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**The Changing Relationship between Politics and Voters Parliamentary
Election Campaign 2021 in Durrës**

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Abstract: This study investigates how political activities affect the political efficiency and political participation in real life among the citizens of the city of Durrës, Albania. Focusing on the parliamentary election campaign of April 25, 2021, this article analyzes the basic concepts of addressing the most important topics for the mass audience and to what extent the data influences voters in the way they vote. This article analyzes how the voter follows the election campaign of political parties and candidates through various forms, face to face, television, online, etc. and the level of issues addressed during the election campaign, how much the demographic context of the voter influences the electoral campaign follow-up, etc. Based on a poll voters conducted after the election, we interpreted these factors to finally identify which of them reflects the greatest weight. For this we examine the candidate's social media messages and how they are understood by the direct audience. In addition, this study sheds light on the relationship between political activities and political awareness. We conducted a survey with (N = 300). To answer the research questions, regression and correlation models were constructed, laminating the impact of various factors on voter campaign attendance. To complete the analysis framework, the latter is also analyzed in the context of the independent variable. The analysis further includes testing the impact of the new media, political messages, on voter perception and their connection to election campaign follow-up. In addition, social media is a vital platform for network users to participate in real-life political activities. In conclusion, the study findings suggest that online political activities are strongly related to political awareness and political participation. The analysis also shows that politicians use new media for different purposes. The article concludes on the ways in which the political message influences voter behavior by exploiting the effects of social media and how new media has changed the campaigns of political parties.

Keywords: electoral campaign; social media; political participation

1. Introduction

Political parties are “reshaping” election campaigns, taking advantage both of social media space and increasing voters’ interest in using it. This seems to be producing a very complex relationship between them.

Political marketing is strongly influenced by media developments and the opportunities it is creating. The media is being used by politics to create perceptions and to orient attitudes that amplify the effect of electoral campaigns, increasing the electoral support. According to researcher Eva Londo, this is a relationship where politics uses marketing techniques to communicate with the voting consumer in a

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way that suits its political demands and predisposition and, in turn, uses the media to build in the mind of the voter visual and perceptual constructions that converge with communication strategy (Londo, 2016).

In these conditions, it is necessary to analyze the way the communication of the components of the political product is realized from the public perspective and on the other hand to evaluate the role of the media on the importance of the triangular elements of the political product during election campaigns, namely, the party, the leader and the program.

If we were to paraphrase Heywood (2008), politics is power and resource allocation. For politics to be effective, it needs the active participation of citizens. But what motivates people to be interested and participate in political life? According to an OECD study, “a key driver is their self-perception of their ability to understand political processes and to influence change through their actions” (OECD, 2021).

Wayne Parsons (1995) on the purpose of public policy, defines that „It is the clarification, shaping and sharing of values, in order to expand and improve the democratization that still remains the core and vital task of public policy theory and practice.” According to Bekim Maliqi (2008), this means that a proper study of public policy can only happen in democratic political systems, ie where decisions and policy-making are not arbitrary and totalitarian, but occur in an environment open to public influences and changes.

In this perspective, our research on the politics-voter relationship has focused on several areas: Why and how do the political promises of the parties in the elections change? How do they define their campaign strategies to influence voters' decisions, starting with the priorities that determine the importance of issues, etc? How much are citizens influenced by political messages when they have to decide whether to vote or not and what are their preferences? What is the role of the media in conveying the political message and how much it affects the voter?

All these have to do with the behavior and action of political parties, the cognitive skills and interests of the electorate, the politics- media and media-public opinion interactions as well as the decision-making process.

Voters need information to make decisions and it is the job of journalists to provide that. But can the media change the outcome of the election, through prior influence on voter decision-making?

What is known is that in a democracy, citizens are expected to take an active part in the political process. However, according to the OECD, „active participation requires citizens to believe in their ability to influence the course of politics, in other words, to feel politically efficient” (OSCD 2021).

Maliqi points out that the concept of political efficiency has played a prominent role in studies on political behavior and political socialization. Scholars explain political efficiency as „the feeling that political and social change is possible and that the individual citizen can play a role in bringing about this change” (Campbell, Gurin & Miller, 1954, p. 187). Political participation can be defined as „an activity that has the purpose or effect of influencing government action - either by directly influencing the implementation of public policies or indirectly by influencing the selection of the people of those policies” (Verba et al., 1995, p. 38).

Looking at election campaigns as communication events, Eva Londo emphasizes that they are adapting to consumer logic by introducing a new dimension of political communication, at the center of which is the political product, defined by Blois (1974) and Butler, and Collins (1994) as the party, leader or candidates and the issues they present.

Electoral campaigns of leaders / candidates and parties tend to garner electoral support in the run-up to elections, in a political contest that assesses the needs of the electorate, and then use this knowledge to build communication strategies that further influence electoral behavior (Ibid). This type of political marketing focuses on the image of the political product and the role of the media in conveying its message to the public. The orientation of electoral campaigns towards the image of the leader, candidate or party, and issues, comes as a result of the development of electronic media. The latter is affecting not only politics, but also voters, which is mostly reflected in the way general elections are conducted (Kolovos & Hurriss, 2005).

Thus, the emphasis on the image of the elements of the political product, the content of the news, and the interest that the media pays to the components of the political product structure and influence the perceptions of the voters and consequently, influence the way the election campaigns will take place. But this impact is difficult to be measured. (Sebastian Stier, Arnim Bleier, Haiko Lietz & Markus Strohmaier (2018).

This article will observe the development of the political marketing process as an important component of election campaigns in relation to the factors that have influenced the communication process. This will be looked at how the images of the leader, the image of the party or the issues prevail in political marketing strategies in an approach that matches the way people vote. On the other hand, it will be observed how the media influences not only the way the communication of the political product is constructed in terms of the importance of each of its components, but also the way the media constructs the media content emphasizing one or the other of these components.

The study focuses on two aspects:

First, it seeks to identify and evaluate the importance of key political indicators (image of the leader, image of the political entity and issues) in the decision-making of the electorate, as well as to prove that these three factors are inevitably interdependent.

This connection has led to the need for close cooperation between politics and the media, where the latter facilitates electoral campaigns by guaranteeing electoral and public support. This report is the second aspect that this article focuses on.

The study investigates how political activities affect political efficiency and political participation in real life among the citizens of the city of Durres. Focusing on the parliamentary election campaign of April 25, 2021, this article analyzes the basic concepts of addressing the most important topics for the mass audience and to what extent the data influences voters in the way they vote. This article analyzes how the voter follows the election campaign of political parties and candidates through various forms, face to face, television, online, etc. and the level of issues addressed during the election campaign, how much the demographic context of the voter influences the electoral campaign follow-up, etc.

The third section presents in detail the methodological approach on which the study has been implemented, in an attempt to test the hypotheses raised. Regarding the study conducted in the electorate, such methodological issues as questionnaire construction, sample selection, monitoring period selection, data collection and analysis, analysis methodologies are clarified.

In the fourth section, an analysis of the phenomena that influenced the development of political marketing and the electoral campaign in Durres is conducted.

This investigation based on concrete figures and details about the electoral results of political participation in elections, taken from our poll and official sources will help to understand the importance

of the components of the political product during the campaign, b) the focus of electoral campaigns on the image and c) the reasons for the behavior of the electorate.

Further, we will present the survey data conducted in the electorate that tries to identify and assess the importance of the constituent components of leader image, party image and raised issues in decision making. This information sheds light on how election campaigns are conducted and provides a clear picture of the mutual influence between the media and politics, but also of their influence on the voting.

2. Literature Findings

Most classical studies on voter behavior are based on observational data. The waves of democratization, accompanied by data from surveys and questionnaires that scan well the environment, have increased the veracity of these studies. The literature on political parties, and voter behavior, has also considered the influence of the media on the reconceptualization of electoral campaigns and the effectiveness of conveying the political message. Traditional patterns of voter choice based on sociological factors and the identification of political parties do not seem to be sufficient to explain the new terrain in which these relations are taking place.

The rapid developments that are taking place in politics have produced the need to analyze the political product as the basic element that determines the communication strategy of election campaigns. The media with the power and effect it has had can contribute enough to the importance that the components of the political product are taking by influencing the decision for the vote. Over the past decade, extensive literature has been published on the effects of social media on political participation in real life. Many argue that social media stimulates political participation.

Aeron Davis in his book *Political Communication and Social Theory* (2010) referring to the basic functions of political communication emphasizes that its first function is to provide information to the public about what is happening around. Gurevitch, M., Coleman, S. and Blumler, J.G., in their book *Political communication - Old and new media relationships* (2009), point out that traditional media is unable to bridge the gap between political parties and the general public. Already, digital media has entered politics and created a chance for many groups to get involved in the political communication process.

Electoral campaigns today are oriented towards the image which is transforming the way political communication is realized. Meanwhile, political developments estimate that a very important aspect that affects the way its product is perceived is the images and the creation of the most favorable perception among voters. The latter determines their predisposition during voting. Thus, along with the concept of the political product, which uses marketing techniques to be „sold”, was born the concept of the political triangle, which emphasizes the political brand and the image of the elements of the political product, which are the image of the party, the image of the leader or candidate, and policies or issues (Londo, 2015).

Recognizing the importance of these elements of the political product in the conduct of the electorate, it is easier for communication specialists to construct communication strategies that focus on the communication of that component that occupies the greatest weight in the decision to vote. William H. Riker and Peter C. Ordeshook (1968) explain why there is a category of voters who vote irrationally, and therefore have decided who they will vote for before the campaign begins. Today voters are categorized into two groups: core voters in front of the swing voters model (Gary W. Cox, 2012). Cox and McCubbins, creators of the core voters' model argue that vote-maximizing parties will allocate

distributive benefits primarily to their core voters. Lindbeck and Weibull's (1987) defined "swing voter models a person who is not a firm supporter of any political party.

Referring to Albania, according to the researcher Afrim Krasniqi, "a quarter of the electorate is always determined for and against one party. This militant part is not affected by political ups and downs, by the change of leader or electoral circumstances, by electoral programs or platforms. Meanwhile, a part of the voters are inclined to decide on a pragmatic basis a party or candidate that at that moment best suits their interests. In most parliamentary elections the winning party received 45-55% of the national vote or 20-30% more than the loyal electorate. This is the defining part consisting mainly of fluctuating citizens in the elections, those who make the rational choice and those who decide at the last moment to join the winner. (Krasniqi, 2013).

In this context, successful communication campaigns offer a political product that fits the predispositions and expectations of the public and that especially the voters and wavering. The model begins with the individual voter and the forces that push him or her into the decision-making process, determining whether he or she will vote or not. And if he is going to vote, which element of the political product is the one that contributes the most to this decision? Meanwhile, with the increasing influence and effects of electronic media, the image is gaining more importance (Crewe & King, 1994). Thus, politicians during election campaigns are focusing more on images by ignoring issues, aided by the media. This highlights the role of the media as a very important factor, which creates certain perceptions in the way voters vote.

With the massive spread of the Internet and online communication in Albania, politics has „expanded” more and more. This means using interactive online channels for political communication. Political forces are applying the latest virtual communication innovations to their needs and goals, which is seen in the growing number of online followers.

Among other things, the Internet creates the opportunity for political actors to enter into direct communication without the need for the mediation of traditional media. Through the internet, they reach new age groups and users of all ages much better than through traditional media. Consciously or not, it can be said that politics has currently managed to be in the spotlight of the Albanian public, in fact, much more than it should be. The media has played a major role in this excessive politicization of society. Currently, we can talk about the „bombardment” of the public with politics.

According to Gren Gerguri (2021), the role of communication in political life has developed over the years along with technological and media development. This has led to new media and, especially social media, gaining great importance in the political and social processes in general. Political communication includes actors in the political sphere, media and citizens, who have different roles in this process. Politicians produce messages that they convey to the public through the media, while citizens perform their role by receiving those messages. However, it can happen that a message goes from bottom to top, that is, from citizens to politicians. These cases have intensified thanks to the opportunities offered by social media as the citizen is no longer just a recipient of the message, but, at the same time, can be a producer of it.

The concentration of political actors on social media has prompted researchers to address more closely the possibility of the effect that social media may have on the election campaign and elections. Politicians seek to spread their ideas and gain the trust of citizens by communicating directly with them through social media, Facebook or Twitter. This type of communication has already ruled out the great role of the journalist in the process of political communication and, at the same time, has given the

politician the most convenient means to spread a message, without fear of being ‘censored’, or filtered that message from the editorial policies of the radio, television, newspaper, or portal.

Practice has shown that politicians tend to use the media as a propaganda tool and, in the new environment with multiple social media, therefore the question arises, whether Facebook and Twitter have brought the politician closer to the citizen, intensifying and facilitating communication between them, or have they distorted political communication by producing propaganda and misinformation?! The American political scientist Bernard Cohen says that the press may not be successful in how people should think, but it is surprisingly successful in telling them what to think (Bernard Cohen, 1963). Social media is a path through which, even today, seeks to influence public topics and public opinion.

All political parties build their own political communication strategies during election campaigns. “Strategic political communication is about the deliberate management of the organization of information and communication, to achieve the political goals that it has set for itself.” The primary goal of political parties is to „maximize political support.” Of course, increasing political support in elections means more votes, consequently, more chances to achieve the goal, for which there is a political party, to take power.

The role of the media in disseminating the message of political actors to the public is irreplaceable, but in recent years, the strategy of campaigning has changed compared to the traditional one. A new form of using social media as a main tool for political communication has been developed. The election campaign on social media created the ground for „open and unrestricted public involvement in communication” and this is one of the reasons why these types of campaigns proved successful. Political parties (and commercial advertisers) have moved from open methods that favored reaching millions of people with a similar message to more accurate tools which are able to target smaller audiences with such custom messages. By applying sophisticated data extraction techniques capable of linking people’s personal characteristics to political beliefs and uncovering voters’ political behavior, political parties aim to attract new voters by delivering individualized messages on specific issues that may concern them they personally and can be decisive in the way they cast their vote, regardless of whether they are of concern to the wider electorate. This allows party officials to reach the thousands who win the election. According to Eurospeak, the social media campaign has become a very attractive tool to reach potential voters (Eurospeak, 2001). Moreover, message targeting seeks to optimize election campaign resources and thus focuses primarily on hesitant or undecided voters.

“The internet is also a useful platform for political parties to present their agenda to the electorate and to mobilize a larger support base for their causes. The cost of communicating with voters can be substantially lower through this medium than through broadcast media, given the availability of free blog and video sharing platforms and social media. Small political parties with limited resources and independent candidates in particular can benefit from this type of communication” (Council of Europe, 2018, pg. 7). Studies have shown that young voters have a higher tendency to be interactive and participate in new electoral media than with traditional media, being considered as the digital generation, (Diana Owen, 2017; Baumgartner and Morris, 2010). On the other hand, studies have shown that this factor is not always related to the impact on the voter who uses the media during the election campaign or the increase of electoral participation (Baumgartner, J. C., and J. Morris. 2010).

3. Methodology

To see the extent of the impact of „party image”, „image of the leader / candidate” and „issues” on the behavior of the electorate, the authors of the paper conducted a structured survey, conducted in the city of Durres, where data were collected.

To determine whether campaign messages are aimed at a larger audience or more specific audience groups, we analyze the distribution of relevance on a range of issues and make a new contribution by (1) extracting these distributions from survey responses to representative preferences of a mass audience, as well as (2) from various social media and (3) from many layers of content (politicians and social media audience). We add to this research by integrating features from multiple areas of political communication into a research design that enable us to perform text analysis on a larger scale. We consider the answers to an open-ended question in a representative survey as reviews of the thematic priorities of a mass audience and to take these as an empirical basis for analyzing social media messages by candidates and their audiences.

Our empirical study relies on the survey and social media created during the 2021 election campaign. Topics at the county level are of minor importance in election campaigns and public agendas largely converge with prominent topics at the national level. Therefore, the emphasis of the topic expressed in the messages of politicians on social media can be reasonably compared to the emphasis of the topic in public opinion polls.

What are the research hypotheses? This paper explores the potential impact of social media on political participation during elections. Although voter choice is assumed to be influenced by mood and rationality rather than political marketing activities, the growing role of social media is considered an important tool during election time. Do social media have the potential to influence the political process? The development of modern technologies also enables citizens to use social media to participate in political processes. This paper analyzes the impact on the Albanian electoral context. It also discusses the hypotheses that voter behavior can be influenced by the use of social media. Social media has changed the way people search for and consume information.

The paper provides examples of how much social media has been used by voters to consume information and be active and how political actors have used social media during election campaigns and political debate. It also discusses some important issues for future studies on social media and politics in Albania. But the main question is whether social media informs or manipulates citizens? This paper respond to new perspectives opened by the use and expansion of social media in Albanian politics.

To answer the research questions, regression and correlation models were constructed to test the impact of various factors on voter campaign attendance. To complete the analysis framework, the latter is also analyzed in the context of the independent variable. Further, the analysis includes testing the impact that the new media (internet) has on voter perception and the connection with their election campaign following. The data for testing the models were taken from the database of the survey conducted in the city of Durrës „Parliamentary election campaign 2021 „. The applied sample is 300 respondents, with a proportional distribution by gender and age group of persons who meet the criteria to be a voter in the elections of April 25, 2021. Data of other primary, secondary types are available from public, international institutions, etc.

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1. Electoral campaign April 2021 in Albania and the city of Durrës

In a statement of preliminary conclusions on the occasion of the general elections, the OSCE stated that: The political campaign, and especially its media coverage, lacked depth, with public messages often focusing on the figures of the main party leaders rather than discussions with central the real problems. Campaign tools included public meetings and the door-to-door campaign, due to the pandemic situation, had an added online element, with social networks and messaging platforms playing an important role. (OSCE, 2021)

The Socialist Party (SP) platform focused on the COVID-19 vaccination program and the government's achievements, including the ongoing reconstruction after the 2019 earthquake. The Democratic Party (PD)-led coalition focused on central topics of opposition to government. The opposition campaign also focused on and the economy, financial incentives for youth and farmers, wages and employment. All parties had in common the country's accession to the EU (Ibid).

For the OSCE, fundamental freedoms were generally respected and electoral subjects were able to campaign freely. As in previous elections, there were credible allegations of vote-buying during and after the campaign, and investigations were launched into a number of issues. These claims were not limited to either party. The Central Election Commission (CEC) had a website where citizens could report election violations.

Official activities gave the SP a significant advantage, which was already further reinforced by the SP's dominance in the local administration. In addition, employment in the public sector increased significantly in the pre-election period, exactly in the run-up to the moratorium on authorizing new employment in the public administration.

During the campaign, through a leak of information, a database with personal information and contact details for approximately 900,000 Albanian citizens appeared in the public domain, which also contained their potential voting preferences. Unauthorized sharing or combination of voters' personal data for the alleged purposes of democratic engagement may be considered a breach of the commitment to protect the right to privacy and family life. This could damage the confidence of the electorate, including the confidence in the secrecy of their vote, concludes its report, the OSCE.

According to the CEC, in the Durres district, the Socialist Party secures 8 seats, while the Democratic Party has received 6 seats. Translated into votes SP received 76,924 votes, or 50.26%. While PD-AN received 63,431 votes, or 41.45%.

In this district there were a total of 481 ballot boxes, while the total number of voters on the list is 358,730. As for the invalid votes, according to the CEC, they are 7808.

4.2. Election Campaign Monitoring and Related Factors

Statistical analysis was conducted on the basis of questionnaire questions, which do not include all the factors that could theoretically affect the perception of voters during the election campaign. So during the analysis this conditioning must be considered.

Based on the theoretical basis of the factors that the voter perceives as the cause of the level of election campaign attendance, a series of statistical calculations to the data of the sample taken in the City of Durres were applied to confirm the factors that are related and their level of influence on the variables

“election campaign attendance”. So, basically, we have specifically asked which factors mainly influence the voter to follow the election campaign.

In this context, on the survey data, researchers for the variable „election campaign monitoring” we built two models of correlation and regression analysis:

The first model, the election campaign attendance variable is considered as a dependent variable. Factors considered in the analysis as related to its variability are: voter follow-up of the campaign of new political parties, use of the Internet in the follow-up of the campaign, the feeling the voter receives from political messages during the campaign, and demographic factors such as age, education and employment.

From the data resulted that they are statistically related (table 1) to the variable election campaign attendance for the parliamentary elections 2021: voter attendance of new political campaigns, internet use in campaign attendance (relationship which expresses the highest level high weight of mutual influence), the feeling the voter receives from political messages during the campaign, and demographic factors such as gender and age.

Statistically this relationship between the factors is at a high level of 95% reliability, and between the level of association between them from 18% - 40%. At this level of relationship we can accept that factors such as the use of technology, the campaign of new parties, the gender and age of the respondents are likely to be interrelated in the perception that the voter creates during the election campaign. In contrast, other factors such as demographics, employment and education do not turn out to be factors related to election campaign monitoring and consequently do not affect the perception of voters, which theoretically relies on selective perception.

To further confirm the above correlation relationship, we applied regression analysis (Table 2), to see the extent to which these factors explain the level of voter campaign attendance. The level of correlation between the factors taken into analysis is 0.544, which indicates a slightly above average correlation level. Regression analysis shows that the election campaign follow-up variable is explainable by the factors considered at 29.6%. The regression model predicts with a high statistical certainty (.000) the result of the dependent variable. We can say with great certainty that the factors of use of technology (voters who use technology, also tend to follow the election campaign), the feeling towards the political messages of political parties during the campaign (the more optimistic, positively perceived the election campaigns the more voters follow it), the campaigning of new political parties (not very statistically certain .069), gender (results show that men turn out to campaign more than women) and age (with increasing age the level of election campaign attendance also increases), are factors that affect the extent of 30% of the voter formation towards the election campaign monitoring in the parliamentary elections. In the political context, political parties need to consider these elements during their election campaign in order to secure more votes and increase their chances of winning seats in parliament.

Table 2.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.544 ^a	.296	.282	.994

a. Predictors: (Constant), "Age", "Generally, the messages of the political parties during the election campaign evoked in the voter...", "Gender", "If we ask you about the new political parties that participated in the April 25 elections, which of them did you follow the most?," "How much did you use the internet (technology) to follow the election campaign?"

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	103.813	5	20.763	21.004	.000 ^b
	Residual	247.125	250	.988		
	Total	350.938	255			

a. Dependent Variable: "How much did you follow the electoral campaign for the parliamentary elections of April 25, 2021?"

b. Predictors: (Constant), "Age", "Generally, the messages of the political parties during the election campaign evoked in the voter...", "Gender", "If we ask you about the new political parties that participated in the April 25 elections, which of them did you follow the most?," "How much did you use the internet (technology) to follow the election campaign?"

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.593	.354		7.333	.000
	If we ask you about the new political parties that participated in the April 25 elections, which of them did you follow the most?	.235	.129	.098	1.829	.069
	Generally, the messages of the political parties during the election campaign evoked in the voter:					
	How much did you use the internet (technology) to follow the election campaign?	-.222	.058	-.212	-3.837	.000
	Gender	.340	.054	.361	6.267	.000
	Age	-.470	.127	-.200	-3.688	.000
		.166	.038	.244	4.418	.000

a. Dependent Variable: "How much did you follow the electoral campaign for the parliamentary elections of April 25, 2021?"

The second model, the variable attendance of the election campaign is considered as a variable statistically correlated in its variability with factors (objectives, issues, etc.): mass vaccination of the population, development of infrastructure, increase of salaries, promotion of employment, strengthening of rule of law, fight against corruption, curbing immigration, tax cuts, EU integration.

From the data (table 3), statistically correlated are all the factors taken in the correlation analysis with the variable election campaign attendance for the parliamentary elections 2021. Statistically this relationship between the factors is at a high level of 95% confidence, and between the level of association between them from 27.1% - 41.8%. In general, at this level of relationship we can accept that the factors are correlated with each other. Factors that have a slightly higher correlation than others in this relationship are infrastructure development (0.418), employment (0.337) and tax cuts (0.350); factors which are practically mentioned during the electoral campaigns of political parties, such as the Socialist Party. The statistical certainty of the relationship is extremely high in the nine cases cross tabularized with the monitoring of the election campaign, which means that at the level to which these

variables have correlated we can speak with complete certainty that the more these factors are mentioned in the campaign by political parties, the more the voter campaign attendance will increase. In the political context, political parties or candidates during the parliamentary elections need to include in their electoral platform the issues that the electorate in this statistical logic considers important to listen to and have credibility in solving problems or increasing the quality of each of them (Wilhelm Hofmaster, Karsten Grabou, 2020).

As can be seen from the table 3, mass vaccination of the population (one of the most discussed issues especially from the government, SP), has a lower statistical level in correlation with the campaign follow-up, compared to other factors; Thus, we can conclude that for the factors taken into account, the voter perceives it as an issue which should have less weight in the submission of political parties in the campaign than other issues such as infrastructure development, employment, EU membership, etc.

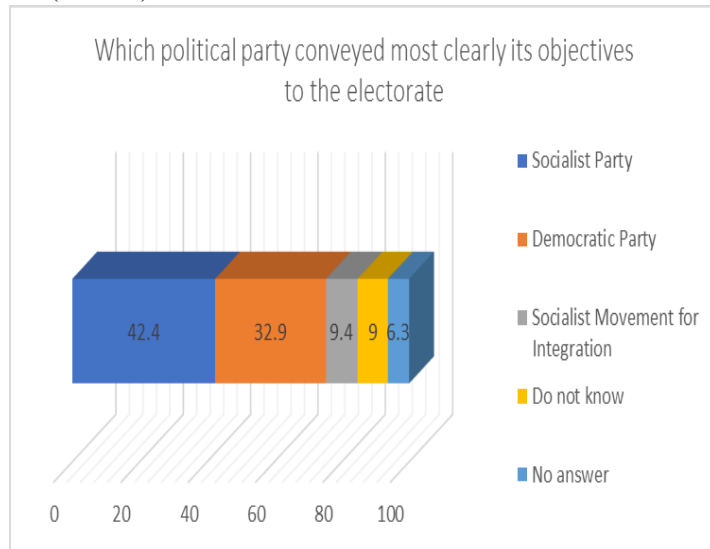
Table 3. Correlations

Factors in correlation with the independent variable “following the election campaign in the elections of April 2021”	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Mass vaccination of the population	.285**	0.000	292
Infrastructure development	.418**	0.000	288
Wage increase	.301**	0.000	292
Promoting employment	.337**	0.000	291
Strengthening the justice system	.271**	0.000	289
The fight against corruption	.322**	0.000	285
Curbing immigration	.311**	0.000	293
Tax cuts	.280**	0.000	290
Meeting the standards for EU membership	.350**	0.000	289

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

In support of the above shown analysis, respondents confirm the support of the ruling party SP, in discussing at a higher level the objectives or providing solutions to problems which are perceived by voters as important, to the extent of 42.4%, compared to DP 32.9% and SMI 9.4%. Under this logic, we can say that the Socialist Party has adapted its electoral platform and campaign more closely to the demands of the voters than the other two parties, and as a result, the voter has perceived this party more positively in the electoral support through voting in on election day.



4.3. Use of Technology (Internet) and Campaign Attendance

The internet is expanding to include other strata of society in the political debate, contributing to this path towards the process of democratization of politics. In Albanian political communication, social networks are widely used and are being considered as an alternative way of communication for the daily message or to expand the ranks of supporters.

Subsequently, taking into account the results of correlations in Table 1, and the large extent of Internet use in the current period, we considered this factor as a dependent variable of 6 of the 11 factors with which this factor has resulted statistically related (table 1), level of campaign following, feeling from political party messages (the more negative the feeling, the less the internet is used to follow the campaign), gender (men use the internet more), and age (young people have tend to use the internet more to follow the electoral campaign than adults). To further confirm the relationship of this correlation, we applied regression analysis (Table 4), to see the extent to which these factors explain the use of the Internet (technology) during the election campaign by voters. The level of correlation between the factors taken into analysis is 0.565, which indicates a slightly above average correlation level. Regression analysis shows that the dependent variable is explainable by the factors considered at 31.89%. The regression model predicts with a high statistical certainty (.000) the result of the dependent variable. As noted, not all factors integrated in the regression turn out to be reliable influencers on the dependent variable, the age of the respondent in this regression model does not provide statistical certainty to be an influential factor in the use of technology during the election campaign, so it is not a factor which directly affects the perception that voters have of following the election campaign online. In contrast, the level of education results statistically with a very high significance (.0.000) to be one of the predictors of using the internet to follow the election campaign (the higher the education the more the voter tends to use technology to follow election campaign).

Table 4.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.565 ^a	.319	.306	1.038

a. Predictors: (Constant), "Education", "Gender", "Generally, the messages of the political parties during the election campaign evoked in the voter...", "How much did you follow the election campaign for the parliamentary elections of April 25, 2021?", "Age"

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	125.222	5	25.044	23.262	.000 ^b
	Residual	267.002	248	1.077		
	Total	392.224	253			

a. Dependent Variable: "How much did you use the internet (technology) to follow the election campaign?"

b. Predictors: (Constant), "Education", "Gender", "Generally, the messages of the political parties during the election campaign evoked in the voter...", "How much did you follow the electoral campaign for the parliamentary elections of April 25, 2021?", "Age"

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	Sig.

	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.225	.471		2.600	.010
How much did you follow the electoral campaign for the parliamentary elections of April 25, 2021?	.357	.062	.337	5.782	.000
Generally, the messages of the political parties during the election campaign evoked in the voter:		.062			
Gender	-.124	.137	-.073	-2.001	.046
Age	-.183	.046	-.152	-2.407	.017
Education	.110	.041	.289	4.622	.000

a. Dependent Variable: "How much did you use the internet (technology) to follow the election campaign?"

4.4. Voter Perception of Campaign Messages

The way the voter perceives the campaign in terms of how he / she feels about the messages displayed by political parties during the election campaign can be considered as one of the factors that influences the voter to vote / not vote on election day or to support or not a party certain political as defined by Ghiuta, Ovidiu-Aurel, (2014). Following the election campaign through various forms (face to face, meetings, internet, etc.) is a factor that we considered as influential in creating the perception of the feeling that the voter creates towards the messages of political parties. This relationship was initially confirmed at the correlation level (table 1), at the .277 level and provides complete assurance of the relationship between them. Based on these data, the researchers further applied the regression model, to see the degree to which these two factors have an impact on the variability of voter perception of the feeling evoked by the election campaign.

The level of correlation between the factors taken in the analysis (table 5) is 0.361. Regression analysis shows that the variable feeling that the voter receives from the messages of political parties during the election campaign can be explained by the level of campaign attendance in general and the level of campaign attendance via the Internet by 10%. Although the regression model predicts with a high statistical certainty (.000) the result of the dependent variable, we will accept that only 10% of the vote has an impact on creating the perception of positive or negative feeling through election campaign messages. With this result we can accept that the feeling that the voter creates towards the campaign messages is explained at a very low level through the measure of campaign following. Practically, there may be other factors that interfere with this relationship and may further influence the variable we seek to explain. These can be meetings with the voter from political parties, electoral promises, previous activity of political parties / government, etc. related to the form of behavior of the Albanian voter. „It is the pragmatists who today seem to ‘decide’ where the scales of power are going. The pragmatic behavior of the Albanian voter may be one of the factors that explain this low level of voter influence from the feelings of the masses, but rather from the rational activity and the benefit that the voter receives from the voting action.

Table 5.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.316 ^a	.100	.093	1.068

a. Predictors: (Constant), "How much did you use the internet (technology) to follow the election campaign?", "How much did you follow the electoral campaign for the parliamentary elections of April 25, 2021?"

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	32.069	2	16.035	14.056	.000 ^b
	Residual	288.614	253	1.141		
	Total	320.684	255			

a. Dependent Variable: "Generally, the messages of the political parties during the election campaign evoked in the voter..."

b. Predictors: (Constant), "How much did you use the internet (technology) to follow the election campaign?", "How much did you follow the electoral campaign for the parliamentary elections of April 25, 2021?"

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.991	.192		15.553	.000
	How much did you follow the electoral campaign for the parliamentary elections of April 25, 2021?	-.221	.062	-.231	-3.588	.000
	How much did you use the internet (technology) to follow the election campaign?	-.131	.058	-.145	-2.255	.025

a. Dependent Variable: "Generally, the messages of the political parties during the election campaign evoked in the voter..."

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Annex: Table 1

Question	Statistical indexes	How much did you follow the election campaign for the parliamentary elections of April 25, 2021?	In general, what influences voters the most when deciding who to vote for?	In your opinion, what was new about the April 25 election campaign in the three main parties compared to the	Following the campaign of the new parties in the elections of April 25. Generally, the messages of the political parties during the election	How much did you use the internet (technology) to follow the election	Gender	Age	Civil status	
How much did you follow the election campaign for the parliamentary elections of April 25, 2021?	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.067	-0.08	.180*	-.277**	.400**	-.255**	.195**	-.218**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.274	0.198	0.002	0	0	0	0.001	0
	N	295	270	261	295	265	283	295	295	294
What influences voters the most when deciding who to vote for?	Pearson Correlation	-0.067	1	.128*	-.047	0.02	-0.064	0.035	-0.041	0.019
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.274		0.04	0.438	0.754	0.306	0.569	0.505	0.759
	N	270	272	257	272	250	260	272	272	272
What was new about the April 25 election campaign in the three main parties (SP, DP and SMI)?	Pearson Correlation	-0.08	.128*	1	-0.1	0.038	0.032	0.073	0	-0.024
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.198	0.04		0.106	0.555	0.616	0.239	0.995	0.696
	N	261	257	263	263	246	253	263	263	263
Following the campaign of the new parties in the elections of April 25, 2021	Pearson Correlation	.180**	-0.047	-0.1	1	-0.076	0.043	-0.099	0.055	-0.041
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.002	0.438	0.106		0.213	0.469	0.087	0.339	0.477
	N	295	272	263	300	269	287	299	300	298
Generally, the messages of the political parties during the election campaign aroused in the voter	Pearson Correlation	-.277**	0.02	0.038	-.076	1	-.227**	-0.059	0.02	0.057
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0.754	0.555	0.213		0	0.339	0.742	0.355
	N	265	250	246	269	269	260	269	269	269
How much did you use the internet (technology) to follow the election campaign	Pearson Correlation	.400**	-0.064	0.032	0.043	-.227**	1	-.147*	-.229**	0.062
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0.306	0.616	0.469	0		0.013	0	0.295
	N	283	260	253	287	260	287	287	287	286
Gender	Pearson Correlation	-.255**	0.035	0.073	-.099	-0.059	-.147*	1	0.007	-0.036
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0.569	0.239	0.087	0.339	0.013		0.901	0.54
	N	295	272	263	299	269	287	299	299	298
Age	Pearson Correlation	.195**	-0.041	0	0.055	0.02	0	0.007	1	-.548**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	0.505	0.995	0.339	0.742	0	0.901		0
	N	293	271	262	296	267	284	296	296	296
Civil status	Pearson Correlation	-.218**	0.019	-0.024	-.041	0.057	0.062	-0.036	-.548**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0.759	0.696	0.477	0.355	0.295	0.54	0	
	N	294	272	263	298	269	286	298	298	298