

**ŁUKASZ PRZYBYSZ**

*Political Communication in the 2010 Presidential Election*

**KEY WORDS**

elections, president, political communication, media, voter behaviour, election strategies

**ABSTRACT**

Problems raised in this article concern the past elections of the Polish president. Out of necessity of executing them within the constitutional time limit after the death of Lech Kaczyński in the plane crash near Smolensk and his brother standing for the presidency, a precedent in the history of Poland can be discussed. Owing to those above, the campaign gave opportunity to analyses on the fields of political science, as well as communication or even sociology. The passing of the president in office extorted a so far unknown means of election struggle management and intensified the action rate. Modern methods of political communication were applied, such as new media, non-trite events or change in the attitude to election advertising. The author tries to indicate the fields of using contemporary methods of political communication with their simultaneous evaluation with reference to the three leading candidates: Bronisław Komorowski, Jarosław Kaczyński and Grzegorz Napieralski.

Activities carried out during election campaigns in democratic countries are similar to each other and they come down to a general pattern. Individual communication may, of course, differ but the goal is always the same – to win the election. In order to do so what is applied are election marketing and political mechanisms, as well as political public relations and integrated political communication mechanisms<sup>1</sup>. Even though the 2010 presidential elections in Poland took place under specific circumstances (after the tragic death of president Lech Kaczyński), what was modified in the election campaign were only the emphases, the composition of means and most of all the contents but not the election system itself. Therefore it is an interesting research case, which justifies analysing its solutions. The goal of the paper is to assess the communication activities of Bronisław Komorowski, Jarosław Kaczyński and Grzegorz Napieralski – the three main presidential candidates.

---

<sup>1</sup> Vide: Ł. Przybysz, *Zintegrowane komunikowanie polityczne – próba redefiniowania marketingu politycznego*. "Studia Medioznawcze" 2009, No. 4, p. 87–92.

## Communication and politics

There is no agreement among researchers for the definition of the term political communication, nor even regarding the terminology of mechanisms applied between politics and the citizens. Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska suggested a model emphasising mass media and reciprocity: “Political communication is a process [...] in which the goal is to publically broadcast and exchange information on politics between political actors making politics and the citizens whom the policy affects, with the large-scale use of mass media responsible for presenting that policy; it is a two-way process taking place between the actors and the citizens, and vice versa”<sup>2</sup>.

According to the above definition, if having added the integration component, a broad range of political communication activities targeting the audience, which means the voters, may be defined. Their base is: “the integration of the entire political communication strategies, including marketing and public relations, into one tactics as integrated political communication. [...] Political communication is about the cooperation of all the components during, before and in between election campaigns, in order to either build or maintain positive relations between the candidate and the voters”<sup>3</sup>. Such approach enables better planning and more effective communication activities during the election campaign. According to the author, it is required by contemporary realities and in particular, the growing media convergence and complementarity. They force a more centralised approach to communication, where the centralisation should be understood as a homogenous planning and management of the whole communication processes in order to successfully reach the recipients with the desired announcement and to achieve the desired feedback. In the case of elections, it is about the building and maintaining the preferred party or candidate image (political public relations), sustaining the endorsement (political marketing) and casting a specified vote (election marketing), and all that with the use of all the available mass media means (political communication).

Election campaigns are, on the one hand, based on carrying out a repeatedly tested and reliable scheme and, on the other, on adjusting the activities to the current realities and environment needs. The first one involves the necessity to apply particular political marketing solutions which neglect could have highly negative consequences for the entire campaign or would produce no desired effects. It includes at least an advertising campaign in the media, meeting the voters, taking part in debates and media events. When it comes to adjusting the

---

<sup>2</sup> B. Dobek-Ostrowska, *Komunikowanie polityczne i publiczne*, Warszawa 2007, p. 155.

<sup>3</sup> Ł. Przybysz, *Zintegrowane komunikowanie...*, p. 91–92.

strategy and tools to the current realities, it means using modern communication means or non-standard ways of reaching the voters. The candidate's or party's intensified activity leads to the audience being better informed while using modern media (especially social networks)<sup>4</sup> shortens the distance between the candidate or the party and the voter, thanks to individualizing and materializing both sides to each other.

As mentioned before, some researchers suggest a specific formula for the creation of the election offer, which means the final product offered to the voters. The process starts with finding the right candidate and then, by targeting and positioning, defining the final offer targeted at the citizens (chart 1).

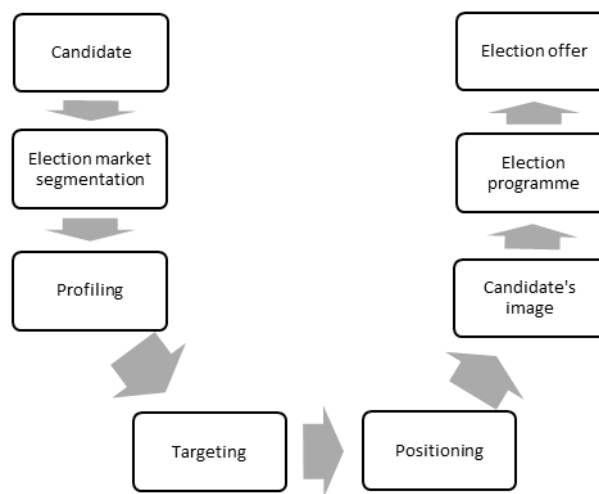


Chart 1. Designing an election offer

Source: By author, after B. Dobek-Ostrowska<sup>5</sup>.

Based on the observation, it seems that today's reality requires a verification of the above process. The increased consumption of mass media, their availability, scope and especially interactivity are a platform for feedback, allowing the broadcasters to find out the recipients' opinions and needs. For this reason, the above outline requires an addition of the voters' needs component and a change in the order of the design stages. This approach allows to come up with a contemporary outline aiming to maximize the campaign effectiveness, as a result of meeting the voters' needs (chart 2).

<sup>4</sup> *Social media* – mass media means, controlled by the public, that can be used in a virtually unlimited way. They include broadcasted content as well as possible view points on the information provided. (D. Kaznowski, *Definicja social media*, <http://networkeddigital.com/2010/04/17/definicja-social-media/> [accessed: 16.10.2010].

<sup>5</sup> Cf. B. Dobek-Ostrowska, *Kampania wyborcza: marketingowe aspekty komunikowania politycznego*, Wrocław 2005, p. 31–32.

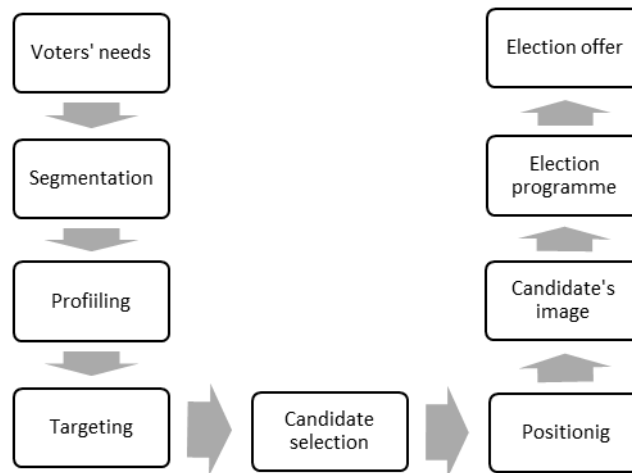


Chart 2. Designing a modern election offer

Source: By author

During the 2010 presidential election campaign in Poland, most campaign teams chose the classic campaign outline, first selecting the candidates from among their ranks, and then adjusting the election offer to them. Only the Law and Justice (PiS) slightly diverged from the model, however this was more on account of necessity than planning.

### **Presidential campaign realities**

The last presidential elections in Poland resulted in several interesting, from the research point of view, observations. On the one hand, the campaign began roughly about six months earlier than the planned date (it was supposed to take place in October 2010) and seemed to be carried out in a manner and atmosphere sustained long time since by the politicians, which mainly meant offering a new alternative to the Lech Kaczyński's presidency. This plan was proposed by the Civic Platform (PO), while the main opposition, the Law and Justice (PiS), was offering a continuation of the former style of presidency. The other candidates were less obvious choices for the position of president (i.e. the Democratic Left Alliance's (SLD) candidate Jerzy Szmajdzinski). An interesting, although not entirely successful, activity was performed by the Civic Platform. The party, in an American style, decided to hold primary elections to indicate the party's mature way of perceiving democracy. However, the party proposed, euphemistically speaking, an unfortunate manner of primaries in the form of voting

only among the party members, as well as putting up only two candidates (Bronisław Komorowski and Radosław Sikorski), with a rather perceptible indication on Komorowski. It re-echoed rather unfavourably in the media. Additionally, a debate between the two candidates was organized in which the questions were not asked by journalists (like it is in the US) but by the party members. Again, this was criticized by the media. In the end, Bronisław Komorowski became the Civic Platform's candidate (at the time the Speaker of the Parliament), which officially initiated the 2010 presidential campaign. It framed to be a debate between him and Lech Kaczyński, with the election polls mostly indicating the Civic Platform candidate's victory.

An unexpected turn took place after the accident of the Polish plane near Smolensk in Russia. Not only did the president in office die but also the Democratic Left Alliance's candidate for this office.. Moreover, according to the constitution, Bronisław Komorowski, as the speaker of parliament, took over the head of state duties. The situation required anticipatory elections to be announced, which itself complicated carrying on the campaign. The Law and Justice and the Democratic Left Alliance had to select candidates from among their members, which resulted in (according to the scheme of designing the election offer) rather adjusting the market to them than an aware creation of the election offer or a candidate meeting the voters' needs. Here, it can be considered if designating Jarosław Kaczyński by the Law and Justice did not have features of meeting the expectations of at least a part of the society. In support of this thesis, there may be advanced an argument for fondness of the deceased president among some part of the electorate, as well as interlining in the trend for negative feelings which was so strong at the time. Meanwhile, the SLD's new candidate, Grzegorz Napieralski, who initially had minute support (the early surveys gave him about 4% of support)<sup>6</sup>, thanks to having applied innovative and interactive methods of campaign management, undeniably managed to succeed by multiplying the number of his supporters (eventually 13.68% of voters supported Napieralski in the first round of elections)<sup>7</sup>. Objectively speaking, it should be noted that Bronisław Komorowski was in a difficult position who, not only did have to drive his campaign (not even, as planned before, against the former president) but at the same time he served as the Speaker of the Parliament and an acting president.

---

<sup>6</sup> GfK Polonia, 12 May, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Estimated official results by The National Electoral Committee (PKW) on 20 June, 2010.

It was noticeable that the campaigns of all the candidates had been prepared in too short time and the PO and SLD's campaigns had no idea how to take polemics against the solutions of the former presidency, in order not to violate the ethical principles of criticising the departed. There was also no concept how to constructively show the differences which Poles could experience under Komorowski's or Napieralski's presidency. It was slightly changed by Jarosław Kaczyński having entered the election battle, who on the one hand appeared as the opponent to the PO's government, while, on the other, he referred to the Smoleńsk catastrophe (but in a strongly veiled way, and according to his campaign – even with a complete lack of any references to that event) which brought him a growing support in each survey. All that, combined with the general Polish nostalgia and some people's resentment of the PO reign (intensified by the two waves of flood for which the ruling party was held responsible), resulted in more people turning towards Jarosław Kaczyński. Taking into account that he was a candidate not prepared to run a campaign for the President of Poland, and moreover that he was in a difficult personal situation, it can be said that he did surprisingly well. However, an allowance should be made for all the circumstances mentioned above and consider whether they could have brought him the lion's share of his support.

In conclusion, all candidates were in specific positions, unprecedented in the history of democracy, which, on the one hand, made it difficult for them to obtain the Poles' trust while, on the other, it created a field for further analyses. It shows that playing on emotions pays most, especially those shared by large social groups. Among other things Jarosław Kaczyński owes his success to those factors. Even though Bronisław Komorowski eventually managed to defeat him, the small percentage difference between the two candidates can be rated as a good score for the PiS's candidate.

### **Models of voter behaviours**

Wojciech Cwalina and Andrzej Falkowski point out, after Vladimir O. Key, a retrospective model of voter behaviour: “when people approach the ballot-box, in their heads they mainly evaluate how well they have lived since the last elections”<sup>8</sup>. According to it, a positive assessment of the past times induces them to vote for the group or person in power, and a negative one leads to supporting the opposite part. This, in other words, is called *the process of election rewarding and punishing*<sup>9</sup>. In case of the analysed election, the term *retrospective voting* gains additional meaning. Some people voted for the person associated with the former

---

<sup>8</sup> W. Cwalina, A. Falkowski, *Marketing polityczny. Perspektywa psychologiczna*, Gdańsk 2006, p. 70.

<sup>9</sup> E.P. Greenberg, B.I. Page, *The Struggle for Democracy*, New York 1995, p. 49.

president also on account of the sentiment for him, somehow to compensate for the loss which can also have two aspects: firstly, it can be understood as a loss of the president by the state and its citizens; secondly – as a loss for his family. It can be supposed that Polish voters for Jarosław Kaczyński were affected by both those emotions and voted in a retrospective way, exactly for the brother of the deceased president.

Another theory, based on the marketing model of voter behaviour, also mentioned by Cwalina and Falkowski, consists of the realm of current and private events on voters' choices. "Current events [...] include domestic and international affairs that can contribute to transferring the vote on another candidate"<sup>10</sup>. Obviously, the Smolensk disaster and the flood can be considered such kind of events which significantly moved the support towards Jarosław Kaczyński. As far as the second aspect is concerned, it regards the "events in the candidate's private life that can be the reason of transferring the votes on another politician"<sup>11</sup>. Even though the authors of this theory meant the issues of shaping the candidate's image or negative campaign, it can be proved that in the case of the 2010 presidential elections, it meant an event enhancing the support for a candidate whose private sphere was affected by a fact of a social resonance.

There is one more described by the quoted scholars – feelings. That means the emotional dimension of voting: "This realm is associated with a general emotional respond to a candidate, as well as feelings such as: hope, responsibility, patriotism, etc."<sup>12</sup>.

There was a great range of emotions in the last presidential election, including those very intense and radical. As a result, some voters could have voted under their influence, thus because of sentiment and compassion on the one hand and dislike or need for change on the other. The first one provided support for Jarosław Kaczyński, who both personified the former president and announced a continuation of his policy, and also seemed to need compassion and fondness after having lost his twin brother. Such an attitude contributed to taking away many votes from Bronisław Komorowski which had been declared in early stages of the campaign. The media effect was significant too. That means an intensified presence of the Kaczyński family and politicians associated with PiS in the media shortly after the plane crash, as well as presenting Komorowski in a negative way with a simultaneous positive showing of Kaczyński by the nationwide media, in particular TVP (Polish Television)<sup>13</sup>. As a

---

<sup>10</sup> W. Cwalina, A. Falkowski, *Marketing polityczny...*; p. 91.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 91.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 90.

<sup>13</sup> *Demokracja w działaniu. Monitoring mediów publicznych (od 31 maja do 2 lipca 2010)*. Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego, Warsaw 2010.

result of playing on emotions regarding the two key candidates Napieralski was gaining support. It should be noted that he gained the majority of support due to his expansive and active campaign, however, a number of voters might have considered him an alternative to the first-choice candidates, whom Komorowski and Kaczyński appeared to be. Napieralski gained part of his support through the difference in political and social views of the both candidates mentioned above, while there were no explicit borders visible. Holding the trump of a campaign well prepared in the terms of image, although pared on strategy and political solutions, Grzegorz Napieralski was attractive to those undecided or not convinced enough on the rightness of voting against one of the two main candidates, which he took a great advantage of and transformed into a satisfactory result in the first round of voting.

### **Success of the major candidates**

Analysing the support ratings of the three competitors: Bronisław Komorowski, Jarosław Kaczyński and Grzegorz Napieralski, it can be presumed that for each of them the score was a success. Respectively: Komorowski won the election, Kaczyński doubled and Napieralski tripled their initial supports. It is worth considering what caused such a turn.

The campaign of Grzegorz Napieralski was noticeable as it used modern methods of communication, especially the internet, including social networks and blogs, as well as an unconventional attitude to the traditional campaign media and widely resonating media events. His every move was introduced and commented on the internet. There was a series of films prepared and placed on his website (Napieralski TV) and on YouTube. Napieralski's campaign also introduced numerous media events with their candidate – from the traditional ones in his family circle to those non-standard such as the famous “Napieralski's singing twins” or apples distributed e.g. in Cracow. A 10% increase in his ratings seems to be significant, yet taken into consideration the circumstances in which the elections were taking place, meaning the necessity to replace the deceased candidate and a clear dualism in distribution of support between the candidates from PO and PiS, Napieralski's score could be interpreted as a success for which largely responsible was his use of modern election techniques. In this aspect the SLD's team demonstrated their familiarity with modern methods of managing political campaigns.





Photo 1. Napieralski TV

Source: [www.napieralski.com.pl](http://www.napieralski.com.pl)

The Law and Justice's (PiS) candidate adopted an entirely different election strategy. Immediately after having announced his candidacy, he refrained from appearing in the media for a long time, presenting neither his plan for the campaign nor the prospective presidency. This move was visibly related to his personal situation, which straightforwardly incorporated the Smolensk catastrophe into the election campaign. At that time, his support was rated at about 28%<sup>14</sup>. In the end, he obtained 39.46% of votes in the first round of elections and 46.99% in the final one<sup>15</sup>. Jarosław Kaczyński's team had their own specific way of using election marketing strategy. They declared a factual and substantive campaign without any disputes or rows but in reality their entire activity was, in a veiled way, based on the after-10-April mood. Kaczyński declared to continue his brother's policy, however, he did not specify what that meant. He put himself in opposition to Komorowski and criticized the Donald Tusk's government but he simultaneously required from his opponents to conduct peaceful and substantive campaigns, due to the peculiar situation. Inevitably, it was a continuous reference to the president's plane crash which had a distinct effect on the campaign reception

<sup>14</sup> TNS OBOP, 20 May, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> PKW, 20 June, 2010.

by the society. Referring to the theory of provocation, Kaczyński's activities seemed to have features of a permanent provocation. Mirosław Karwat describes it as follows: "Permanent provocation is an activity (of an artificial creation of phenomena and perception, exposing certain matters, speeding up or slowing down of various social changes) that is based on a relative continuity of behaviour, activities, procedures, ritual gestures and declarations made permanently in the same form on the same issues and with reference to practically the same subjects"<sup>16</sup>.

It meant persistent repetition of arguments against PO as the ruling party, escalated during the flood and, most of all, through constant alluding to the Smolensk catastrophe. Here Jarosław Kaczyński also used another solution described by Karwat. It is about provocative "conditioning" where you influence people's decisions not through your own activities but owing to occurring circumstances. The general moods of the Poles after the 10<sup>th</sup> April and the growing sentiment for the deceased president might be considered an example of such a situation. "Shaping and changing the socio-economic and political situation create incentives for particular moods, opinions and beliefs, which in turn induce people to behaviours that, given the right circumstances, suggest themselves 'of their own accord'"<sup>17</sup>.

In this case, it meant voting for the brother of the deceased president who promised to be his continuer. It may be assumed that in this way the PiS's candidate earned rather a good lot which was one of the factors that helped him enter the final round of presidential elections.

Another factor was rather daredevil and in some circles considered insincere – it was about warming the Kaczyński's image. In order to do so, several party activists were engaged, such as the chief of his campaign, Joanna Kluzik-Rostkowska, Paweł Poncyliusz and, most of all, Elżbieta Jakubiak. Politician unequivocally associated with Kaczyński's closest milieu, such as Marek Migalski, Zbigniew Ziobro, Jacek Kurski, Adam Bielan and Michał Kamiński, were then moved aside. It was staked on communication and content so far not associated with Kaczyński. There were changes made in the sphere of rhetoric, language and subject matter. Theoretically, the focus was not to be on the Smolensk disaster but on the future of the country instead. These endeavours caused a metadebate about Smolensk, and the issue *de facto* never disappeared from the scope of public discourse. It was even further intensified by a film in which Kaczyński spoke to "the friends Russians", widely commented on by the media and experts as an unexpected and radical change of the PiS's candidate. Officially, this new style of campaign management was described as warming his image and abandoning the

---

<sup>16</sup> M. Karwat, *Teoria prowokacji. Analiza politologiczna*, Warszawa 2007, p. 92.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 100.

previous (that means negative and aggressive) rhetoric. Within the strategy, Kaczyński visited orphanages, inspected the flooded areas or took part in happening meetings with voters. To top things off, he spoke about Edward Gierek and the Polish People's Republic (PRL) during his leadership in a laudatory way, which further aroused mistrust among some people and

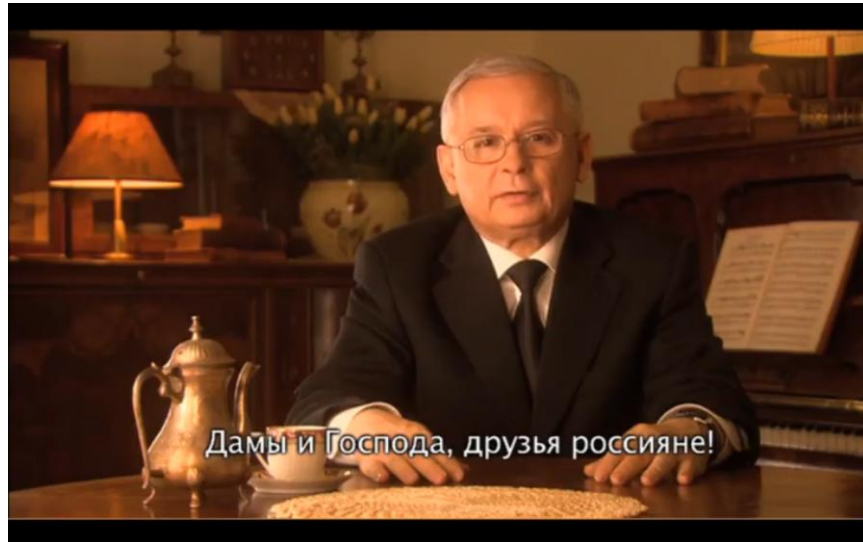


Photo 2. Jarosław Kaczyński to the friends Russians

Source: [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

commentators. Despite that, nearly half of the voters believed in the declarations of a man who was so far famous for his implacability towards the regime, and fought to overthrow it two decades earlier.

The described above selection of the PiS's candidate's behaviours characteristic for the past campaign can be analysed through the prism of the study of attitude and conduct, particularly the theory of equilibrium. Being referred to elections: "disequilibrium occurs when a person loses their certainty of the legitimacy of his attitude towards a given subject. It happens when another person, whom the first one is negative about, declares a similar attitude towards the subject: 'Something is not right if he/she agrees with me'"<sup>18</sup>. Hence, the recipients might have been confused having heard Kaczyński say the opposite of what he had previously said, which could have resulted in him losing a certain group of voters – especially the undecided ones.

Yet another theory, also mentioned by Anthony Davis, regards the strength or intensity of positive and negative attitudes toward a person. "The theory of convergence attempts to answer the question of what happens when there is discrepancy between somebody's opinion on a given subject and their attitude towards a person who is promoting that issue or is

---

<sup>18</sup> A. Davis, *Public relations*, Warszawa 2007, p. 115.

somehow connected to it”<sup>19</sup>. It assumes a correction between the opinion and the attitude towards the sender, in order to level the divergence. As far as the communication used by Jarosław Kaczyński is concerned, there can be two lines designated. The first one constitutes the opinion distribution of the voters supporting him who, in order to vote for him in good conscience, had to accept his new views. The other one concerns the undecided ones who, from that moment on, either adopted his views or, because of his radical change, totally rejected them. Having made choices, they beforehand avoided cognitive dissonance which everybody was provided with by the PiS’s candidate shortly after the announcement of the preliminary election results. In the end, it turned out that his promises about change were untrue as he immediately backtracked to his old rhetoric.

The concept of cognitive dissonance is associated with Charles Handy’s theory of consequence which states that we change our attitudes only when the subject of divergence is rather insignificant or, on the contrary, very important and there is no way to change the dissonance<sup>20</sup>. This theory can also be applied both to Jarosław Kaczyński and his voters. He adjusted his attitude in order to scoop the largest possible number of votes since the perspective of becoming the president was extremely important for him. His supporters (especially the die-hard electorate<sup>21</sup>) adapted to the arguments promoted by the candidate in order to provide support for him as him exercising the function of the president was also imperative to them.

The use of new media by the Kaczyński campaign should be numbered among the category of modern campaign management. They mainly focused on his website (where clips from meetings with supporters, commentaries and statements by Kaczyński and other PiS politicians were uploaded) and on video channels (mainly YouTube). Discussions with the internet users were mostly carried out by Kaczyński’s associates within their personal blogs. However, the body of internet communication activities done by his campaign when compared to the other rivalries (especially Napieralski), it can be said to have come off poorly. It should be noted that generally the web is a preferred channel of reaching the younger and better educated voters, conscious and seeking ones, who only marginally resist among the interest of PiS. Their predominant electorate is centred around news in traditional media (especially television, and as mentioned above Polish Television [TVP] particularly

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem, p. 117.

<sup>21</sup> “Die-hard electorate” meaning staunch and long term supporters of a given political party or politicians and very unlikely to change their opinions.

favoured the PiS's candidate). For this reason his team did not focus on campaigning via the internet because such an effort it was finally less profitable for them.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the Kaczyński campaign applied (consciously or not) some strong persuasive means. All the endeavours aimed to promote their candidate, strengthen his initial support but mainly gain new voters from among those undecided or fluctuating. Some unconventional, as for PiS, methods were used which – being widely commented by the media – increased Kaczyński's support ratings. These means, however, were not entirely successful since the society's cognitive dissonance was too strong and they were lacking arguments to level it (after the elections Kaczyński was supported by 37% of respondents – 10% less than according to the official election result)<sup>22</sup>.

### **Komorowski's victory**

The campaign of the PO's candidate followed a similar route to the one of Grzegorz Napieralski but a completely different from Jarosław Kaczyński's. The Komorowski's campaign lacked clear ideas for his presidency and it was predominantly based on the argument of a non-conflicting approach to governance, particularly between the president and the government. On the one hand, there were modern solutions applied, such as preliminary elections, however, they did not take expected effect for they were carried out in an inadequate way (as art for art's sake, not as a test of the public perception of the candidates). On the other hand, most attention was paid to refining the well-tried mechanisms. It meant presenting the candidate first and then adjusting the election offer to him, with an attempt to evoke a delusive conviction of answering the voter needs (the primaries). It did not seem that the Komorowski campaign had planned the first stage of the campaign (before the 10<sup>th</sup> April) any differently from what they did in the quick time. However, it was noticeable that the president's death threw PO out of the argument of counter-punch towards the previous style of holding the office. Because of the inability to apply the previously planned guiding idea, there was a necessity to come up with a new platform for communication about the candidate and his proposals. It was decided to emphasise the Komorowski's family and his Solidarity activity which was a trite yet successful move.

Referring to the theories of political communication tools, there can be distinguished four types of election strategies used by the Komorowski campaign: induration, expansion, neutralisation and reversal. "The strategy of induration is used with reference to the party

---

<sup>22</sup> CBOS, July 8–14, 2010.

supporters and sympathisers. It aims to confirm the voters in their hitherto convictions and inure them to rivals' persuasion by providing them with proper knowledge and arguments"<sup>23</sup>. The first aspect of this strategy was relatively hardly visible in the Komorowski's strategy. However, as far as inurement for the opponents is concerned, there were arguments dissuading from supporting Kaczyński used repeatedly. Grzegorz Napieralski behaved likewise, while the PiS's candidate campaign utilised that strategy particularly during a radical change of his image and opinions. The Komorowski campaign resorted to a rescue in the form of making the voters resistant to the PiS's rhetoric in the face of a growing threat of the electorate moving their votes in favour of Jarosław Kaczyński. Perhaps it was not the most successful strategy chosen by PO, yet it did have some influence on the final score.

"The strategy of expansion [...] consists of making an election appeal to the undecided and/or non-voting electorate"<sup>24</sup>. This strategy was extensively used by PO. Firstly, they wished to attract the undecided voters who, on the basis of general social mood, might have advocated Kaczyński. That tendency included communicating about an unprofitable vision of his presidency and indicating advantages of choosing Komorowski. Secondly, the *Vote without registration* campaign inspired by PO and inducing people to vote effectively increased positive reception of Komorowski. Analysing the election results divided up into geodemographic categories, it can be argued that it was largely due to a high voter turnout, especially in large cities and abroad, that won Komorowski his presidency.



Photo. 3. *Vote without registration* and *Vote wherever you are* campaign logos

Source: [www.glosujbezmeldunku.pl](http://www.glosujbezmeldunku.pl), [www.gdziekolwiek-bedziesz.pl](http://www.gdziekolwiek-bedziesz.pl)

"The strategy of neutralisation is addressed to the supporters of the rival parties. Its goal is to weaken their attitudes, increase doubt among the sympathisers and discourage them from

<sup>23</sup> B. Dobek-Ostrowska, *Kampania wyborcza...*, p. 326.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*.

voting”<sup>25</sup>. Neutralisation was rather utilized by PiS which used various means and ways to make Komorowski lose his supporters (e.g. by blaming PO for the flood, negative portrayal of this party and their candidate in the public media and especially accusing them for wishing to privatise the health service). The Komorowski campaign used that strategy sparingly, focusing rather on presenting the negative aspects and threats resulting from the Kaczyński’s prospective presidency, simultaneously emphasizing the advantages of choosing their candidate. However, those activities were not effective enough to overtake any significant share of the rival’s electorate. Not to mention that his electorate was divided into two groups: those from before the 10<sup>th</sup> April and afterwards. In the first period, that electorate (still supporting Lech Kaczyński then) was estimated at about 26%, while Komorowski was supported by a twice larger group<sup>26</sup>. After the incident in Smolensk, the number of supporters of Lech Kaczyński increased significantly (to nearly 68%)<sup>27</sup>, and then transferred their backing onto his brother. Such an argument was difficult to be disputed, that was probably why PO deemed it necessary to devote their attention to the undecided voters, a large part of whom had already turned to Kaczyński and (later on) to Napieralski. That strategy, especially implemented by Kaczyński, could be said to most likely be the key to his, after all, success. As a result of his activities, a number of the voters slightly opting for Komorowski (yet not entirely determined) believed Kaczyński’s psychological techniques and finally voted for him.

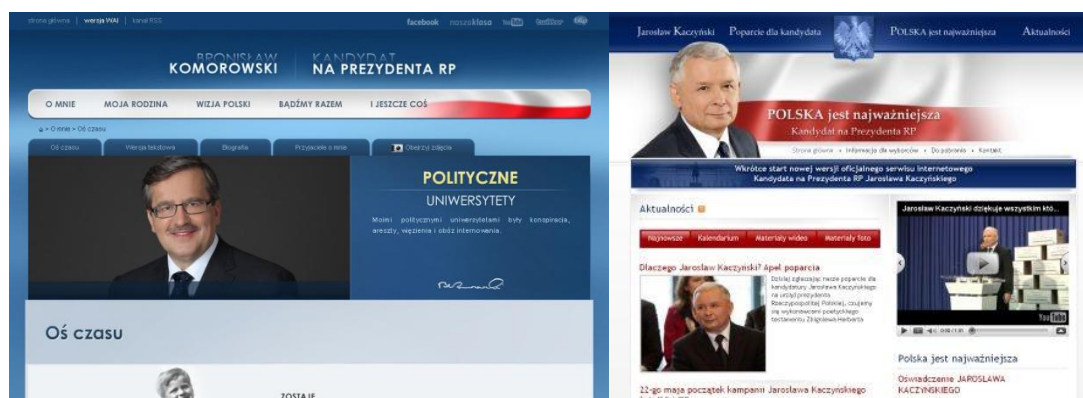


Photo 4. The internet activities of Bronisław Komorowski and Jarosław Kaczyński

Source: [www.bronislawkomorowski.pl](http://www.bronislawkomorowski.pl), [www.jaroslawkaczynski.info](http://www.jaroslawkaczynski.info)

“The strategy of reversal [...] consists of leading to voting for the candidate by his political opponents. To change the mark of someone’s attitude is a long and complicated process but

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem, p. 326.

<sup>26</sup> TNS OBOP, 8–9 April, 2010.

<sup>27</sup> IPSOS, 7–14 May, 2010.

with favourable circumstances and using the strategy of reversal one can influence a change in the voting behaviour. It sometimes happens in the final round of elections, when there are two candidates left and none of them suits the voter. What usually happens then is voting for the lesser evil or against the other candidate”<sup>28</sup>. Perhaps here the mark of the Bronisław Komorowski’s election success has been hit. In the last stage of the campaign some voters could have experienced the described above cognitive dissonance with regard to Jarosław Kaczyński. That could have driven them to making a decision of not voting for him, which consequently resulted in supporting Komorowski as the only alternative left in the final round. It was also rumoured that people may have chosen him as the lesser evil. Nevertheless, the strategy carried out by PO most of all during the final stage of the election struggle (mainly during the TV debates) achieved a desired effect.

Communication activities taken up by the PO’s candidate campaign were mostly based on a professionally prepared and well assessed internet website, materials presented on the web and TV spots. They were coherent activities, yet focused more on building and maintaining a positive image rather than including system solutions, critical about those suggested by the rivals. It was a reflexive campaign, answering the opponents’ proposals and public opinion, present in media events and statements by party colleagues. It could be noticed that more critical of the opposition were Komorowski’s associates (mainly Janusz Palikot) rather than the candidate himself. There could have been two reasons for that: perhaps he wished to refrain from criticizing a person bound up with the deceased president or there were solutions known from western democracies applied, where candidates have an explicit warrant and loyalty of their parties. It should be added that no one used negative TV campaigning (in a form similar to those used previously), with the entire negative discussion taking place between parties and their candidates in the media space. Additionally, the whole image was completed by the internet based user-generated content disseminated via various channels such as Facebook or YouTube. Summing up, the above is evidence of the dualism of the means of communication being most active during the campaign: on the one hand – television (including 24-hour news channels) and, on the other – interactive internet.

---

<sup>28</sup> B. Dobek-Ostrowska, *Kampania wyborcza...*, p. 326.



## Conclusion

“Politics on television is just like commercials – nobody wants to watch it. You need to create a good programme with high audience ratings so that the broadcasted political ideas reached some audience”<sup>29</sup>.

Jakub Bierzynski’s statement, still true today, can be applied to all media. No politician or politics exist without them and it would be virtually impossible to drive election campaigns. Knowing this, political actors use all available means to most effectively reach their voters with the desired message. Their success depends on the level of their proficiency (or craftiness) in making use of them. The past presidential campaign has provided us with the ground for multi-plane analyses. On the one hand, it seemed nearly impossible to be compared to the previous ones because of untypical circumstances it was led in. On the other, it introduced new election campaign tools and developed the previous ones, especially in the field of political communication.

Although the candidates carried out their campaigns differently, there were three who stood out among the others. Bronisław Komorowski as the favourite of the presidential race, Jarosław Kaczyński because of substituting for his deceased brother and some rather original communication solutions, and Grzegorz Napieralski with his innovative style and taking advantage of the internet. He was the one who had the most modern campaign and it paid off placing him as the second runner-up in the first round and tripling his initial support ratings. Even though he did not make it to the final round of elections, his campaign proved the persuasiveness and effectiveness of the internet communication in elections.

From the very first days after the Smolensk disaster, it became clear that the 2010 campaign would be bipolar. Two favourites were marked out – Bronisław Komorowski and Jarosław Kaczyński – the greatest fight was played between those two. The president of PiS did surprisingly well in his presidential challenge. Firstly, because of a really hard period in his personal life and secondly, because of objectively marginal public support at the beginning. The first aspect contributed so considerably to the daily increasing support ratings that in the final stage it nearly gained him victory. Kaczyński’s high voting ratings were the effect of both the Poles having sentiment for his brother (combined with the feelings of some part of the society about the catastrophe, Donald Tusk’s government, Russia or many other issues being negatively warmed up by PiS) and his campaign attempting to soften their candidate’s image (mainly sociotechnical endeavours by the campaign directors – Paweł

---

<sup>29</sup> J. Bierzyński, *Walka o rynek TV*, “Marketing Polska”, December 9, 1998.

Poncyliusz, Joanna Kluzik-Rostkowska or Elżbieta Jakubiak – as well as Kaczyński's new, sometimes subversive rhetoric). A large number of voters succumbed to such manipulation, however – as shown by the pre-election surveys – for a short while.

Finally, the Komorowski campaign – despite some shortcomings and incorrect decisions – applied an effective election strategy driving him to victory. There were numerous factors that went into making of this – from managing the country efficiently during the presidential vacancy and fighting the flood to effective communication with voters using its modern methods.

To summarise, the past presidential campaign can be considered the most difficult one in the history of democratic Poland. This was owing to various circumstances beyond control (Smolensk, flood) as well as the socio-political mood present at the time. The winner was a politician enjoying a greater social approval, although he accomplished it with some difficulties as a result of two factors: a relatively weak campaign and disoriented public opinion in the then situation. Still, a number of Poles were tempted by Kaczynski's demagogy which has dangerously increased in strength since the elections. There is nothing left but hope that Polish democracy will continue to develop. Even if only one step at a time.