BULGARIAN POLITICAL PARTIES: AN EXPLORATION OF ROMA REPRESENTATION IN ONLINE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS

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ABSTRACT

This study explore Roma representation during online electoral campaigns of four Bulgarian parties, competing for vote in the election of April 2023. Scrutinizing 327 Facebook posted during the political campaign of March 2023, this empirical analysis showcase how is the Roma minority in Bulgaria addressed by the parties and test a hypothesis about the political parties' strategy based on the risk to include and address Roma explicitly. This argument is based on the literature of Roma and electoral politics. The methodological approach of this study is qualitative text analysis. While the results confirm a hypothesis of Bulgarian parties not addressing Roma explicitly during political campaigns, the study acknowledges the limitation and challenges to scrutinize the substantive and descriptive representation of Roma in the Bulgarian political landscape.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Minority representation always has been a question interesting many - researchers, activists, and ordinary citizens. This master thesis explores the representation of the largest European minority group - the Roma people. This research is focusing on the national context of representation of Roma withing the online electoral campaigns of the current Bulgarian parties. This European minority is recognized as an ethnic minority in Bulgaria but not as a national as it is in many other European countries. Consequently, that impacts the aspects and opportunities for representation in Bulgaria and Roma are supposed to be represented by the mainstream political parties of the country.

Between April 2021 and March 2023, Bulgaria has been rolling on series of political campaigns and elections. The interest of minority representation and the current electoral landscape has motivated this research to focus on investigating the descriptive and substantive minority representation during the online campaigns of the parties.

Moreover, this thesis gives an overview on the theoretical and empirical aspects of the representation of Roma in Bulgaria. The emphasis of this research is on representation of Roma during political campaigns. Further, this study expands the discussing by using the substantive and descriptive representation arguments offered in the literature. In addition, the analysis engages with the with other studies done in the field of electoral party strategies and undertakes upon testing literature derived hypotheses.

The method used in this study is qualitative content qnalysis and particularly qualitative text analysis. This academic exploration focuses on the electoral campaign of the elections that took place on 2nd of April 2023, in which several parties competed for votes. The political parties had 30 days before elections to appeal to their constituencies and promote their political agenda. The political campaign started one the 1st of March 2023 and lasted until 30th of March 2023. As the fifth electoral campaign in in a row, the political parties already have been practicing their political strategies for promotion and political endorsement. They have been using different way to appeal and address their constituencies, one of which has been the utilization of social media. Individual party members and political have been active and vocal trough social media. The Facebook social platform is one of the most used by political figures and the civic sector in Bulgaria. Hence the empirical analysis of this master thesis scrutinizes the Roma representation in trough the online social media platform Facebook. Precisely the Facebook status and textual posts through which parties and party members address the Bulgarian voters.

The chosen parties for this research are two types: two well-known parties with an established electorate and two newly established parties. The goal of the case selection is to test the stated hypothesis and to examine if there is difference between the status of the parties and the way they see Roma, address, and include, since the theory gives an interesting perspective on the status of the parties and the implication which might occur upon the inclusion Roma related narratives in electoral campaigns.

Additionally, this master project touches upon a debate about minority representation from an identity politics perspective, where the literature debates the entitlement of majority actors to represent Roma. This study intersects between the topics of electoral and party politics, minority representation and identity politics.

Aim of this study and justification

The lack of representation of the largest European minority is significant, on the European level, the European Parliament has 705 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), representing 27 member states, including Bulgaria. In 2023, out of 705, only 3 members of the European parliament, openly identify as Roma. (EUobserver, 2019) At the national level of Bulgaria Roma are also underrepresented. However, the focus of this research on the national Bulgarian parties and the representation of Roma trough the mainstream parties.

In general, studying the topic of Roma representation, particularly in the Bulgarian context has not been an appealing topic for political scientist. Roma are often studied from a sociological and anthropological perspective but there has been a lack of research, connected to the Roma political representation and in the field of party politics. With this master thesis, I aim to contribute to the literature of political science and the national context of Bulgaria. I chose the Bulgarian national context to explore this topic.

Moreover, when Roma appear within the political space in the context of party politics in Bulgaria. They usually appear in the negative related context and connotations. This negative discussion usually are discussed by nationalist parties and present give a negative image of Roma. This master thesis aim to look at the representation of Roma within the political parties who might include Roma in their political agenda and address Roma during their electoral campaigns. The underrepresentation of Roma and the recent changes in the political scene of Bulgaria, make the case of Roma representation is an interesting case to be analyzed.

After the change in the political landscape, the establishment of new parties in Bulgaria and the European influence on Bulgaria in the past two decades, make the case of Roma

significant for reproach. In this relation, This master thesis aims to look at the Bulgarian political parties and to explore what is the political party representation of Roma and how political parties address Roma within their political campaigns on social media.

Moreover, this research aims to analyze four selected Bulgarian parties and to study how do they address, under what contexts and with what type policies related. Further, the aim of this research is to see if there are any differences or similarities of the selected parties sending political messages during the electoral campaigns.

Further, this thesis aims to contribute to the literature on minority representation and particularly Roma representation in Bulgaria by exploring the following research question: How the Bulgarian parties address Roma during their political campaigns? With this question I would like to explore how Roma are represented by Bulgarian parties during political campaigns and further study the sub-questions: Are there any differences or similarities between the different parties when it comes to addressing and representing Roma. The last perspective to be examine is how the parties differ in their representation of Roma and other minorities.

Research Question: How the Bulgarian parties address Roma during the political campaigns?

Sub - question: Are there any differences or similarities between the differences in addressing and representing Roma?

This study particularly explores the Roma representation by focusing on written social media posts, published on the official Facebook pages of four parties. Through which they communicate political messages and appeal to the voters during the electoral campaigns. The parties included in this analysis are GERB - SDS (in Bulgarian: „ГЕРБ - СДС, Граждани за европейско развитие на България - Съюз на демократичните сили", acronym for Citizens for European Development - Union of Democratic Forces), a party that has been ruling for the past 12 years, the newly established parties PP (in Bulgarian: Продължаваме промяната ПП", acronym for We Continue the Change) and DB (in Bulgarian: "ДБ, Демократична България", Democratic Bulgaria) which managed to strengthen their political influence in the past two years. In this analysis, I am also including another actor which is the DPS (ДПС, acronym for Movement for Rights and Freedoms) informally known as the Turkish party that attracts an ethnic minority electorate, including Roma votes.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1.Bulgarian political landscape

In the past few years, the Bulgarian political scene has been very dynamic. Different topics and events have been a at the political table for a discussion. Similarly, to other countries in Europe, Bulgaria has its groups and party favorable voters who support the narratives of anti - European union membership, anti - immigrations, populist narratives, anti - Roma sentiments and homophobic attitudes.

With the rise of nationalism and ethnonationalism (Jenne, 2018; Bieber, 2018), and many right-wing parties gaining political influence in Europe, ethnic division and hate speech had become a more often seen political narrative and ideology. Antigypsyism has been normalized and Roma have been used as a scapegoat for many years by members of right-wing parties in Bulgaria, such as the case with the Member of the European Parliament - Angel Dzhambazki, who has been spreading openly hate speech messages against Roma for years and even blaming Roma for the spread of the Corona virus, at the beginning of the Covid - 19 pandemic, in 2020. (Matache & Bhabha, 2020)

However, while nationalist ideas still flourish in Bulgaria and other European countries, Bulgarians have been exposed to the European values and influence, hence that changed over the years the political scene in Bulgaria. New political parties have been formed and new political demands emerged. Disappointments from political scandals and anti - corruptions narratives mobilized well-known political activists and the opposition parties of Borissov's government to organize a series of protests in the summer of 2020. Many Bulgarian citizens across different cities in Bulgaria have joined the demonstartion.

These protests carried a demand for political change and resignation of Borissov's government. Moreover, the citizens were calling for visibility of corrupted practices and asking offer better political alternative. This energy of the demonstrations transformed into the establishment of new political projects and strengthening the political influence of some already existing parties in opposition. Which has broadened the political choice for the constituencies and pushed the political parties to be more active and to seek strategies to appeal to the voter.

The demonstrations did not manage to take down GERB and Boyko Borisov's governments which has been in power for 12 years. After the end of their mandate in 2021, a political change occurred in the political scene and many parties claim to be the alternative of GERB and Borissov's government. Since 2021, Bulgaria has entered a stage of series of election where the Bulgarian parties compete with each other. The newly established parties are labeled as "The parties of the change", they claim to be more socially sensitive, inclusive towards different minorities and to seek justice. Moreover, they main aims is to fight against corruption and better protection of human and minority rights.

The fact that Bulgaria is part of the European Union (EU) where the protection of human and minority rights is guaranteed and protected European value has influenced some of the political parties to form more pro-European attitudes and to adopt laws, strategies, and understandings of the EU. As a European minority, Roma have been a targeted institutional topic among the European institutions such as the Council of Europe and the European Commission. The European institutions have issued multiple EU Roma strategies for Roma integration and combating antigypsyism. (Goodwin & Buijs, 2013). Through strategies and international tools, the EU is fighting for Roma inclusion of Roma and further, pushing member states to take actions.

There are different debates about the influence of the EU on its member states. However, urging member states to draft, propose and implement plans and for the integration of Roma people is argued by some author that might create the understanding that the Strategies for inclusion and Roma related policies are primarily a EU responsibility an not a responsibility of the particular member state. Hence, they might omit from taking responsibility for Roma inclusion (McGarry, 2014).

Nevertheless, as a member state, Bulgaria has obliged to implement EU policies, to monitor and had the benefits of receiving European funding. As a result, Bulgaria has been progressing through the years and it seems that the Bulgarian civil sector has been more demanding and adopting pro-European values. The demonstrations, the changes which followed and the rise of new parties with more pro-European attitude has been an evident that the political scene in Bulgaria is changing. Hence, which build certain expectations that they might be willing to create space for accommodating minorities and ensure their representation.

1.2. Political representation of minorities

Political representation is embodied within the democratic idea where the power is given to the people. Petit argues that political systems and governments have been designed to give "kratos" to "demos", meaning giving the political power to the people. (Pettit, 2010, p.61). Nowadays, in democratic societies, citizens have the right to vote, elect others and to be elected themselves. Representation is a fundamental right of citizens and understanding its importance is crucial for constitutional democracies. It is essential that all groups withing a society are being represented. Hence, minority representation needs to be insured, however, often minority groups are being underrepresented.

To understand representation, one needs firstly to define representation. For instance, Pitkin defines representation as formalistic, symbolic, descriptive, and substantive representation. (Pitkin, 1967, p. 209). This study focuses on the descriptive and substantive representation. Moreover, discussing Pitkin's definition, the substantive representation view is taken as a basis for defining political representation where actions are being taken for the represented group. Further, descriptive representation is argued to be understood as representation that resembles common interests or shared experiences with the group that is being represented. (Pitkin, 1967, p. 209).

Authors define minority representation as different types of representation. Here, I use Loncar's understanding of representation as descriptive and substantive representation (Loncar, 2013). Nevertheless, both types of representation are important, and they address different aspect of the representation. The descriptive representations looks at the presence of minorities in the party, parliament, or party lists. However, there are cases where members of minority groups are being used by the pollical parties in "exchange" of descriptive representation or a seat at the table. Hence, a seat at the table does not guarantee an impact when it comes to decision making and policy implementation.

Additionally, Pitkin's definition of political representation is a concept where the representatives "act in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them" (Pitkin, 1967, p. 209). The position of "acting" on someone's behalf is crucial in any democratic society and any nation. Hence, the representatives might be "individual agents" or "groups of individual gents" (Petit, 2010, p.65). These agents could be the political parties and candidates who address demand, needs, and represent citizens. This political entitlement of

parties tor represent is happening trough acting on the behalf of the people who the parties represent. (Loncar, 2013, p.25) Pitkin's understanding of descriptive and substantive representation has been influential in past research on minority representation. In this framework descriptive representation refers to the presence of elected representatives who belong to a defined group and "look like" the represented while the substantive representation refers to the minority interests and needs, that could be formulated as policies and promises. These definitions serve as a starting point for understanding the representation of national or ethnic minority groups.

However, it should be taken into consideration that the descriptive representation does not guarantee substantive representation. (Pitkin, 1967) Descriptive representation is essential for minorities but often is not enough on its own. As important it might be to see one of your own being present and taking a seat among the people with political power, it is also equally important that these "agents" have the ability to make any meaningful change for the groups that they represent, such as implement policies that target and include minorities.

In addition, Loncar argues that these types of representations need to lead to better policies as a respond to the demands of the electorate. Moreover, representation could be descriptive or substantive, but it is not limited. Further, Loncar argues that descriptive representation could be crucial in order to have substantive minority-friendly outcomes as it can polarize majority voters against the minority. The act of political representation may look in different ways, however it raises for a discussion two main questions - "Who are represented?" and "Who does the representing?" (Petit, 2010, p.64). These crucial questions, reflect on the participation of minority groups and their representation in the political life.

Further, authors argue about the importance of minority participation from an egalitarian perspective where it is a principle of justice, minority interests of individuals to be addressed. (Kymlicka, 2017) This consideration of demands and needs of different ethnic minority groups should be seen as a key element of all democracies, even, in cases where they contrast with the majority's opinion. (Kumlicka, 1998)

Hence, descriptive and substantive representation matter and have an impact on the status of the minority. The political representation is a right to each minority, and it is a sign that the state cares about all of its citizens. Moreover, descriptive representation builds trust between the state and its minority groups, and it shows equal treatment. (Loncar, 2013, p.57)

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In this relation, Kumlicka argues that in multicultural societies state–minority relations are critical. It is essential minority needs and demand to be Identified, because it is a state accountability to response to the citizens demands and to not exclude anyone. (Kymlicka, 2017). In the discussion of state - minority relations, developing further the symbolic representation or descriptive representation by group members, might give members of minority groups the feeling of inclusion and participation in the decision-making process.

1.3. Roma representation in Bulgaria

The Roma people in Bulgaria remain an extensive part of the population. According to the National Statistical Institute in Bulgaria, 4.4% or 266 720 people, who have responded to national census of Bulgaria have identified themselves as Roma ethnic origin. (National Statistical Institute, 2022, December 21). However, because of prejudices and widespread discrimination among the Bulgarian society, often people with a different ethnic background, prefer not to respond to the identity question. Moreover, in the case of the Roma, many prefer to identify as Turkish, especially in the Muslim Roma communities, because they often recognize that anything different than Roma, gives a different status in the society. Hence the unofficial number of the Roma population could be speculated.

Roma communities across Europe and in Bulgaria are a heterogeneous and dispersed ethnic group. For instance, not all speak the same language or share a common religion. Even within country or one region, Roma communities speak different dialects, have different traditions, and political identities. There are also other differences between the different Roma subgroups such as different cultural, economic, and political experiences. (McGarry, 2014, p.757) Therefore, people from the same ethnic group could have different preferences about their political representation. Nevertheless, Roma remain at the margin of the political representation in Bulgaria.

As the largest European minority Roma, are politically underrepresented, not only at the national level in Bulgaria but also at the European level. (Kóczé & Rovid, 2012). Moreover, Roma representation is complex, not a visible, one-way process. In different countries, across Europe, Roma representation happens through ethnic parties or reserved seats. In Bulgaria, there are no official quotas for political representation, no reserved seats as an affirmative action or a Roma ethnic party. Hence, as with any other group in Bulgaria, Roma are being represented through majority political parties.

Over the years Bulgaria did not have many officials who have been elected and claimed to represent particularly the Roma minority interest, or if they were elected, they remained politically invisible. In the 90s a political party named "Euroroma" was established, claiming to represent Roma interests. However, this party also stated that is not strictly Roma-oriented and had members with a diverse ethnic background. Since the registration of an official ethnic party in Bulgaria is not possible. Euroroma has not been politically active since 2015.

Nevertheless, within the mainstream parties rarely there are self - declaring Roma candidates or ana explicit political agenda related to Roma. Often, candidates who might be associated with a Roma identity, are usually placed at the end of the electoral lists and yet Including Roma in the majority party's electoral lists or electoral programs somehow changes the dynamic of the party. (Barany, 2001) Not every party includes Roma among the candidates or speaks about Roma. However, the approaches of attracting Roma constituencies might have has changed over the years.

In the recent years, after the changes in the Bulgarian political scene, the emergence of new parties, protest and shaking the ground of the known and ruling for 12 years GERB's party, the representation ground has changed, which seems a good moment for the parties to broaden their electorate bye either including Roma candidates or policies about Roma. Moreover, this analysis pacifically focus on the descriptive and substantive representations on the political campaigns and test, if the parties have a stand on the Roma representation.

Barany discuss that in similar times of changes of party leadership positions or any other major changes withing a party the it is more likely are more likely to occur a change in the strategies or target of the electorate. Such a shift in the political dynamic in Bulgaria as the protests and mobilizations in 2020. (Barany, 2001). Which could be an additional reason for the well stablished and ruled over the years party, such as GERB or DPS to broaden their electorate and to include Roma in vidible in their political campaign.

Although Roma are not politically represented or associated with any mainstream party, the topic of the Roma minority appear in the social and political space but primely in a negative context, related to stereotypical topics endorsed by right-wing and nationalist parties, which not only does not represent Roma in the political space but most importantly it creates a negative political image of Roma as an ethnic group in Bulgaria.

The lack of Roma communities' participation in public representation leads to negative discourses ethicizing certain social issues, such as criminality. Since, Roma have been

appearing mainly in negative contexts and nationalist narratives, building solidarity and cultural understanding is necessary between communities.

1.4. Who is entitled to represent minorities?

There is a debate withing the different minority studies and scholarly emerging fields such as the Romani studies field, that tackles the question of entitlement and ownership over presenting minority perspectives within the knowledge field production. Different Roma and non - Roma scholars have been engaged with the question who has an "authority to speak". (Stewart, 2017, p.139) Since this study aims to scrutinize minority representation withing majority parties, I find the debate of entitlement relevant to be introduced.

The question of who is entitled to write about Roma could be easily turned around and reparsed as "Who is entitled to represent Roma?". While there is a demand for different perspective and inclusion of minorities, some authors criticize the demand of Roma being involved in the scholarly "representation.", by describing a stigmatization of non-Roma scholars and dangerous implications of narratives for the Roma involvement. (Stewart, 2017)

However, seeking the Roma representation at the first place, calls upon the narrative of seeking policies related an identity. Moreover, with an interest exploring the Bulgarian Roma representation within the mainstream parties of Bulgaria, I find necessary to discuss minority representation not only as an entitlement to Roma themselves but also as a state responsibility of ensuring minority representation. Further, I believe that mainstream and ethnic parties are entitled to represent or speak on the behalf of their constituencies as long as there is understanding and consideration of demands and issues of the communities.

Moreover, not everyone might one to be seen from the perspective identity and that is a right of minorities, however, policies and representation should not exclude at a general scale the identity aspect. This approach of color blindness (Doane, 2017), where officials and governments pretend that there are no aspect of race or ethnicity involved is dangerous. It rejects any policy or governmental response that might need to be tailored for the communities, but also it makes it impossible to tackle nationalists' discourses or hate crimes against communities, because of race and ethnicity.

Further, seeking the substantive and descriptive representation of a minority within a mainstream party, suggest that an identity element would be scrutinized. Moreover, this study look into the way of addressing Roma and particularly through the lens of descriptive and substantive representation because the understanding is similar to the debate about scholarly

work. No one by default and based only on identity could be ensured to produced non harmful outcomes for the minority (Mirga-Kruszelnicka, 2018), the same way I state that only ethnic line could secure the representation. However, it is essential that minorities are part of the representation and to look at representation from descriptive and substantive representation, where those who represent can look like the minority and most importantly understand the specific minority related issue.

Responsiveness and identity

Miriam Hänni argues that the political support of minorities depends not only on a particular political institution, but rather on the way how this intuitions function. Moreover, the way and the extent to which the political actors are responsive towards minorities and the degree of their inclusion, "namely the degree of inclusion and responsiveness". (Hänni, 2017,p.666) If we take Political parties as such institution and their way of approaching, speaking and appealing to minorities, one can see to what extend these institution are considerate towards minorities.

Although it might be a basic understanding that states provide equal opportunities for participation and representation to all its citizens and minority groups. That is not always the case, states are not always aware and considered about minorities. Governments which are responsive to most of the society trough policies, does not mean that they are also responsive to the minority groups in society. (Hänni, 2017) This responsiveness need it be ensured. In this case making sure that minorities have a national status, recognition and tailoring policies responsive to them should not be taken as ethnonationalist's approach but rather an inclusive one towards minorities.

Moreover, it understandable that not everyone might one to be seen from the perspective identity and that is a right of minorities, however, policies and representation should not exclude at a general scale the identity aspect. This approach of color blindness (Doane, 2017), where officials and governments pretend that there are no aspect of race or ethnicity involved is dangerous. It rejects any policy or governmental response that might need to be tailored for the communities, but also it makes it impossible to tackle nationalists' discourses or hate crimes against communities, because of race and ethnicity.

The Roma communities in Europe are among the poorest which is consider as a social economic issue, however there are also many Roma - ethnic specific issues on which parties

need to take a stand. Scrutinizing minority representation is motivated by the believe that governments should be responsive and provide equal opportunities for minority participation.
and representation in the society.

Bulgaria as a country does not differ from other European countries on the level of inclusivity and representation of minorities. Nonetheless Bulgaria does not recognise Roma as a national minority which might be crucial in some cases. For instance, many children coming from minority communities in Bulgaria enter the education system, speaking a different language than Bulgarian. Often in kindergarten and pre - school programs, the children cannot communicate properly with their teachers because of the language barrier. Without speaking Bulgarian or barely speaking the official language, the education system and families face major obstacles in the education process. This is a major language barrier, often for children coming from regions with informal Roma settlements and extreme levels of segregation. Meanwhile the state does not acknowledge the existence of the minorities nor their languages, the school system and all devoted to educating children encounter that visible difference.

Children who speak a different mother thong than Bulgarian, often speak Romani language (Romanes) or Turkish in the Turkish speaking Roma communities. In these cases, the state need to recognize the fact that minorities exist, and they speak different languages. Since in order to tackle this issue, states and education institutions need to tailor the educational policies for children with a different ethnic background. For instance, issuing textbooks for bilingual children or training teachers how to work with bilingual children. Romani speaking and Turkish speaking minorities are the biggest minorities in Bulgaria and in cases like one, it is this important in the minority status and its context. It is inevitable and it should be encouraged to take specific action applying to the specific minority.

Policies responsive to minorities - including . Social economic policies, access to policies, health care and education, are important and need to be addressed and tackled for all marginalized communities but also, I believe that the explicit mentioning matter when it comes to policies and needs. Moreover, there is a need for cultural representation and policies tailored for Roma specifically. Additionally, the cultural representation and acknowledgment of a certain group politically it further promotes solidarity and understanding in the society. (McGarry, 2014)

Tailoring policies and building intercultural understand in the society will also create or strengthen the sense of belonging of each citizen. Marginalization, segregation, and the lack

of institutions in many Bulgarian Roma settlement create the sense of exiting nowhere. Political, social and culture recognitions are a way to show the different communities that they are part of the Bulgarian society. Which creates a positive image, or at least acknowledgement and further could result in more willingness of the political parties do represent and speak about Roma with no risks considerations of losing voters.

Since Bulgaria is a democratic country where there are no ethnic parties, and mainstream political parties represent the interest of all citizens, I wonder, how this democratic representation includes the Roma minority. In the case of Bulgaria, both - identity appeals and policies towards minorities, need to be addressed in the case of the claim for minority representation. To unpack the understanding of this minority relations, one need to see the parties approaches of addressing and representing minorities.

2. **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES**

The literature discusses political representation mainly in the contexts of national minorities, In this case I focus on the Roma ethnic minority in Bulgaria. Since, Bulgaria has no national minorities defined by its constitution but only ethnic, hence Roma are defined as "ethnic" The national status of a minority groups is an important aspect, since it gives official recognition and legitimacy, which could result to claims about certain right such as parliamentarian representation and recognition of minority languages. The status of the different ethnic groups in Bulgaria, shifts the focus towards the demographic diversity rather than a national minority status and a sense belonging to the state.

However, parties have different strategies and approaches to appeal to voter. Identity and policy promises are often used to attract new electorate. Authors have been studying how identity appeals affect constituencies and how parties address voters. For instance, nationalist parties often succeed by addressing identity appeals and policy offers on the line that excludes minorities and appeals to the majority. In some cases, through fear-based lines   (Howe et al., 2021) In other cases, mainstream parties would rather avoid including a minorities in their political agendas because it might not be a good strategy, considering their electorates biases towards a certain community. Research argue that for the majority parties, it takes courage to include or speak about minorities. Therefore, it is not a preferable strategy by political parties. To elaborate further, I use Zoltan Barany's argument that including a Roma candidate in the electoral lists and electoral campaigns, could be seen as a "liability given widespread societal biases against Roma" (Barany, 2001, p. 4). As a result of widespread biases that the society holds toward the Roma communities is a possible reason for the mainstream parties not to talk explicitly about Roma, to include Roma in their campaigns or have policies tailored for Roma in their agenda.

Hence, mainstream parties with an established electorate within nationalists and racist societies, would avoid explicitly stating policies, promises or descriptively addressing minority communities, such as the Roma. For the reason that tackling voter's trough ethnic lines might result in a negative outcome, such as losing votes from the majority population.

Moreover, the literature says that the new parties without yet established electorate have nothing to lose when it comes to the expectations or biases of the voters and the majority. (De Sio & Weber, 2019) Hence, if newly established include Roma, in theory, they would do not

have what to lose. Therefore, when it comes to including minorities, the case with newly established parties might be different than the parties with an established electorate.

Additionally, researchers suggest that party strategies are essential, and parties plan and consider what is most beneficial for them in order to benefit from their campaigns. Researchers claim that the party strategies, political messages, and the communication with the voters, are created based on an electoral risk–opportunity evaluation. The expectation is that parties whose agendas looks at the electoral opportunities while avoiding risks will be rewarded at the polls. (De Sio & Weber, 2014)

De Sio and Weber, researched campaign designs of political parties and their strategic assessment of the potential electoral results which had end to be in their favour. Turns out that when the parties rely on well-designed communication strategies, at the end are being eventually rewarded by the voters. This is called the "issue-yield theory" and is used to measure the electoral risks and rewards. Hence, whoever the parties thing has more promising and high electoral return, then the greater the campaign emphasis towards the group or community. (De Sio & Weber, 2014)

In another study, De Sio and Weber argue that within the electoral competition, parties create multidimensional model of party strategy, in which the parties compete and highlighting certain policy issues. Therefore, the parties choose meticulously what Issues to emphasizes during campaigns and how to appeal to the voters, being motivated by particular goals such as to mobilize the party's core voters and to broaden their electorate. (De Sio & Weber, 2014).

Reflecting on the Bulgarian political landscape and all of the recent party changes that lead to the establishment of new parties and the electoral mobilization of the well-known parties in Bulgaria, I wonder if the risk consideration applies in the Bulgarian case. Moreover, if the newly established parties consider the risk - benefit of votes. After the series of political campaigns and elections, I consider that the Bulgarian parties also take into consideration the electoral risks, rewards and the pollical gains from the elections. Therefore, the political parties and plan their campaigns accordingly.

Hence, the Bulgarian parties might have the realization of the risks addressing or speaking about Roma during campaigns might not be a beneficials the "cost - benefit" strategy for them and the risk to lose votes. (Buta & Gherghina, 2022) Therefore, including Roma in their political agenda is considered to be sign of bravery which the Bulgarian parties do not have. (Barany, 2001)

Hence, I hypothesize that the Bulgarian political parties do not address Roma during the political campaigns, because of the risk to lose electorate. Moreover, the Bulgarian political parties are being aware of the consequences at the poll. As a result, I argue that political parties in Bulgaria do not take a vocal and explicit stand in terms of addressing Roma or tailoring political promise or policies, towards Roma during their political campaigns.

In addition, considering the literature and the arguments related to the newly established parties that they do not have what to lose in terms of established electorate, the assumptions is that the newly formed political parties might be more inclusive and address Roma during their campaigns. Although they may seem more open to change and diversify, however there still might l be a concern of being labeled as a pro - Roma or losing majority votes. Since Bulgaria has been had experienced a series of elections and political campaign, I aim to scrutinize if that political parties in Bulgaria take a vocal and explicit stand in terms of addressing Roma or polices towards Roma in during their political campaigns. Moreover, considering the argument that new parties are more open to broaden their electorate and could "risk" I aim to examine if the new parties are more considerate to address Roma. Based on the discussed literature and the national context of Bulgarian Roma representation, I developed two hypotheses which I test and explore with this empirical analysis

1.The Bulgarian political parties do not address Roma explicitly during the electoral campaigns because of the risk to lose votes.

2.The newly established parties do not have what to lose in terms of votes and they could potentially address Roma.

3. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH AND DATA

This methodological chapters is constructed in the following way: it starts with the explanation about the methodology that I use for the analysis, next, it discusses why content analysis is a suitable method for the aims of this research. Further, this chapter presents what are the advantages and the disadvantages of the chosen method. In addition, this chapter contains a discussion about the case selection, data collection and the usage of Facebook in Bulgaria and the end is followed by the empirical analysis of this study.

This empirical analysis scrutinizes the research question: How the Bulgarian parties address Roma during political campaigns and further analyses if there are any differences and similarities of how the parties see in the Roma in the context of representation. Moreover, this empirical study is testing the two theoretical hypotheses - that Roma do not appear in campaigns, because it is a risk for the political parties and although the newly established parties might want to broaden their constituencies, the risk-taking theory might apply to them as well.

To explore the research question, test the hypotheses of this study which derive from the theoretical arguments and the literature discussed in this thesis, I use for this analysis the Qualitative Content Analysis and precisely Qualitative Text Analysis. This research method is suitable to explore my research question because it provides a way for analysis, objective way to scrutinize the usage of word and terms, their occurrence and it provides conceptualization.

Since the focus of this study is to look to the political parties narratives of representation addressing the Roma minority and to conceptualize these understandings, the method provides a meaningful research way to find the certain words and concepts and moreover to determine the relationship between them. Many researchers use Content Analysis to explore the usage of certain words and concepts within a given qualitative data, such as newspapers, speeches, articles, or social media posts. With this method the unit of analysis is often media content.

In this research, the unit of analysis are Facebook posts published by four Facebook accounts of Bulgarian political parties. My focus Is how the parties phrase "Roma", when they do address Roma directly in their social media posts. Through the Qualitative Content Analysis, I found a way to systematically scrutinize the data withing the context of the posts, while identifying patterns, themes and withdrawing interpretations that I could connect further.

(Roller & Lavrakas, 2015) Moreover, in my case where I look into the usage and frequency of particular words and terms such as: "Roma", "minority" and other Roma associated terms.

Firstly, to conduct a qualitative content analysis, one needs to determine the main research objectives and select the deductive or inductive approach to the analysis. (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015) While focusing on the objectives of this research, I started developing the categories for analysis, called also "codes" based on the developed theory and hypothesis. Therefore, the approach of this analysis is a deductive development of the "code" and data. However, it is not unusual for researchers to use both approaches. I the process of analysis, new "codes" were developed and categorized based on the textual data.

The strength of this method is that it could be used identifying patterns in contextual and non-contextual way. Being able to contextualize the results based on this method is one of the strength of the content analysis. Also it is a highly cost-effective method for research. Moreover, it strength is that scrutinizes data that is naturally occurring data from variety of sources. (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015) Moreover the content analysis could be done by using a qualitative software, then the analysis is called computer assisted qualitative content analysis. In this master thesis, to study the research question and to test the hypothesis I have used the qualitative software - NVivo.

As any other social science method, the usage of content analysis has its advantages but also some disadvantages related to the meaningful interpretation of words and context. For example, making inferences and connection that have derived from the data is valuable, however, Roller and Lavrakas point out that there could be a danger for the researcher falling in "trap" to make claim a relationship. Moreover, one cannot make a casual claim with this research when used as a primary method. That is why acknowledging these limitations of the content analysis, one need to create its study objectives systematically and meticulously.

The relevance of method, it is helpful to systematize the data and visualize using the program or software, however, the main role is based on the research, to contextualize the usage of the certain category and would be "coded" or categorized as a relevant information.

In addition, the qualitative content analysis which apply in this study and the categories of this research have been developed in two ways - factual and thematic categories. The first one - the factual refers to more objective appearance and the thematic type of development of the categories refers to specific content and context. (Kuckartz et al., 2014, p.41)

3.1.Political parties – selection

To conduct this analysis, I focus on four Bulgarian parties. The parties which are included in this analysis are **GERB** (ГЕРБ - "Граждани за европейско развитие на България" , *"Grazhdani za evropeysko razvitie na Bulgaria-Sayuz na demokratichnite sili"*, an acronym for Citizens for European Development-Union of Democratic Forces), **PP** (ПП - "Продължаваме промяната", *"Prodaljavame promyanata"*, acronym for We Continue the Change) and **DB** (ДБ - "Демократична България", " *Demokratichna Balgariya"*, Democratic Bulgaria) and **DPS** (ДПС - "Движение за права и свободи", *"Dvizhenie za Prava I Svobodi"*, an acronym for Movement for Rights and Freedoms). The four Bulgarian parties are visualized in the following table (Table 1)

	Name of the party
1.	**GERB - SDS** acronym Citizens for European Development-Union of Democratic Forces
2.	**PP** - acronym for We Continue the Change
3.	**DB** - acronym Democratic Bulgaria
4.	**DPS** - acronym for Movement for Rights and Freedoms

Table 1. Political parties included in the analysis of this study.

The first political party - GERB, has been ruling in Bulgaria for 12 years. Its main leader is Boyko Borissov. This party is one of the well - established Bulgarian parties, well known in bigger cities, small and rural areas, among different class and groups of the society. Over the years, they had Roma candidates and elected officials, mostly on a local level - mayors or members of the municipality councils.

The second party included in this analysis PP, a new political party that has been established in September 2021 by the two Harvard graduates - Kiril Petkov and Asen Vasilev, they claim to be an alternative of the status quo. They have pro-European values, and they fight against corruption and to provide better educational opportunities.

The third party is DB and its has been on the Bulgarian political scene since 2018. The main leader is Hristo Ivanov and other leaders of DB, were the main political figures to mobilize during the protests in 2020. After the protest, the party gained more influence and strengthened its electorate. DB works for fair and transparent judiciary system and digitalization and green policies.

The fairly new two established parties PP and DB managed to gain more political influence in the past two years, they are also known to be more open and liberal towards different social groups. "Democratic Bulgaria", has activist and political candidates from the Roma minority. Moreover, members from both parties PP and DB are also known to be supportive of the

different communities in Bulgaria. These two parties - PP and DB have decide to merge their political power on the elections taking part in April 2023.

Moreover, in this analysis I am looking at the two parties: DB and PP as separate cases, although they have merged their powers for this specific election. However, that was a very recent event upon the election and people still recognize them as separate structures.

The last party, selected in this analysis is DPS, which is not only known as the Turkish party but also the most associated one with the Roma representation, although they primarily claim to represent the Turkish minority. Moreover, they manage to attract Roma votes, especially from Muslim Roma communities or Turkish-speaking groups and this is the only party that is associated to be an "ethnic" party.

However, DPS is not officially an ethnic party, since in Bulgarian constitution prohibits the establishment of ethnic parties. Therefore, an ethnic Turkish party cannot be registered by the law. Despite that DPS is known to be active in the Turkish communities in Bulgaria, to target them as electorate and to represent other ethnic minorities. They mainly address issues related to the Turkish community. Tackling ethnic lines and Bulgarian nationalism and the events from 1980s, the forced migration of the Bulgarian Turks to Turkey, known as a "revival process". (Bojkov, 2004) Moreover, they discuss issues concerning certain regions with pronominally Muslim population, such as the one living in the Rhodope Mountains region, Tatar communities and the Pomak minority. In addition, DPS has a very active political youth structure, called "Youth DPS" that primarily recruits young people from the Turkish communities, primarily students from all across Bulgaria.

The selection of the parties is in this analysis is based two reasons. First, the expectation for potential representation appearance or the political parties addressing Roma. For example, choosing a right-wing party might lead to result findings the occurrence of terms or policies that mentioned Roma, however they might not be related to representation of Roma rather anti - Roma hate speech. The second reasoning for the selection of the four parties included in this research, is the interest to analyze the well-established parties, such as DPS and GERB who have an established constituency and the more recently founded parties, such as the PP and DB.

Further, the motivtion of this selection is to test the literature driven hypotheses that the established Bulgarian parties consider addressing Roma in campaigns as a risk in appealing to the voters and as a potential treat losing electoral results. On the other hand, are the newly

established parties as a selected case, which are supposed to be more open, hence they might include Roma in their political campaigns. In this case, the DPS party is an interesting case as a well-established and Roma associated with representation.

Moreover, since this research seeks minority representation, the selection is also based on the expectation for the political parties to have Roma representation in the campaign or at least to do not depict a negative picture of this minority. That is why the selection is not based on where do Roma could appear as a term or in being discussed during political campaigns. Because the expectation would be that a nationalist or a right-wing party might not even consider representation of Roma. Moreover, since the methodological approach is content analysis, it will be easier to find terms and frequency of words in the context, posts of nationalists and right-wing parties, however they wool be in a negative context and not with the intention of representation.

3.2. Party politics and social media advertisement

Social media has influenced many aspects of our lives, including politics and how the political parties promote themselves. Nowadays social media spaces and different digital platforms are used by political parties, individual candidates and even governments to promote and restrict online content that reaches out the social media users in different countries and beyond. Social media has changed the settings and the political strategies. Different computer programs and algorithms offer many advertisings digital tools and specific ways to even target potential constituencies by identifying characteristics such as voting age, social and cultural background. (Chester et al., 2017)

Social media channels have provided new ways of interaction and advertisement for political parties, new ways of political promotion during political campaigns and endorsement of political ideas and agendas. Politicians and parties are present in the online space, their social media pages and account are followed by thousands, therefore that provides efficient promotion, especially during times of elections and campaigns.

Social media platforms such as Facebook are being actively used in Bulgaria, especially during campaigns for digital endorsement of the candidates and the party's agenda. The selected four political parties used in this analysis, are very active on different social media platforms - parties and users, primarily use Facebook and utilize it as a tool for political promotion. Troughs the main party channels, the parties published official press releases, written Facebook posts as part of their campaigns, videos and pictures, and they often repost

post of their party members. Moreover, each of the selected party has thousands of followers on their official political pages. Facebook displays the rough number, as it follows, the Facebook page of DPS is followed by 43 000, the DB party has 41 000 followers, GERB's account has been followed by 46 000 and the PP party has the most with 91 000 followers. These numbers show how many people are exposed to the social media content which the parties published on a daily basis.

In the Bulgarian political landscape, after the series of elections and multiple campaigns to promote parties and attract potential votes, Social media platforms and especially Facebook as platform has become a digital space for discussion and open communication between party members, leaders and voters. The political parties have been through five political campaigns between 2021 and 2023. I focus on the data naturally generated during the campaign in March 2023. The political parties have been investing in pre - electoral campaign endorsement. Research done by the Bulgarian national television indicates how active and much capital did the parties spent on social media advertisement during the campaign in March 2023.

The media used the advertisement tracker, and took into concidertaion, the fact that each Facebook advertisement is being declared on the platform who finance it, an individual, a business, a government or a party. Therefore, the media channel that conducted the research revealed the spendings of the parties on social media endorsement. In the result, it turns out that the two newly established parties and DB have spent the most to promote their Facebook post and publications. These are the parties that also have digitalization in their political agenda. However, a table (Table 2) shows on the amount of money that the PP and DB have spent together on Facebook marketing, 89152 euro. The original table is in Bulgarian, for the purposes of this study, I have created a translated version.

страница	кой плаща	сума в евро - 30 дни	брой
Коалиция ПП - ДБ	Коалиция Продължаваме промяната- Демократична България	76175	283
Да, България	Коалиция Продължаваме промяната- Демократична България	10621	43
Искрен Митев	Коалиция Продължаваме промяната- Демократична България	1756	11
Демократична България - Разград	Коалиция Продължаваме промяната- Демократична България	500	2
Стела Николова	Коалиция Продължаваме промяната- Демократична България	100	1
		89152	340

Table 2. How much money did the parties spend on Facebook ads during the election campaign - PP and DB party.

Facebook page (**social media** account)	Who pays	The amount of money in Euro **for 30 days of the campaign**	Number of publications
Coalition PP - DB	Coalition PP - DB	76175	283
Yes, Bulgaria (part of DB)	Coalition PP - DB	10621	43
Iskren Mitev (member of PP-DB)	Coalition PP - DB	1756	11
Democratic Bulgaria - Razgrad	Coalition PP - DB	500	2
Stela Nikolova (member of PP-DB)	Coalition PP - DB	100	1
		89152	340

Table 2. How much money did the parties spend on Facebook ads during the election campaign - PP and DB party (translated)

Source: https://bntnews.bg/news/koya-partiya-kolko-e-poharchila-za-feisbuk-reklami-po-vreme-na-predizbornata-kampaniya-1229160news.html

3.3. Data

The textual data of this analysis is publicly available and it was taken from the Facebook social media account of each the selected political parties. Through a search function, Facebook allows the publications and posts to be filtered for a certain time frame period. Which allows the information on each Facebook page to be selected and manually saved. From there It is a matter of observation and manual effort, where I have selected the textual data and collected in a word file for each party. The selected post for the analysis were published between 1st and 31st of March. Since the time of the electoral campaign started one the 1st of March 2023 until 30th of March 2023. The reasoning to select this electoral campaign is based on the fact that is the last and the most recent one at the moment of this study.

Since the research question of this study aims to analyze how the parties address Roma and how they formulated their messages within the time frame of the political campaigns, I focused precisely on the written Facebook posts that address the voters.

The Facebook post contains written text and hashtags with political messages. In this study, I do not focus on any other Facebook materials that could be used for analysis, like visual data - videos or pictures, because each of them would need a different methodological approach an extended time scope for research.

Reading trough each of the Facebook pages of the four parties' accounts, I have collected , specifically each written message that appeal to the voters. The amount of the Facebook posts that have been collected and analyzed in this study - 372 written texts, between one and 6

paragraphs each. The number of Facebook post posted by each party are visualized in the following graph (Figure 1)
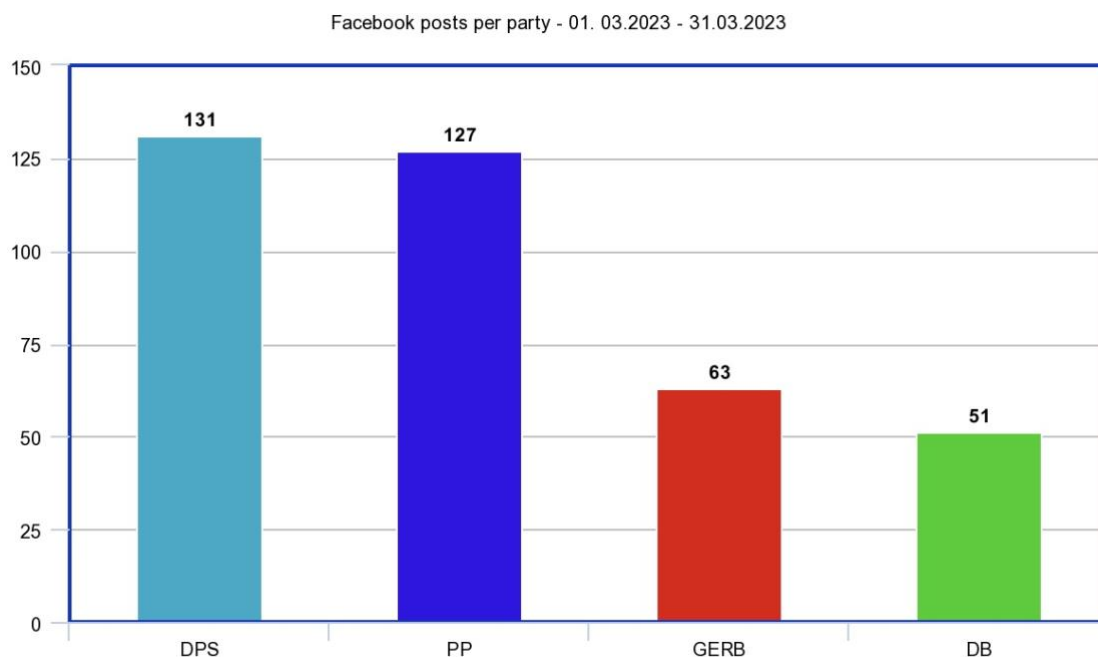

Figure 1. Facebook posts per party - 372 posts, posted during the campaign 01 March - 31 March

Source: own visualization

For this study, I have chosen to analyze Facebook because the political parties are very active there, moreover, this social media platform is widely spread among the Bulgarian population. Hence, it is rational for the parties to utilize social media consumption for political messages. and in this case Facebook.

Further, choosing Facebook, hence a digital space has consequences in terms of certain limitation. One might argue that poorer communities might not have accesses to internet. However, since Facebook has emerged as a digital space, after the 2004, many others platform emerged and the accesses to mobile data become easy. While poor communities still might not have access to cable internet and providers, many people nowadays have access to mobile data social media accounts. Yet the limitation that remains is in terms of the age of the users. Nevertheless, Facebook is widely spread among Bulgarians, the following chart (Graph 2.) illustrates the numbers of Facebook users in Bulgaria, in March 2023. The data is illustrated in percentages, numbers and by gender.
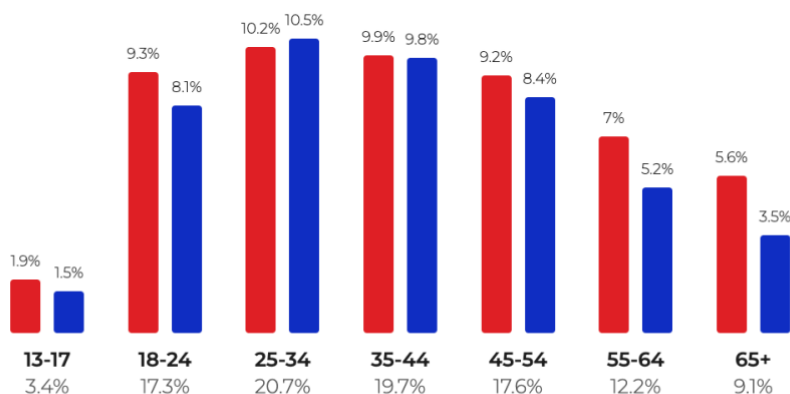
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Figure 2 - Facebook users in Bulgaria in March 2023, which accounted for 65.7% of its entire population.

Source: https://napoleoncat.com/stats/facebook-users-in-bulgaria/2023/03/

4. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

To give an overview of this section and restate the study objectives, this empirical analysis looks at the word frequency in the data collected, contextual relationship between the concepts and the appearance of the term "Roma" and policies restate to this minority, that could be connected in a substantive and descriptive way. Each code has been devolved with the specific reason to understand better the objectives of this study. Hence, to scrutinize the terms and categories that are related to representation.

Moreover, the case selection and code development are predefined by the formulated hypotheses that the Bulgarian political parties do not include Roma in their political campaign to avoid the risk of being labeled as pro - Roma and to risk to lose voters. Moreover, that that the newly established parties might consider that risk as well.

After defining the hypotheses and the study objectives of this research, the empirical part of this research has been developed and conducted in two phases, following the structure illustrated in Figure 3.
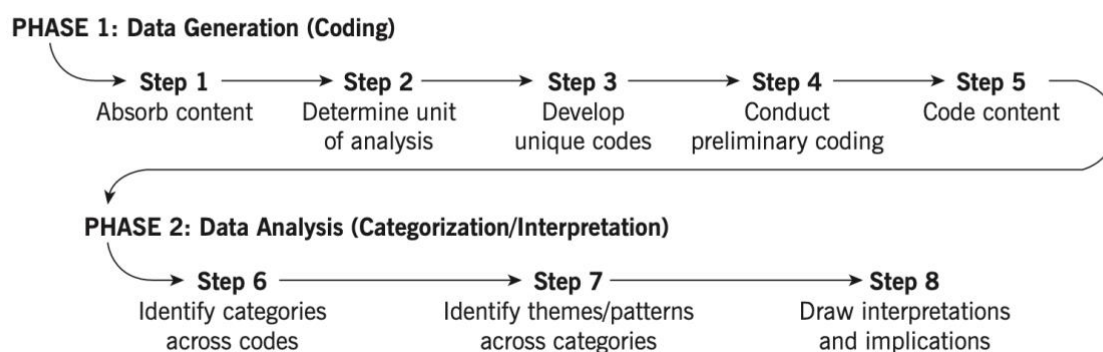

Figure 3. Phases in qualitative content analysis
Source: (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015, p.235)

Guided by the structure presented by Roller and Lavrakas, In the first phase of this research, I briefly observed the digital content that the political parties have posted during their campaigns, then I have determined the unit of analysis of this of this study which is the written text messages and posts that are being published by the parties. To process of the next steps of the first phase of this research, I have collected the data from the official Facebook pages of the selected parties and a separate file for each party. Later on these files

have been uploaded and analyzed with a software. To approach this research empirically, I use a qualitative software assistance - NVivo. This software assist to systematize and analyze the data. The next steps, after the collection of the data was to create the predefined "codes" or categories and proceed to the preliminary coding stage.

Preliminary defined codes and explanations:
1. Addressing Roma explicitly
2. Addressing other minorities explicitly
3. Addressing the majority
4. Policies (promises) for Roma
5. Policies (promises) for other minorities
6. Policies (promises) for the majority
7. Representation of Roma
8. Representation of other minorities

Table 3. Preliminary defined codes

Table 3 shows the preliminary defined codes. Each code had been developed with a specific aim, resulting from the theoretical argument which are earlier. In this specific case, the theory discusses the representation of minorities through the lens of substantive and descriptive representation. With this qualitative content analysis, and more specifically, qualitative text analysis - I have created categories that aim to seek the representation of minorities in in each case - political party selected to be analyzed.

The first three categories listed in Table 3 - (1)"Addressing Roma", (2)"Addressing other minorities" and (3)"Addressing the majority", have been developed with the intention to explore if the parties address Roma and to compare with minorities and the majority. By addressing, this code means to categorize specific and explicit messages and sentences in which context where parties "talk to" a particular group. Moreover, the code also categorizes the contextual presence of the word "Roma" and the word for other minorities,

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different words, depending on the minority. This code has the purpose to look at the descriptive presence of minorities.

The next two codes in Table 3 - (4) "Policies (promises) for Roma" and (5) "Policies (promises) for other minorities" and (6)" Policies (promises) for the majority, have been created with the aim to scrutinize if the parties include the mentioned groups in their policies. Since the study analyses the Facebook post, therefore they include written message, I have decided to categorize promises for actions for the particular group in the code for "Policies". To clarify the meaning of, "action" in this analysis is categorized as "Policies" only when is explicitly states by the party or a member of the party that they would work, implement, or do something about the community or work on identified problem that specifically concerns the group. This code has the aim to seek the substantive representation in during each party's campaign.

The last two preliminary codes from Table 3 - (7) "Representation of Roma" and (8) "Representation of other minorities" were created with the aim to seek when Roma and other minorities are intentionally represented withing the analyzed social media post of the campaign. However, after I have started the preliminary coding and in the progress of the analysis, a question emerged related to two the categories being too similar to each other by meaning. Hence, the categories creates as "Representation" and the categories for "Addressing" connected into one. Hence, in the next stage of the analysis each code of "Representation" is merged and analyzed as "Addressing" code.
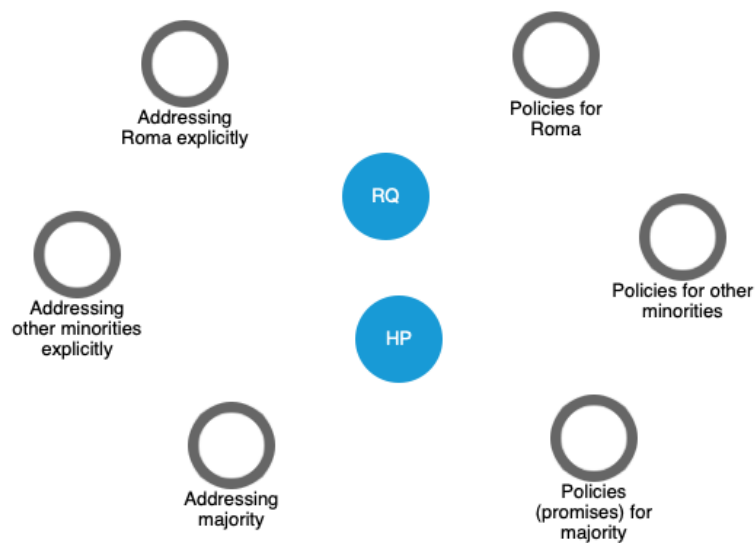
28

Figure 4. Visualization of the main categories, after merging "Representation" into "Addressing"

Source: NVivo, own visualization

The illustrated visualization, showcase the research question, the hypothesis as central points for the development of the main codes, used to determine the objectives of this study. The next section, give and an explanation of the coding process and a detailed reasoning for the main and sub - categories created during the applied study.

As the empirical analysis progressed and the main codes were predefined, the next step of coding process followed. Which is the second phase of the qualitative content analysis - after the preliminary coding step, additional categories were identified and added to the analysis and the full process of categorizing or "coding" followed. The next table (Table 4.) illustrates the additional categories that have been developed.

Type of code	
Main code	***Sub - code***
	Women
Addressing other minorities →	*Turkish minority*
	Religious
Cultural or social cause →	*Any other social issue or cause (beside representation of ethnic minorities)*

Table 4. Additionally added categories - after preliminary analysis

One main code and a few subcodes (Table 4). This main code: "Social or cultural cause", includes any social issue or cause (beside representation of ethnic minorities) that the parties addressed, talked about, and promoted as important during the political campaign. This code is an important dimension to show if and what is the general political sensitivity of the parties and to some extent their ideological priorities, hence to what they devote endorsement and policies. Moreover, it is interesting this code to be compared with the other codes created to study the ethnical aspects.

The sub - codes few others sub - codes, related to the of "Women", "Religious", "Turkish minority" (when explicitly stated), these categories had to be created to give a more specific overview to the main code "Addressing minorities", to see what other types of minorities the parties addressed and in what context.

The initial research approach to this analysis is closed coding, however, after the preliminary coding I combined both - closed and opened coding approaches. These approaches are also called "inductive" and "deductive" coding strategies. In the discussion of the coding process, it is necessary to give an example for the coding process and the relevant "coding" or categorization of the codes. In the next chapter of this analysis, presents the results and interprets each of the developed categories.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1.Findings of the empirical analysis

This section showcases the findings of this research and further discusses the implications. Finding how the political parties address Roma and how do they address other minorities, analyzing 372 written Facebook posts. In the next section, I present two types of tables with codes and the analysis. The table (Table 5) displays the detailed codes, including the main and the sub-codes. Moreover, the analysis, analysis is presented case by case. After the detailed tables, are only the substantive and descriptive created for the purposes if the study then the Roma related codes.

The results are displayed in two types of tables created for the purposes of the analysis and showcasing the result. In order to understand better the answer to the research question of this research, the Tables show one detailed result and on with the main one. Table 5 is a detailed table with all of the main codes, developed during the preliminary analysis and all of the additional codes that had to be created, to give a better overview of the empirical analysis. Table 6 contain the main codes of this analysis.

	A : DB_Data	B : DPS_Data	C : GERB_Data	D : PP_Data
1 : Addressing majority	12	7	3	3
2 : Addressing other minorities explicitly	1	34	9	5
3 : Cultural representation	0	21	0	2
4 : Gender based violence	6	0	0	4
5 : Religious	0	21	5	1
6 : Turkish minority	0	5	1	0
7 : Women	1	2	1	2
8 : Addressing Roma explicitly	0	0	0	1
9 : Representation of Roma	0	0	0	0
10 : Policies (promises) for majority	23	11	0	2
11 : Policies for other minorities	2	5	0	0
12 : Women	1	0	0	2
13 : Policies for Roma	0	1	0	5
14 : Cultural representation	0	21	0	2
15 : Religious	0	21	5	1
16 : Turkish minority	0	5	1	0
17 : Social or cultural cause	1	16	7	20

Table 5. Table with all the main and sub - codes

In this detailed table are included all of the created categories and it could be how many times the codes for the particular category appear in the data file of each case - political

party. Then the detailed coding for information purposes, however the discussion focuses on the two main tables with the results to discuss the hypotheses and the research question.

The analysis of each party id discussing which category is the most frequently found in which of the data sets for each party. The empirical findings and the interpretations are analyzed case by case, hence separately for each party. At the end of this section, follows a clarification how the finding connect to the theoretical arguments and what are the results from formed and tested hypothesis. For each of the analyzed political parties has been created a data file. The following table contains the general results from all the developed codes - categories, for each of the political parties.

Codes	DPS_Data	DB_Data	GERB_Data	PP_Data	Total
◯ Addressing Roma explicitly	0	0	0	1	1
◯ Addressing majority	7	12	3	3	25
◯ Addressing other minorities explicitly	34	1	9	5	49
◯ Policies (promises) for majority	11	23	0	2	36
◯ Policies for Roma	1	0	0	5	6
◯ Policies for other minorities	5	2	0	0	7
◯ Social or cultural cause	16	1	7	20	44
Total	**74**	**39**	**19**	**36**	**168**

Table. 6. Results from the qualitative analysis - each category and each party

On the table (Table 6) in the left side, as a column are displayed all of the developed categories which I used in this qualitative textual analysis, on the right side are displayed all of the four data sets, hence a file created for each of the analyzed parties. Moreover, the table shows how many types of the certain code appears withing that data file, for each party. Each data file is named after each party and at the end the table illustrates the total number of the category presence.

To begin this analysis, I begin discussing case by case each of the precent each Starting with the first party in listed in the findings - DPS or the Movement for Rights and Freedoms. For the 30 days period of the political campaign in March 2023, DPS had posted 131 Facebook post that contain text messages. As the only party associated with ethnic representation, in the DPS case, the codes related to did not appear, hence DPS did not address the Roma minority directly withing their campaign, and the term "Roma" does not appear at all withing within their Facebook posts.

DPS is knows as the only one tackling ethnic lines of representation - openly addressing the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, addressing them by as the citizen around certain regions of Bulgaria with predominantly with ethnic Turkish population. Moreover, they are addressing religious communities in Bulgaria, particularly Muslim communities. It is important, for the context to be clarified that the last week of the electoral campaign of March 2023 happened to be at the same time of Ramadan and the starting period of fasting for the Muslim community. In this relation, one of the most often visible code was related to Ramadan and "Iftar" - the meal with such the Muslim communities break the fast. Hence, the appearance of the religious category might be an exception in this campaign. However the fact that it the category related religion appears more 21 times for a the one week of Ramadan that happens to be at the same time as the campaign, shows that religious communities are important for the party, hence that is why they are addresses within this context.

Moreover DPS have been addressing minorities explicitly the Turkish minority, however when it comes to other ethnic group such as the Roma there could be just assumptions that they are also addressed under the different terms used for for minorities - such as "minority groups" and "vulnerable communities", but they have not explicitly addressed the Roma communities although DPS is associated with Roma representation.

Further they have been mentioning cultural and historical recognitions of places, monuments and historical commemoration days, important for the Turkish community in Bulgaria Also, they have been tackling Turkish ethnic lines and the Bulgarian nationalism withing their campaign, remining about the events from 1980s, the forced migration of the Bulgarian Turks to Turkey, known as a "revival process".(Bojkov, 2004). The narratives of this period are coded under "Cultural representation", together with cultural places important for the Turkish community in Bulgaria, such as historic places important for regions where Turkish ethnic communities lives Another interesting aspect about the DPS is that they have been addressing youths and in among the "other" minorities, women appeared. They have a strong youth structure. Therefore, it is expected to address their structure or descriptively or substantively. Women were mentioned in relation to the branch of the DPS as a political party with a special structure for women. The youth organization and the women's organization are structures part of the party.

The second party listed in the analysis is the DB or Democratic Bulgaria, this party has the lowest number of written Facebook post, shared during their political campaign. Among the 51 posts analyzed with the qualitative text analysis, the findings show that this party has been

addressing the most the majority - the code "Addressing majority" appears 12 times and the code "Polices for majority" 23 times. In this case, the code for "majority" is considered to appear and count as such, when referring to all citizens, or suing close meaning, speaking to all. The two categories "Addressing majority" and "Polices for majority" have been appearing in the context of pro - European attitude and "talking to" all citizens in this context, moreover the polices addressed to the majority had most economic dimension. Further, DB mentions two other minorities during the campaign. They talk about women in the context of gender-based violence as a problem and with intention for creating laws and policies. Moreover, in a post devoted to the commemoration of Day saving the Bulgarian Jewish communities from being send to the camps during the Holocaust. The Jewish community is mentioned only once in this context.

The third party in this analysis is GERB - SDS or the union of **the** Citizens for European Development and Union of Democratic Forces which had posted 63 written Facebook posts during their political campaign in March. The GERB data set has the smallest number of codes that could have been coded in relation to related to minorities and majority or policies - 19 codes. While the reading the posts, a main difference that occurred between GERB and the other parties, is the posts and re - posts of their main leader - Boyko Borissov or stating mainly what they have done - as a party that has ruled for years, well known and well-established. Moreover, another noncoded specific detailed but notice during the analysis was the strategy attacking other parties on different topics an polices, primarily the parties that claim to be an opposition of GERB. Additionally, the results of the analysis show that GERB addresses religion. In the posts related to Muslims and Christians. The "Religious" code was coded in the context of mentioning traditions or religious holidays - Ramadan and mentioning Churches were in this context. Within the code for "Addressing other minorities", GERB addresses women and the Jewish community. They are mentioned in a specific context, when other parties also have been public and explicit as well, on the 10th of March which is considered to be the Day of saving the Bulgarian Jewish community from the death camps of the Holocaust and women are mentioned in the context of 8th of March on the International Women's Day.

The fourth and last party included in this research is PP or We Continue the Change party which. One of the most visible codes of PP have been related to "Addressing other minorities" and "Social or cultural cause". PP seem to be very pro - European oriented and they addressed the majority, "talking" to the citizens for being united around European future,

ideas, and addressing the majority as "Europeans" who want a better life and better "European like life". Further, they also addressed during the political campaign the issues with gender-based violence, women, and Jewish people. Moreover, the PP party is the only parti in their political campaign, Roma and Roma related policies are addressed. One of the most interesting categories in the PP data file is the code for "Social or cultural cause", since it categorizes a variety of social issues.

It was evident that their campaign strategy was to connect with different groups from the civil sector by addressing activists and different types if social sensitive groups, non-governmental organizations, and foundations that work for different social causes within the Bulgarian society. They had a special hashtag for each post devoted to the social cause translated the hashtag means "Book of the causes" (#КнигаНаКаузите). Some of the examples from that post series are the following the topic and causes: a foundation that works to for urban and cultural preservation of monuments and historically important places for Bulgaria, an organization that builds dog shelters, cultural organization that restores museums and galleries, an NGO that works for the preservation of a protected trees across Bulgaria, a NGO collective that work for prevention of drug use and organization that work with deaf communities in Bulgaria. It is beneficial for the civic sector and the Bulgarian society such causes to be promoted and politically addressed; however, it is visible that the has a stand about causes and issues which could not be controversial or create a division withing the society, topics that are "safe" to be promoted and addressed. Perhaps topics such as LGBTQ+ right or Roma related topics are more riskier topics to be politically promote by the parties and that could cause negative consequences such as losing electorate.

A special attention in this analysis is devoted to the Roma related codes in the next section, which I scrutinize closely and give an overview how they connect with the hypotheses of this research and the theoretical arguments. The main codes displayed on Table 7 illustrate how many times the political parties have addressed Roma explicitly withing their political campaign period and how many times in relation to policies or promises.

Codes	DB_Data	DPS_Data	GERB_Data	PP_Data	Total
◯ Addressing Roma explicitly	0	0	0	1	1
◯ Policies for Roma	0	1	0	5	6
Total	**0**	**1**	**0**	**6**	**7**

Table 7. Result of the Roma related categories

Objectively, the two main codes created in relation to the Roma minority with which I investigate the how the political parties address Roma, objectively and descriptively and if the mainstream Bulgarian parties address Roma substantively when it comes to policies and action towards certain Roma related issue. Nevertheless, from this textual qualitative analysis of 372 Facebook post of four Bulgarian political parties, Table 7 illustrates that Roma have been addressed during the political campaign of the parties one time, explicitly by one party and six times in a policy or a promise of an action, related to Roma communities, by two different parties - once by DPS and five times by PP.

DPS mentions Roma in terms of policies and promises action by not stating explicitly" Roma", but rather "vulnerable groups" in this one time, withing the context of other minorities. The context explains that Roma are part the vulnerable group, since the text where the promises have been made is stated about a region-based community. These results provide an avenue for a discussion and could serve as an example how parties do not address explicitly the Roma minority. Although the new parties have the choice and more freedom in establishing their electorate, yet they also do not state explicitly and do not consider Roma in terms of policies and promises during campaigns.

Furthermore, the PP party explicitly addressed Roma one time and five times in relation to policies or promises, identifying issues and needs of the Roma communities in Bulgaria. PP discusses Roma in exactly one Facebook post in the context of participating to a debate that they have been invited to from a NGO that works with different Roma communities. mobilizing and informing Roma about the elections and party's campaigns. Hence, the initiative to talk about Roma comes from outside civic organization and it is not an initiative of the PP party. However, the PP is the only party addressing Roma explicitly and in one of the posts in which is mentioned "Roma", the party also identifies and explicitly states need

and policies for the Roma communities across Bulgaria. These policies and promises are categorized as " five times as "Policies for Roma".

The policies or promises identified by the party are the following: (translated from Bulgarian)

1. Education and employment of low qualified people, to decrease the sustainable unemployment.
2. Appointing independent and competent official in the Commission for protection of discrimination.
3. Guaranteed right to every Bulgarian citizen to be able to issue an Identity card.
4. Finding a solution to the problem with the illegal housing.
5. To fight the inequalities and poverty.

The one descriptive and the five substantive codes, both are in PP party. However, from the translated examples is visible that there are no established ground of how the encountered problems may be fixed, but rather as promises only and recognition of the existence of these issues. Nevertheless, Roma do appear on the social media during the political campaign, although in one Facebook post.

Further, the only one appearance of the Roma category should be acknowledged that in the newly established parties, although the initiative for creating a conversion for Roma was initiated by another actor - the civic sector. Nevertheless, the fact that they have responded to the debate and carried a conversation about Roma which has been later posted on Facebook could be taking in consideration as a sigh that the newly established parties are more open.

Furthermore, the tendency parties to not address Roma, is more visible in the DPS party, where the Roma are included under the different groups and terms. For instance, under the names of "vulnerable", "marginalized communities" or simply "minorities". Although DPs is the only party considered to be an "ethnic", this party also avoid taking a explicit stand when it comes to Roma. However, for better clarity on the Roma representation and the unofficial ethnic party, more research would ned to be done.

The last results are displayed on two separate tables - Table 8 and Table 9. The tables visualize the detailed codes for both established and new established parties, where it could be seen the comparison of the two types of parties, chosen in this analysis.

	A : DPS_Data	B : GERB_Data
1 : Addressing majority	7	3
2 : Addressing other minorities explicitly	34	9
3 : Cultural representation	21	0
4 : Gender based violence	0	0
5 : Religious	21	5
6 : Turkish minority	5	1
7 : Women	2	1
8 : Addressing Roma explicitly	0	0
9 : Representation of Roma	0	0
10 : Policies (promises) for majority	11	0
11 : Policies for other minorities	5	0
12 : Women	0	0
13 : Policies for Roma	1	0
14 : Cultural representation	21	0
15 : Religious	21	5
16 : Turkish minority	5	1
17 : Social or cultural cause	16	7

Table 8. Detailed code results, comparing the well-established parties - DPS and GERB

	A : DB_Data	B : PP_Data
1 : Addressing majority	12	3
2 : Addressing other minorities explicitly	1	5
3 : Cultural representation	0	2
4 : Gender based violence	6	4
5 : Religious	0	1
6 : Turkish minority	0	0
7 : Women	1	2
8 : Addressing Roma explicitly	0	1
9 : Representation of Roma	0	0
10 : Policies (promises) for majority	23	2
11 : Policies for other minorities	2	0
12 : Women	1	2
13 : Policies for Roma	0	5
14 : Cultural representation	0	2
15 : Religious	0	1
16 : Turkish minority	0	0
17 : Social or cultural cause	1	20

Table 9. Detailed code results, comparing the two newly established parties - DB and PP

5.2. Conclusion

This master thesis discusses the following research question and a sub-question:

Research Question: How the Bulgarian parties address Roma during the political campaigns?

Sub - question: Are there any differences or similarities between the different in addressing and representing Roma?

Based on the theoretical arguments of Barany and with reference to De Sio and Weber, I have formulated the hypotheses of this research: well-known and established parties with well-defined electorates fear losing votes if they campaign for the Roma vote or they risk being labeled as pro - Roma. On the other hand, the theoretical argument states that newly established parties do not have anything to lose and hence, they might want to broaden their electorate and appeal to voters from different or underrepresented groups. Therefore, I test for that assumption.

The hypotheses if this study:

1.   The Bulgarian political parties do not address Roma explicitly during the electoral campaigns because of the risk of losing non-Roma votes.

2.   The newly established parties also do not address Roma explicitly, although as new parties they do not have anything to lose.

The empirical results of this study, show how that the four Bulgarian parties, included in this analysis address Roma in their political campaigns. Based on the empirical result, it is evident that the parties do not address Roma explicitly (Table 6 and Table 7). Moreover, the parties do not address the Roma when it comes to policies or actions for this ethnic community. These results confirm with the established hypothesis that the Bulgarian political parties do not address Roma explicitly during the electoral campaigns. From the four parties - DPS, GERB, PP and DB, only PP addressed Roma explicitly during their political campaign.

Moreover, the second hypothesis related to the newly established parties and the selection of PP and DB as newly established parties that are fairly new and might want to broaden their electorate, one can see that although a small-scale research out fourth, the one where Roma appear is a new party. In order to confirm this theory fully, bigger scale research would be needed which could not be covered in a master's project.

Although, I consider the first hypothesis that the parties do not address Roma as confirmed, I acknowledge the limitation of this research and the challenges of making claims about the substantive and descriptive representation of Roma in the Bulgarian political parties.

I understand that to make claims about Roma representation and to make a fair judgment to the Bulgarian parties more extensive research is needed, perhaps that includes more methodological approaches - such as interviews with politicians and Roma candidates. Although it might not be an easy task to find a Roma candidate to be interviewed, given the example, from the European parliament about the Members of the European Parliament and how many candidates or representatives openly identify as Roma.

Moreover, other future recommendation for research on Roma representation in Bulgaria could include comparative research of all five political campaigns between 2021 and 2023 campaign. Further, in my future academic work, I will consider including more approaches to study representation in Bulgaria and broader data collection.

Although this is a small-scale masters project, within the scope of this research it has a value and a small contribution in the national context of Bulgaria where the topic of Roma representation is not an interest of studies. Moreover, the political campaign covered in this study is a very recent political event which could help for future analysis of the political parties and all five political campaigns which I take into considerations for exploring further the developing political landscape and minority representation.

This research project starts with giving an overview of the Bulgarian political landscape, discussing the current political situation upon the Roma representation in Bulgaria, over the years and at the currant stage of this study. Further, this study presents the motivation and significant exploring the topic of Roma representation. Next, this research present the theoretical grounds and arguments of minority representation which are used as abasis for this research. Moreover, the studies discussed were done by researcher and literature that has driven the establishment of the hypotheses in this study. Additionally, in the theoretical ground, this project introduces the debate of entitlement to representation, derived from another study field, which puzzles with the topic of minority representation. After, I discuss my take on the topic of entitlement as Roma and non-Roma being equally entitled to represent unless each of the groups represent is being represented and acted upon with understanding and consideration of the identity specific issues and acknowledgement of the ethnic group. Also, in the introduction of the theoretical argument, I discuss the need for responsiveness of the state when representing and tailoring policies for minorities.

Moreover, this study offers an exploration of the research question: How the Bulgarian parties address Roma during the political campaigns and tests two hypotheses - the first, testing claiming that the Bulgarian political parties do not address Roma explicitly during the electoral campaigns because of the risk to lose votes and the second that the newly established parties also do not address Roma explicitly, although as new parties they do not have what to lose in terms of votes. Based on the results, although the first category could be considered confirmed this study acknowledges the limitation of making claims about the substantive and descriptive representation of Roma within the Bulgarian parties. Further, this study acknowledges methodological limitation using qualitative text analysis as a primary method and research avenues in relation to the topic of Roma representation.

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