abril, E., Rojas, H., “Weblogs, traditional sources online and political participation: an assessment of how the internet is changing the political environment”, *Sage Publications, New Media & Society*, Vol. 11(4), 2009: 553-574.
- Dumitru, Mihnea, *Codex Politicus: Blogosfera Politică Românească*. http://digitallights.net/newmedia/?page_id=32 (accessed May 2010).
- Dumitru, Mihnea, *La ultima strigare a Codexului*. January 2010. <http://codexpolitic.us/2010/01/26/la-ultima-strigare-a-codexului/> (accessed May 2010).
- European Commission, *Europe’s Digital Competitiveness Report*. May 2010. http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/cf/itemdetail.cfm?item_id=5789 (accessed March 7, 2011).
- Ford, P.K., Johnson, T.A., Maxwell, A., “«Yes We Can» or «Yes We Did»? Prospective and Retrospective Change in the Obama Presidency”, *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 40(3), 2010: 462-483.
- Fuchs, C. *Internet and Society - Social Theory in the Information Age*. New York: Routledge, 2008.

- Gallup, *Sondaj național de opinie*, July 2009; <http://max-media.blogspot.com/2009/07/sondaj-gallup-iulie-2009-crin-antonescu.html> (accessed March 2011).
- Guțu, D. *New Media*, Editura Tritonic, București, 2007
- Kaye, Kate. *Google Grabbed Most of Obama's \$16 Million in 2008*. January 6, 2009. <http://www.clickz.com/clickz/news/1703163/google-grabbed-most-obamas-usd16-million-2008> (accessed March 2011).
- Kreiss, D. "The Whole World is Networking: Crafting Networked Politics from Howard Dean to Barack Obama", *Society for Social Studies of Science Annual Meeting*, Washington, D.C. October 29, 2009, unpublished, http://www.stanford.edu/~dkreiss/Kreiss_WholeWorldNetworking.pdf. (accessed March 5, 2011).
- Lawson-Borders, G., Kirk, R. "Blogs in Campaign Communication", *Sage Publications, American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 49(4), 2005: 548-559.
- Quintelier, E., Vissers, S. "The Effect of Internet Use on Political Participation: An Analysis of Survey Results for 16-Year-Olds in Belgium", *Sage Publication, Social Science Computer Review*, Vol. 26(4): 411-427, 2009.
- Panagopoulos, C., *Politicking online: the transformation of election campaign communications*, Rutgers University Press, 2009.
- Perlmutter, D.D., *Blogwars*, Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Perlmutter, D.D. "Political Blogging and Campaign 2008: A Roundtable", *Sage Publications, Press/Politics*, Vol. 13(2), 2009: 160-170.
- Sălcudeanu, T., Aparaschivei, P., Toader, F., *Bloguri, Facebook și politică*, București: Editura Tritonic, 2009.
- Tufekci, Z. "Can You See Me Now? Audience and Disclosure Regulation in Online Social Network Sites", *Sage Publications, Bulletin of Science Technology Society*, Vol. 28(1), 2008: 20-36.
- Trammel, K.D., Williams, A.P. "Candidate Campaign E-Mail Messages in the Presidential Election 2004", *Sage Publications*, Vol. 49(4), 2005: 560-574.
- Van Dijck, J. "Users like you? Theorizing agency in user-generated content", *Sage Publications, Media Culture Society*, Vol. 31(1), 2009: 41-58.
- Winograd, M., Hais M. D., *Millennial makeover: MySpace, YouTube, and the future of American politics*, Rutgers University Press, 2008.

Corpus

- Crin Antonescu's Facebook account – <http://www.facebook.com/crin.antonescu>
- Kelemen Hunor's Facebook account – <http://www.facebook.com/kelemenhunor>
- Sorin Oprescu's Facebook account – <http://www.facebook.com/SorinOprescu>
- Mircea Geoană's Facebook account – <http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=1614968943&ref=ts>
- Traian Băsescu's Facebook account – <http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100000228818682&ref=ts>
- Crin Antonescu's Twitter account – <http://twitter.com/crinantonescu09>

Kelemen Hunor's Twitter account – <http://twitter.com/hunorkelemen>
Mircea Geoană's Twitter account – http://twitter.com/Mircea_Geoana
Sorin Oprescu's Twitter account – <http://twitter.com/sorinoprescu>
Traian Băsescu's Twitter account – <http://twitter.com/tbasescu>
Crin Antonescu's blog – <http://crinantonescu.ro/Blog/CrinAntonescu.html>
Kelemen Hunor's blog – <http://www.kelemenhunor.ro/blog>
Mircea Geoană's blog – <http://www.mirceageoana.ro/blog>
Sorin Oprescu's blog – <http://www.sorinoprescu.ro/blog>
Crin Antonescu's YouTube account – <http://www.youtube.com/user/crinantonescu>
Traian Băsescu's YouTube account – <http://www.youtube.com/user/hetraianbasescu>
Kelemen Hunor's YouTube account – <http://www.youtube.com/user/kelemenhunor>
Mircea Geoană's YouTube account – <http://www.youtube.com/mirceageoanapsd>
Sorin Oprescu's YouTube account – <http://www.youtube.com/user/sorinmirceaoprescu>