МЕДИАСОЦИОЛОГИЯ

D. Yu. Kulchitskaya, A. O. Folts

BETWEEN POLITICS AND SHOW BUSINESS: PUBLIC DISCOURSE ON SOCIAL MEDIA REGARDING KSENIA SOBCHAK, THE ONLY FEMALE CANDIDATE IN THE 2018 RUSSIAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

BETWEEN POLITICS AND SHOW BUSINESS: PUBLIC DISCOURSE ON SOCIAL MEDIA REGARDING KSENIA SOBCHAK, THE ONLY FEMALE CANDIDATE IN THE 2018 RUSSIAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

МЕЖДУ ПОЛИТИКОЙ И ШОУ-БИЗНЕСОМ: ПУБЛИЧНЫЙ ДИСКУРС В СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ МЕДИА О КСЕНИИ СОБЧАК, ЕДИНСТВЕННОЙ ЖЕНЩИНЕ-КАНДИДАТЕ НА ПОСТ ПРЕЗИДЕНТА НА ВЫБОРАХ-2018

Diana Yu. KULCHITSKAYA[1] — *Cand. Sci. (Philol.), Associate Professor at the Department of New Media and Communication*
E-MAIL: diana.kulchitskaya@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3432-5965

КУЛЬЧИЦКАЯ Диана Юрьевна — кандидат филологических наук, доцент кафедры новых медиа и теории коммуникации факультета журналистики , Московский государственный университет имени М. В. Ломоносова, Москва, Россия
E-MAIL: diana.kulchitskaya@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3432-5965

Anastasia O. FOLTS[1] — *Cand. Sci. (Philol.), Associate Professor at the Department of New Media and Communication*
E-MAIL: stasy.alekseeva@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0240-6234

ФОЛЬЦ Анастасия Олеговна — кандидат филологических наук, доцент кафедры новых медиа и теории коммуникации факультета журналистики , Московский государственный университет имени М. В. Ломоносова, Москва, Россия
E-MAIL: stasy.alekseeva@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0240-6234

[1] Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia

Abstract. The article analyzes the public discourse on social media regarding the only female candidate in the 2018 Russian presidential election. Ksenia Sobchak is a famous Russian public figure who started as a TV personality and subsequently changed her image to become a serious journalist and finally a politician.

The figure of Sobchak is an interesting topic to study for a number of reasons. Firstly, the issue of women in politics is poorly studied in communication research due to their low representation in political sphere. Secondly, Sobchak undermines traditional views about women in society; that is why looking at Sobchak

Аннотация. В статье анализируется общественный дискурс в социальных сетях относительно кампании единственной женщины-кандидата в президенты России на выборах 2018 г. Ксения Собчак — широко известная фигура в России, которая начинала карьеру как телеведущая, но впоследствии изменила свой имидж и попыталась стать серьезным журналистом и, наконец, политиком.

Фигура Собчак представляет собой интересный предмет для исследований по нескольким причинам. Во-первых, образ женщин в политике недостаточно хорошо изучен в сфере коммуникационных исследований в связи с их

as a presidential candidate allows a researcher not only to consider this case study through the lens of Sobchak's image as a politician but also to understand the public attitudes towards women with an active civic position in the Russian society.

The paper examines the public discussion on social media related to Sobchak campaign. The authors analyze the messages within five top social media websites (Facebook, Instagram, Odnoklassniki, Vkontakte, Twitter). Computer-assisted sentiment analysis shows that Sobchak's background as a scandalous TV host has had a negative impact on her political career. Public discourse in the sample under consideration was predominantly focused on the scandals related to the Sobchak's past and least related to her statements during the electoral competition.

низкой репрезентацией в политической среде. Во-вторых, пример Ксении Собчак как кандидата в президенты во время выборов 2018 г. позволяет рассмотреть ее имидж не только с точки зрения ее образа как политика. Собчак подрывает традиционные представления о роли женщины в обществе. Сквозь призму этого конкретного примеры можно увидеть отношение российского общества к женщинам, занимающим активную гражданскую позицию.

В данном исследовании рассматривается общественная дискуссия в социальных сетях, посвященная кампании Ксении Собчак. Для этого были проанализированы сообщения в пяти ведущих социальных сетях (Facebook, Instagram, «Одноклассники», «ВКонтакте», Twitter). Компьютерный сентимент-анализ показал, что прошлое Ксении Собчак как ведущей скандальной телепередачи до сих пор негативно влияет на ее политическую карьеру. Публичное обсуждение в анализируемой выборке было сосредоточено в основном на скандалах, связанных с прошлым Собчак, и в меньшей степени — на ее заявлениях в период предвыборной кампании.

Keywords: social media, public discourse, online discussions, presidential election, Russian politics, Ksenia Sobchak

Ключевые слова: социальные медиа, публичный дискурс, онлайн-дискуссии, президентские выборы, политика в России, Ксения Собчак

Introduction

Political communication has been transformed tremendously by social media. Social networking sites now represent both aplatform forpolitical campaigning and a tool for politicians helping them communicate with the audience [Stier et al., 2018]. The victory of Barack Obama during the 2008 presidential election in the USA is considered to be a pivotal moment in the integration of social networks into the political process

Many researchers note that it is the first time in contemporary history, when social networks were extensively used in the run-up to the election of the US president and this use turned out to be very effective. [Cogburn, Espinoza-Vasquez, 2011; Macnamara, Kenning, 2014].

At the same time political communication has been democratized by social networks, giving new opportunities for people to participate in the political discourse. Today citizens can be actors in the political process by commenting on different events or political figures [Gibson, 2015; Vaccari, Valeriani, 2016]. The discussion in the social networks may help a politician to build an appealing public image or, on the contrary, have a negative effect on his/her image and ruin his/her electoral campaign or entire career [Vaccari, Valeriani, 2016]. Citizens, of course, do have a role in the so-called mediated political discourse, however, communication scholars also note the importance of influential political bloggers and public figures in social networks, who are able to frame the discussion in some cases and lead the public to certain conclusions and conceptions [Karlsen, 2015]. At the same time, the public discourse in the social networks may be used as a barometer to measure the changes in public opinion and the perspectives rooted in the social consciousness.

The following article is devoted to the study of mediated political discourse [1] in the social networks regarding Ksenia Sobchak, the only female candidate in the Russian presidential election in 2018. This research topic is important for several reasons. Firstly, women in politics are usually understudied in communication research due to their low representation in politics in comparison to men. This is the first research gap that needs to be filled in media studies. The case of Ksenia Sobchak as a candidate in the 2018 Russian presidential election is interesting in this respect, as it allows us to look at her image not only in her role of a female politician. She is a woman who doesn't fit in the usual traditionalist conceptions of women's role in society. Sobchak as a TV anchor and show business diva has scandalized the Russian public many times and has always had a reputation of a flamboyant and extravagant representative of the Russian elite. Another research gap that we try to fill in this article is the lack of study of mediated political discourse in the Russian context, which has also received relatively small attention in scholarly research partly due to the fact that Russian politicians traditionally don't use social networking sites as much as their Western counterparts.

Our paper is organized as follows. After the literature review there is a section, which describes Ksenia Sobchak's background as a public figure and politician in Russia. This section is followed by our Main findings, where each RQ is addressed in an orderly manner. Firstly, we try to answer RQ1 by identifying the main topics discussed in the sample and by determining the key words in the discussion, as they also highlight the specific features of the discourse. Secondly, we address RQ2 by finding who are the key personalities in the discussion and what they say about Ksenia Sobchak in their posts. Thirdly, we address RQ3 by identifying whether there are gender-charged words in the discussion and analyze the context in which they are used.

---

[1] Mediated political discourse is the discussion devoted to political issues and existing on different media platforms (both traditional mass media and new media). The term is used in communication studies and political communication research.

Literature review

Political communication has changed radically after the advent of social networking sites. Now the number of actors in the political discourse has multiplied and politicians, opinion leaders and citizens can participate in the so-called mediated political discourse [Velasquez, 2012; Strandberg, 2013]. On one hand, social networking sites can serve some electoral purposes and be used by politicians, on the other hand, opinion leaders and common citizens can participate in a mediated political discourse and express their opinions online [Karlsen, 2015].

Both political PR specialists and researchers realized the potential social media have in mobilizing the electorate and winning new voters [Filimonov, Russmann, Svensson, 2016; Vergeer, 2017]. Since then there has been a growing body of papers devoted to the use of social networking sites for electoral purposes. Scholars have focused their attention on various platforms [Gustafsson, 2012; Williams, Gulati, 2012; Bruns, Highfield, 2013; Lesnic-Alujevic, van Bauwel, 2014; Filimonov, Russmann, Svensson, 2016; Vergeer, 2017]. Twitter is regarded as one of the most studied platforms due to the popularity it has in the sphere of political communication [Filimonov, Russmann, Svensson, 2016]. At the same time, Twitter's API is relatively easy to study [Bruns, Liang, 2012]. More and more scholarly papers focus on the visual representation of politics [Galai, 2019; Orgad, 2013; Bleiker, 2015]. With the advent of new visual social networking sites like Instagram and Pinterest, as well as with the spreading of such a phenomenon as memes, visual analysis of political parties' activities in the social media is becoming a popular research method [Muñoz, Towner, 2017; Dean, 2019].

Scholars have identified several purposes, which may be set by political candidates when using social networking sites in the process of political campaigning. They include (1) broadcasting election messages, (2) mobilizing supporters, (3) managing the party's image, and (4) amplifying and complementing other campaign materials [Filimonov, Russman, Svensson, 2016]. Researchers have even coined the term digital politics to describe the way new media are integrated into the process of political communication. In a recent work, J. G. Blumler shows the ways in which contemporary new media technologies shape the political discourse [Blumler, 2019]. Blumler notes that 'if there is the fourth age of political communication, its crux must be the ever-expanding diffusion and utilization of Internet facilities — including their continual innovative evolution — throughout society, among all institutions with political goals and with politically relevant concerns and among many individual citizens. /…/ Whereas in the past political leaders and their strategists geared up to cover and intervene in television, radio and press outlets, now they are involved to a considerable extent in multi-dimensional impression management' [Blumler, 2019].

On the other hand, another gap we are trying to fill is connected with the coverage of female politicians in traditional media outlets and new media. The representation of female politicians in traditional media is a topic that has received a lot of attention from media scholars. A significant body of research shows that women in politics are often viewed in a stereotypical way and their gender roles are more often emphasized in the public domain than in the case of their male counterparts [Eagly, Karau, 2002; Puwar, 2004; Rudman, Phelan, 2008]. Women often receive less coverage in the

media than men [Gidengil, Everitt, 2003; Lawrence, Rose, 2009; Dunaway et al., 2013; O'Neill, Savigny, Cann, 2016]. Sometimes they are devalued and criticized by the public for presenting a different role model and not following the traditionalist perception that women should devote their lives to their family instead of participating in politics [Banwart, 2010]. One of the few research projects devoted to the coverage of female presidential candidates is the study done by K. Sheeler and K. Anderson. The two US researchers analyzed the way Hillary Clinton was covered in the media during the presidential campaign of 2008. They found out that both traditional and digital media frame women in the stereotyped female roles [Sheeler, Anderson, 2017].

At the same time, the way users perceive female politicians in social networks has been studied much less. There are very few works, which focus specifically on the way users of different social networking sites view female political figure. A group of US scholars showed that female politicians are more likely to be verbally attacked in the social networks than male [Rehualt, Reyman, Musulan, 2019].

Political discussion among citizens in social networks is not such a prominent topic in the area of communication research. There are some studies of public discourse on social network sites; however, this is still an understudied area. As we mentioned before, Twitter in this respect is the most studied platform due to the structure of the platform and the established methodology in this field [Arlt, Rauchfleisch, Schäfer, 2018]. A recent study shows that there is still a significant gender gap in the sphere of online political discussion. Female influencers are still a rare phenomenon when it comes to political topics, they use special communication techniques in order to be noticed in this male-dominated field [Vochocová, 2018].

Research methodology

Our research was aimed to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What kind of topics were discussed in social networks regarding Ksenia Sobchak and her presidential bid during the studied period (March 2 — March 16, 2018)? Does Sobchak's show business past represent a significant part of the discourse?

RQ2: Which bloggers and celebrities framed the discussion about Ksenia Sobchak in social networks and in what way?

RQ3: Was there gender bias in the views of people regarding Ksenia Sobchak and her presidential bid?

In order to answer these questions, we conducted computer-assisted sentiment analysis of posts about Ksenia Sobchak and her political campaign during the election. Sentiment analysis, or opinion mining, is a specific form of content analysis that identifies how sentiments, opinions, and emotions are expressed about a given subject in text-based documents, such as social media messages. We used a Russian social media analytical system Brand Analytics[2], which allows firms and individuals to gather social media messages and find specific features of discourses around a brand or a personality. Computational software not only assists in the efficient analysis of texts, but also allows us to tap into online databases and quickly process messages across

---

[2] Brand Analytics Website. URL: https://br-analytics.ru/ (accessed: 04.08.2020). (In Russ.)

numerous online media platforms. Brand Analytics is a partner of the Lomonosov Moscow State University.

Our research is designed as a two-step process. At the first stage we created a 'theme' in the Brand Analytics system choosing keywords which comprehensively describe the search query (Ksenia Sobchak), and then we verified the results in a trial mode. We also chose social platforms where the posts were published, the time period, and the language of the posts in the sample. As stated before, we used posts from five social media, the time period was March 2 — March 16, 2018, the language of the posts was Russian. After that we retrieved the sample. At the second stage we analyzed it using human-based coding (including tags).

To find the most popular topics of the discussion about Sobchak (RQ1) we performed discourse analysis of the sample and computer-assisted analysis of the most popular words (produced automatically by the Brand Analytics system). To determine how much the show business past has affected the discourse we manually selected most suitable topics and phrases from the sample and evaluated their popularity.

To answer RQ2 we employed Brand Analytics' tools which identify popular bloggers and celebrities in the sample by the following four parameters:
— user engagement;
— number of comments;
— page views;
— author's audience.

Then we found similarities and unique features of each group of bloggers.

In order to find whether there was gender bias or not in the framing of Ksenia Sobchak as a candidate (RQ3) we identified keywords (see Table 1) and used them for our search in the sample. To identify gender bias, we also employed the so-called deductive approach [Dan, Iorgoveanu, 2013] trying to find frames, which have been used in previous research of gender politics and seen in the way Russian media cover Ksenia Sobchak. One of these frames is the *trivialization frame*, which implies that the discussion focuses on the candidate's appearance, personal features, clothes and gender roles, rather than on the substance of the political statements of this or that politician [Trimble, Treiberg, 2010]. In other research papers the same constructs hold the name "sex-specific narrative frames" [Gidengil, Everitt, 2003], "gender frames" [Boomgaarden, Semetko, 2007], etc.

We made a hypothesis that users have the same gender stereotypes that are often manifested in the mass media. Researchers have identified that often a positive image of a Russian female politician is based on the idea that she is a wife, a housekeeper or/and an ornament of a party or a political team [Kashina, Dmistrokova, 2009]. If she does not match these roles, she usually is viewed as a bad politician, who cannot even stick to the basic gender roles. Besides, female politicians are also judged based on their relations with men [Kashina, Dmistrokova, 2009]. The attribution of typical feminine traits (kindness, sensitivity, warmth) to a female politician can also be viewed as a representation of gender bias [Huddy, Terkildsen, 1993]. If a woman does not possess these features, she is viewed as flawed and unworthy to run for any kind of office.

We relied on previous gender research in the Russian academic sphere, as Russia has a specific socio-cultural context when it comes to the representation of women politicians [Kashina, Dmistrokova, 2009; Balaluyeva, 2014; Balakina, Tovkes, 2019].

Based on the mentioned above assumptions, we identified key words (nouns and adjectives) used to describe a positive stereotyped image of a female politician and a negative stereotyped image (see Table 1). After conducting preliminary analysis of the sample, we added some more gender-specific words (see Table 1), which were typical when describing Ksenia Sobchak's appearance and behavior. They were taken from the sample during the preliminary analysis of the posts.

Table 1. **List of gender-specific words used in the study**

Positive	Negative
Good mother (хорошая мать)	Bad mother (плохая мать)
Good housekeeper (хорошая хозяйка)	Bad housekeeper (плохая хозяйка)
Stylish (стильная)	Ugly (некрасивая, страшная, уродливая, уродка)
Beautiful (красивая)	Prostitute (проститутка)
Standout (яркая)	Slut (шлюха, шалава)
Sensitive (чувствительная)	Girl (девочка)
Tender (нежная) Сочувствующая (compassionate) Понимающая (understanding)	Stupid woman (дура) Резкая/наглая/дерзкая (crusty/cheeky/nervy) Неуравновешенная (hotheaded) Скандалистка Блондинка/глупая блондинка (blondie, stupid blond woman) Баба (gal)

This study uses data collected from five leading social networks in Russia (VK, Odnoklassniki, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter). As mentioned above, the posts were collected using Brand Analytics platform. Each social network has specific features in the Russian context. Facebook is a site with a large audience aged 35+ (near 50 % of the users are in the age group 35—55+), which is politically active and has distinctive political preferences. VK is a social networking site mainly for Russian speaking users. The site has the largest share of youngsters (nearly 22.7 % of its users are in the age group 18—24, 17 % of the users are younger than 18). Odnoklassniki is a site popular among people living in smaller Russian cities. It has a large share of the audience over 50 years old. Instagram in Russia, as well as in other countries, is the fastest growing social networking site and has a large share of users under 30[3]. We deliberately selected several social networks in order to trace the way users with various backgrounds and socio-demographic characteristics reacted to Ksenia Sobchak's campaign. We excluded from the sample those posts, which represented spam and were not related to the election topic and used the hashtag #sobchak together with many other popular hashtags to gain traffic. For example, there were posts with commercial companies' advertising, which had nothing to do with the election campaign of Ksenia Sobchak.

---

[3] Social Media Statistics. *Brand Analytics*. URL: https://br-analytics.ru/statistics/author/ (accessed: 04.08.2020). (In Russ.)

The selected time slot was March 2 — March 16, 2018. We collected a sample of 147,472 posts in five social networking platforms. We have chosen two weeks before the election, at the end of the rally, because we believe that candidates made all decisive statements and users decided who to vote for by that time. Different time periods can provide different topics, but we believe that the trends are the same because our approach preserves semantic validity, a strength of human-based coding, while also being applicable to large datasets.

Ksenia Sobchak between show business and politics

Ksenia Sobchak's image is an interesting object of study for several reasons. First of all, she is a famous public figure in Russia, known for her TV show past[4]. Secondly, Sobchak is the daughter of Anatoly Sobchak[5], the former mayor of Saint Petersburg and a mentor to Vladimir Putin when he was in office at the city hall. Initially Sobchak started her career as an it-girl, anchoring a TV reality show called 'Dom 2' (House 2). The TV format of Dom 2 can be compared to Love Island, a British dating reality series aired on ITV. The show earned a scandalous reputation for the display of nudity and intimate scenes between the participants as well as for the obscene language used in it[6]. Later some representatives of the public were outraged by her personal show 'Blonde in Chocolate', where she appeared as a rich Russian young lady living a luxurious life and copying in many ways the American TV diva Paris Hilton[7].

Another stage of Ksenia Sobchak's career is connected with her work for the independent TV channel "Dozhd", which is famous for its liberal views and support for opposition leaders. Sobchak tried the role of an interviewer and held hard conversations with various politicians and opinion leaders. One of her most watched interviews was the one with the Russian oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky, former owner of the Yukos oil company. He was accused of embezzlement and held in prison for six years, however, some journalists and public figures saw him as a political prisoner, who was punished for having political ambitions in Russia[8]. The interview with Khodorkovsky, who had just left prison at the time, was viewed by many people, even those who did not represent a loyal Dozhd audience. Finally, Ksenia Sobchak supported the protests in Russia held after the Duma elections in 2011. In the public eye she tried to stick to the image of Vladimir Putin's opponent.

Ksenia Sobchak announced her desire to run for president in the 2018 election rather late, about five months before the date of the election. At first, she denied publicly her desire to join the presidential race, but then announced her decision to

---

[4] Bekbulatova T. (2017) Beautiful Art Project, Thrash, Stem. Taisia Bekbulatova Tells Political Story of Ksenia Sobchak. *Meduza*. November 21st. URL: https://meduza.io/feature/2017/11/21/prekrasnyy-art-proekt-tresh-steb (accessed: 04.08.2020).

[5] Biography. *Anatoly Sobchak: Official Website*. URL: http://sobchak.org/site/bio.html (accessed: 04.08.2020). (In Russ.)

[6] Sadchikov-jr. M. (2018) From "Dom-2" to Politics: Scandalous Stories from Ksenia Sobchak's Life. *StarHit Online Journal*. November 5th. URL: https://www.starhit.ru/novosti/iz-doma-2-v-politiku-skandalnyie-istorii-iz-jizni-ksenii-sobchak-155400 (accessed: 04.08.2020). (In Russ.)

[7] Vandysheva O. (2007) SIGNIFICANT! "Blondie in Chocolate" is Too Fond of Swearing. *KP.RU*. February 7th. URL: https://www.kp.ru/daily/23851/63072/ (accessed: 04.08.2020). (In Russ.)

[8] Walker S. (2016) Exiled oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky: I have no obligations to Putin. The Guardian. February 19th. URL: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/19/russia-oligarch-mikhail-khodorkovsky-no-obligations-vladimir-putin-pardon

enter the run-up[9]. The political establishment had mixed feelings about her candidacy. Some viewed her as a real oppositional candidate, some said she was a puppet in the election show approved by the Kremlin[10]. Sobchak tried to create an image of a new figure on the Russian political landscape, claiming to be a candidate 'against all'[11].

Sobchak was the only female candidate in the 2018 presidential election. There are only two other women who ran for president in the history of contemporary Russia apart from Sobchak. The first one is Ella Pamfilova, a human rights activist and currently the head of The Russian Electoral Commission, the second is Irina Khakamada, a liberal politician famous in the 1990s. The masculine and traditionalist nature of Russian politics is a well-known fact [Vartanova, Smirnova, Frolova, 2013], which was proved again with the results of an opinion poll held several months before the election. In October 2017 the Russian Centre for Public Opinion Research (VCIOM) published a report, showing that 38% of the respondents were ready to vote for only for a male president in Russia because presidency "is not women's business" and women have a "different mindset"[12].

There are some research articles or books focusing on Sobchak political activities. One of them is a book by M. Gabowitsch where Sobchak is mentioned along with a blogger and politician Alexey Navalny as those who became self-declared leaders of the protest in Russia in 2011—2012 [Gabowitsch, 2017]. Gabowitsch points out that Sobchak and Navalny are persons with good media skills and therefore they were able to define what the protest was about.

An interesting research project was conducted by a Russian scholar Elizaveta Gertner, who found transformations in the image of Ksenia Sobchak and her transition from a TV diva to a politician. As Gertner points out, at the beginning of her campaign Sobchak was viewed by the public as glitterati, but gradually people started paying attention to her political messages and taking her seriously [Gertner, 2018]. These changes were distinguished based on a content analysis of articles in the mass media retrieved from the analytical system *Integrum* during three periods: before, during and after the election. Another research paper devoted to Ksenia Sobchak and her image during the presidential campaign in 2018 is the one published by Lyudmila Voronova and Emile Edenborg from Sodertorn University (Sweden). The authors state that traditional media outlets used a lot of gender stereotypes when covering Sobchak [Voronova, Edenborg, 2019].

We should also note that the 2018 presidential campaign in Russia attracted some attention of media scholars, but the focus in the majority of the conducted studies was not placed on specific political figures, but on the features of political communication in general. Thus, S. Shomova studied the memes, which were used during the political campaign in 2018 by different internet users. She described the candidates

---

[9] Gershkovich E. (2017) Ksenia Sobchak, Russia's Star Presidential Candidate, Will Be Heard. *The Moscow Times*. October 26th. URL: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2017/10/26/ksenia-sobchak-russias-star-presidential-candidate-a59377 (accessed: 04.08.2020).

[10] Ibidem.

[11] Ibidem.

[12] The Survey Showed the Percentage of Russians Who are Willing to Elect Only a Woman President. *RIA Novosti*. 2017. October 26th. URL: https://ria.ru/20171026/1507584793.html (accessed: 04.08.2020). (In Russ.)

running for president and noted that this campaign was different from previous ones as it included more memes and activity in social networks, which might be due to the fact that millennials joined the electorate for the first time and their digital culture was taken into account when constructing the images of different politicians [Shomova, 2019]. Besides, Shomova notes that Sobchak was an object of memes not so often as her counterparts in the presidential race. However, the memes were mostly connected with her past as a host in the TV show Dom 2 (House 2) and her previous controversial photoshoots published in men's erotic magazines [Ibidem].

Another interesting scholarly article sheds light on the way metaphors are used in anecdotes about Ksenia Sobchak during the run up period in the 2018 election [Kondratieva, 2019]. This paper is rather an exception, as the interest of most researchers during and after the election campaign was not focused on Sobchak, as we mentioned before. The author found out that in most anecdotes the image of Sobchak was negative and there were a lot of unpleasant remarks regarding her appearance and her background (being a daughter of a former governor, participating in scandalous shows, leading a lifestyle of an it-girl). As Kondratieva notes, the writers of these anecdotes mocked Ksenia Sobchak for her desire to become a serious politician as her previous career contradicted the image of a trustworthy and authoritative presidential candidate.

Main findings
Popular topics

Using the Brand Analytics platform to form the data, we found two main groups of topics within the sample:
1) scandals around Sobchak's political declarations and activities during the presidential bid (group 1);
2) Sobchak's previous show business activities and controversial statements (group 2).

The most discussed topic (group 1) was a TV-debate, during which the leader of the LDPR State Duma party (formerly called Liberal Democrats Party of Russia [13]) Vladimir Zhirinovsky called Ksenia Sobchak "*stupid woman*" emphasizing her gender, after that she threw water in his face. Many users criticized Sobchak for her lack of control, but there were also others who supported her and accused Zhirinovsky of insulting the only female candidate.

The name of Zhirinovsky is one of the most mentioned in the sample (72.8 thousand posts) after the name of Sobchak and The Russian President Vladimir Putin, for example:

> *Zhirinovsky wants to cancel school Uniform state exam, Sobchak wants to cancel the school uniform. Imagine, if we combine them, it will be a cool president of the Russian Federation.*
> (The audience of the post in the VK group was 1,5 million people)

---

[13] Subbotina S., Dergachev V. (2012) The LDPR has Ceased to Be Liberal-Democratic. *Izvestia*. December 12th. URL: https://iz.ru/news/541314 (accessed: 04.08.2020). (In Russ.)

Vladimir Zhirinovsky continues the war with Ksenia Sobchak. This time he said that when he wins the election, the next day he'll put her in a mental institution. (The audience of the post on Instagram was 960 thousand users)

Zhirinovsky is well known in Russia for his clownish behavior and provocative announcements[14]. Zhirinovsky is usually the most controversial participant of the election campaign, so it is no surprise that his statements are actively discussed in social media.

The other politician who was mentioned along with Sobchak was Alexey Navalny (15.6 thousand mentions), the leader of the non-system opposition in Russia. He could not take part in the bid because of a prison term but he supported Sobchak. The attitude towards Navalny partly determined the perception of Sobchak: *"she is as schizophrenic as Navalny"*, *"Sobchak and Navalny, go to the USA, your friends are waiting for you"*, *"Navalny and Sobchak are a Kremlin project"*, *"Sobchak, Navalny, and other scum"*, etc.

The next popular topic (group 1) is Sobchak's provocative political declaration about Crimea's annexation. She asked the Ukrainian officials for permission to enter Crimea through the territory of Ukraine to run the election campaign. She did not get the permission and was criticized both by the officials in Kyiv and by Russian politicians. The head of the Ukrainian Foreign Office Pavel Klimkin commented on Sobchak's request on Twitter: *"I am often asked about Sobchak and occupied Crimea. It is, of course, positive to adhere to the Ukrainian legislation to enter occupied Crimea. But the legal entry to conduct an illegitimate campaign for illegitimate elections on the occupied territory is definitely political schizophrenia,"*. His post was shared more than eight thousand times. The press secretary of the Russian Foreign Ministry Maria Zakharova, who is very active in social media, also commented on this case, as well as the State Duma deputy Natalia Poklonskaya, who was born in Crimea. A very well-known patriotic journalist Maxim Shevchenko mentioned that Sobchak "*has made a sharp 180-degree turn*" when she first backed the accession of Crimea and then claimed she was against it.

Sobchak's private life and her family (group 2) including the mentioning of her then husband, her mother, her son, and her father, who was a Mayor of Saint-Petersburg in the 1990-s, were also discussed actively in connection with her previous controversial statements. In 2016, Sobchak called little children "cripples and small jerks" and argued that wouldn't readjust her schedule because of a child[15]. More than 500 authors reminded her these words in connection with her motherhood at present (in 2016, she said she wouldn't have children). They used this situation to show that Sobchak changes her opinion depending on the situation.

The next place in the list of topics is occupied by the hooligan attack on Sobchak by Dzutsev (group 1), the personal assistant to the Moscow City Duma Chairman Shaposhnikov, who wanted revenge for the incident with Zhirinovsky (group 1, more than 2 thousand mentions). The attack was taken when Sobchak entered the Petrovsky

---

[14] Loshak V. (2018) "The Circus Needs New Clowns". *Kommersant FM*. March 22nd. URL: https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3579929 (accessed: 04.08.2020). (In Russ.)

[15] Panyukov M. (2016) "I Don't Care if There are Kids Here!" Sobchak Remembered her Boorish Behavior Before Motherhood. *Express Gazeta*. November 18th. URL: https://www.eg.ru/showbusiness/58739/ (accessed: 04.08.2020). (In Russ.)

Palace in Moscow to wish a happy birthday to the last Soviet President Gorbachev. Dzutsev threw water in Sobchak's face screaming *That's for Zhirinovsky!*" Most users and groups just mention the incident without any moral sense, nevertheless, we see again that scandals accompany the election campaign of Sobchak.

The next group of topics is devoted to discussions of Sobchak's previous media jobs (group 2) including her involvement in the scandalous TV shows *Dom-2* (599 mentions) and *A blondie in chocolate* (1680 mentions). The discussion is mostly critical: "for me, she's still the host of *Dom-2*", "the whole country has already been turned into *Dom-2*", "she turned the political debate into *Dom-2*" and so on. But there were users who considered *Dom-2* just as a job: "When Sobchak put forward her candidacy, most people were skeptical about it. A woman in politics, "Dom-2", a prostitute, etc… But like no one else she showed all the political darkness that was so carefully concealed and conspired by the "*important people*". The peak for me personally was the TV debate with Zhirinovsky…"

We should note that there can be an overlap between the topics in the sample, therefore posts can be included in different thematic groups.

To define the thematic landscape of the discussion in more detail we also analyzed the most frequently used words. As a result, we managed to confirm some of the earlier findings and found new topics.
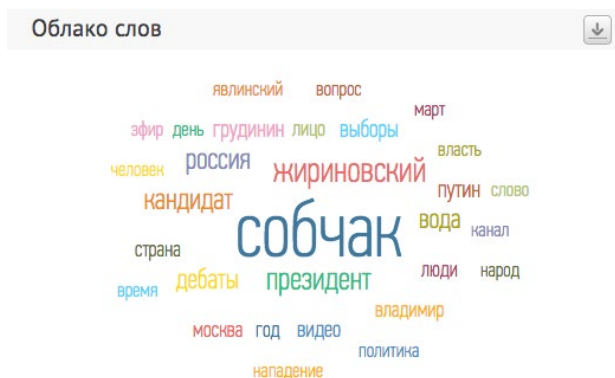

Fig. 1. Word cloud for the first period

To identify the most frequently used words, we divided the sample into 3 periods: March 2—6, 7—11, and 12—16 as *Brand Analytics* system is not capable of processing the whole amount of publications at once.

In the first period March 2—6, 2018, a significant share of the word cloud consisted of neutral words describing the presidential bid as a whole with some specific words:
— names of candidates,
— nouns connected with the election process ("*president*", "*election*", "*candidate*", "*Russia*"),
— nouns connected with the TV-debates ("*debates*", "*air*", "*channel*", "*question*", "*water*").

— the only exception is an indication of a hooligan attack on Sobchak.

During the second period (March 7—11, 2018) the fastest growing leader-words were *"the Crimea"*, *"Ukraine"*, *"permission"*, *"request"*, and *"territory"*. All those words were associated with the provocative political act of Sobchak to enter Crimea through the territory of Ukraine to run the election campaign.

During the last period (March 12—16) the fastest growth leader-word was "a *loser*". It became popular after Ksenia Sobchak met Vladimir Zhirinovsky during the TV-debates one more time. Zhirinovsky brought the book *The Encyclopedia of a Loser* written by Sobchak in 2010. *"For 18 years people have chosen the same political regime, not understanding what all this results in, so who else are they if not losers?"* — commented Sobchak. She claimed that elections in Russia are similar to the work of a casino, where its owner always remains the winner. This declaration was reposted many times in social media; lots of people considered themselves insulted and hurried to criticize Sobchak.

The word "*campaign office*" was also among the fastest growing leader-words. Two scandals were the reason for its popularity. First, the head of Sobchak's campaign office in the Chuvashia region and journalist Daria Komarova made an incriminating post on Facebook accusing a well-known Russian film director Govorukhin of a sexual harassment. Komarova wrote that Govorukhin who was head of Putin's election team in 2012 offered her to spend a night with him in exchange for the opportunity to play a role in his film. The other scandal was about secret correspondence published on Facebook. Timur Valeev, director of the election office of Sobchak and concurrently executive director of the Open Russia Civic Movement, wrote a letter to Yury Kanygin, director of the Pskov department of the former oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky's foundation. Valeev instructed Kanygin how to interact with the opposition and told a story about budgets allocated for stuffing with scam ballots and other provocations during the voting. Therefore, we see that scandals are attracting the attention of the public in social media.

We can conclude that the show business past of Sobchak represent a significant part of the discourse and to a large extent defines the perception of Sobchak as a presidential candidate. Due to her participation in two scandalous and low-brow TV shows and especially in "Dom 2" the audience still sneers at Sobchak and perceives these shows as a way of her life rather than just as her work.

Key personalities of the discussion

The Brand Analytics system identifies popular bloggers and celebrities who frame the discussion about Sobchak by the following four parameters:
— user engagement
— number of comments
— page views
— author's audience.

The statistics includes not only posts but comments and reposts as well. We excluded comments and reposts from our study because they are often used for paid promotion of candidates or any other business or political ideas. We wanted to find original authors who are real content creators.

We should also note that we excluded from the analysis posts where the name of Sobchak is mentioned casually, and the main topic is not connected neither with the subject of the elections, nor with the candidates. In particular, this refers to the publications made by popular bloggers: they were included in the sample due to the great engagement of the audience but did not influence the discussion.

The top platform *by user engagement* (comments, share, and reposts) turned out to be Instagram. The most popular post was published by the State Duma deputy, actress, and blogger Maria Kozhevnikova, on March 4. Although Kozhevnikova is a political figure, we can consider her a blogger: she creates professional content for Instagram and uses it to earn money from advertising. Her post about Sobchak received 47.4 thousand likes and 2 thousand comments. The audience of the post was 2.2 million people. Kozhevnikova criticizes Sobchak for insulting her in public. In the early 2010's Kozhevnikova played the role of a narrow-minded young woman in the youth TV-show "Univer", of which Sobchak once reminded her and claimed she was not intelligent enough to be a member of the state Duma. Kozhevnikova denied Sobchak the right to run for president because Sobchak had her own TV-show where she made many controversial statements. However, in general, Kozhevnikova argues that she would have willingly supported a female candidate if this had not been Sobchak:

> I don't support Sobchak not because she is an actress, as it's written above, and not because she insulted me and tried to humiliate me publicly when I was elected as a deputy, and at the same time she was, as she said herself, a journalist who, in my opinion, has no right to descend to that level. Not because she was hinting at "Allochka" and my "famous" surname, although it was just surreal when a person told us about morality, a person who worked under her own surname and showed the whole country all her worldview in her own show, please note, not in the movies, where there are fictional characters and a certain genre <…> I would be happy to support women, but in this case, when a woman herself insulted, humiliated, ruffled, suggested that children should die, … she faced what she had sowed, save me from it, I won't participate in this circus and I don't advise you. Working for the Duma, I support women and fight for the increase of maternity benefits, allowances for children under 3 years of age, for queues in kindergartens from 1.5 years of age, to fight for the rights and opportunities, for quality food, to work further on children's broadcasting, education, and availability of sports and more importantly — free medical care, and not only now, I did it in the Duma, my colleagues will confirm it.

The post of Kozhevnikova influenced the discussion around Sobchak's campaign. We have found 250 accounts on Instagram, VK, Facebook and Odnoklassniki which reposted the original post in whole or in part, sometimes rewriting it and adding comments, thus, forming negative public opinion around Sobchak as a presidential candidate.

The next post was made by the user *Sergey Kalyuzhnyi* on Instagram, the post gathered 9.5 likes and 515 comments. Although the author shared the values of Sobchak, he argued that there was no reason to vote because there was only one candidate who can really win the elections — Putin.

The other user *Blinovskaya* (her post had 11.2 likes and 338 comments) is also loyal to Sobchak but not ready to vote for her: *"…she grew up in this environment.*

Everything that happens is natural to her <…> To throw a glass of water at Zhirinovsky is like hitting your friend over the head with a spade in a sandpit".
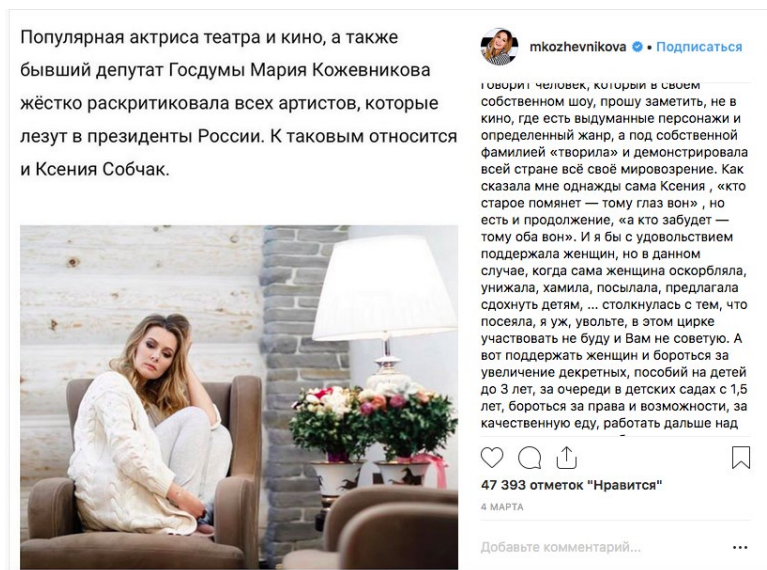

Fig. 2. Kozhevnikova's post on Instagram

A great amount of popular accounts by user engagement (1.5 thousand) discuss the scandalous meeting of Sobchak and Zhirinovsky on TV (e.g. *Rifmi i Panchi* channel, 13,5 likes and 16 comments).

There is an overlap between the most popular posts *by number of comments* with the one from the previous group, we see that users actively comment on topics about the election race and voting.
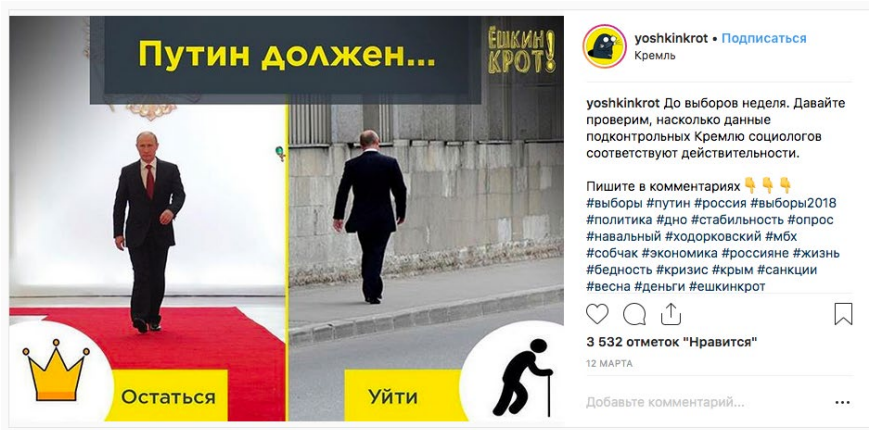

Fig. 3. Yoshkin krot's post on Instagram

The first one was published by the user *Yoshkin Krot* (3677 comments) who proposed to take part in a virtual poll insisting that Kremlin sociologists do not show real results of the voting. Such posts traditionally have a high virality potential in the Russian segment of the Internet. In 2012, the most popular post among the Russian mass media was created in the VK by the Internet media outlet *Lenta.ru* asking subscribers to vote for the candidate for Russian Presidency-2012. Three million people took part in that poll. *Yoshkin Krot* has a clear anti-Putin position, which he actively promotes. In one of the posts he published a very popular video about "*Five main reasons not to vote for Putin*" (1477 comments). That video is very well assembled and structured.

Maria Kozhevnikova's post on Instagram takes the second place.

Another online voting ranks third and was published in the account of the Russian TV-show "*School of Renovation*": "*Would you like to see Sobchak as Russia's leader?*" (1674 comments).

The post of the user *Feodorit Sergey Senchukov* on Facebook gathered 678 comments. *Feodorit* explained why he would vote for Sobchak, as Putin was an "*international criminal*" and Vladimir Zhirinovsky and Grigoriy Yavlinsky, the leader of the liberal Yabloko party, were "*a couple of elderly clowns*".

Statistics *by page view* is only available for VK, Telegram, YouTube, and video posts on Odnoklasskini and Instagram. We have found that posts with the highest page view rates were published in Odnoklassniki which now heavily invests in the development of video content and live broadcasts. The most popular video in the group was published by the popular video blogger *Max Maximov* and received 11.1 million page views. *Maximov* found provocative quotes of Sobchak and assembled the video.

Another popular blogger *Oleg Basovich* did the same: he compared some previous remarks made by Sobchak with her rhetoric during the election campaign and concluded she was a hypocrite.

The most popular posts *by audience reach* (a number of followers at the moment of writing the post) were published in VK public pages because they are very popular among Russian-speaking users. The leading post was distributed through the page "*Ya tebya lyublyu*" (*I Love You*) with 6.2 million subscribers. "*There are many smart, strong, and worthy women in Russia. Ksenia Sobchak encourages women to fight sexism, domestic violence, and gender discrimination.*" Many other posts in the group repeat this rhetoric and even the exact text.

The third, fourth and fifth posts were published in the public page *Pozor* (*Shame*) with 3.7 million subscribers. The typical content includes political jokes, e. g.: "*This morning I was drinking tea when my dad asked me: whom are you going to vote for? I said "for Sobchak" just for fun, and nothing else to remember…*" Or: "*Today there was a rally on the square and people shouted: "Vote for dogs ("sobak" in Russian — authors' note)! They shouted and waved posters until someone corrected them "For Sobchak*".

Gender bias

When the list of gender-charged words was finalized, we analyzed the sample to identify usage patterns. As we found out, the first frame is associated with traditional female roles. Firstly, we verified gender-charged words with positive connotations mentioned above in the "Research questions" section. We see that users don't identify

Sobchak as a "good mother" or a "good housekeeper", even as a "beautiful" or "stylish" woman. In contrast, users mentioned that she once said that she "hated children" (70 times) ("previously Sobchak said that she hated children and then she gave birth"). The love to children is typically associated with a traditional concept of a woman and is also connected with gender roles.

Users often call Sobchak *a prostitute* (appr. 1100 times, e. x. "a prostitute from Leningrad") and use other gender-specific expressions which describe her as a *slut* (appr. 450 times):

— *It's right not to let this slut into Crimea. This slut has to be sent from Russia to Antarctica to the penguins.*
— *An ordinary rich slut.*

Secondly, we found that the word "woman" is used in the sample 1440 times both with positive and negative meanings, for example:

— *In 18 years Ksenia Anatolievna has turned from a woman with low social responsibility into a presidential candidate*
— *Is Sobchak a woman? She is a product of "Dom 2"!*
— *Did you want a woman-president? Get a puppet candidate with brilliant PR who says everything you want to hear with an empathetic look*
— *In my opinion, Sobchak is a very competent, wise woman and a worthy candidate.*

These examples show that, first of all users consider Sobchak as a woman with different skills and behavioural patterns but not as a politician. Social media users also describe Sobchak as a "girl" (240 times) which we see as a derogatory definition of a politician:

— *Oh, it's going to be a long way for a girl from a family of St. Petersburg intellectuals to the political stardom.*
— *She's a smart woman, but the girl was born with a gold spoon in her mouth.*
— *Zhirinovsky called Sobchak a "girl from the street" who "has never run anything".* (on Odnoklassniki)

Furthermore, social media users called Sobchak a "stupid woman" ("дура" in Russian) 2400 times *("she is a stupid woman from birth", "was a stupid woman once again", "who writes instructions to this stupid woman")*. The word "дура" (stupid woman) in Russian has a specific gender-charged connotation, as it refers to the gender asymmetric concepts, where some traits are considered to be purely masculine and women are devoid of them. For example, there is a gender stereotype that women are less intelligent than men, which is manifested in some idiomatic sayings and proverbs in the Russian language (i. e. "все бабы дуры", which means literally "all women are fools") [Knizhnikova, 2011]. That is why we decided to include this word in the list of gender-charged terms, as it implies a specific reference the authors of the posts make to emphasize their view of women's intellectual abilities.

This frame also has another dimension. Male politicians and opinion leaders do not see Sobchak as a real opponent, as she is a woman (for example, the case with Zhirinovsky shows that). A. Myasnikov, medical director of the hospital in Moscow and authorized representative of Vladimir Putin as a Presidential candidate, published a post on his Instagram account (5088 likes and 1504 comments) arguing that Putin does not have any real competitors: "*Putin has come to his full strength, there are no such leaders on the planet anymore! He is really the World Champion!*" Along with that in the same post Sobchak is treated not as a politician but is derided in a joke: "*Does anyone like the priest, the priest's wife, or his daughter?! (and does someone even like Sobchak?!)*"

Political analyst and famous Russian pro-government journalist V. Tretyakov also tried to reproach Sobchak for not paying attention to her political program and preferring to play with words: "*Three days ago, on a garbage dump, Sobchak swore she loved people. And she even called them smart. And today she called them losers. Still, she looks and talks better on the garbage dump.*"

The second frame is concentration on appearance, not on political statements and actions of the candidate, it is also a typical manifestation of gender bias as well as using gender stereotypes. For example, a public page called Ofigenno (Cool), which has nearly 2.3 mln subscribers, published a post trying to track changes in Sobchak's style and her clothing preferences over the last 20 years. They defined her style changes as "from slutty dresses to granny clothes". This post is only one manifestation of the focus on Sobchak's appearance, however, such frames in the sample appear very often. Users discuss Sobchak's appearance ("*we are sure that Ksenia didn't go without the injections with botulinum toxin and fillers*", "*look at how much her appearance has changed*", "*she is a long way from being beautiful*", etc.). But there are users who criticize others for judging people by their appearance: "*Those who give negative feedback on Ksenia Sobchak, including her appearance, are often paid trolls… are you all Alain Delon yourselves?*"

Social media users in the sample also called Sobchak "Ksyushad" (372 times). This word was created as a mix of two Russian words: the name "Ksenia" and the word "loshad" (a horse), it is insulting, highlighting her unappealing appearance and gender.

Conclusion

First, we have found that users view Sobchak mostly as a media personality, not as a serious politician. The main topics (RQ1) in our sample are connected with various scandals: the first group is associated with Sobchak's activities and declarations during the election campaign; the second group is associated with previous activities in show business and provocative statements she made over the years of her career. Her scandalous behavior in the past has a negative impact on her political and social activities. Her background had an impact on her public image, from which she could not disconnect.

Secondly, we have found how professional bloggers and celebrities framed the discussion about Sobchak. The most influential blogger in the sample is Maria Kozhevnikova, the State Duma deputy and the actress in the near past. We see that she exploits political themes to expand her audience and to create hype using popular

public figures. The emphasis on self-promotion is especially noticeable on Instagram, where bloggers illustrate political posts with photos of themselves, which are not relevant to the discourse.

There are popular bloggers who are more concentrated on political issues, a part of them support Sobchak, others are pro-Putin, and this fact determines the attitude towards Sobchak.

Thirdly, we found that the gender component appears in the texts in different ways. The discourse was partly built around Sobchak's personal life and appearance, and this can indicate gender bias. We also see some insulting gender-specific words when users criticized Sobchak. Besides, our study shows that Sobchak's political male counterparts don't take her seriously, preferring to mock her.

Another dataset, which may be analyzed, comprises comments to popular posts. They are distinguished by free speech and are not strictly connected with the topic. These comments can contain new useful information. The way this information can influence the discussion is not that easy to figure out. However, the active participation of users in comments testifies that the exchange of opinions represents a significant part of the political discussion where the electorate formulates its preferences. Unfortunately, it is much more difficult to analyze comments than posts due to some technical limitations. We hope to achieve these goals during the second stage of the current research.

Список литературы (References)

Arlt D., Rauchfleisch A., Schäfer M. S. (2019) Between Fragmentation and Dialogue. Twitter Communities and Political Debate About the Swiss "Nuclear Withdrawal Initiative". *Environmental Communication.* Vol. 13. No. 4. P. 440—456. https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2018.1430600.

Balakina J. V., Tovkes M. Yu. (2019) Linguistic Means of Constructing the Image of a Female-Politician (on the Example of the Microblog Twitter). *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. Language and Literature*. Vol. 16. No. 3. P. 381—399. https://doi.org/10.21638/spbu09.2019.304. (In Russ.)
Балакина Ю. В., Товкес М. Ю. Лингвистические средства конструирования образа женщины-политика (на материале микроблога Твиттер) // Вестник Санкт-Петербургского университета. Язык и литература. Т. 16. № 3. С. 381—399. https://doi.org/10.21638/spbu09.2019.304.

Balaluyeva I. A. (2014) Media Image of Women and Development of Gender Discourse in the Russian Press. *Humanities, Social-Economic and Social Sciences*. P. 26—32. (In Russ.)
Балалуева И. А. Медиаобраз женщины и развитие гендерного дискурса в современных российских федеральных газетах // Гуманитарные, социально-экономические и общественные науки. 2014. № 12—1. С. 26—32.

Banwart M. C. (2010) Gender and Candidate Communication: Effects of Stereotypes in the 2008 Election. *American Behavioral Scientist.* Vol. 54. No. 3. P. 265—283. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764210381702.

Bleiker R. (2015). Pluralist Methods for Visual Global Politics. *Millennium*, *43*(3), 872—890. https://doi.org/10.1177/0305829815583084

Blumler J. G. (2019) A Fresh Perspective on Politicians and the Media. *Political Communication.* Vol. 36. No. 1. P. 190—194. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2018.1548413.

Boomgaarden H. G., Semetko H. A. (2007) Duell Mann gegen Frau?! Geschlechterrollen und Kanzlerkandidaten in der Wahlkampfberichterstattung. In: Brettschneider F., Niedermayer O., Weßels B. (eds.) *Die Bundestagswahl 2005. Analysen des Wahlkampfes und der Wahlergebnisse.* Wiesbaden, Germany: VS Verlag. P. 171—196. (In German).

Bruns A., Liang Y. E. (2012) Tools and Methods for Capturing Twitter Data during Natural Disasters. *First Monday.* Vol. 17. No. 4. https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v17i4.3937.

Bruns A., Highfield T. (2013) Political Networks on Twitter: Tweeting the Queensland State Election. *Information, Communication & Society.* Vol. 16. No. 5. P. 667—691. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2013.782328.

Cogburn D. L., Espinoza-Vasquez F. K. (2011) From Networked Nominee to Networked Nation: Examining the Impact of Web 2.0 and Social Media on Political Participation and Civic Engagement in the 2008 Obama Campaign. *Journal of Political Marketing.* Vol. 10. No. 1—2. P. 189—213. https://doi.org/10.1080/15377857.2011.540224.

Dan V., Iorgoveanu A. (2013) Still on the Beaten Path: How Gender Impacted the Coverage of Male and Female Romanian Candidates for European Office. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*. Vol. 18. No. 2. P. 208—233. https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161212473508.

Dean J. (2019) Sorted for Memes and Gifs: Visual Media and Everyday Digital Politics. *Political Studies Review.* Vol. 17. No. 3. P. 255—266. http://doi.org/10.1177/1478929918807483.

Dunaway J., Lawrence R. G., Rose M., Weber C. R. (2013) Traits versus Issues: How Female Candidates Shape Coverage of Senate and Gubernatorial Races. *Political Research Quarterly.* Vol. 66. No. 3. P. 715—726. https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912913491464.

Eagly A. H., Karau S. J. (2002) Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice Toward Female Leaders. *Psychological Review*. Vol. 109. No. 3. P. 573—598. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.109.3.573.

Filimonov K., Russmann U., Svensson J. (2016) Picturing the Party: Instagram and Party Campaigning in the 2014 Swedish Elections. *Social Media + Society.* Vol. 2. No. 3. P. 1—11. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116662179.

Gabowitsch M. (2017) Protest in Putin's Russia. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Galai Y. (2019). The victory image: Imaging Israeli warfighting from Lebanon to Gaza. *Security Dialogue*, *50*(4), 295—313. https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010619835365.

Gertner E. V. (2018) Exposition of the Pre-Election Campaign 2018: Gender Component. *Political Linguistics*. No. 2. P. 40—44. (In Russ.)
Гертнер Е. В. Экспозиция предвыборной кампании — 2018: гендерная составляющая // Политическая лингвистика. № 2. С. 40—44.

Gibson R. K. (2015) Party Change, Social Media and the Rise of 'Citizen-Initiated' Campaigning. *Party Politics.* Vol. 21. No. 2. P. 183—197. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068812472575.

Gidengil E., Everitt J. (2003) Talking Tough: Gender and Reported Speech in Campaign News Coverage. *Political Communication.* Vol. 20. No. 3. P. 209—232. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600390218869.

Gustafsson N. (2012) The Subtle Nature of Facebook Politics: Swedish Social Network Site Users and Political Participation. *New Media & Society*. Vol. 14. No. 7. P. 1111—1127. https://doi.org/10.1177/2F1461444812439551.

Huddy L., Terkildsen N. (1993) Gender Stereotypes and the Perception of Male and Female Candidates. *American Journal of Political Science.* Vol. 37. No. 1. P. 119—147. https://doi.org/10.2307/2111526.

Karlsen R. (2015) Followers are Opinion Leaders: The Role of People in the Flow of Political Communication on and Beyond Social Networking Sites. *European Journal of Communication.* Vol. 30. No. 3. P. 301—318. https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323115577305.

Kashina M. A., Dmistrokova E. V. (2009) The Image of a Politician in Russian Mass Media: Gender Aspect. *Administrative Consulting*. No. 3. P. 122—136. (In Russ.)
Кашина М. А., Дмистрокова Е. В. Образ политика в российских СМИ: гендерный аспект // Управленческое консультирование. № 3. С. 122—136.

Knizhnikova Z. O. (2011) Gender Stereotyping in Language and Culture. *Journal of Historical, Philological and Cultural Studies*. No. 1. P. 261—266. (In Russ.)
Книжникова З. О. Гендерная стереотипизация личности в языке и культуре // Проблемы истории, филологии и культуры. № 1. С. 261—266.

Kondratieva O. N. (2019) Specific features of using conceptual metaphors in a cycle of political anecdotes (based on the case study of anecdotes used during the campaign of Ksenia Sobchak in the Presidential election in the Russian Federation). Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Filologia. No. 60. P. 28—44.
Кондратьева О. Н. Особенности развертывания концептуальной метафоры в цикле политических анекдотов (на материале анекдотов о баллотировании Ксении Собчак на пост президента Российской Федерации) // Вестник Томского государственного университета. Филология. 2019. № 60. С. 28—44.

Lawrence R. G., Rose M. (2009) Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House: Gender Politics and the Media on the Campaign Trail. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

Lesnic-Alujevic L., van Bauwel S. (2014) YouTube: A Political Advertising Tool? A Case Study of the Use of YouTube in the Campaign for the European Parliament Elections 2009.

Journal of Political Marketing. Vol. 13. No. 3. P. 195—212. https://doi.org/10.1080/15377857.2014.929886.

Macnamara J., Kenning G. (2014) E-Electioneering 2007—13: Trends in Online Political Campaigns over Three Elections. *Media International Australia*. Vol. 152. No. 1. P. 57—74. https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X1415200107.

Muñoz C. L., Towner T. L. (2017) The Image is the Message: Instagram Marketing and the 2016 Presidential Primary Season. *Journal of Political Marketing*. Vol. 16. No. 3—4. P. 290—318. https://doi.org/10.1080/15377857.2017.1334254.

Orgad S. (2013). Visualizers of solidarity: organizational politics in humanitarian and international development NGOs. *Visual Communication*, *12*(3), 295—314. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357213483057

O'Neill D., Savigny H., Cann V. (2016) Women Politicians in the UK Press: not Seen and not Heard? *Feminist Media Studies.* Vol. 16. No. 2. P. 293—307. https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2015.1092458.

Puwar N. (2004) Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies Out of Place. Oxford; New York, NY: Berg.

Rheault L., Rayment E., Musulan A. (2019) Politicians in the Line of Fire: Incivility and the Treatment of Women on Social Media. *Research & Politics*. Vol. 6. No. 1. https://doi.org/10.1177/2053168018816228.

Rudman L. A., Phelan J. E. (2008) Backlash Effects for Disconfirming Gender Stereotypes in Organizations. *Research in Organizational Behavior*. Vol. 28. P. 61—79. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.riob.2008.04.003.

Sheeler K. H., Anderson K. V. (2013) Woman President: Confronting Postfeminist Political Culture. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press.

Shomova S. (2019) 2018 Russian Presidential Elections in the Mirror if Memes: New Realities of Political Communications. *Polis. Political Studies*. No. 3. P. 157—173. https://doi.org/10.17976/jpps/2019.03.10. (In Russ.)
Шомова С. Выборы президента РФ — 2018 в зеркале мемов: новые реалии политической коммуникативистики // Полис. Политические исследования. 2019. № 3. С. 157—173. https://doi.org/10.17976/jpps/2019.03.10.

Stier S., Bleier A., Lietz H., Strohmaier M. (2018) Election Campaigning on Social Media: Politicians, Audiences, and the Mediation of Political Communication on Facebook and Twitter. *Political Communication*. Vol. 35. No. 1. P. 50—74. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2017.1334728.

Strandberg K. (2013) A Social Media Revolution or Just a Case of History Repeating Itself? The Use of Social Media in the 2011 Finnish Parliamentary Elections. *New Media & Society*. Vol. 15. No. 8. P. 1329—1347. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444812470612.

Trimble L., Treiberg N. (2010) "Either Way, There's Going to Be a Man in Charge": Media Representations of New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark. In: Murray R. (ed.)

Cracking the Highest Glass Ceiling: A Global Comparison of Women's Campaigns for Executive Office. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger. P. 116—136.

Vaccari C., Valeriani A. (2016) Party Campaigners or Citizen Campaigners? How Social Media Deepen and Broaden Party-Related Engagement. *The International Journal of Press/Politics.* Vol. 21. No. 3. P. 294—312. https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161216642152.

Vartanova E. L., Smirnova O. V., Frolova T. I. (2013) Women in Russian Politics: the Media Show Where Gender Equality Comes from. *Theoretical and Practical Issues of Journalism*. No. 1. P. 49—63. (In Russ.)
Вартанова Е. Л., Смирнова О. В., Фролова Т. И. Женщины в российской политике: СМИ показали откуда придет гендерное равенство // Вопросы теории и практики журналистики. № 1. С. 49—63.

Velasquez A. (2012) Social Media and Online Political Discussion: The Effect of Cues and Informational Cascades on Participation in Online Political Communities. *New Media & Society.* Vol. 14. No. 8. P. 1286—1303. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444812445877.

Vergeer M. (2017) Adopting, Networking, and Communicating on Twitter: A Cross-National Comparative Analysis. *Social Science Computer Review*. Vol. 35. No. 6. P. 698—712. https://doi.org/10.1177/0894439316672826.

Vochocová L. (2018) Witty Divas, Nice Mothers and Tough Girls in a Sexist World: Experiences and Strategies of Female Influencers in Online Political Debates. *Media, Culture and Society*. Vol. 40. No. 4. P. 535—550. https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443717729211.

Voronova L., Edenborg E. (2019) Ksenia Sobchak and the Visibility of Female Politicians in the Russian Public Sphere. *Baltic Worlds*. Vol. 12. No. 1. P. 28—32.

Williams C. B., Gulati G. J. (2012) Social Networks in Political Campaigns: Facebook and the Congressional Elections of 2006 and 2008. *New Media & Society*. Vol. 15. No. 1. P. 52—71. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444812457332.