

**Are parties all the same on social media? Varieties of Facebook  
uses by party type in Serbia**

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Submitted to Central European University

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in  
Political Science

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Budapest, Hungary

(2015)

## Abstract

The research at hand deals with the use of the Internet communication technologies (ICTs) for political purposes. Particularly, in case study of five Serbian parties, it investigates how social media such as Facebook are used for political representation. The main question this research aims to answer is *whether party type has an effect on Facebook representation and communication*. The methodology used consists of combination of content analysis and quantitative regression analysis of the data. The units of analysis are Facebook posts from parties' official Facebook pages, for time period of three months (from December 2014 until March 2015). The major findings suggest that there are variations in representation of parties on this online platform. In general, parties are active on Facebook, but the most active and the most popular ones are rightist parties. These parties manage to engage citizens in commenting and sharing their content. The main implication is that communication is predominantly indirect one. Additionally, my analysis has shown that the content differs in terms of type of parties, where government and big parties tend to have more leader oriented, personalization focused posts and issue coverage. Besides that, opposition leads in criticism towards opponents. While provision of information is the main goal of parties on Facebook, the opposition and left wing parties dominate in posting this type of content. Finally, my findings suggest that women are not so frequently present on parties' official Facebook pages, and in the cases they are—it is mainly in posts of big parties and parties in government.

## *Acknowledgments*

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor Marina Popescu for ideas, help and guidelines from the beginning of the work on this thesis. Also, I am thankful for a great communication that we had, and her patience while working on this study.

Special thanks to Oana Lup, for her suggestions and ideas which were essential from the beginning.

Of course, without my family and friends I could not achieve all this. I was happy to have Marcela Figueroa Franco, and I am grateful for faithful friendship and endless care for me through these several months. My parents, Ljiljana and Rajko, and my sisters Zorica and Jelena deserve special gratitude. Thanks to their love, support and encouragement I was able to finish this work, and studies, successfully. They are my strength and my personal treasure.

I have to thank Milos B, for his help, suggestions and endless encouragement; and most of all for his patience, care and love during these several months. Without him I am sure I would not be able to accomplish my goals.

Finally, this is for Vladimir and Anastasija, to always push upper limits and live beautiful reality, instead of virtuality.

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## INTRODUCTION

They say that if you are not present on social media you do not exist. In that manner political communication has changed as well with the emergence of Internet Communication Technologies (ICTs). Political parties are using Facebook and other social media networks in order to represent themselves and communicate with public. It can be said that the 2008 Barack Obama`s campaign was the one that pushed political communication and campaigning towards more digitalized tools. After this intensive and successful Internet campaign, which used for the first time the abilities of social media networks, all over the globe politicians and political parties started to exploit such tools for gaining favorable coverage, popularity and even votes. Not only that ICTs nowadays play an important role in campaigning, but are essential in political communication in general. Today parties and candidates use Internet (websites) and especially social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube as channels for representation and communication with public.

Some of the distinctive characteristics of the Internet communication like direct communication with voters without any external gatekeeping, low costs and the possibility for two-way communication and interactivity, make these Internet platforms more appealing for political parties to present themselves. This lack of editing gives to parties a sense of control over the content and lowers possibilities that their message will be distorted. In other words, they can say what they want and how they want. Also, the interactivity gives an opportunity to contact citizens and to hear them out. On the other hand, citizens can easy, cheap, fast get updated about politicians` actions. In this way, following some of the traditional functions of “old” media, this new media environment can provide information supply and opportunity to keep public officials accountable.

The way of using new media platforms might differ among parties. For instance, the distinctions might appear between US and UK type of political communication and European Non-Western type. As many of the studies are done in Western democracies, there is need for research in the field of use of ICTs in political communication of non-western democracies. Findings in the US and UK, or even Australia suggest that the use of Internet did not help building the more equal political competition (Gibson et al. 2003; Gibson & Ward, 2002) as Internet optimists expected. Furthermore, its interactive and two-way communication flow potentials are not exploited by political parties as much as they could have been (Nielsen & Vaccari, 2013). Political communication in general remains one-direction communication from top to the bottom. Additionally, the audience reach is limited due to the fact that the information gain and possible interactivity in online sphere is only possible if the user wants to connect. Thus only those already interested in politics or in certain party/candidate are the users of the online content. Finally, the most intensive use of the Internet and social media platforms is in the election period after which online activity slows down.

In order to explore specific non-Western democratic state and its parties` online strategies, this thesis will focus on the official Facebook pages of the five main political parties in Serbia. Precisely the research questions of this thesis are: *How party type influence communication and presentation of Serbian political parties on their Facebook pages? And is interactivity and citizens` behavior on those pages related to type of party?*

In general, the main assumption is that in Serbia party type predisposes political communication on Facebook. Moreover, it is expected that in case of Serbia, political parties do use frequently their Facebook pages for communication and representation. Additionally, small and rightist parties might use this online tool more and better than others. On the other hand government and opposition (but also other types such as right-left wing parties, or small-big ones) differ in the type of content they are presenting. In conclusion, the

expectation about citizens' activity and communication flows is that there will not be direct communication, but more indirect one.

One of the specificities of this study is in the examination of the political communication on social media platform in the non-election period which is considered a quieter period. It is relevant as it reflects the continuous strategies of parties to communicate with the electorate, which can be more general than those strictly related to a particular election campaign. Besides that, this non-election period analysis might be more easily related to the nature of the party and its place within party competition structure.

Furthermore, this research will try to fill the gap in the literature on Western-Balkan countries' online political communication. Serbia is a good case study not only because it has not been previously studied in this manner. Namely, it is a new democracy with a proportional party system with closed party lists which basically differs from the studied cases by now, mainly US and UK. Here political parties are the main actors in transitional process and main figures in politics in general. On the other hand individuals, officials and party members may not be so visible to general public and easy to reach. That is why online communication flows (direct or indirect) might differ in the current context.

In comparison to US context, for developmental reasons, the use of Internet might limit the importance and strategies of online political communication in Serbia. In terms of Internet reach, according to official republic's statistics in 2014, 63.2% of the population has computers in their homes (Statistical Office of Republic of Serbia, 2014a) and 62.8% of the population has Internet access (Statistical Office of Republic of Serbia, 2014b). This is an important part of the population which can be targeted and reached by Internet communication strategies of political parties. Moreover, Statistical Office of Republic of Serbia reports about frequencies of using Internet: 62.1% has used Internet recently (until

three months) and relatively high percent represents those who have never used it 33.1% (1.3% used it for the last time three months ago, and 2.9% used it last time over a year ago) (Statistical Office of Republic of Serbia, 2014c).

In order to answer my research questions the study will employ content analysis of the official Facebook pages of five Serbian political parties. The data consists of downloaded Facebook content from those pages for a period of three months (from December 2014 until March 2015). Selected parties are: Serbian Progressive Party, Socialistic Party of Serbia, Social-democratic Party of Serbia, Democratic Party and party called Dveri. Each of the parties selected represents specific party type, according to their size, left-right position, government status, and also relevance and popularity. The content was screen shot from their official FB pages, coded and analyzed using quantitative approach. This content was observed in the terms of six different dimensions: personalization, leader orientation, and issue coverage, criticism towards opponents, promotion and presence of women. Additionally, the analysis took into account the opposite side of the communication flow represented by citizens and their reactions to the parties` Facebook content.

Findings suggest that in general parties do use Facebook frequently, and mostly for the information provision. But, if the party is small and/or leftist one there are more chances it will use FB as a tool for information provision and promotion. The most active and also most popular ones are rightist parties. They appear to engage citizens in commenting and sharing content significantly more than others. Government status and size of the party are important in predicting the type of content which is posted on Facebook. In that manner, opposition leads in criticism, government in leader oriented content and personalization, and issue coverage as well. Finally, presence of women appears to be related to big parties and those in government.

The structure of the thesis is as follows. The thesis has four chapters and conclusion. The first chapter will review relevant literature. This will be followed by Chapter two, which explains Serbian contextual differences and states expectations. The third chapter will give a brief overview on methodology and data collection. At the end comes the Chapter four dedicated to empirical analysis of the case of Serbian parties, their representation on Facebook and citizens` engagement with parties` FB activity. After that, the conclusion will provide brief overview what was the goal, what is done and what are the findings.

# Chapter 1: ICTs and POLITICAL COMMUNICATION: THE BIG QUESTIONS

The theoretical background for this thesis consists of two main points of view. First emphasizes the importance of political accountability and transparency provided by political communication and mass media in general. In media theory this is mentioned as importance of media and its basic functions. Second point of theoretical view on this topic refers to the broad literature on potentials of Internet and its tools in political communication field, campaigning and gaining favorable coverage and also votes. This part will consist of providing some theoretical arguments, supported by empirical evidence, of normalization theory (or “no change” theory) and some arguments that might contradict this theory equalization and democratization claims in favor of Internet.

## 1.1 Political accountability, transparency and media functions

From the first print media until today media has had three main functions: first to inform, then to educate and at the end to entertain. As Katz et al. said, media has functions of diversion and entertainment, as well of information and influence (Katz, Gurevitch & Haas, 1973). It is known that the main function above all is also to make political actions visible to broader public and following this to be a watchdog of society. In absence of media there is no possibility to control politicians, to make them and their actions accountable and transparent (Balkin, 2009). In this way new media, such as Internet and social media networks should be considered as controlling and transparency tool as well. This tool should serve the public. There are three types of transparency that Balkin points out: information transparency, participatory transparency and accountability transparency. Information transparency refers to knowing about decisions and government, and having access to government information. Second type of transparency gives possibility to participate in decision making. Finally,

accountability transparency means holding public officials accountable by legal system or by public opinion (Balkin, 2009).

What Balkin posits as the main characteristic of the contemporary democracy and its media is overwhelming entertainment and infotainment focus of the media content. According to him, this tendency of media to pay attention to private lives of politicians, scandals, entertainment instead of the substantive issues makes accountability and control lower (Balkin, 2009).

What might make accessibility of political parties and indirectly their accountability less possible in new media environment is the huge and trained organization needed for this kind of communication, and fear of mistakes and possible embarrassment for the organization due to publicity of the communication (Vaccari, 2014). Proposed research fits into this theoretical framework in the sense it reconsiders the role of the media, but through this new kind of media, as Internet and social media platforms are. Analyzing the content of the party presentation online would explain whether this new media follows the common trend in traditional media when it comes to the infotainment, or it highlights important issues and social questions.

## 1.2. Internet communication technologies (ICTs) potentials

The emergence of Internet brought a lot of changes in the ways how societies function nowadays. It substitutes distance for closeness, limited repertoire of information for extremely large quantities of information that run daily among thousands of people all over the globe. It certainly provided more possibilities for inclusiveness in society, for gaining information and knowledge, and for being updated almost immediately as events occur.

In their “Proposal Methodology for studying the function and effectiveness of Party and candidate Web sites” Gibson and Ward mention five crucial ways how Web has changed the communication. First of all, it made an impact on the volume- now largely more information

is available then before. Secondly, speed up- compression of data and more space for communication decrease time needed to send a message. Thirdly, formatting is changed. Now Internet allows sending messages that combine visual, audio and textual features, or so called, multimedia formats. Fourthly, direction of the communication became two-way and with interactive possibilities. And finally, there is individual control and decentralization which denotes the opportunity for the individual to decide what to use, consume, view and importantly what to publish (Gibson&Ward, 2000). In this sense, the political actors might and for sure are using these broad and appealing features of the Internet platforms to promote themselves and to communicate with citizens.

Various authors have mentioned few implications of the Internet on politics and political behavior. Anduiza et al. stress two implications: a) Populations` opportunity to engage in different types of political participation online and b) Interaction and information gaining via Internet (Anduiza, Gallego&Cantijoch, 2010). Gibson and Ward give further Internet tools impact: 1. Deliver information unmediated to voter- no editors, no distortion of message and message/content with greater details; 2. Mobilizing and targeting voters more effectively and 3. Creating ongoing dialogues- hear opinions and be accountable (Ward& Gibson, 2003). In one of their works Vaccari and Nielsen particularly addresses two political implications of social media networks and those are: 1. New forums for indirect communication and 2. Institutional changes in political communication processes (Nielsen &Vaccari, 2013a). Stressing the emerging use of social media in everyday life Nielsen and Vaccari point out that even if both candidates and citizens are present online that does not mean that they communicate with each other out there.(Nielsen &Vaccari, 2013a). This questions real potentials for interactivity and more direct communication between candidates/parties and citizens, which frames this thesis in the way to search for the frequency of contacts and interactivity on social media platforms.

When it comes to the communication flow, and most of all to the direction of it, some authors talk about these direct-communication possibilities. But, others bring another type of the quality of Internet communication technologies, and mostly of social media networks, which refers to growing potentials for indirect communication. Direct communication and interactivity still seems to be issue with ICTs. As Vaccari and few more authors mention there is something about Internet as pull media that influences this direct contact (Nielsen & Vaccari, 2013). Pull media (versus push media) are interactive ones, decentralized and individualized. Whereas push media are characterized with top-down communication, one way flow of it, and it is mass media. Push media is targeting people without their will and delivers them information. These kinds of push activities are familiar for advertising, e-mail, phone communication. Of course, those activities are more plausible for direct communication. (Nielsen & Vaccari, 2013). On the other side, pull environment needs political interest, or engagement first on the side of the recipient. Social media networks function this way: people decide on their own about receiving the content and participating and involving. Pull media, as Internet is, targets those who are active and already interested in politics. What this environment does is to just engage already active individuals with the message (Nielsen & Vaccari, 2013). As Vaccari states the Internet is primarily a pull environment, but nevertheless has features that categorize it as a push environment as well: online advertising in general, and online political advertisements in specific (Nielsen & Vaccari, 2013).

The main problem with pull media is the limited audience in the sense of those already interested in politics. With Internet communication technologies access to the information is cheap, fast and unlimited. Furthermore, there are claims that exposure to more information online produces more interest in politics (Nielsen & Vaccari, 2013). Not only is that initiative of users' obstacle, but also ability to control the content and exposure. This is known as

selective exposure (Brundidge, 2010; Nielsen & Vaccari, 2013;). Selective exposure is peoples` tendency to select media outlets that reinforce their existing attitudes and views, and to avoid the contradictory opinions. It is seeking to confirmation rather than confrontation. And this type of behavior is mostly characteristic of online sphere. Also, Internet gives an opportunity to individuals with specific interest to select information which strengthens their position- this is called reinforcement (Nielsen & Vaccari, 2013). There are still counterarguments for reinforcement and selective exposure which are based on several situations of unplanned exposure to content that occur online: friends sharing the content via social networks, advertising bans, receiving e-mail etc. (Nielsen&Vaccari, 2013).

I shall go back to the question of direct communication opportunities. The social media networks seem to be the part of the so called “new political information cycle”, which means that new social media platforms contribute to the production of political news as non-elite actors (Chadwick, 2011). The stress is not anymore on the direct communication and interactivity capabilities, but on the indirect communication chances and “listeners” role. As much of the literature dealing with democratizing effects of the Internet point out the existence of “lurkers”-people who are present online, but do not let their voice out or do not discuss online (F.Shen and H.Liang, 2014). Vaccari claims that it is important to redefine “lurkers” as “listeners” and listening as democratic participation. When he writes about Twitter, he also says that an impact of the Internet communication technologies, and especially social media networks, in the most on the indirect communication via shares and comments. Here lays the real importance of use of ICTs for political purposes- in broadening the audience for certain information. (Vaccari& Valeriani, 2013). In this sense proposed research would not watch only at direct communication on Facebook, because by doing that it will lose from a sight, maybe more present, indirect communication flow. These indirect

communication flows should be caught by number of shares and comments for each post made by political party.

### 1.3 Normalization and equalization theory

Here the existing literature divides on two main positions about ICTs potentials. One is optimistic and sometimes named equalization or democratization of political process. The equalization mainly refers to more equal political competition, which might be achieved due to the cheapness of the Internet mediated political communication. In that sense, Gibson states as one of the impact of the Web on parties is actually impact on party competition (Gibson& Ward, 2003). They state how smaller and extremist parties “with smaller resource base and very limited exposure in traditional media outlets, these groups see wide reach, high volume, and relatively low cost of this media, along with its lack of external editing, as a superb way of communicating their message to potential voter” (Gibson&Ward, 2000, 302). According to this, Internet lowers the threshold for smaller parties and they become equally competitive as established, big parties with more resources parties. The interactive characteristic will lead to more contact with citizens and cheapness will lead to more egalitarian political environment (competition).

Furthermore, Gibson and Ward give five possible functions for political websites which easily can be reflected on other types of online political activities like social media networking. Those key functions they mention are: Information provision, Campaigning, Resource generation, Networking and promoting participation (Gibson& Ward, 2000, 2003). In this direction my research tries to discover whether these optimistic expectations of Internet are actualized in the specific context, specific country. As several research done in United States, United Kingdom and Australia have shown, political parties tend to use these Internet tools most frequently for information provision purposes, then for resources

generating and campaigning (Gibson et al. 2003; Gibson& Ward, 2003;). In Spanish case and other Southern European countries the situation is relatively the same, with exception of resources generation, because citizens do not donate and donation are not as crucial as in US context (Anduiza, Gallego& Cantijoch, 2010). Nevertheless, some authors remain at the position that opportunities for better representation and communication with ICTs, as well as more equal and high quality competition, are on the side of the small parties with actual lack of resources. Gibson et al. emphasize how in the election time this equality is not so visible. But, in between election period fringe parties are as active as established ones (Gibson, Margolis, Resnick& Ward, 2003).

The other position on ICTs` potentials in political communication field is more pessimistic one. In literature this position is called “normalization theory” or “no-change” theory. It is an opposition to the thoughts of Internet as equalizer of political competition. According to this view the reality shows that Internet tools are not helping those “disadvantaged” parties. The assumption that Internet will help small parties with no resources to be equally competitive is not reality. What happens is that parties with more money would have better representation online (Vacarri& Nielsen, 2013). Some authors show that parliamentary status, or distinction between established and un-established parties, makes difference in their representation in online sphere where established ones employ more resources and have better designed online communication (Gibson& Ward, 2013).

In general, there are two approaches to political communication that both will be used as a background for this research. One is the supply – side approach, and the other one is demand-side approach (Nielsen & Vaccari, 2013). Supply-side approach focuses on analyzing of candidates/ parties online. The main question in supply side approach is: How politicians/ political parties use Internet communication technologies? This approach suggests that distinctive features of the ICTs are that Web allows politicians to talk directly to the public.

Also, there are relatively low costs for using these tools. Finally, it is a great mode to facilitate small and less known parties/ candidates promotion to general public (Nielsen & Vaccari, 2013). This paper will remain to this question of how political parties really use new internet platforms. Moreover, it will analyze this supply content of the political parties in a given country.

The focus of the second approach, demand-side approach, is on peoples` online behavior (Nielsen & Vaccari, 2013). It suggests that people in Internet environments can react and comment, can engage in dialogue. Most importantly, it can reach highly interested minorities, and because of the pull environment characteristic gives an opportunity of control over exchanged content in communication (Nielsen & Vaccari, 2013). As already mentioned above, the consequence for direct communication is that contact via social media networks implies that users must choose to engage in such interaction. When it comes to this approach, the thesis will use it indirectly, as the research question suggests in order to find out citizens reaction to political communication of parties on Facebook. This will mainly include indirect communications potentials of the Internet platform Facebook, with measuring sharing the content and reacting on it (shares and comments).

## Chapter 2: SERBIAN PARTIES ON FACEBOOK: WHY AND HOW?

In previous chapter the relevant literature was reviewed. I have elaborated how broader theory about ICTs looks like and how it could be connected to my research. In this chapter, I will go further in explaining the contextual differences important in investigating use of ICTs for political purposes. Moreover I will state main expectations regarding Serbian context when it comes to the use of Facebook for political communication.

### 2.1 Contextual differences in investigating use of Internet communication technologies for political purposes

As it was already said at the beginning, the great part of the research and empirical evidence in this field is done in United States, United Kingdom and Australia. Some of the most recent research was done in Europe, precisely Spain and other Southern European countries. Generalization about the ICTs and Internet tools used in political communication cannot be made just on the basis of the western democracies experience. This lack of knowledge about online political communication in Western Balkans, for example, gives further reason to investigate it.

For several different reasons, the expectations and findings in the use of ICTs in Serbia, and Europe in general, might differ. Those distinctions are related to cultural differences, recent history, economic development and party system. Therefore, I think it is important to emphasize these differences.

First of all, European and non-western democratic countries differ from US or UK in terms of the path of economic development. Economic development in these countries went slower and for sure has an implication on rates of the Internet usage which until today was lower

than in US or UK (Cuhna, Martin, Newel& Ramiro, 2003). Particularly, this will imply possible unimportance of the Internet in politics and limited influence of political communication online. Nevertheless, the frequent use of the Internet and its tools has grown recently, especially in Serbia. Statistical office of republic of Serbia in 2014 reports that 63.2% of the population has computers in their homes (Statistical Office of republic of Serbia, 2014a) and 62.8% of the population has Internet access (Statistical Office of republic of Serbia, 2014b). Also, they report about frequency of using Internet: 62.1% has used Internet recently (until three months) and relatively high percent of those who have never used it 33.1% (1.3% used it for the last time 3 months ago, and 2.9 % used it last time over a year ago) (Statistical Office of republic of Serbia, 2014c). This high percentage of people who have Internet access does not mean that they are actually using it. Also, there is around 40% of the population which is excluded from Internet tools in their homes. This will imply that we could expect that Internet tools use in political communication practice will differ from US experience. Less people use the internet, there is less possibility for provision of information and an impact through the social media networks like Facebook.

Another distinction that some authors mention is that in European countries there is a lack of long traditions of democratic rules that allow political actors to build stable relationship with the electorate (Cuhna, Martin, Newel& Ramiro, 2003). These authors claim so in relation to the states like Portugal, Spain, and Greece where democratic transition period started in 70s. This aspect might be really explanatory in the case of Serbia which altered to democracy fourteen years ago. This is not considered a long time period and it might have implications on the competitiveness of the parties in the terms of use of ICTs. As political parties are the main actor of democratic changes, we would expect them to have significant influence on public. Additionally, it would be reasonable to assume that both big and especially small parties will use new technologies to improve their status (not like in US or Australia where

small parties or non-established ones are less capable of using the ICTs in proper manner). In other words, normalization theory might not be totally approved in European context (Cuhna, Martin, Newel& Ramiro, 2003). According to Gibson and Ward there are four basic party goals: 1. Vote maximization; 2. Pursuit of executive office; 3. Policy advocacy and 4. Internal democracy (Gibson & Ward, 2000). Because of the recent transformation to democracy, in Serbia, as in many other European countries, parties tend to be vote maximizing. This is something also familiar for the post-communist countries and parties, as one of the authors states: "Externally, they reflect 'catch-all' strategies where the open political market places a premium on flexible political organizations, able to reach the swathes of uncommitted voters more easily through the mass media..." (March, 2004,374).

The third difference between US case and European context are political system characteristics. As Anduiza et al. claim referring to the case of Spain, political system context matters in predicting interactivity and direct contact with citizens via Internet and its social media platforms (Anduiza, Gallego&Cantijoch, 2010). They give an example of Spain which has proportional party system with closed party lists and say how in this type of political system context citizens can barely identify their representatives, not to mention the possibility to communicate with them (Anduiza, Gallego&Cantijoch, 2010). When that is the case, it takes more efforts to contact officials than in single member district. This has an implication on the flow of communication in an online environment: it might lead in some cases to improvements in communication between candidates and citizens, but in most cases it will not make it a direct one. As Serbia has similar party system, proportional party system with closed party lists, the expectations can be the same as mentioned.

In theory there are assumptions about several features of parties and the context in which there will be high possibility of switching to Internet tools, and most of them are made in the western-liberal-democracies field. In that manner Gibson and Rommele identify seven such

characteristics: 1. Well-founded parties; 2. Mainstream parties; 3. Right-wing parties; 4. Organizations with significant resources; 5. Parties with centralized internal power structure; 6. Parties who experienced recent election defeat or government loss and 7. If that defeat was followed by leadership struggle inside the party. If these features are present, Gibson and Rommele state the parties are more likely to professionalize their campaign and use the ICTs for those purposes (Gibson& Rommele, 2001). In the European setting some of these features might and some might not appear significant. The study is to investigate on it.

Finally, recent history and long tradition of leader oriented culture posits some specific features that can influence Serbian way of the use of Internet tool and the way of communication of parties online.

## 2.2 EXPECTATIONS

The country of interest (Serbia), has its own peculiarities when it comes to the political communication exercised in online sphere. In one of the next chapters empirical results will be presented and analyzed from the contemporary and contextual point of view. Contemporary refers to Serbia and Serbian parties today. In other words, aim of this work is to provide description of current situation and current trends in political communication and representation among Serbian political parties online- on social network called Facebook. On the other hand, contextual point of view refers to political, cultural, historical, and so forth, explanations of the empirical results. But, before jumping to empirical results at this point it is crucial to present expectations, or theoretically based expectations for current study.

EXPECTATIONS 1: First of all, normalization theory suggests that Internet tools do not introduce more equal competitiveness among parties. In contrary, bigger, more important and better founded parties will be in advantage and will be more successful in using ICTs. As in Serbia parties are most important political actors, building block and actors of

democratization, my expectations were that in this context all parties will use Facebook, and in general be active on their official Facebook pages.

Alternative expectation 1a: It is possible that certain party type is related to the extent of Facebook activity. It might be that small parties actually are using online tools, especially Facebook, more frequently. In that sense, as equalization theory suggests, parties with less resources may be equally competitive.

EXPECTATIONS 2: Party type might actually have an impact on the content of the activity. More precisely, characteristics of the content posted on Facebook might be related to three different dimensions of the parties: governmental/oppositional status, right/left position and big/small size of the party. The types of content and expectation related to them are as follows

- Promotion (2.1): The expectation is that parties (as vote maximizing) in general will use ICTs mainly for provision of information. Moreover, the content with (self) promotion and announcements about themselves might be present in higher amount in all parties` Facebook activities.
- Leader orientation (2.2): According to historical and cultural context the expectation is that parties in general might lean to leader oriented posts. Moreover, government parties might exercise to higher extent the leader oriented context. Also, parties in Serbia have mostly centralized interior relations which supports the idea that those on top (leaders) might be more important and more frequently in the center of public/media attention.
- Personalization (2.3): Today's media coverage is often focused on individuals and his/her activities more than on specific issues. As a consequence it is expected to see

in online sphere how parties dedicate more space to personalization than to some issues or important problems.

- Criticism (2.4): When it comes to Facebook content which basically consists of criticism towards opponents, somehow plausible is to expect that opposition will lead in this type of content. The opposition has primarily the role to watch over the government`s actions, to control and constantly observe every move of the government. Besides that, strategy for gaining public`s attention and citizens votes consists mainly of attacking the opponent, selecting his/her weak points and presenting ones` own best solution for diverse kinds of issues. In this manner, representation on Facebook can differ among two blocks – government and opposition.
- Issue coverage (2.5): The amount of issue coverage might be higher on the part of opposition, as they intend to criticize more and offer their solutions and alternatives for diverse types of issues and problems in society. Furthermore, leftist parties might deal with issue coverage in greater extent than rightist ones, as they in general focus more on improving citizens` life, education, quality of living environment.
- Presence of women (2.6): Besides the paternalistic patterns in culture in general, in every party there are at least a few female important actors. The expectation is that presence of women in the Facebook content in general will not be highly frequent. Additionally, such content might be present in Facebook activity of parties in government, as four of 18 ministers in current government are women.

EXPECTATIONS 3: Here the story continues on the part of the citizens` online activity. More precisely it refers to the relationship between party type and the way how citizens react on Facebook activity of the parties. The text to follow explains several main expectations related to citizens` activity and interactivity on the parties` official Facebook pages.3.1

Popularity: The expectation is that the most popular party will be the main party in the government. In other words, this party might have the highest number of likes per page and highest number of likes per Facebook post.

- 3.2 Direct communication: There might not be direct communication through the official Facebook pages, more precisely FB posts. Alternatively, the indirect communication might exist in general in particular amount. The numbers of shares and comments per party reflect the existence of indirect communication flows.
- 3.3. Citizens` engagement: In general there might not be high activity in this sense, measured by number of comments per party. But, the expectation is that the highest engagement of citizens`, visible through number of comments, might be on the government parties` posts.

After indicating specificities of the context that should be taken into account when analyzing use of ICTs by parties in Serbia, and elaborating my expectations about online activity of Serbian parties, in the next chapter I elaborate further how I proceeded with analysis. The chapter to follow will deal with methodology.

## Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY AND OPERATIONALIZATION

In order to answer my research question(s) I have to analyze the online political communication. In the beginning given my interest in social media in this thesis I this chapter I will give an overview of my methodology. My analysis covers official Facebook pages of five political parties in Serbia. Precisely, each post on those pages for three months period, from December 19<sup>th</sup> 2014 until March 18<sup>th</sup> 2015, is my unit of analysis. The time period included in research has been chosen in order to be a non-election period, as I mentioned that my goal is to explore the political communication and the pattern of parties` representation in non-campaign period. This helps in clarifying how do parties actually understand the purposes of new technological tools and social media networks in the frame of political communication. Furthermore, it will answer to the first question on demand side of political communication: What do political parties use Facebook for?

### 3.1 Independent variable: Party type

Five parties are selected by several characteristics. Those characteristics are as follows. One of the first criteria for selection was size of the party measured by number of seats in parliament. In that sense it is essential to mention that last parliamentary elections were in March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2014. In these elections 3.592.375 people voted<sup>1</sup>. Majority of the votes, 48.35%, won coalition around Serbian Progressive Party (SNS). In other words, from total of 250 seats in parliament SNS and its minor coalition partners won 158 seats. Socialistic Party of Serbia (SPS) gained 13.49% of votes, which translates into 44 seats in national parliament. When it comes to the Democratic Party (DS) it won 6.09% of voter or 19 seats in parliament. Besides the fact that compared to SNS it has extremely less seats in assembly, in this thesis Democratic Party is considered as a big party as well in the sense that it has important

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<sup>1</sup> Republic Electoral Commission <http://www.rik.parlament.gov.rs/cirilica/Rezultati/Izbori2014Karte.pdf>  
[http://www.rik.parlament.gov.rs/cirilica/Rezultati/Izbori%202014%20Tabela1\\_konacna.pdf](http://www.rik.parlament.gov.rs/cirilica/Rezultati/Izbori%202014%20Tabela1_konacna.pdf)

amount of votes, but it also has undeniable influence on public. It is the main and biggest oppositional party in the current structure, representing almost 20% of the population. It is the main actor of democratization process started on its initiative in 2000. Additionally, it was the main party in government in two previous constellations, from 2003 until 2007, and from 2008 until 2012. For all reasons mentioned above DS is treated as big party in this study.

To continue with election results, Dveri won 3.58% of votes, and no seats in parliament according to 5% legal threshold. However, this rightist party is important for the analysis because of her extreme ideological position and nationalistic orientation as the theory suggests this type of party might use ICTs the most. Finally, its popularity grows over time, and it is assumed that it attracted voters of Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS which did not pass the legal threshold for the first time since democratic alteration) due to its anti EU and nationalistic orientation. Also, Dveri also shows high activity in online sphere and for all mentioned reasons is included in analysis. Lastly, Social Democratic Party of Serbia (SDPS) was the pre-election coalition partner with SNS and within that coalition it gained nine (9) seats in national assembly.

To conclude, independent variable named “Party” in the data is coded as follows: 1 for SNS; 2 for SPS; 3 for SDPS; 4 for DS; and 5 for Dveri. For needs of analysis this variable was also recoded into three different dummy variables, which I will elaborate below along with the selection criteria. But, here I mention one of them named “Size”, referring to division of parties into two blocks, and coded as 1 for big parties and 0 for small parties.

A second criterion for selection of cases is government/opposition status. In that manner SNS, SPS and SDPS belong to the government block, while Democratic Party and Dveri are in the opposition block. For the purpose of the analysis the data includes dummy variable named “Government”, coded as 1 for government parties and 0 for parties in opposition.

Furthermore, position on the right-left spectrum was accounted as well. According to their program and more their politics, SNS and Dveri are classified as rightist ones, and SPS, SDPS and DS belong to group of leftists. This is the third dummy variable recoded from “party” variable in the data. It is called “Right”, and it is coded as 1 for right wing parties and 0 for left wing ones.

Besides these main reasons, I took into account pro/con European Union attitude while selecting cases (parties). Also, another selection condition was taken into account for governmental parties and that is pre-election and post-election coalition partner. Here Socialistic Party of Serbia is representing post-election coalition partner, while SDPS stands as pre-election coalition partner. Finally, I ended up with five parties, four of them with parliament status and one without. The selection of cases (parties) looks in this manner:

- 1) Serbian Progressive Party (SNS further in the text) – Big party, majority in government (main party), rightist, pro EU
- 2) Socialistic Party of Serbia (SPS) – Big party, in government, leftist, pro EU, post-election coalition partner
- 3) Social Democratic Party of Serbia (SDPS) - Small party in government, leftist, pro EU, pre-election coalition partner
- 4) Democratic Party (DS) – Big party, main opposition, left- center, pro EU
- 5) Dveri – Small party, opposition, rightist, con EU, not established (it has not seats in parliament)

### 3.2. Dependent variables: Content of presentation of the Facebook pages and citizens activity

Within the Facebook pages representation I am looking at six important dimensions. First dimension is named “Personalization”. It refers to the extent of personalization covered by

content compared to issue coverage. In other words, it should indicate whether particular Facebook post center stages individual activities or individual compared to some specific issue or problem. In the data this is dummy variables, coded as 1 for personalization content (identified and explained above) and zero (0) for content which does not focus on individual or individual activities.

Second dimension is “Leader orientation” which indicates how much of the coverage is focusing on leader (absence of other party members in the coverage). This is, as well, dummy variable coded as 1 for each post that is leader oriented and zero (0) for posts which are not leader oriented.

Third is “Issue coverage” and it counts for posts that deal with some particular issue. In the data this is dummy variable, coded as 1 for the posts related to some issue and 0 for those which are not related to any specific issue.

Fourth dimension of content and dummy variable in data as well, is “Criticism”. Basically, it counts for criticism towards opponents. Each post that has this type of content is coded as 1, and zero (0) is for posts which do not appear to consist criticism towards opponents.

Fifth dependent variable, is called “Promotion and announcements”. This dummy variable refers to the content which indicates whether published content is a kind of self-promotion, announcing parties or party members’ activities, events, future plans, or their press-releases and so forth. It is coded as 1 for it is a promote and announcing content and zero (0) stands

The “Presence of women” is the sixth aspect of the content and sixth dependent variable. As the label indicates it counts for the presence of female actors in Facebook posts. It is dummy variable, where value 1 stands for presence of women in the content, and zero (0) stands for the absence of women presence.

Finally, for citizens` activity (as well as for the party popularity and flows of communication) three main dimensions are important: number of likes, comments and shares per posts. These are three separate variables in the data named: “Likes”, “Comments” and “Shares”. All three are numeric, continuous variables.

### 3.3. Data collection and collation

After selecting cases I have started with the procedure of collecting data/content. For this purpose I have divided my collection data process in two parts. First part included scribing of data about each post on each party`s Facebook page in these three months. I have used software Spyder which allowed me to scribe for each post number of likes that post has, number of comment and number of shares as well. Now that I have a list of posts for each party, and these counts for likes, comments and shares I had to proceed with second part of data collecting. This second part included gathering each post in a more qualitative sense. In other words it meant content collection for purposes of analyzing that same content (of Facebook posts). As I was unable to download this content using software, I had to collect it manually. What I did was screenshot each post from the list of post I got in previous phase of collecting data. Each post for every party separately was screenshot and named by the date of publishing on Facebook. At the end, I have collected content of 1 036 posts all together included in analysis. Or individually per party:

- |                    |                      |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1) SNS – 162 posts | 4) DS – 222 posts    |
| 2) SPS – 394 posts | 5) Dveri – 159 posts |
| 3) SDPS – 98 post  |                      |

To conclude, this chapter aim to give information about methodology, how I have chosen cases for analysis, and information about data collection and collation. Naturally what comes after this is empirical analysis, and the Chapter four will be dedicated particularly to this.

## Chapter 4: EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

In this chapter I am about to present empirical findings. Collected data was processed using SPSS software. The analysis included regression analysis and at some points I have used t tests. The results are as follows.

### 4.1 EXPECTATION 1

Regarding expectation 1 that all parties in general might be relatively active in using ICTs, I have checked for the number of post per party, which will give an image of activity at first glance. In Table 1 it is indicated how many post there are for each party (during observe three months period). As we can see, according to these numbers in general parties were active in posting on Facebook. Expect Social democratic party of Serbia (SDPS), all have posted above 150 posts for this period. SDPS is small party currently part of the government. Possible explanation of lower than others activity is that this party does not target large population. Looking backward at their political moves, this party has been in last three governments, making coalitions with even different political actors/parties. This slightly opportunistic strategy, to seek for few ministers and positions in government, just to be in government without grand goals of having the all power for itself, leads mostly in limited reach in population. In other words, it is “play safe” strategy with no need for too much promotion, especially not on Facebook. The size of the party does not have to play an important role, as we can see in Table 1, small party Dveri has a great amount of activity on their Facebook page. Part of the explanation might be in the fact that SDPS is a government party and they will be in the focus of all traditional media, so the need for Facebook presentation is not that important. But, if this is so then other two parties in government (SNS and SPS) would be also less active. As we can see in Table 1, they are extremely active. Finally, SDPS is that type of a party which does not have strategic approach to online tools,

especially Facebook. They “exist” online, because recently this is a trend in a field, but do not exercise these tools too much.

Table 1 Number of posts per party

Party	SNS	SPS	SDPS	DS	DVERI
Number of posts (sum)	<b>162</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>159</b>
In total	<b>1036</b>				

Regarding alternative expectation 1a, we see that (Table 1) one small party, Dveri, appears to be particularly active in using Facebook, but other small party does not. Dveri indeed have strategically better approach to particular online tool. As rightist party they are relatively popular, and try to take attention of mass public even through this channel of communication. Furthermore, Dveri is oppositional party, so it might be the intention use Facebook as alternative for mainstream media for communication and presentation.

## 4.2 EXPECTATIONS 2

Expectations 2.1: Second step in dealing with empirical data refers to the theoretical expectation that parties in particular context are in general vote maximizing (March, 2004; Gibson & Ward, 2000). Relatively recent democratization (started 14 years ago) and the fact that Serbia is a post- communist country indicates that parties are the most important actor in politics and all are vote maximizing oriented (March, 2004). From this view point the expectation was that parties in general will use ICTs mainly for provision of information. Moreover, the content with (self) promotion and announcements about themselves might be

present in higher amount in all parties` Facebook activity. For this purpose, I have analyzed how much “promotion/announcements” are present in parties` posts. Just to note briefly, in the data there is a variable named “Promotion/announcements” (dummy variable: 1- yes, 0- no) which counted for each post of each party if it has following content/information: announcing news, photos, activities (where have they been, announcing appearance in TV shows or news, or just saying what they offer to society, why they are “good” or holidays/celebration posts). Basically it is a self-promotion of the whole party or its members.

Table 4 Frequencies: Promotion and announcements

	Frequencies	Percent %	Mode	Minimum	Maximum
<b>No</b>	415	40.1			
<b>Yes</b>	620	59.8			
<b>Missing</b>	1		1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	1036				

N 1036

In general (Table 4), all parties together seem to lean more to promotion/announcements posts as expected. In sum, the most frequent is that post are promotion oriented indicated by mode value of 1. Moreover, around 59% of all posts is promotion oriented and 40% is not of that type.

Additionally, (Table 5) Logistic regression results indicate that if the Facebook posts are from parties in governments there are 77 percent changes that these posts are not characterized by promotion and announcement information. Or said it differently, the more post are from opposition the more they are related to (self) promotion and announcements about themselves. Even though, in general information provision is often there is slightly more chances that opposition will use Facebook in order to promote themselves. Reason for this

might be in the simple fact that government is in constant focus of mainstream media, so parties in government have more chances and channels to provide information to general public than opposition. In addition, it is common that current government is always more popular and opposition has to catch public`s attention through all possible channels, therefore online sphere and social media networks, such as Facebook, are obviously ease and often exploited by opposition.

Table 5 Logistic Regression for Government as predictor of Promotion and announcements

	B	Exp (B)
Government	-.258*** (0.133)	.773
Constant	.566	1.761

\*\*\*  $p=0,05$  SE in parenthesis

Moreover, the results from Table 6 indicate,  $\chi^2(1)$ ,  $p<0.05$ , that around 71% of promotion posts are made by left wing parties and 28% of it is posted by some of two right wing parties.

Table 6: Crosstab for Promotion & Announcements and Right-left

		Right/Left		Total	Pearson Chi- Square	df
		Left %	Right %			
Promotion&Annocmnts.	no	65.1	34.9	100%	5.247**	1
	yes	71.8	28.2	100%		
Total		69.1	30.9	100%		

\*\*  $p<0.05$

Table 7: Logistic Regression Size as predictor of Promotion & Announcements

	B	Exp (B)
Party size	-.838*** (0.159)	.432
Constant	1.048	2.581

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$  ; SE in parenthesis

Additionally, regression coefficients from the Table 7 show that if party in Serbia is small one there is around 57% chances that content of Facebook post will contain promotion and announcements. This is also closely connected with theoretical assumption, more precisely it supports equalization arguments which states that online tools help small parties to be equally competitive as big ones and better founded ones (opposite to normalization theory).

#### 4.3 EXPECTATIONS 2.2 & 2.3

Next step further in analysis is focused on two dimensions in Facebook posts: leader orientation and personalization. When it comes to Serbia cultural and historical context might be explanatory in this sense, especially in leader orientation. This country has the long tradition of leaders and leader culture. Most important and historically recent examples, which had a huge impact on the society, in general, are Josip Broz Tito and more recent presidency of Slobodan Milosevic. Former as president of communist Yugoslavia was known as benevolent dictator because of his diplomatic and economic politics. But, as communistic regime, following the example of soviet model, it created the cult of leader which remained influential even long after Tito`s death in 1980. Worshiping the leader and need for The One who would know best how to run a state even nowadays from time to time appears in public opinion polls. The continuations of the leader importance represent 90s and powerful leadership exercised by President Slobodan Milosevic. His party, Socialistic party of Serbia,

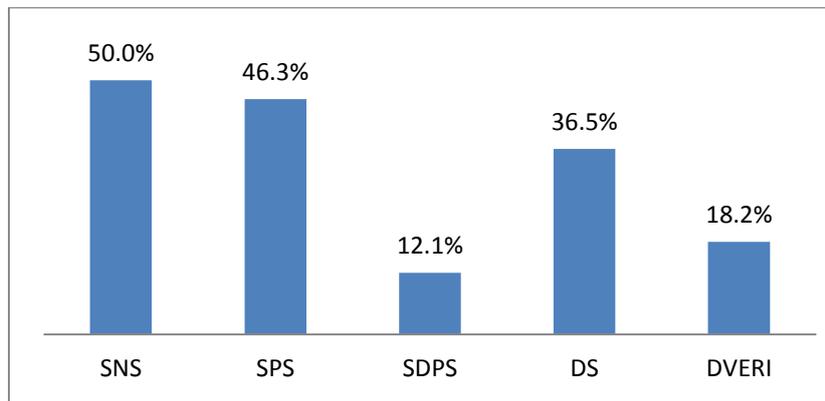
basically was ex-communistic party. It had strong, centralized internal structure with all power and final word on president Milosevic. This period is known by this powerful public figure, and its influence or power exercised in limitation of public speech (media). Until Milosevic`s overthrown in October`s Revolution in 2000 the regime can be characterized as non-democratic. Revolution proceeded by gathered opposition (Democratic opposition of Serbia –DOS) represents official alteration to democracy, but was not able to change, or not in total and so fast, the long lasting culture of leaders and authority. This might be the reason to expect that Serbian parties might be more leaders oriented in their appearance. If not all parties, then those in government might need to appear more leaders centered because that gives an image of strong and well runner government. Also, all parties have mostly centralized interior relations which supports the idea that those on top (leaders) might be more important and more frequently in the center of public/media attention.

Table 8 : Descriptives % of Personalization, Leader oriented, Issue coverage, Women, Criticism and Promotion in posts

	<b>Personalization</b>	<b>LO</b>	<b>Issue</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Criticism</b>	<b>Promotion</b>
	<b>%Yes</b>	<b>%Yes</b>	<b>%Yes</b>	<b>%Yes</b>	<b>%Yes</b>	<b>%Yes</b>
<b>SNS</b>	47.5%	50.0%	32.7%	16.0%	18.5%	41.6%
<b>SPS</b>	34.5%	46.3%	63.2%	20.1%	.3%	57.6%
<b>SDPS</b>	17.2%	12.1%	40.4%	0.00%	14.1%	83.8%
<b>DS</b>	25.7%	36.5%	33.3%	17.1%	39.2%	60.8%
<b>DVERI</b>	21.4%	18.2%	45.3%	5.7%	33.5%	67.9%

*N 1036*

Graph.1 Leader oriented posts per party



In Table 8 and Graphic 1, are presented values in percent for six variables related to the Facebook content of chosen political parties in Serbia. When it comes to the leader oriented (LO) posts the main party in government, biggest one, Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) shows the highest tendency for leader orientated content. SNS has 50% of leader oriented posts, Socialistic party of Serbia has 46.3%; Democratic Party 36.5%, Dveri has 18.2% and finally SDPS has 12.1%. This provides an empirical support for the expectation that parties in government might have a tendency towards more leader focused Facebook representation. For SPS is interesting to mention that it is Milosevic`s party and because of that historical perspective and tradition of leaders makes more sense as an explanation. Additionally, DS appears to have significant amount of leader oriented content, which needs further explanation. Apparently, (Table 9) if the post is from the big party the higher possibilities are that it will have leader oriented content. Post from a big party has 20% more chances to be leader oriented as well. In the case of DS this is valid explanation, as well for the rest of big parties in the sample (SNS and SPS) which, as presented in Table 8, have more leader oriented posts than other parties.

Moreover, regression analysis (Table 10) shows that only 22% of the posts characterized with focus on leader might be posts from opposition parties. In other words, if the post on

Facebook belongs to the party in government, there are 78% of chances that the content will be leader centered.

Table 9: Logistic regression Party size and Leader oriented posts

	B	Exp (B)
<b>Party size</b>	1.436*** (0.185)	4.205
<b>Constant</b>	-1.666	0.189

\*\*\* p< 0.01 SE in parenthesis

Table 10: Logistic regression Government as predictor of leader oriented posts

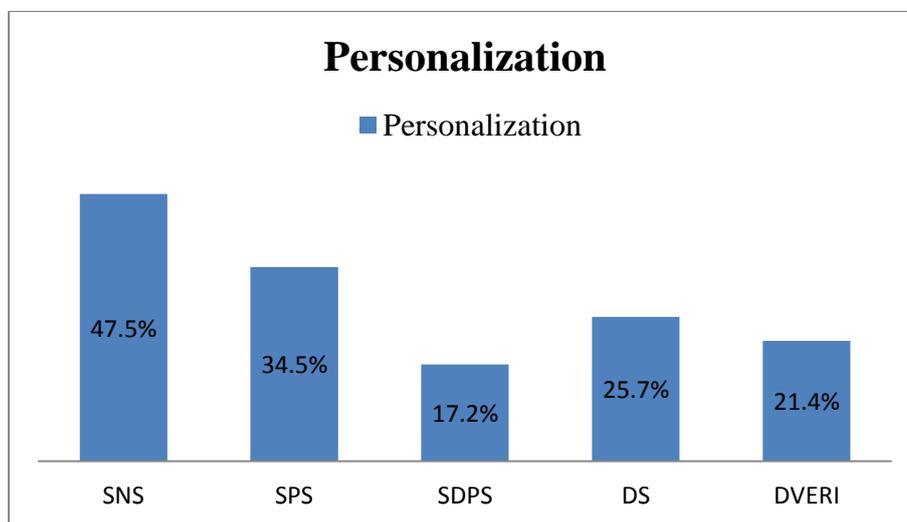
	B	Exp (B)
<b>Government</b>	0.581*** (0.138)	1.788
<b>Constant</b>	-.902	.406

\*\*\* p< 0.01 SE in parenthesis

When it comes to the personalization (expectation 2.3), what is meant by this is how much the focus in Facebook posts is on some individual an hers/his activities compared with issue coverage. In theory was already mentioned that keeping officials accountable is somehow limited due to the fact that media and communication advisers emphasize mainly personality and personal information of candidates. It is a trend in mass media called sometimes “tabloidization”- where sensationalism, scandals, everything that catches audience attention and sales news is important. This makes politicians extremely popular and lowers possibilities to control and keep them accountable. Campaign strategists and communication advisers nowadays focus on leaders and other individuals, and try to present at the front stage

their personalities, and this is so worldwide. Finally, Serbia is not an exception. It is highly expected to see in online sphere how parties dedicate more space to personalization than to some issues or important problems. In the graphic 2 bellow, we can see that all parties to an important extent tend to post on their Facebook pages content with personalization characteristics. SNS (Graph.2) has the highest percent of this type of posts, 47.5%; SPS 34.5%, DS 25.7%, Dveri 21.4% and finally SDPS has 17.2% of Facebook content dealing with some individual, his activities and not an issue.

Graph.2 Descriptives: % Personalization in FB posts per party



According to t test,  $t(df\ 867.615), p < 0.01$ , parties in government are slightly more posting content with personalization than opposition, and this is significant at the level of 99%. Finally, there is no difference between right and left parties on this issue, but there are slight differences when it comes to the size of party (see Appendix).

Table 11 Independent samples t test: Government/opposition on Personalization content

	N	Mean	F test	T test	df
<b>Government</b>	655	0.35			
<b>Opposition</b>	381	0.24	65.753	3.906***	867.615

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

#### 4.4 EXPECTATIONS 2.4

Regarding Expectation 2.4 criticism towards opponent was expected to be predominantly in the posts of opposition. The specific characteristic of oppositional parties is that they try to control government, so they should be mostly criticizing and indicating fragilities in governing. That is why it was expected that opposition will lead in online post dealing with criticism towards opponents. As presented above in Table 8 opposition really has higher percentages of criticism in Facebook content. Democratic Party has 39.2% of content related to criticism towards opponents, Dveri have 33.5 %, SNS 18.5%, SDPS 14% and SPS less than one percent of such posts. This indicates how current opposition in Serbia is actually more attacking and criticizing the opponents. Besides this, (Table 12) results of the regression analysis indicate if the Facebook post belongs to party in government the less possible is that this post includes criticism towards opponents. Simply, if content is criticism there is around 88 percent likeliness that it belongs to the opposition.

Table 12 Logistic regression: Government as predictor of Criticism in posts

	B	Exp (B)
<b>Government</b>	-2.066*** (0.188)	.127
<b>Constant</b>	-.539	.583

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$  SE in parenthesis

Furthermore, in Table 13 results of logistic regression show that criticism content tends to be the content from the rightist party. If the post is rightist one`s the chances to contain the

criticism towards opponents increases for 10%. In the sample there are two rightist parties: one in government (SNS) and another is opposition (Dveri). According to Table 14, and results of t test  $t(303.653)$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , differences between these two parties on the variable called “Criticism” are statistically significant. Put it more simply, Dveri as an opposition have more criticism content than SNS as governmental party. This straightens the assumption that opposition in current Serbian context leans more to presenting content online which criticizes opponents.

Table 13 Logistic regression Right as predictor of Criticism

	B	Exp (B)
<b>Right</b>	.743*** (0.166)	2.101
<b>Constant</b>	-1.792	.167

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$  ; SE in parenthesis

Table 14 Independent samples t test: SNS and Dveri on Criticism towards opponents

	Mean	F test	T test	df
<b>SNS</b>	0.19	39.085	-3.095***	303.653
<b>Dveri</b>	0.34			

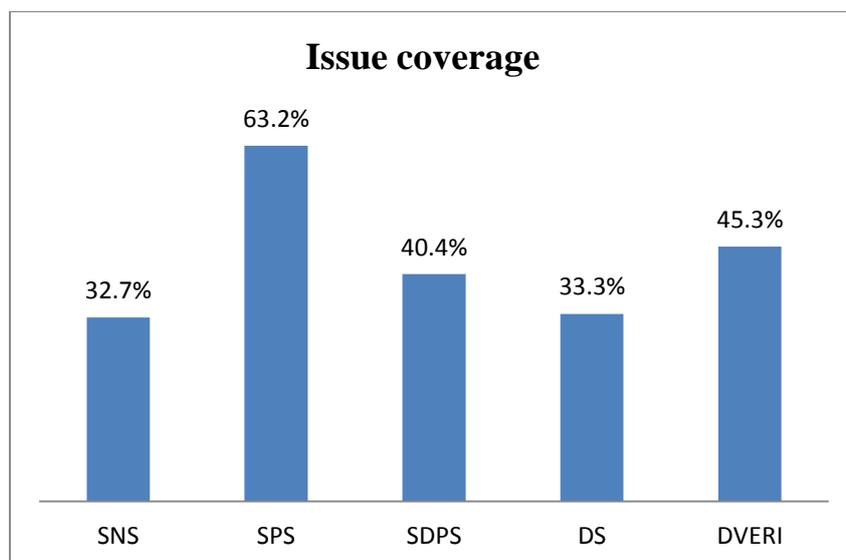
\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

#### 4.5 EXPECTATIONS 2.5

Regarding expectation 2.5 about issue coverage the assumption was that online content will be more personalization colored than covering some issue. In general, tendency in political

communication and political marketing is to deal less with issues- to try to attract voters more with entertaining information and appearance than with serious solutions to different problems. But, the main expectation was that opposition would have more posts related to specific issue than parties with government status. Moreover, the left wing parties might have more post dealing with issues. At this point, I will provide a brief overlook on the frequency of the issue coverage in Facebook posts of Serbian parties. Most of the issue coverage in the Facebook posts has SPS – 63.2% (Graph.3), then DVERI with 45.3%, SDPS with 40.4%, DS 33.3% and finally SNS with 32.7% of the post dedicated to some specific issue. Practically, all parties deal with some specific problems and issues in Facebook representation in significant amount.

Graph.3 Descriptives: % Issue coverage per party



As it is shown in Table 15a, in Logistic regression analysis, if the government party is posting there is 75 percent more possibility that it deals with some specific issue. This might be interesting, because most of the times we would expect that opposition leads in criticism and also in dealing with problems in society offering their opinion and alternative. But, having in

mind that government has the power to change situation, to improve the life or resolve problems, it has also an obligation and responsibility to work toward it, it is not unusual for governmental parties to pay attention to issues. They have to at least create an image of “problem solvers” and responsible actors in front of the citizens. Furthermore, if the post (Table 15b) is dealing with some specific issue there is more chance that it does not belong to one of the two rightist parties (around 60%). Shortly, more often it would be the leftist party’s FB post. Possible explanation for this is that left wing parties in general are focusing more on improving citizens` life, education, quality of living environment. Also, SPS as leftist, but party in government has several important ministers in government which are trying to promote, resolve and emphasize issues from their field.

Table 15a Logistic regression Government as predictor of Issue coverage

	<b>B</b>	<b>Exp (B)</b>	
<b>Government</b>	<b>.565***</b> <b>(0.131)</b>	<b>1.759</b>	
<b>Constant</b>	-.476	.621	

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$  SE in parenthesis

Table 15b Logistic regression Right as predictors of Issue coverage

	<b>B</b>	<b>Exp (B)</b>	
<b>Right</b>	<b>-.481***</b> <b>(0.137)</b>	<b>.618</b>	
<b>Constant</b>	.031	1.031	

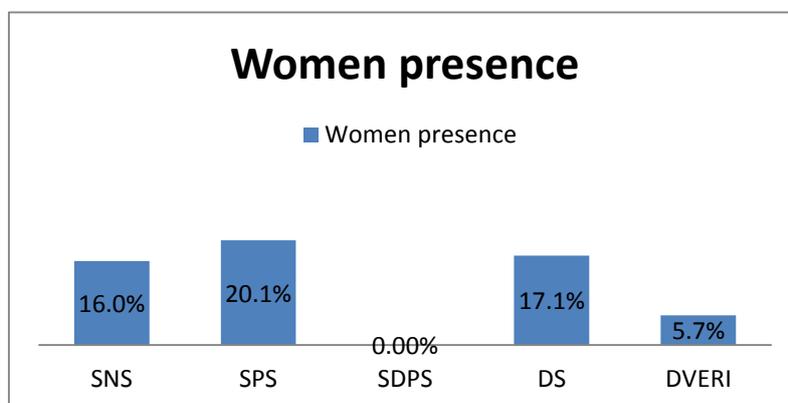
\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$  ; SE in parenthesis

## 4.6 EXPECTATIONS 2.6

Finally, this first and biggest part of data analysis is to conclude with the overview of the FB coverage including women presence. Regarding presence of women the expectation was that the presence of women in Facebook post in general will not be frequent. Being still a bit paternalistic culture, with domination of males in every single aspect of life, especially public life, the intention is to show how much space women have in representation and communication of political parties online. Additional, it was expected that if such content exists it might belong to parties in government.

The highest percent of women presence (Graph.4) in their Facebook representation has Socialistic Party of Serbia 20.1%. After comes DS with 17.1%, SNS with 16%, Dveri 5.7% and SDPS has less than one percent of women present in FB posts. In general, these are not significantly high results. In overall, women are less present than man; mostly the presence of women is an exception rather than a rule. Even when the posts are related to women it is so because those women are domestic ministers or officials of foreign countries. Only few posts were related to issues dealing gender equality or other issues related to status of women in the society.

Graph.4 Descriptives: % Presence of women in FB post per party



#### 4.7 Multivariate regression models

Regarding Expectation 2, in this section I present results from the multivariate regression analysis of predictors for six dependent variables. In Table 16 we can observe predictors of promotion. I have produced two models, first, the controls, and second the independent variables. According to Hosmer and Lemeshow goodness-of fit, as well as Pseudo  $R^2$  it can be seen that the Model1 is not very useful for predicting 'promotion'. However, 'likes' and 'comments' are significant predictors ( $p < 0.01$ ). In second model, after the controls, main predictors are introduced. Model became significantly improved. Hosmer and Lemeshow test is insignificant, and Nagelkerke, although still not very strong, is much better comparing to Model1. It could be seen that 'government' is not statistically significant predictor. But, if the post is 'right' it significantly decreases the probability of 'promotion. More accurately, if the post is 'right', it is 51.7% less likely that the post will be about promotion. On the other hand, 'size' seems to be the most significant predictor. Since this is dummy variable (0=small, 1=big parties), it appears that the smaller party is, the more 'promotion' the post will be. We could also said that if the 'size' is big, it is 67.8% less likely that the post is going to be about the 'promotion'.

Table 16 Predictors of Promotion

	Model 1		Model 2	
	B	Exp B	B	Exp B
Likes	.001***	1.001	.001**	1.001
Comments	-.018***	.982	-.008	.992
Shares	-.003	.997	-.005*	.995
Government			.040	1.041
Right			-.729***	.483
Size			-1.133***	.322
Constant	.450***	1.569	1.431***	4.181
Hosmer and Lemeshow X <sup>2</sup>	32.112(8), p = 0.01		8.849(8), p = 0.355	
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	.034		.079	

\*\*\*p < 0.01    \*\*p < 0.05    \*p < 0.1

In Table 17 we present the correlation estimates among predictors. It could be seen that in more than few cases we have strong correlation. This indicates a problem of multicollinearity. Correlation estimates shows that we observe strong correlation between likes and shares (r=0.62). Also, strong correlation between likes and comments (r=0.54) and Likes and right (r=0.42). Moreover, correlation between right and comments is strong (r=0.60), and between right and shares and right and like is also high (r=0.42). But, important is that between three main predictors (right, government, size) there is no strong correlation.

Table 17 Correlation of estimates

	Likes	Comments	Shares	Government	Right	Size
Likes	1.000	.543	.629	-.223	.424	-.131
Comments	.543	1.000	.512	.022	.599	.036
Shares	.629	.512	1.000	-.316	.422	-.167
Government	-.223	.022	-.316	1.000	-.177	.297
Right	.424	.599	.442	-.177	1.000	-.382
Size	-.131	.036	-.167	.297	-.382	1.000

Regarding expectation 2.2 I have made models of predictors as well. Bellow (Table 18) we can see predictors of Leader oriented posts. Similarly as in the previous section there are two models, first controls and then independent variables. According to Hosmer and Lemeshow goodness-of fit, as well as Pseudo R<sup>2</sup> it can be seen that the Model1 is not very useful for predicting ‘leader orientation’ of posts. In this model comments (p<0.05) and shares (p<0.1) appear to significant predictors. In Model 2, after the controls main predictors are introduced. Model became improved. Hosmer and Lemeshow test is insignificant, and Nagelkerke, although still not very strong, is much better comparing to Model1. Here also, government appears not significant predictor. Furthermore, if the post is from the rightist party that increases the probability that the post will be leader oriented. More precisely, if the post belongs to the rightist party there is 75% chances that post is characterized by leader orientation. Finally, size is an important predictor. If the post belongs to big party there are 82% possibilities that it will be leader oriented.

Table 18 Predictors of Leader oriented posts

	Model 1		Model 2	
	B	Exp B	B	Exp B
Likes	.000	1.000	.000	1.000
Comments	.008**	1.008	-.004	.996
Shares	-.008*	.992	-.004	.996
Government			.210	1.234
Right			.559*	1.750
Size			1.575***	4.829
Constant	.451***	.637	-1.975***	.139
Hosmer and Lemeshow X <sup>2</sup>	19.339 (8), p = 0.01		4.980 (8), p = 0.760	
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	.015		.107	

\*\*\*p < 0.01    \*\*p < 0.05    \*p < 0.1

Regarding Expectation 2.3 in the Table below (Table 19) are presented two models of predictors of Personalization in posts. Model 1 includes controls, and model two is controls with introduced independent variables. Looking at Hosmer and Lemeshow goodness-of fit, as well as Pseudo R<sup>2</sup> the first model is not the best predictor of Personalization content of posts. However, comments and shares appear to be significant predictors (p<0.1). When independent variables introduced in Model 2, the model becomes better. Although,

Nagelkerke  $R^2$  is still low, but compared to Model 1 it is improved significantly. As we can see, all three variables are significant predictors. Firstly, if government posted the 40% more chances are that post contains what is named “personalization” content. Secondly, If the post belongs to rightist party the possibility that it is a personalization post increases for 47%. Thirdly and finally, size seems to be important predictor here as well. Results indicate that big parties` post has 70% possibilities to have personalization content. In other words, small parties in 30% cases will post personalization highlighted content.

Table 19 Predictors of Personalization

		Model 1		Model 2	
		B	Exp B	B	Exp B
s	Likes	.000	1.000	.000	1.000
	Comments	.009*	1.009	-.005	.995
	Shares	-.006*	.994	-.003	.997
	Government			.339*	1.404
	Right			.905***	2.473
	Size			.996***	2.709
	Constant	-.771***	.463	-1.953***	.142
	Hosmer and Lemeshow $X^2$	9.822 (8), p = 0.278		4.899 (8), p = 0.768	
	Nagelkerke $R^2$	.012		.062	

\*\*\*p < 0.01    \*\*p < 0.05    \*p < 0.1

When it comes to the fourth dependent variable (Expectation 2.4) models of predictors for Criticism towards opponents are presented in Table 20. Model 1 suggests that comments and shares are significant predictors ( $p < 0.01$  and  $p < 0.05$ ), Hosmer and Lemeshow goodness-of-fit appear significant, and Pseudo  $R^2$  is extremely low which all together means this is not a good model. But, when introduced independent variables in Model 2 the model becomes improved. Pseudo  $R^2$  is significantly improved compared to the Model 1. It seems that the more likes post has there is 99% less likely that the post will be critical oriented. And the more comments it has the more chances are that it will be content with criticism, although this percentage is low (2%). Right and Size as we can see are not significant predictors, but governmental status it is. As results show, if the post belongs to the party in government the chances that it will contain criticism decrease. However, the percentage of possibilities is low – 8%. In other words, there is 92% possibilities that if the post belongs to opposition it will be post dealing with criticism toward opponents.

Table 20 Predictors of Criticism

	Model 1		Model 2	
	B	Exp B	B	Exp B
Likes	.000	1.000	-.002****	.998
Comments	.007**	1.007	.029****	1.029
Shares	-.013****	1.013	.005	1.005
Government			-2.416****	.089
Right			-.124	.884
Size			-.151	.860
Constant	-1.826****	.161	-.425	.654
Hosmer and Lemeshow X <sup>2</sup>	122.463 (8), p <0.01		60.769 (8), p <0.01	
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	.061		.271	

\*\*\*\*p < 0.01    \*\*p < 0.05    \*p < 0.1

Regarding Expectation 2.5, in Table 21 we can see predictors for Issue coverage. Model 1 includes controls, and Model 2 introduces independent variables. According to Pseudo R<sup>2</sup>, as well as Hosmer and Lemeshow goodness of fit, the second model is more explanatory, but in

the first we have ‘Likes’ and ‘Shares’ as significant predictors. Model 2 Right and Size also are not significant, but the Government it is. According to results from Table 21, if the post is from government the chances that it deals with some issue increases. More precisely, if the post belongs to government the chances that it is focused on some issue increase for 90 percent.

Table 21 Predictors of Issue coverage

	Model 1		Model 2	
	B	Exp B	B	Exp B
Likes	-.002***	.998	-.001*	.999
Comments	.002	1.002	-.004	.996
Shares	.012***	1.012	.015***	1.015
Government			.643***	1.902
Right			-.258	.772
Size			-.025	.975
Constant	.056***	1.058	-.396**	.673
Hosmer and Lemeshow X <sup>2</sup>	33.565 (8), p <0.01		11.202 (8), p = .191	
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	.040		.065	

\*\*\*p < 0.01    \*\*p < 0.05    \*p < 0.1

Lastly, regarding Expectation 2.6, in the Table 22 we can observe two models as predictors of women presence in the FB posts. Model 1 includes controls, and Model 2 introduces

independent variables. According to Hosmer and Lemeshow goodness-of fit, as well as Pseudo R<sup>2</sup> it can be seen that the Model1 is not very useful for predicting ‘women presence’ in posts. When independent variables introduced in Model 2, the model becomes better. Although, Nagelkerke R<sup>2</sup> is still low, but compared to Model 1 it is improved. It is visible that only ‘Size’ is significant predictor. If the post is from the big party, the possibilities that it presents or refers to women increases for 33 percent.

Table 22 Predictors of Women presence

	Model 1		Model 2	
	B	Exp B	B	Exp B
Likes	-.001	.999	-.001	.999
Comments	.007	1.007	.002	1.002
Shares	-.008	.992	-.006	.994
Government			-.260	.771
Right			.374	1.453
Size			1.993***	7.335
Constant	-1.617***	.198	-3.191**	.041
Hosmer and Lemeshow X <sup>2</sup>	8.940 (8), p = .347		11.202 (8), p = .191	
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	.012		.065	

\*\*\*p < 0.01    \*\*p < 0.05    \*p < 0.1

#### 4.8 EXPECTATIONS 3 INTERACTIVITY

Second and additional part of analysis is related to citizens` activity or interaction with Facebook content posted by political parties in Serbia. The expectations were that the main party in government might be the most popular one, according to number of likes per post. Also, the expectation was that in general the communication flow might be more indirect one than direct. Finally, citizens might engage the most through comments and especially when it comes to the Facebook posts of parties in government.

Regarding Expectation 3.1 Popularity, how popular parties are, among those who use Facebook, can be presented through number of likes each official page has and through the sum of likes for all posts per page. At the time of observation the highest number of likes for official page had the main and biggest party in the government, SNS with 101 280 total page likes. Then follows party DVERI with 45 943, Democratic party with 39 823, Socialistic Party of Serbia has 26 851 total page likes, and at the end SDPS has 5 240. According to this the most popular is SNS which is plausible because it is the government itself and currently the most popular party with also most popular and present party members. This nationalistic oriented, rightist party has significant number of likes/followers which might indicate the citizens` tendency towards this direction. Besides SNS, Dveri is also rightist and second most popular which might lead to conclusion that in general political climate goes toward right direction and it has essential support from citizens in contemporary Serbia.

Table 23 Descriptives: Mean values of Likes, Comments and Shares per party

	<b>Likes</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Shares</b>
	<b>MEAN</b>	<b>MEAN</b>	<b>MEAN</b>
<b>SNS</b>	466.22	55.03	37.50
<b>SPS</b>	13.45	.16	1.61
<b>SDPS</b>	49.20	.58	2.75
<b>DS</b>	227.54	8.23	24.29
<b>DVERI</b>	442.03	18.62	44.69

On the other hand, average number of likes for Facebook posts might point to popularity. Looking at number of likes (Table 23) as indicator of popularity and citizens activity it says that the most popular and the most engaging citizens are post from SNS with mean values of 466.22 likes, then DVERI with 442.03 average likes and DS with 227.54 average likes per post. SDPS has 49.20 and SPS the lowest activity on this dimension 13.45 mean values of likes per post. As two parties (Table 23, SNS and DVERI) appear to have obviously more likes, comments and shares than others (and close to each other average values), I have proceeded with statistical analysis in order to find more explanation for this. I have compared these two parties on all three variables using t-test (Table 24). Also, I have compared those two parties, by running the same test, with other parties.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Tables with t test results for other parties in Appendix

Table 24 Independent samples T test: number of likes, comments and shares for SNS and Dveri

	Mean	t test	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
<b>Likes</b>				
SNS	466.22	0.340	182.556	.734
Dveri	442.03			
<b>Comments</b>				
SNS	55.03	10.251	284.523	.000***
Dveri	18.62			
<b>Shares</b>				
SNS	37.50	1.290	233.896	.195
Dveri	44.69			

\*\*\*p<0.01

According to t test (Table 24), there is no statistically significant difference between SNS and Dveri on likes and shares. For first one, the t test (df = 182.556) is 0.340 and it is not significant, which means that differences in means of likes between those two parties are not actual differences. Similarly, for shares t test value (df= 233,896) is 1.290, and this is not significant. This also indicates that we can approve null hypothesis which states that there are no significant difference between numbers of shares of these two parties. In other words, these differences are not statistically important. When it comes to comments, the situation is different. Results of t test (284.523), p<0.01, indicate that we can reject null hypothesis which states there are no differences in number of comments for two parties. Differences in number of comments among these two parties are significant. Two parties actually differ on this variable. As results from t test for other parties and these two were all significant indicating real differences between these two and others (see in Appendix) and as seen in Table 24 these

two parties have significant similarities, in further text I give possible explanation for these similarities. It appears that nor size or government status predisposes citizens` activity on Facebook pages, but maybe more left-right orientation. This is so, because results of t test suggest that SNS and Dveri are similar and both are rightist or right leaning parties. It is possible to state that current rightist parties in Serbia are more likely to be more active in the Facebook environment. They have more likes per page, more likes per post, more comments, and obviously more shares than others (Table 23). The tendency of right-wing parties and also parties with centralized internal power structure (visible in both parties) switching more to online tools in political communication indicated in work of Gibson and Rommele here appears to have support (Gibson& Rommele, 2001). I can claim that current rightist party in Serbia, show more tendency to be active online and to mobilize citizens online more than other observed parties.

#### 4.9 EXPECTATIONS 3.2& 3.3

Regarding expectations for direct communication and citizens` engagement with posts we should take a look on Table 23. SPS is the party with the highest number of post in general (394), but on the other hand (Table 23) it is not popular, not engaging citizens in commenting and sharing. As we can see in Table 23, SNS has less than one (1) comment per post, a slightly more than one share per post. Similarly, SDPS has less than one comment per post and slightly more than two shares per post. For these two parties nor direct or indirect communication flows with citizens are functioning. When it comes to other three parties, DS has around eight comments per post and around twenty five shares; Dveri has around eighteen comments and slightly more than 44 average shares. Finally, SNS is with highest value of average comments and shares – fifty five comments and around thirty seven shares. Number of shares and comments are valuable in order to see how much the indirect communication flows are present. Having in mind the fact that only party Dveri has few, but

only few, direct replies to citizens` comments and other parties are just transmitting their information without engaging into direct communication with citizens, it could be stated that Facebook representation and communication of political parties does not tend to be direct and interactive. It is more top – down communication, from parties to people. Moreover, parties use this internet tool mostly for information provision and promotion. Indirect flows of communication are present and indicated actually by number of shares and comments. By commenting and sharing content citizens engage with parties` posts and parties in general, and parties expand their audience on Facebook. Here, we can see that citizens are sharing and commenting the most SNS and Dveri`s posts.

#### 4.10 PARTY PROFILES

Here is to create short elaboration for each party`s Facebook activity. After creating that type of profiles I will discuss about similarities and differences among them. At the end, I will try to explain whether or not characteristics are related to certain party type.

##### Serbian Progressive Party (SNS)

As already mentioned several times this is the main party in current government in Serbia. Just to remind, on last election in March 2014 SNS won 158 of 250 seats in national parliament. Like every government it has the full attention of mainstream media, especially the prime minister who is member of this party. When it comes to the online tools, particularly Facebook, their official FB page is the most popular among parties` pages in Serbia. It has 101 280 total pages likes, at the time of analysis. It does not lead in number of posts, but it is a third after Democratic Party and Socialistic Party of Serbia, with 162 Facebook post in total per three moths investigated period. However, SNS FB posts lead in the number of likes. This study has shown that average number of likes per post for SNS`s page is 466.22, which is the highest value among five parties. This indicates the popularity of

the party in this online environment, which is somehow plausible due to the fact it is main actor in government, and at the peak of its political power. People on Facebook frequently comment their posts and share it to others. This is the party to which FB content citizens are engaging the most when it comes to the number of comments (at average 55 comments per post). These comments are mostly supporters` comments, and sometimes critics. Intensive sharing is also present, 37.5 shares at average per post, and second best value after party Dveri which has the highest number of shares. This value of shares per post indicate that citizens` are actively involved with party`s content, and that indirect flows of communication take place. As direct communication with people and interactivity are not present at all at SNS Facebook page, I can state that the communication is characterized as top down.

What is the published content explains what party does online, on Facebook, and does it use this tool. First of all, 41.6% of the content is characterized as promotion or sort of announcement, which is the lowest percent among the rest of the examined parties. Why SNS does not try to promote itself as much as other things of Facebook, might be explained with the fact that there are plenty of other channels for that purpose available to them. Traditional media, especially Television and Public Service Television, follow the government and report about its activities more than about other political actors. This is plausible, as government has more significance to public, and also it should be followed and controlled by the media all the time. Secondly, SNS`s posts are in 50% of cases leader focusing, and it is more than the rest of the parties. Centralized internal structure and the powerful position of its leader Aleksandar Vucic, current prime minister, lead to the content in media in general to be leader oriented. The same is at Facebook. Closely related to that is the fact that 47.5% of the posts are dealing with some individuals and their activities or personalities, which is again the first highest rate among these five parties. If the posts are more personalization colored, then issue coverage would be in decrease. In the case of SNS this is true. Its FB presentation dedicated

the lowest space to the issue coverage in comparison to the rest of four parties (32.7%). Furthermore, posts of this party have some important amount of criticism towards opponent (18%), but is almost a half less than, for example Democratic Party or Dveri with around 39% of this type of posts. Finally, women are present in the content (16%), but it is third rate after SPS and DS.

### Socialistic Party of Serbia (SPS)

The FB activity profile of this governmental party looks as follows. It has forty four seats in National assembly and it was the part of last two governments. Regarding its Facebook activity this is the party with the highest number of post on its official page (394). Nevertheless, it is the last before SDPS by number of total pages likes, and on the last place with 13.45 average likes per post. This shows its tendency to only provide information, but on the other hand inability to catch audience on the particular social media network. In other words, it is not popular. Additionally, according to average number of comments (0.16) and shares (1.61) this is the party with lowest values of it, and the one which does not mobilize people on Facebook. No one is interested in commenting SPS's FB posts and rarely it comes indirectly to the broader public. Fortunately for them the governmental status gives more access to mainstream media, so the online sphere is not decisive for communication and representation.

The content published on FB official page is half of the times promotion or announcement (57.6%), and it is the lowest rate after SNS. The explanation might be the same as for SNS, the government does not take Facebook as the primary source for promotion. In the high rate posts are leader centered, which is highest after main governmental party. The same stands for personalization. The historical context is important for this manner. Being the party of former nondemocratic president of the state, Slobodan Milosevic, and extremely centralized

interior structured this party has almost natural bases for emphasizing the leader. Now, leader of the party Ivica Dacic is one of the most important politician in country, former prime minister and currently chairperson of Organization for security and cooperation in Europe (OSCE). On the other hand, this is the party which has the higher percent compared to others of posts related to specific issue. SPS like left wing party and with few minister positions crucially important to economy, like agriculture or energetics, tries to emphasize different issues, and that is visible on their FB page. Moreover, women are present in 20% of the FB content, which is the most compared to other parties. At the end, there is almost no criticism content.

### Social democratic Party of Serbia (SDPS)

This is the small, but with enormous coalition potential party, which can be seen through its importance for the big political actors when negotiating for government formation. It has been the part of the last three governments, and its leader Rasim Ljajic is one of the most popular politicians in Serbia. The map of this party`s Facebook activities are as follows.

First of all, according to its number of page like and likes per post it is one of the least popular parties. Also, it is last according to number of page likes in total with only 5 240 likes, and second last by the likes per post (49). Besides that, it is the least active party among these five parties. SDPS has only 99 posts for observed three months period. This would indicate not paying too much attention to this kind of communication with public. Besides, SDPS almost does not have comments and shares rarely, which means that people do not engage with its content, maybe do not look at it at all, and most importantly do not spread the information indirectly to others.

Interesting is that this party leads in the promotion and announcements content, with around 83% of posts being like that. It provides information, but it does not reach the audience

obviously. Particularly informative is that SDPS has the lowest rate of personalization and leader oriented post compared to other parties. Nevertheless, its content deals in significant amount with issues, but still third ordered after SPS and Dveri. Might be that leftist position of the party and its general orientation towards improvement of citizens` lives has to do with this issue focused FB content. In addition, there is 14% of criticism characterized posts, and this is second lowest rate after SPS. Finally, less than one percent of the Facebook posts present women.

### Democratic Party (DS)

Democratic Party states for itself to be to base of the democratization in Serbia. This is the truth from the historical facts, where DS was the gathering force of the democratic opposition in 90s, and it succeeded in overthrowing Milosevic`s regime. After that, it was the main party in government until 2012 when they faced with the election defeat. The Facebook activity profile of this party is to be presented in further lines.

Regarding Democratic Party`s activity, this is the one of the most active in using Facebook compared to the rest. With 222 posts in total, it has the second best rate when it comes to the frequency of posting. Similarly, it is relatively popular among citizens who use Facebook. Immediately after SNS and Dveri it has the highest number of Facebook page likes (39 823). Average number of likes per post is relatively high as well (227.5), but still it is almost half of the likes SNS or Dveri have. However, we can say that DS has its online audience and reaches it in significant amount, which is visible through the number of shares. Although, it has not the great amount of average comments per post, it has around twenty four share per post indicating the indirect communication flows, engagement of citizens/supporters and broadening the audience.

When it comes to the type of content DS is spreading through the Facebook page, the promotion and announcements are present in significant quantity. Around 60% of the content is of this type (third after SDPS and Dveri) and it suggests that opposition is trying to represent themselves through this alternative media outlet. As opposition, it has to capture every possible chance for representation, as mainstream media dedicate them less coverage. The personalization is the characteristic of the 25% of their FB content, which is average compared to other parties. Additionally, its posts are often leader focused (36.5%). Big party, centralized internal structure and most importantly with the tradition of leader as well (Zoran Djindjic<sup>3</sup>) it shows tendency to present the leader at first place and most frequently compared to other actors. Moreover, Facebook content at DS's official page, is dealing with specific issues in around 30% cases. This is an average, as all parties deal with issues to some extent, but it is second lowest rate before SNS. As it was expected, DS leads in criticism towards opponents as it is the biggest and the most important opposition in current structure of political forces in Serbia. Around 39% of the posts are directly criticizing the government, especially SNS, and at the same time providing alternative solutions. To conclude, if you follow its FB page you can see that women are present in there, and exactly in around 17% of cases.

## Dveri

Dveri is the rightist party, extremely national oriented and anti EU actor in Serbia. It gain around 4% of the votes in last elections in 2014, but it does not have the parliamentary status. It was chosen for the analysis as extremely rightist party, with increasing popularity and visible activity on the social media platforms. Facebook and similar tools appear to be

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<sup>3</sup> Djindjic was the leader of the DOS (Democratic opposition of Serbia) and revolution in 2000. The reformer and prime minister of the first democratic government in Serbia; In 2003 he was assassinated, and from this point the sort of cult of Djindjic and its reformatory ideas have gain the enormous value.

highly important for this party, as they are not so visible or maybe aren't at all in mainstream media. The basic features of Dveri's activity on Facebook are as follows.

Dveri's official Facebook page is the second most popular among pages of analyzed five cases. It has 45 943 page likes in total, which makes them virtually popular and visible. Also, after SNS this is the party with the highest average number of likes per post 442. Then it has around 18 comments per post, which makes Dveri second most commented. Finally, Dveri has the highest average number of shares per post. All numbers presented prove that this small party is particularly active on this social media platform. Not only that is active, but it is able to influence citizens by FB content to react, to comments, to spread the info and engage. Moreover, Dveri is the only party that has, although only few times, replied directly to the comment of some Facebook user.

Regarding the content, Dveri is one of the leading in promotion and announcements form of content. Regularly it posts about their activities or plans (68%, second after SDPS). Criticism is also a frequent content that they publish – around 33% of the posts are criticizing, mostly government. Personalization is obviously present, but it is much lower than with other parties (21.4%). Similar is with leader oriented posts (18%), where Dveri counts second lowest place after SDPS. Naturally, they are focusing on issue coverage mostly. With 45% of the issue coverage at its FB page, it is a second best rank when it comes to the dealing with specific problems and issues. At the end, as expected, women are underrepresented in Dveri's FB content, with less than 6% of the content of this kind.

### Party types and representation

After undertaking the analysis of the data what is left here to do is to try to connect it with the first and essential goal of this study: How party is related to FB representation? Actually,

there are some patterns that can be stated in relation to some party types in current Serbian context.

First of all, it can be claimed, almost for sure, that right wing parties are the most popular ones on Facebook nowadays. Parties like Serbian Progressive Party and Dveri appear to be the most followed and liked compared with the rest of three parties. They are also particularly active on this Internet platform. Moreover, when it comes to rightist parties there is a pattern present on the side of citizens as well. Followers and people online tend to comments more these parties` posts than others`. In addition, people spread (share) the content of Dveri and SNS than of other parties. For SNS it seems reasonable to be significantly popular due to the fact it is a central actor in government. But, on the other hand Dveri`s popularity leads to conclusion that public`s attention is really pushed toward rightist direction, as analysis has shown.

Secondly, if the party is small one and leftist there are more chances it will use FB as a tool for information provision and promotion. According to data, current opposition in Serbia tends to promote themselves using FB official page more often. But, as seen in analysis part we cannot for sure predict this sort of content by government/opposition status.

Thirdly, leader focused and personalized content are characteristics of the big parties` posts and often governments` and right wing ones. However, all parties dedicate some space to issue coverage, and it seems if it is a government it will be more active in this manner. It is plausible that parties in government have more responsibility for current state of affairs in country, and obviously have more power to influence it. That is why government might lead with greater amount of issues related content.

Fourthly, criticism is mostly the feature of opposition`s FB activity. And finally, presence of women in FB posts is related to big parties and those in government.

## CONCLUSION

The point of departure was to explore usage of ICTs in political communication field. More precisely, the goal was to see how political parties in Serbia use one of the online tools - Facebook, for their representation and communication with citizens. Moreover, the attempt was to show how communication on Facebook looks like between parties and voters. Research questions posit the relationship between party type (ideology, size, status in government) with certain type of content posted on Facebook. In addition, it asks for possible relationship between party type and citizens` engagement with published content. The main argument was that in Serbia, post-communist and non-Western democracy type, online political communication might not be the same as in Western democracies, and equally important as in US or UK. Also, different types of parties might use ICTs in a different way and frequency. These differences might have cultural, historical and economic background, and can also influence dissimilarities in citizens` activity and reactions to the Facebook activity.

Major findings suggest that in general all parties are using Facebook for information provision, and that online communication with people is not direct at all, but mainly indirect. Citizens mostly engage with rightist parties` content. Also, there are specificities in type of content and amount of activity when it comes to the contemporary rightist parties and those in government- they tend to be more active and more popular than others. While government parties` posts tend to be more leaders oriented, issues focused and personalization oriented, opposition leads in criticism towards opponents. Furthermore, provision of information is main goal of all parties on Facebook, but left wing parties and the ones in opposition dominate in posting this type of content. Size of the party is important in leader focused posts and for presence of women, because big parties show more tendency than small ones to

publish this form of content. Finally, women are not present in great amount on FB pages, and when they are, it is mainly on pages of big parties and parties in government.

This thesis represent unique contribution to the broader field of political communication, especially to the part dealing with new Internet tools that became important to this field. It gives additional information about possibilities and patterns of using social media networks for political purposes. And moreover, it contributes to the knowledge about non-Western democracies in Europe and the way how political parties in these countries approach ICTs. It also provides understanding of how in different context the same tools could be used differently, and how different outcomes might appear. Moreover, it contributes to the general theoretical discussion about potentials of ICTs in political communication and communication strategies. It questions and explains whether the ICTs can make political competition more equal (equalization theory) or it continues to favor inequalities in organizations` resources (normalization theory). This thesis certainly fills the gap in literature referring to non-Western democracies, and particularly Balkan context, and the role of digitalized media in political communication.

Limitations of this work might be the most in the number of cases and inability to analyze all parties in Serbia and their online activities, due to the time and space constrains. Of course, it was not even an intention, or possible, to make generalizations or inferences about all party types in general, but it was an analysis about current state of affairs and current parties and their behavior. One might say that the coding of content was biased and needed external coder, but that was not possible due to the time available for this work.

Future research might take other social media platforms into account, in order to compare it findings. Also, future studies can include all parties in Serbia into examination, or attempt to

make a comparative research in Europe searching for possible patterns in online political representation and communication.

## Appendix

Table 1 Independent samples t test: SNS and SPS likes, comments and shares

	Mean	t test	df	Sig. (2 tailed)	
<b>Likes</b>	<b>SNS</b>	466.22	23.649	161.135	.000***
	<b>SPS</b>	13.45			
<b>Comments</b>	<b>SNS</b>	55.03	18.750	161.021	.000***
	<b>SPS</b>	.16			
<b>Shares</b>	<b>SNS</b>	37.5	14.279	161.365	.000***
	<b>SPS</b>	1.61			

\*\*\*p<0.01

Table 2 Independent samples t test: SNS and SDPS likes, comments and shares

	Mean	t test	df	Sig. (2 tailed)	
<b>Likes</b>	<b>SNS</b>	466.22	21.339	174.407	.000***
	<b>SDPS</b>	49.20			
<b>Comments</b>	<b>SNS</b>	55.03	18.501	164.706	.000***
	<b>SDPS</b>	.58			
<b>Shares</b>	<b>SNS</b>	37.5	13.693	167.687	.000***
	<b>SDPS</b>	2.75			

\*\*\*p<0.01

Table 3 Independent samples t test: SNS and DS likes, comments and shares

	Mean	t test	df	Sig. (2 tailed)	
<b>Likes</b>	<b>SNS</b>	466.22	11.317	229.594	.000***
	<b>DS</b>	227.54			

<b>Comments</b>	<b>SNS</b>	55.03	15.559	179.364	.000***
	<b>DS</b>	8.23			
<b>Shares</b>	<b>SNS</b>	37.5	4.683	243.994	.000***
	<b>DS</b>	24.29			

\*\*\*p<0.01

Table 4 Independent samples t test: SNS and Dveri likes, comments and shares

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>t test</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig. (2 tailed)</b>	
<b>Likes</b>	<b>SNS</b>	466.22	.340	182.556	.734
	<b>Dveri</b>	442.03			
<b>Comments</b>	<b>SNS</b>	55.03	10.251	284.523	.000***
	<b>Dveri</b>	18.62			
<b>Shares</b>	<b>SNS</b>	37.5	-1.290	233.896	.198
	<b>Dveri</b>	44.69			

\*\*\*p<0.01

Table 5 Independent samples t test: DS and SPS likes, comments and shares

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>t test</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig. (2 tailed)</b>	
<b>Likes</b>	<b>DS</b>	227.54	24.158	221.886	.000***
	<b>SPS</b>	13.45			
<b>Comments</b>	<b>DS</b>	8.23	11.568	221.507	.000***
	<b>SPS</b>	.16			
<b>Shares</b>	<b>DS</b>	24.29	17.621	222.919	.000***
	<b>SPS</b>	1.61			

\*\*\*p<0.01

Table 6 Independent samples t test: DS and SDPS likes, comments and shares

	Mean	t test	df	Sig. (2 tailed)	
<b>Likes</b>	<b>DS</b>	227.54	18.404	291.392	.000***
	<b>SDPS</b>	49.20			
<b>Comments</b>	<b>DS</b>	8.23	10.003	292.807	.000***
	<b>SDPS</b>	.58			
<b>Shares</b>	<b>DS</b>	24.29	16.143	254.133	.000***
	<b>SDPS</b>	2.75			

\*\*\*p<0.01

Table 7 Independent samples t test: DS and Dveri likes, comments and shares

	Mean	t test	df	Sig. (2 tailed)	
<b>Likes</b>	<b>DS</b>	227.54	-3.106	163.292	.000***
	<b>Dveri</b>	442.03			
<b>Comments</b>	<b>DS</b>	8.23	-4.877	196.130	.000***
	<b>Dveri</b>	18.62			
<b>Shares</b>	<b>DS</b>	24.29	-3.971	179.178	.000***
	<b>Dveri</b>	44.69			

\*\*\*p<0.01

Table 8 Independent samples t test: Dveri and SPS likes, comments and shares

	Mean	t test	df	Sig. (2 tailed)	
<b>Likes</b>	<b>Dveri</b>	442.03	6.258	158.010	.000***
	<b>SPS</b>	13.45			
<b>Comments</b>	<b>Dveri</b>	18.62	9.168	158.043	.000***
	<b>SPS</b>	.16			
<b>Shares</b>	<b>Dveri</b>	44.69	8.657	158.091	.000***
	<b>SPS</b>	1.61			

\*\*\*p<0.01

Table 9 Independent samples t test: SDPS and Dveri likes, comments and shares

	Mean	t test	df	Sig. (2 tailed)	
<b>Likes</b>	<b>SDPS</b>	49.20	-5.726	159.044	.000***
	<b>Dveri</b>	442.03			
<b>Comments</b>	<b>SDPS</b>	.58	-8.853	165.650	.000***
	<b>Dveri</b>	18.62			
<b>Shares</b>	<b>SDPS</b>	2.75	-8.408	159.682	.000***
	<b>Dveri</b>	44.69			

\*\*\*p<0.01

Table 10 Independent samples t test: SDPS and SPS likes, comments and shares

	Mean	t test	df	Sig. (2 tailed)	
<b>Likes</b>	<b>SDPS</b>	49.20	9.034	99.948	.000***
	<b>SPS</b>	13.45			
<b>Comments</b>	<b>SDPS</b>	.58	1.326	99.105	.188
	<b>SPS</b>	.16			
<b>Shares</b>	<b>SDPS</b>	2.75	3.038	108.827	.003***
	<b>SPS</b>	1.61			

\*\*\*p<0.01

Table 11 Independent samples t test: Right-left, big-small on Personalization

	Mean	t test	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
<b>Personalization</b>				
<b>Right</b>	.35	1.649	592.243	.100
<b>Left</b>	.29			
<b>Personalization</b>				
<b>Big</b>	.35	4.955	518.969	.000***
<b>Small</b>	.20			
	1.61			

\*\*\*p<0.01

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