Factors and Trends of Increasing Role of Mass Media in Democratic Elections in Kazakhstan

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The article discusses some features of information technologies used by Kazakh media during election campaigns of different years. The purpose of this work is to analyze the peculiarities and factors behind the increasing role of the Kazakh media in the process of democratic elections. The article shows that since 1991-1996 transitional phases, Kazakhstan has been undergoing an intensive procedure of incorporating the media into its constantly evolving democratic set-up and putting up a media monitoring system of the political process in place. Kazakhstan mass media has successfully coped with this task bringing in changes within and taking into account public mentality and technologies at hand. The article presents a comparative analysis of the use of various information technologies in Kazakh election campaigns of different years, with particular attention on the presidential election of 2019.

Keywords: Democracy, elections, Kazakhstan, mass media, political processes, technology

In modern Kazakhstan, as in all democracies worldwide, elections, being the dominant fundamental of the political process, determine the direction and trends of political development. Unlike many Western countries where the tradition of political competition has a long history, Kazakhstan has adapted this process quite quickly. The parliamentary elections (1990) and first presidential (1991) showed to Kazakh people that legitimization of power through the expression of the will of the majority opens a window of possibility for the society to have control over governance through transparency and strength of publicity. Herein comes the role of media in providing channels for identifying and discussing common problems and agreeing on possible ways to solve them. Mass media carry out mutual communication between managers and the managed people, inform the society about actions of authorities, provide an "open rostrum" for expressing opinions of citizens, and maintain a forum for dialogue through the information exchange between the authorities and society (Nysanbaev, Tulegulov, Murzalin&Mashan).

At the same time, it is essential to note that until recently, Kazakh political elites could be quite satisfied with the techniques of campaigning and consent gathering inherited from the Soviet era. However, in a fast transforming Kazakh society, the political elite increasingly feels the need for professional skills of specialists who possess the know-how of social process management. Hence, electoral management and image-building consultant firms and companies are high in demand.

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In today's environment, the media has turned out to be one of the essential tools for modern politicking and dissemination of political information. It is observed that both media and politics work for business, political gimmick, and popularity (Moinuddin, 2015). Media plays the role of a watchdog during Presidential Elections in America (Asghar, Khan, Khuhro, Adnan, & Alqurainy, 2019). However, Farooq (2017) laments those media outlets like WhatsApp are acting as a propaganda tool distorting the essence of communication.

For Kazakhstan and CIS, the leading role of mass media during elections is entirely new. With each successive election, new electoral consulting companies and firms are coming upbringing in new approaches and views, new technologies. Media has almost become an integral part of this venture. *Electoral companies* have become the essential tools for democratizing society and implementing political processes.

Various studies show that not only content but also the nature and strategies of media coverage of the course of election campaigns affect the preferences and expectations of citizens. In today's information society, a journalist or media man becomes a mediator between power, candidates, and voters. The quality of the material, its accuracy, and reality depend on him, as well as the creation of myths and legends for the image of the candidate for deputy or party. It is necessary to note that journalists' professional work contributes to democratic elections and is now in high demand (Akhmetova, 2003).

The purpose of this work is to look into the increasing role of the Kazakh media in the process of holding democratic elections and analyze related peculiarities and factors. The task is to analyze the interaction between the process of forming the institution of free elections in Kazakhstan and the development of independent Kazakh media, keeping at the backdrop the influence of the new economic and political conditions of the country in particular and such common factors like globalization and digitalization as a whole. The novelty of the study is defined by its attempt to understand, in the context of Kazakh reality, not only the role of mass media in the electoral dynamics but also the nature of the use of various information technologies.

Literature Review

The role of media in elections and the political process is quite widely studied, which is, by its very nature interdisciplinary. At the same time, most of the work related to the issue under study belongs to foreign researchers. It is devoted to the analysis of the problem on the experience of Western democracies and international press. The works of E. Toffler, J. Habermas, S. Huntington, E. Noel-Neuman are considered seminal. The conceptual and methodological approaches identified in these works are widely used for empirical analysis of various aspects of media activity during the election period.

The notion is quite common that political consciousness and behavior of people during the election marathon depend significantly on the information field fabricated by the media. The manipulative influence of media on the electoral process is carried out by creating a specific public opinion this way or that way. In such a scenario, two main approaches can be identified, characterizing the degree of influence of the media on the political process.

Proponents of the first approach, older in origin, argue that the media has a significant impact on citizens' political orientations. The theoretical basis of this approach is W. Lippmann's work "Public Opinion" (1922). As a result, the media do not reflect people's perceptions of the world, but create these perceptions themselves, and thus their vision of

the world. E. Dennis (Dennis, 1997), an active supporter of this approach, assumed that the media shaped our thinking, influenced opinions and attitudes, pushed for certain types of behavior, such as voting for a particular candidate. Proponents of the second approach, on the contrary, minimize the degree of the direct influence of the media on the audience due to several mediated factors. They argue that the media merely give a person some information about the political world without affecting his individual political preferences. P. Lazarsfeld, analyzing the influence of the media, concluded that information transmitted to the voter through media channels only reinforces the existing attitudes and orientations (Lazarsfeld, 1940). The active supporter of the second approach, J. Clapper, suggested that the media did not form, but only supported, the political affiliation of voters while developing mechanisms for selective viewing of information, which was becoming a significant barrier to successful propaganda (Clapper, 1960). However, it should be noted that both supporters and opponents of significant media influence on the electoral process cannot exclude the media themselves from the consideration of the political process, but arguing solely about the extent of their impact on the audience, without challenging the existence of such influence.

The role of the media in democratic processes in general, and their direct involvement in electoral processes, is noted at the level of international instruments. At the 1994 OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) Summit in Budapest, participating States recognized the importance of the media clearly and the mandate of ODIHR (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) to "play an expanded role in the observation of elections before, during and after elections" (OSCE, 2012, p. 9). During any election, the media provide an invaluable source of information between rivals and the public. By providing a forum for public debate and informing citizens about the programs and platforms of candidates and parties, the media allows voters to make an informed decision when they cast their votes. The importance of this last point cannot be overstated, as the ability of voters to make informed choices is a crucial aspect of democratic elections (Akhmetova et al., 2013).

Studies and researches note that electoral preferences and expectations are likely to depend on media coverage. The style, nature, and frequency of media coverage in the run-up to elections affect voters' preferences and expectations about election results and may even affect voting results (Faas et al., 2008, pp. 300-301). However, it is essential to note that in modern research the object of analysis is not only the fact of the visible influence of information technologies on voter preferences but also the problems of the impact of the media on post-election coalitions (Eberl & Plescia, 2018), long-term party identification (Plescia & Aichholzer, 2017), transparency of procedure choice and combating unfair practices (Vukovic, 2019) and more. One of the research problems is the consideration of the procedures for conducting the election consultancy and the definition and limitation of the functions of the media during this period as per national legislation and public practice.

Thus, the analysis of the primary thematic orientation of the studies allows, first, to highlight what issues can be influenced by the media, and by what means this mechanism of influence is implemented. The impact of new communication technologies on election campaigns and the effectiveness of media-focused campaign strategies more broadly remain constant themes for discussion in political research as well as in media sociology and journalism. Increasingly, the study is not just limited to media and communication, namely their digital components, websites and Internet services, social networks, and much more. Works also now include an analysis of the impact of social media platforms like Facebook,

WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, etc. on various aspects of elections with examples. The increasing influence of Internet technologies on elections is confirmed by empirical data in multiple countries.

Social media significantly expand possible ways and methods of election campaigning. Even the statement that media influence on voter turnout (Schmitt-Beck & Mackenrodt, 2010) and their sympathies tends to be weaker than that of social media is reasoned.

While in terms of assessing the importance of online news portals and digital media, the opinion of scientists is relatively uniform, regarding the influence of social networks diametrically opposite statements are galore. Hong and Nadler (2012) presented the empirical analysis of the potential impact of social media on the U.S. presidential elections in 2012 based on the determination of correlation dependences between the ratings of candidates and level of the involvement of candidates for the sphere of online and social media. According to the authors, despite the different expectations, the high level of activity in social networks by presidential candidates had a minimal impact on the volume of public attention and the results of elections. However, despite the pluralism of opinions regarding the efficacy of Social Media platforms, Twitter and Instagram remain the objects of research in the context of identifying, predicting, and changing electoral preferences in different countries. Several works present an analysis of the content of election information and election forecasts on Instagram (Schmidbauer, 2018), the use of Twitter to change electoral preferences (Grover, 2019). Through social media analysis, the researchers reveal the impact of the nature of social media discussions through acculturation of ideologies and polarization of voter preferences on voter behavior during elections.

At the same time, it should be kept in mind that the experience of foreign researchers is undoubtedly useful, but cannot be fully applied to the existing domestic reality of Kazakhstan − peculiarities of its political structure and the socio-cultural parameters.

During the political regime of the Soviet period, there was no open sphere of interest in power; hence, the lack of social practice of political participation and competition. The issue of media activity as a factor of influence on political choice has become relevant as society is democratized. Both theoretical and applied research on the role of media as a participant in the organization and conduct of elections in Kazakhstan is in a nascent state. There has been no significant scientific study carried out on the role of media, especially media technologies, in the process of Kazakh elections. The current study is the first of its kind to address this potential research gap in the domain of media technology and political communication in Kazakhstan.

Objectives: This study intends to find out and analyze (i) the factors about the increasing role of the media in the process of democratic elections in Kazakhstan, and (ii) it further attempts at comparative analysis on the use of media technologies over the years in Kazakhstan elections.

Methodology

The current study relied primarily on the results authors' researches and measurements over many years, which allowed summarizing a considerable amount of practical information, text, and video materials on electoral processes presented in Kazakh media, statistical data, and research results using the sociological methodology. The article summarizes research experience of many years spreading over nine election campaigns

(1996-1999, 2002-2012) and in the framework of such research projects as "Realization of women's rights in Kazakhstan" (2000-2001), "Evaluation and monitoring of mass media in the election campaign" (2002-2003), "Chairmanship of Kazakhstan in the OSCE" (2010). The findings are essential for understanding the impact of Kazakhstan's media, voter expectations, and campaign strategies.

As the empirical basis of the study, the materials and data are divided into following groups: (i) official documents, which primarily include documents that form the primary legislative basis for the work of the media in the context of election campaigns; (ii) empirical materials (text and visual) on the process and results of elections from 1996 to 2019; and (iii) materials of Kazakhstan mass media. The analysis of these documents, along with other sources, enabled the authors of this study to identify trends in the further development of forms and peculiarities of mass media use in electoral campaigns of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Findings and Discussion

Under the influence of political transformations in modern Kazakh society, a stable mechanism of legal support to the holding of democratic elections has been formed. The analysis of related literature shows that the role of the media in the electoral process is dual: first, the media are a channel for informing voters about the preparation and conduct of electoral events; Secondly, the media are the essential tool for election campaigning of candidates. Also, representatives of the media, together with observers, proxies, and representatives of electoral headquarters, should ensure transparency of the electoral process.

Mass Media and Elections in Kazakhstan: Origins and Current State

Electoral campaigns, regardless of their type: presidential, parliamentary, or election for regional authorities and local bodies, have the same stages, clearly defined by legislation. However, their main events: announcement of votes, the nomination of candidates, registration of candidates, campaigning, voting – are subject to be influenced by other factors and entities, the most vital of which is information technology. It is impossible to consider the diversity of the capabilities of such technologies under one article. In his work "The Information Age," a prominent authority of political science and sociology, Professor M. Castels, evaluates the computer as a means whose impact can be compared to the invention of the alphabet in ancient Greece. M. Castels, using research data in the United States, notes, "Computer communication begins its way as a means of communication for an educated and prosperous segment of the population of the most educated and well-off countries, most often in large, most developed metropolitan areas" (Castels, 1998).

Information gathering and dissemination technology do not mean cyber where-withal only. Its range spreads from custom articles in print publications, leaflets, posters, advertising-type information inscriptions to special broadcasts on radio and television, the injection of sensational material into the news sections of radio and television broadcasts and various kinds of "military actions" against an opponent on the Internet, etc. It can reach out to multiple layers of society, to take a call on the social situation, to urge people to secure the interests of the common good, to overcome previous differences, to unite on national causes, or to reject those forces that pose a threat to the common good.

In Kazakhstan, the volume of opportunities for print publications is enormous. "Solid" newspapers and magazines have the political elite of the state and the upper layers of the national intelligentsia and bureaucracy in the ranks of their readers. Country's radio news studios and several national television channels, especially their news programs, have similar possibilities. Now mobile phones, with its genuinely worldwide capabilities, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, etc. have become a game-changer.

Measuring the impact of information technologies is becoming increasingly important for political and social activism. In particular, Web 2.0 tools and social media applications have, in the near past, played a significant role in influencing government decision-making and shaping relationships between governments, citizens, politicians, and other social subjects. After the Arab Spring and the revolts that led to significant political changes in Egypt, Tunisia, and Iran, commentators argue that information technology has the potential to strengthen social movements and ultimately transform society (Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia, 2014). However, this influence is not new. The 1990s saw changes using new e-mail and website technologies that we're able to attract significant public attention and generate political pressure. Initially, Kazakh activists used information technologies to promote the main ideas of the movement and receive global support.

The importance of new media lies in the possibilities of modulating various situations, creating a virtual space and community, the emergence of what has been called interactive networks. There is a qualitatively new culture of behavior, a new mindset.

In Kazakh practice, the process of conducting the election campaign is continually changing. However, there is a broad agreement on standard rules for the work of media and journalists in the electoral process. Kazakhstan has recently published several books, brochures, manuals, articles on the work of the media and journalists. Before any election, legislative documents as regards media behavior during the election period are issued, which are supposed to be followed by all participants of the electoral process.

2003-2005 stand out as a separate line in our study, as during this period activists from left to right, people in power as well as opposition, independents published a significant number of brochures and manuals for the press to enable it to work seamlessly in the election period. The 2007 elections went on mainly on the strength of that material, taking into account only legislative changes. This was because the preparatory period of elections was minimal (slightly more than two months!), and almost no one was able to prepare any material, even a manual for the media for elections.

Dispassionate observations show that the press of Kazakhstan can broadly be divided into two opposing camps as per their political leanings. Only a small number of media outlets took a position of neutrality, which published materials of the CEC (Central Election Commission) of the Republic of Kazakhstan, without criticizing any parties and candidates for deputies. They are called quality media as they have a different readership characterized by high income, education, and social status. However, it should be noted that both mass and quality publications worked for political mobilization with an urge to all to take part in elections. The mass media played a significant role in the formation of the electoral majority in almost every region of the country. Figure 1 shows the increase in the representation of various political parties and public associations in parliamentary elections between 1990 and 2016.
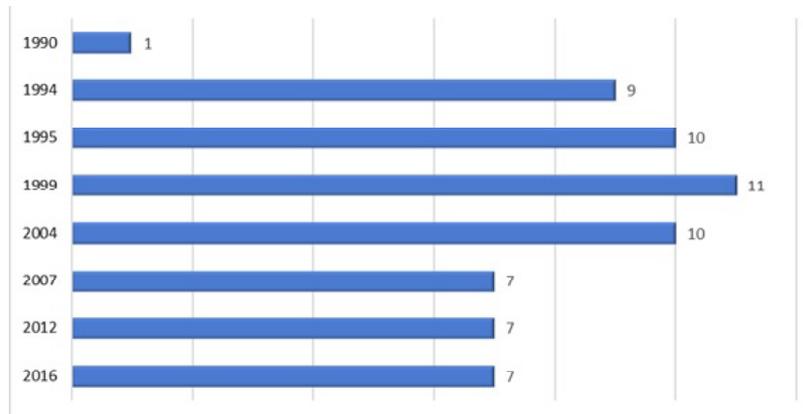
Parliamentary Election in Kazakhstan

Figure 1. Participation of political parties and public associations in parliamentary elections in Kazakhstan (excluding the number of independent candidates)

Many socio-political scientists of the country are now inclined to believe that the authorities have already exhausted themselves, yet, given the psychology of the masses, this technology continues to play a role and influence our electorate. This trend was indirectly confirmed by-elections in 2019. Thus, in the run-up to the voting, the Central Election Commission of Kazakhstan published rules for conducting opinion polls and sample surveys in connection with the upcoming elections of the Head of State. The Election Commission mandated that following paragraph 9 of Article 28 of the Constitutional Law "On Elections in the Republic of Kazakhstan," only registered legal entities having at least five years of experience in conducting public opinion polls, are entitled to do it. They were also asked to notify the Central Election Commission, with attached copies of the relevant documents. Accordingly, it is not allowed to publish the results of opinion polls, forecasts related to elections on the Internet for five days before voting day and on voting day. During the election campaign of 2019, the CEC received only two notifications about the social survey, but both documents were incorrectly executed (Nikitin, 2019).

The experience of presidential elections in Kazakhstan in 2019 shows that articles, interviews, information, comments are most in-demand during the electoral process. The paradox is that with an abundance of information, objective data is challenging to obtain.

The next feature of Russia and Kazakhstan is the continuous election campaign, which means constant demand everywhere for the media and all those involved in this process. But the different point is that according to some Russian authors and researchers, the post-Soviet political consciousness of Russians has been fluid. In the immediate aftermath of the disintegration of the USSR, particularly in the last decade of the 20th century, entire Russia was surcharged with political activism. But after that, indifference to politics crept into the Russian public psyche. In different studies, researchers found that the inhabitants of the country mainly do not show high political activity and civic activity (Radikov et al., 2018). The reasons for this include not only general depoliticization in society but also the altered nature of media influence.

However, the Kazakh public's experiment with politics has a different strain. Although the electorate, for the most part, can be called passive and apolitical, nevertheless the following concepts are supported continuously in the media and of the press: (i) the politicization of society; (ii) the confrontation between different groups; and (iii) high investment on political journalism.

In 2007 in Kazakhstan, before the elections to the Majilis of Parliament (Lower House of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan) and Maslikhats (local representative body in the Republic of Kazakhstan), there were two camps. If earlier, the opposition had difficult access to television and radio for many reasons. This year, the opposition was able to get space on television. It was a 2007 innovation. T.V. debates became a successful project. The discussion of the T.V. show called "the debates" aroused considerable interest among the population of the country and worked as a catalyst for a heated debate among different segments of the people and in various media.

Traditionally, the media have great manipulative potential concerning election juggernaut. Using a substantial resource of information, mass media continue to design, spread, and consolidate in public consciousness stereotypes of opinions, judgments, assessments, which as a result, influence the formation of political choices, which are beneficial to specific political forces.

As a part of this study, comparisons have been drawn among different electoral campaigns in terms of using various information and manipulative technologies. Research shows that there is a relationship between media manipulation, strategic suppression of relevant media, and strategies to use media to cover candidates for elections, and self-prosecution (Miura, 2019, p. 306). Under certain conditions, a voter cannot directly observe the policies proposed by candidates but learns this information through media reports before voting. Thus, though the media may not change the content of information, its supply, quantity, and frequency have an inherent influence on the electorate. For example, to the voters, a new candidate looks most like the media present him. Thus, in the 2019 presidential elections in Kazakhstan, the basis of the election campaign of President Tokayev K-J. was a reference to the preservation of the political course of the country, the political strategy of Nazarbayev N.A., as already tested and with a high level of support of the population.

What are the features of the work of the Kazakh media in the context of elections and the unfolding electoral struggle? Several points are enumerated here that should be interesting to journalism researchers.

The first point is the degree of media trust (general and relative to elections). Usually, almost every newspaper reader, radio broadcast, and television watching citizen know which mass media would write what about contestants and how they will present the electoral picture. Everyone has their degree of trust in one or another media, depending on his or her propensity and attitude towards a particular party.

The second is the opinion of the audience on how adequately and just media interprets the information when it comes to elections.

The third is how cynical or sincere are the journalists themselves about the coverage of elections in the mass media (Are they soldier-robot or professionals?).

We see transparent lobbying of specific party interests by certain media (for example, "Khabar—*Asar*, Kazakhstan—*Otan*, 31st Channel—*AkZhol*). Hence, politics is gradually becoming a problematic playing field instead of those parties that do not have their information channel (for example, Communists).

As far back as in 2003, candidates for deputy in Maslikhats were presented on television. It introduced a world experience into the electoral system of Kazakhstan.

In 2019 in Kazakhstan, the holding of debates among the aspirants became a matter of great importance, but at the same time, it was formal. There were seven candidates for the office of the Kazakhstan president: the representative of "NurOtan" party Kasym-Jomart Tokayev, the candidate of the republican public association "Uli Dala Qyrandari" Sadibek Tugel, the candidate of Federation of trade unions Amangeldi Taspikhov,

the candidate from the "AkZhol" party Daniya Espayeva, the candidate from the "Auyl" party Toleutay Rakhimbekov, the candidate of the Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan Jambyl Akhmetbekov and the candidate of the United National Patriotic Movement "Ult Tagdiri" Amirzhan Kosanov.

Kasim-Zhomart Tokayev and Daniya Espayeva did not participate in the discussion. They were represented by First Deputy Chairman of the "NurOtan" party Maulen Ashimbayev and Chairman of the "AkZhol" party Azat Peruashev, respectively. Also, at the beginning of the debate, it became known that the candidate from the party "Auyl" Toleutay Rakhimbekov also would not participate; Ali Bektayev represented him. There were three round TV debates.

The content of the debate was widely duplicated and circulated in the media, up to the text version of the discussion published on *zakon.kz* – the official website. The portal offers the reader to examine the main points from the statements of candidates and their representatives in the text broadcast. With the most straightforward search query, there are enough links to videos – among them not only the Internet version of television channels but also in particular links to YouTube.com.

Political scientist Marat Shibutov believes that the debates were smooth, and all participants of the election debate remained satisfied with the process and outcome. "First of all, it is necessary to understand that public conflicts are avoided in Kazakh politics. Therefore, the debaters did not criticize each other much. Candidates tried more to present their position than to wound the opponent. It is necessary to understand that our Parliament is a place for discussions. Therefore senators and deputies – Ashimbayev, Peruashev, and Bektayev - looked better." In general, according to Shibutov, the participants concentrated on their election programs and spoke about what was already written.

The analysis of the media materials of 2007 shows that the portrayal of political parties in the media was extraordinarily generalized and simplified: the Communists – those who support the Soviet past, Otan – those who support the President, others – the opposition, etc. There is not any in-depth or precise analysis of the program documents of the parties.

In 2019, the situation was different. Candidates' programs are formulated quite clearly and presented on various Internet resources and in the media. The program of President Tokayev K-J was one of the first, published on the website *toqaev2019.kz.* It expounded three principles: continuity, justice, progress. In the paragraph on continuity, the candidate promises to continue the course lay down by former President Nursultan Nazarbayev. In the remaining paragraphs, it focuses on effective public administration, health care, the eradication of corruption, and justice.

Information Technology in Electoral Process

Research on the role of media in the period of election is predominantly interdisciplinary and widely analyzed in the modern scientific literature. At the same time, the analysis of the most common strategies taking into account regional specificity, the nature of media development, and the corresponding legal framework are of particular importance for each specific region.

Within the framework of this article, it is intended to consider some of the most common aspects of the use of information technologies in the organization and conduction of the Kazakh election campaign.

Contract articles and programs. Though they are not unusual in normal times, the most significant practice is seen during the election campaign, when political parties and

individual politicians resort to such articles to draw attention to their persona. Political scientists and political technologists often pay attention to such items in the press and broadcasts on radio and television. This becomes the most adopted technique to "promote" the image of the candidate or to undermine the image of the rival.

The technique of "overstatement of reason" is another usual practice for Kazakh media for political mileage. In this case, almost ordinary information is "inflated" with special significance. Say, the candidate for Maslikhat (Local representative body in the Republic of Kazakhstan) – the grandson of a renowned Haji of the past, himself teaches aesthetics at the local university. This may be a small statement but speaks volumes about the candidate, the tradition of morality, morality in the family, and helps present the candidate as a person of high foundations, useful to society in all respects. However, aesthetics is about the sensuality of knowledge and representation, about beautiful, highly natural, so morality itself is far from being the most important. There is a perception of "revival." Political prudence expects that when any material like a person's data is presented before the public, it should elicit respect, at least. It is an idyllic picture of family life; it is a story about the noble actions of the candidate towards colleagues, co-workers, neighbors.

The perception about the "voice of the people" is interesting – when a media person projects their idea and viewpoint under the garb of public opinion. But it has an inherent risk – the bubble can burst if a handful of credible references are not presented along with. An interesting fact of the 2019 election campaign in Kazakhstan is an administrative penalty (fine) imposed for conducting sociological surveys. Two such cases were recorded - and according to official data - both "researchers" were fined. As per record, in early May 2019, a resident of Almaty was fined for polling public opinion on elections in the social network "VKontakte," and a resident of Almaty region was brought to administrative accountability for a similar offense committed on the social network "Facebook." Purely theoretically, online surveys have several advantages and certain disadvantages. The main drawback is the inability to control the sample, making the study unrepresentative (Zhang et al., 2017).

Leaflets are the most convenient means of publicity during the election campaign as they are simple, relatively cheap, and suitable for distribution, well-looking thanks to a small format and with successful texturing, easy to read and remember.

The flyer-biography gives a brief story about the candidate. It is desirable to place a clear picture of the candidate in the corner of the center, accompanied by a short slogan to preserve the integrity of the image and, at the same time, give necessary emotional brightness.

The leaflet is a statement and a promise. This type combines two points. The first is a program-type statement containing four or five theses about the candidate's plans. The second is about what and how the candidate intends to change in the life of society, why it is in the interests of the country, and how it will improve the lives of people.

The leaflet, as the material of ongoing agitation and propaganda, should contain purposeful material on no more than one problem or a pressing issue of the day. For example: "Fellow countrymen! I offer you a program of transformation of our beauty Almaty! We implement our program, and we will make the southern capital of the country a business card of our Republic!" The counter-argument on the same topic can become the leaflet of a competitor party, where the same question is presented in a qualitatively different angle: "Almaatins! Because of the new buildings our garden city is rapidly disappearing, residents suffocate with smog and dust, became prisoners of many hours of traffic jams. Let us preserve the beauty and uniqueness of the southern capital!"

Posters as publicity component should combine the image, brevity, conscription, the orientation of the material. The writers of the poster - artist-designer and journalist-political scientist should embody in their material several elements: information, reasoning, image, persuasiveness, compliance with the candidate's program, and an understanding of the problems in common people's lives. For example, "NurOtan" is the party of prosperity and hope of the Fatherland! Vote for success and confidence!" Another poster may contain a call: "AkZhol" is the party of the future. Vote for the future!"

Informative inscriptions are placed on a car body, on a building fence, on a house wall, on a show-window of a newsstand, on a sidewall of the trolleybus, tram, or bus. They must be brief, eye-catching, and conscious. For example, on the fence of dusty new buildings, the environmental plan inscription is significant: "Do we breathe this mixture?!"

In "promoting" of a corruption-fighting candidate, the slogan- "Power - under the strict control of the law! Support the "AkZhol" Party!"- could be effective (2007).

The content of inscriptions, including slogans, should be turned into social and political ideologies. They can be in letter and spirit of following modules: "In the main - unity, in the controversial - freedom, in everything - love for our Fatherland!" The point: we must be united on the central or focal theme - a commitment to the all-round prosperity of the country. But everyone has the right to choose their way to do so. And, no matter how divided we are in politics, we must remain patriots of our country.

"Responsibility, experience, fatherland!" Here, the content oozes optimism of a party that claims to know how to defend the interests of the state and steer it towards development. Three slogans: "Wealth of Kazakhstan for the benefit of the people!" "Fatherland to us - Kazakhstan!", "Young people - get jobs, old people - get care!" - are externally neutral and can be a tool in the hands of any party. The slogan "Well-being for all" (2019) also falls within this characteristic.

News promotions in the press, radio, and television are resorted to literally from the very first hours of registration of the candidate. An example of such an action could be the candidate's application to establish, for example, a special fund to support young biologists. A combination like news and work can attract the attention of the media and thereby make an ordinary person well-known, "inflate" around him a bubble of fame, including an upward movement in the table of the political rating.

Such a news action to have the desired effect needs to be treated by a friendly journalist in a specific manner or as per the order of the campaign consultant. Another way round It is the journalist who needs to think in advance and then launch several different news actions, each of which will play the role of a stage "publicity," change the mood of society towards the specific candidate.

The techniques of revitalizing broadcasts on radio and television are peculiar. This is entirely a different world where the problems of performance quality are solved with the help of sound and light, brightness or shadow of the image, the inclusion of some blanks, etc.

Counter-propaganda is an art in itself and needs special skills to elicit maximum advantage over the rival candidate. They must be thought through in advance and planned as a mirror reflection on the opponent's actions. Nevertheless, their content and meaning should not conflict with the law. The main thing is not to stoop too low, which might border with semi-criminal actions. It is always worth remembering that what works is a balanced connection among the main components of the election campaign: personal (biography legend), public (assessment of public opinion), ideological (program), technological (what is included in the strategy and tactics of the campaign).

Conclusion

The study of several electoral processes of the past in Kazakhstan confirms that media is a significant stakeholder in the democratic process. Its political role increases voluminously during the preparation and conduct of elections for political offices, be they national, regional or local. The media – public or private, loyal or independent, print or electronic, have always played a leading role in shaping public opinion.

The experience of the recent political history of Kazakhstan shows that the media in the country today have all technical know-how and ideological strength to serve various political purposes: how to impart political education to people, promote and help competent participation in politics, and carry out manipulative influence. The upsurge in the strategic use of information by the media to achieve political goals has been observed since the period of Independence, and it can be stated that today almost all approaches and methods are present in the arsenal of Kazakh journalists. Since the elections of 2004-2007, there has been a gradual increase in the importance of digital media, the Internet, and social networks.

At the same time, the legal framework for electoral information dissemination is being systematized and developed. Since 2004, the rules and regulations on the conduct of election campaigning through mass media and information support for elections have continuously been updated. The following basic concepts are used in official documents: information support of elections, election campaigning, speech, political debates, the editorial council of mass media, etc.

Indeed, the electoral process is slowly but consistently embracing new technologies: social networks, mobile applications, Internet sites, digitally direct interaction with the population. Traditional methods have also undergone several changes. In particular, banners and campaign posters are characterized by creativity, brightness, and information. Internet technologies are being adapted to the electoral process at all stages. Of course, Information support of elections, election campaigning, remote voting, counting of votes is automated and digitized in many countries for long. Though this has not been fully realized in Kazakhstan, the process of digitalization is on. To ensure maximum access to information on the electoral process, the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Kazakhstan has created a website *election.gov.kz*. Its content includes information about the electoral system and election bodies of Kazakhstan, the structure and activities of the Central Election Commission, contacts of election commissions in the regional level, normative and legal acts. The presence of websites of many political parties of Kazakhstan on the Internet is also part of the processes of digitalization, which is aimed at maintaining transparency and ensuring the trust of people in the processes of election campaigning. The role of the media in the election campaign depends on a large number of factors, including national traditions, historical and political traditions, civil society structures, dominant values, etc.

Summing up the results of the study, it can be noted that the electoral processes of modern Kazakhstan are inextricably connected with the media. The emergence of democracy in the country has led to significant changes and a powerful leap in the development of the media. The press, radio, television, and the Internet are becoming major electoral battlegrounds. Although the media sometimes hit the voter with a stream of the most contradictory information, it is they who help the voter decide on his choice.

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