

## **SOCIAL MEDIA: A SOURCE OF DATA ON THE SOCIETAL ATTITUDES FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PURPOSES**

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According to the data of the annual report “Global Digital 2021”, the total time spent by the humanity in the global net throughout the last year was longer than 1.3 billion years. The social media was accessed by more than the half of the total Internet users, of which the top one, as of January 2021, was Facebook with 2.7 billion users; the second most popular media was YouTube with more than 2 billion users, followed by WhatsApp and Facebook messengers, and by Instagram with 1.2 billion users taking the fifth place. Ukraine follows the global trends, with nearly 60% of the Ukrainian Internet users using Facebook, 43% – YouTube, and 30% – Instagram [1].

The social media, having become an integral component of the common people’s life, nowadays provide the core communication platforms. They allow to learn daily news of friends or latest world events, or to share one’s own impressions and experiences, to exchange opinions, get advice or waste free time. A peculiar feature of the social media is that they reflect societal attitudes in online mode. At the same time, the use of Internet and social media improves one’s awareness of the social, economic or political events, it stimulates the societal activities and creates an illusion of direct involvement of an online user in all the events and the significance of his/her opinions that are reflected in commentaries and messages.

The social media has been used in political communications to an increasingly wider extent. Quite often the social media turns into sites for self-PR, best known as blogs. O. Zernetska whose argument is worth a mention in this context notes that “a blogosphere is created in each country, and in the planetary scale – thanks to Internet and the opportunity of each Internet user to read a blog in every corner of the world and send own comments (not to mention active bloggers creating political content in their blogs) – it can be said that the global political blogosphere has been created” [2]. If political circles are taken, one of the first classical examples were presidential elections in 2008 in the U.S., as it was there that social media (Facebook, My Space, Twitter, Flickr, Digg, BlackPlanet, LinkedIn, AsianAve, MiGente, Glee and others) were used for the first time for voters’ feedback in a way to launch a highly effective “web blitzkrieg” of B. Obama’s campaign.

Research gives evidence that the attitudes articulated in social networks can be used to predict a company’s stock price movements [3] or develop the public health

care system [4]. Also, the attitudes in social media can have implications for political activities [5, 6] and political opinions [7].

McAllister argues that use of Internet, political awareness and political participation are linked with each other. According to this author, this tendency is critical in time of elections, especially in developing countries [8]. An interesting experience is use of social media in Slovakia in time of the political campaign in 2019 [6]. An analytical tool for Facebook pages, Facepager, was used for analysis of the total number of messages, their types and feedback coefficients for each candidate's pages. As a result, the importance of using social media in time of elections could be confirmed by statistical methods.

Interesting enough is a study of the public perception of economic measures imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Poland in March-June 2020 [9]. This study involved an analysis of big data extracted from Facebook and Twitter, namely 109,022 tweets and 557,473 messages in Facebook, with exploring two variables for estimating the public perception of economic support proposed by the government: number of infected persons and social media coverage.

In spite of a great many scientific publications, the potential of social media still remains understudied. By analyzing issues pertaining to scopes and uses of social media from the statistical viewpoint, we should admit that social media can offer large data volumes.

Statistical indicators used in analyses of various social media are quite similar. The Facebook's tool for statistical analysis contains a series of indicators: number of subscribers, number of page views, number of likes, coverage of audience by messages, coverage of stories, interactions with publication (dissemination, video watches, comments), subscriber characteristics (by age, gender, location). For detailed profile evaluations, index of page attractiveness, index of friendliness, coefficients of dissemination, conversion or click ability, involvement by coverage, involvement by views etc. are used.

Instagram is mostly a visual social media with accounts broken by business and personal ones. As Instagram is most commonly used for dissemination of advertising materials, important statistical indicators in this network are number of subscribers and number of message views and stories.

A specific feature of Twitter is that this social media is a microblogging with user messages not longer than 280 symbols. Its key statistical indicators are, therefore, number of subscribers, number of messages and audience activity. Given that identification of data in tweets (topics of discussions or messages) in this media is made mostly by hashtags (by applying to octothorp keywords), it allows for thematic grouping and grouping by emotional coloring of societal attitudes.

But this is not enough for explorations of societal attitudes. The main tool for exploring societal attitudes nowadays is artificial intellect enabling for analyses of not only the behavior of a user (by responses under messages, communications between friends and groups etc.), but also his/her attitudes (by analyzing the textual part of a comment or message). In this case it refers to personalized and confidential data that can be structured in online mode. This kind of analysis offers an alternative to

traditional studies and an opportunity to have immediate feedback with stakeholders on certain kinds of issues, including the public administration sector.

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