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Spis treści

Ondrej Mitaľ[1]

The Impact of Social Media Use on E-communication Between Government and Public
The Case of Slovakia

Abstract: Regarding the impacts of social media on the execution of public administration, the states try to find optimal E-communication solutions, which might help to increase the qualitative aspects of public governance. The aim of the study is to examine the use of official Facebook pages by Slovak regional cities, more precisely, the purpose of the posts and the sphere of social life included in the posts published between 2016 and 2020. The selected methodology aims to perform an in-depth analysis of Facebook page usage in the five-year period. The main finding is based on the statement that Slovakian regional cities use their official Facebook pages mainly to inform their citizens about various types of events and happenings in the city, while posts asking for citizens´ opinion or participation do not represent significant part of posts published during the analysed period. Besides, the benefit of the article is associated with fostering an interest in examined issues of social media use. It was the ambition of the author to contribute to the standardization of strategies on social media use in public administration.

Keywords: social media, Facebook, local self-government, e-communication, Slovakia

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Wpływ korzystania z mediów społecznościowych na komunikację elektroniczną między rządem a społeczeństwem: przypadek Słowacji

Abstrakt: W odniesieniu do wpływu mediów społecznościowych na wykonywanie zadań administracji publicznej, państwa starają się znaleźć optymalne rozwiązania w zakresie e-komunikacji, które mogą przyczynić się do zwiększenia jakościowych aspektów zarządzania publicznego. Celem opracowania jest zbadanie wykorzystania oficjalnych stron na Facebooku przez słowackie miasta regionalne, a dokładniej celu postów oraz sfery życia społecznego uwzględnionej w postach publikowanych w latach 2016-2020. Wybrana metodologia ma na celu przeprowadzenie dogłębnej analizy wykorzystania stron na Facebooku w pięcioletnim okresie. Główny wniosek opiera się na stwierdzeniu, że słowackie miasta regionalne wykorzystują swoje oficjalne strony na Facebooku głównie do informowania swoich mieszkańców o różnego rodzaju wydarzeniach i imprezach w mieście, podczas gdy posty z prośbą o opinię lub udział obywateli nie stanowią znaczącej części postów publikowanych w analizowanym okresie. Poza tym korzyść płynąca z artykułu związana jest z pobudzeniem zainteresowania badaną problematyką korzystania z mediów społecznościowych. Ambicją badania było również przyczynienie się do standaryzacji strategii wykorzystania mediów społecznościowych w administracji publicznej.

Słowa kluczowe: media społecznościowe, Facebook, samorząd lokalny, e-komunikacja, Słowacja

1. Introduction

The use of information communication technologies in the sphere of public administration is mostly discussed as an important challenge of contemporary governance and the execution of public administration functions. At the same time, the role of engaged public is irreplaceable in current democratic states governed by the rule of law. Regarding the contemporary crisis of democracy, it is necessary to implement solutions focused on the new forms of citizens´ participation. Various positive, negative and contradictory impacts of information technologies can be discussed extensively, but most of them relate to the fact that the role of information technologies is irreplaceable. Put differently, the widening access to modern technologies has laid the foundation for an informed citizenry capable of effective participating in political and public affairs. With this in mind, informed citizens are capable of effective participating in policymaking at local, regional and national level.

The quality of information shared by public administration seems to be more important than in the past. Regarding the growing use of innovative and modern tools, public administration has started to use social media as an alternative communication

platform. The implementation of these new platforms has not been examined deeply so far. Regarding the insufficient exploration of social media use, public administration organizations are still developing standard operating procedures on how to monitor and share information on social media.[2] Contemporary interaction between public administration organizations and citizens has been evolving from traditional conversation in the office to conversation on social media platforms, from traditional face-to-face to real-time online communication.[3] In other words, the use of social media can be characterized as a cross-cutting problem of contemporary governance.

The purpose of this article is to examine selected aspects of social media use focusing on local self-government units in Slovak Republic. More precisely, the paper is focused on the use of Facebook pages of eight regional cities between 2016 and 2021. The article examines content published by selected cities during the analysed period, mainly the purpose of the posts and the sphere of social life included in the posts. The theoretical part regarding the potential of information technologies concentrates on the importance of new forms of communication and use of social media in the sphere of public administration. The importance of social media use will also be outlined. Another part examines selected aspects of social media use in the conditions of regional cities in Slovakia. Last, but not least, the article will include identified trends, suggestion and discussion on perspectives and limits of social media use in public administration.

2. Social media and contemporary public governance

Regarding the importance of information technologies, the E-government, e-services or the concept of smart city might be perceived as a stable part of the contemporary discussions associated with the current challenges of public administration and smartly connected economic and social structures.[4] The growing importance of information

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[2]   C. Wukich, I. Mergel, *Reusing Social Media Information in Government*, "Government Information Quarterly" 2016, vol. 33, no. 2, pp. 305-312; J.K. Lee et al., *Social Media, Network Heterogeneity, and Opinion Polarization*, "Journal of Communication" 2014, vol. 64, no. 4, pp. 702-722.

[3]   K. Kowalik, *Social Media as a Distribution of Emotions, Not Participation: Polish Exploratory Study in the EU Smart City Communication Context*, "Cities" 2021, vol. 108, 10299, https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0264275120313433 (12.11.2021).

[4]   S. Ručinská and M. Fečko, *eGovernment and Digitalization in the Slovak Republic – Current Development and Political Strategies* [in:] *Central and Eastern European eDem and eGov Days, 5-8 mai 2021, Budapest*, T. Hemker et al. (eds), Vienna 2021, pp. 251-262; R. Śliwa, *Proces regulacji unijnych w świetle traktatu z Lizbony a istota koncepcji narzędzia Oceny Wpływu*, "Politeja" 2019, vol. 15, no. 54, pp. 301-311; I. Kawka, *Bezpieczeństwo informacji w internecie: wybrane aspekty prawne ochrony*

communication technologies and the sophistication of involving the citizens into poli-
cymaking process have mostly been discussed in their connections to social media in
the last few years. Social media adoption is another phase in e-government evolution
in the contemporary information society.[5] Overall, social media are the phenomenon
of the last decade. Compared to traditional websites, social media bring qualitatively
different level of interactivity among users and official profiles on social media are also
capable to reach broader public.[6] Social media and their impacts on society continue to
grow, and there is no evidence that this popularity is slowing or stopping.[7] Regarding
the various budgetary restrictions and consolidation of public finances, it is imperative
to reveal how social media can maximize efficiency of governance.[8]

The users of social media represent the key attribute of their functioning. Social
media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or YouTube, are platforms which according
to Driss et al. have potential to connect billions of users and have ability to transform
the way people are accessing, reading and spreading the information.[9] Public adminis-
tration organizations are trying to prepare content adapted to its target audience with
specific objectives for each audience.[10] The power of social media to connect users of
social media and shared information in real time is increasing the capacity of people
to exercise power and mobilize into action, because a large number of groups can be
reached very easily, but on the other hand, they have the potential to split the persons
living in one joint household.[11] The use of social media and information included on

danych osobowych i prywatności [in:] _Bezpieczeństwo RP: wczoraj i dziś: studia z zakresu bezpieczeństwa
państwa_, M. Śliwa, A. Żebrowski, R. Kłaczyński (eds), Kraków 2014, pp. 208-228.

[5]   X. Gao, J. Lee, _E-Government Services and Social Media Adoption: Experience of Small Local Gov-
ernments in Nebraska State_, "Government Information Quarterly" 2017, vol. 34, no. 4, pp. 627-634.

[6]   P. Silva et al., _The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: Three Faces of Social Media Usage by Local Govern-
ments_, "Government Information Quarterly" 2019, vol. 36, no. 3, pp. 469-479; S. Bregman, _Uses of
Social Media in Public Transportation: A Synthesis of Transit Practice_, Washington 2012.

[7]   O. Siena et al., _Facebook's Use by Local Governments to Promote Accountability with Social Partici-
pation_, "Revista de Direito da Cidade" 2019, vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 584-616; J.P. Toscano, _Social Media
and Public Participation: Opportunities, Barriers and a New Framework_ [in:] _Handbook of Research
on Citizen Engagement and Public Participation in the Era of New Media_, M. Adria, Y. Mao (eds),
Hershey, PA 2017, pp. 73-89.

[8]   M.W. Graham et al., _The Role of Social Media in Local Government Crisis Communications_,
"Public Relations Review" 2015, vol. 41, pp. 386-394.

[9]   O.B. Driss et al., _From Citizens to Government Policy-Makers: Social Media Data Analysis_,
"Government Information Quarterly" 2019, vol. 36, no. 3, pp. 560-570.

[10]   F. Charest et al., _Public Relations and Social Media: Deliberate or Creative Strategic Planning_,
"Public Relations Review" 2016, vol. 42, no. 4, pp. 530-538.

[11]   D. Sihi, _Friending and Funding Through Facebook: Social Media Use of Regional Non-profit Or-
ganizations_ [in:] _Innovative Perspectives on Public Administration in the Digital Age_, A.P. Manoharan,
J. McQuiston (eds), Hershey, PA 2018, pp. 256-283; A. Lev-On, N. Steinfeld, _Social Media and_

social media profiles affect almost each sphere of our society, especially patterns of behaviour, hierarchy of values and opinions of individuals.

2.1. Benefits of social media use in public administration

The impacts of social media can also be identified in the activities of state across all levels of governance. Social media use is mainly connected with more transparent and open governance and policymaking. Governments use social media as a tool, which could make communication with the public more effective.[12] Put differently, social media are in full accordance with the ideal of immediate communication in modern public governance of the 21st century. Social media in this sense help to create more open and transparent public administration.[13]

This main benefit of social media can help citizens and governments, as partners, to be better informed, make socially responsible decisions. and to transform governance system at the city, region or state level.[14] This interactive dialog is possible thanks to social media, because according to T. Stamati et al., social media help transform the role of citizen from a passive adopter to a co-creator of public policies.[15] Social media have the potential to create an environment where citizens can express their opinions and feel more involved in the management of organization, measurement of its performance, and at the same time feel more responsible for a specific territory.[16]

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the City: Analyzing Conversations in Municipal Facebook Pages [in:] *Social Media and Local Governments. Public Administration and Information Technology*, M.Z. Sobaci (ed.), Cham 2015, pp. 234-261.

[12]   J. Lee, B.J. Reed, *From Paper to Cloud* [in:] *Public Administration Evolving: From Foundations to the Future*, M.E. Guy, M.M. Rubin (eds), New York 2015, pp. 158-191.

[13]   J.S. Eom et al., *Can Social Media Increase Government Responsiveness? A Case Study of Seoul, Korea*, "Government Information Quarterly" 2018, vol. 35, no. 1, pp. 109-122; T. Stamati et al., *Social Media for Openness and Accountability in the Public Sector: Cases in the Greek Context*, "Government Information Quarterly" 2015, vol. 32, no. 1, pp. 12-29; S. Picazo-Vela et al., *Understanding Risks, Benefits, and Strategic Alternatives of Social Media Applications in the Public Sector*, "Government Information Quarterly" 2012, vol. 29, no. 4, pp. 504-511; A. Miller, *Information Science Reference Cultural Barriers to Organizational Social Media Adoption* [in:] *Social Knowledge: Using Social Media to Know what You Know*, J.P. Girard, J.L. Girard (eds), Hershey, PA 2011, pp. 96-114.

[14]   S. Picazo-Vela et al., *Understanding*…

[15]   T. Stamati et al., *Social Media for Openness*…

[16]   L. Todisco et al., *Exploring Social Media Usage in the Public Sector: Public Employees' Perceptions of ICT's Usefulness in Delivering Value Added*, "Socio-Economic Planning Sciences" 2021, vol. 73, 100858; S. Hartmann, *Citizen Relationship Management for Civic Participation: How Smart Cities use to Involve Citizens* [in:] *E-Participation in Smart Cities: Technologies and Models of Governance for Citizen Engagement*, L. Alcaide Muñoz, M.P. Rodríguez Bolívar (eds), Cham 2019, pp. 59-77; T. Dimitrijevska-Markoski, *Exploring Municipal Utilization of Social Media in Performance Measurement and Management*, "Public Administration Issues" 2018, no. 6, Special Issue II, pp. 98-106.

Social media cannot be defined just as a platform for two-way communication between public administration and citizens. This view is limited and does not describe the real importance of social media for both society and public administration. Social media have the potential to raise public awareness of the execution of public administration functions. Public administration and citizens could use social media in ways that foster participation, deliberation, collaboration, as well have potential to mobilize citizens to participate in online civic engagement behaviour, via the ability of its network capital and the group incentives.[17] What is more, the use of social media has a significant influence on public satisfaction, which ultimately affects the intention of informed citizens to participate in public governance.[18]

The use of social media by various types of public administration bodies is mostly examined in ordinary situations, the general aspects of sharing information are mostly in the scholars´ centre of attention. However, various existing studies focusing on social media crisis communication have changed the way of thinking about sharing immediate information with the public during crisis.[19] Social media was used during various natural and man-made crisis situations, such as the 2010 Haiti earthquake and Hurricane Sandy,[20] the organizing of civil society protests,[21] or the terrorist attacks in Europe.[22]

During the time of disaster or crisis, people try to communicate with their families and friends, seek various information about their basic needs and transportation, and

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[17] L.A. Brainard, *Fostering Engagement Through Social Media? The Case of the Washington, DC* [in:] *Social Media for Government: Theory and Practice*, M. Zavattaro, T.A. Bryer (eds), New York 2016, pp. 117-134; M.A. Warren et al., *Social Media Effects on Fostering Online Civic Engagement and Building Citizen Trust and Trust in Institutions*, "Government Information Quarterly" 2014, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 291-301.

[18] T. Hariguna et al., *Effect of Social Media Activities to Determinants Public Participate Intention of E-Government*, "Procedia Computer Science" 2019, vol. 161, pp. 233-241.

[19] W.T. Coombs, *The Value of Communication During a Crisis: Insights from Strategic Communication Research*, "Business Horizons" 2015, vol. 58, no. 2, pp. 141-148.

[20] J. Preston, B. Stelter, *In Crisis, Public Officials Embrace Social Media*, nytimes.com, https://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/02/technology/in-crisis-public-officials-embrace-social-media.html (20.02.2020).

[21] S. Valenzuela et al., *The Social Media Basis of Youth Protest Behavior: The Case of Chile*, "Journal of Communication" 2012, vol. 62, no. 2, pp. 299-314; H.M. Abdelsalam et al., *Social Media in Egyptian Government Websites: Presence, Usage, and Effectiveness*, "Government Information Quarterly" 2013, vol. 30, no. 4, pp. 406-416.

[22] B.G. Smith et al., *Social Media Dialogues in a Crisis: A Mixed-Methods Approach to Identifying Publics on Social Media*, "Public Relations Review" 2018, vol. 44, no. 4, pp. 562-573.

enquire about their own safety and security.[23] Social media can be perceived as an ideal platform to distribute information in real-time to an almost unlimited number of users.

Put differently, social media represent communication channel between public administration and the public, which is thanks to their interactivity, simplicity, and immediacy different from the interaction tools used so far. Summing up, social media should be described as a tool which helps public administration to inform citizens more effectively, and, at the same time, might help public administration improve participation of citizens and their engagement of the wider public. The importance of social media in public administration could also be identified in the daily execution of public administration functions. The use of social media is expected to contribute to the fulfilment of goals and imperatives, such as cost saving, quality of public services, citizen satisfaction, transparency, accountability, citizen participation or cooperation.

2.2. Cross-cutting issues of social media usage in public administration

The use of social media offers various, already mentioned chances for improvements in public governance. Regarding the need of a systematic approach, social media activities should be based on a sophisticated strategy. As the use of social media increases, the need for rules, regulations, standardization, and institutionalization of strategic planning has increased as well.[24] In this sense, social media activities need to be considered in a wider context.

There is an extensive pressure on public administration to implement social media, because there is a legitimate fear that public administration will be left behind as governments make such a little use of it.[25] However, is not only an opportunity for public administration to use social media, but also it appears mandatory to avoid someone else playing the role of a certain organization of public administration, providing ambiguous information to citizens.[26]

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[23]   A. Saroj, S. Pal, *Use of Social Media in Crisis Management: A Survey*, "International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction" 2020, vol. 48, 101584.

[24]   R. Laforest, *Deep and Wide: Citizen Engagement in the Era of Social Media* [in:] *Canadian Public Administration in the 21st Century*, Ch. Conteh, I. Roberge (eds), Boca Raton 2013, pp. 61-78; I. Mergel, B. Greeves, *Social Media in the Public Sector Field Guide: Designing and Implementing Strategies and Policies*, San Francisco 2012.

[25]   S. Hofmann et al., *What Makes Local Governments' Online Communications Successful? Insights from a Multi-Method Analysis of Facebook*, "Government Information Quarterly" 2013, vol. 30, no. 4, pp. 387-396; T. Fyfe, P. Crookall, *Social Media and Public Sector Policy Dilemmas*, Toronto 2010.

[26]   D. Agostino, *Using Social Media to Engage Citizens: A Study of Italian Municipalities*, "Public Relations Review" 2013, vol. 39, no. 3, pp. 232-234.

Moreover, various risks and threats must be managed by the organization and administrators of social media pages. Using the words of Shark, public organizations could very easily create their official social media pages, but at least the following aspects of social media use should be considered: social media policy with goals, tools and objectives, staff to make sure that content is up to date, the ability to protect and monitor the site in order to ensure it is not abused or hijacked.[27] Using the words of T. J. Snead, it is better to have fewer types of media and better interaction with community members than to engage in more types of media with minimal interaction.[28]

Obviously, some important challenges and differences must be solved. Otherwise, the ideal of public administration, cooperating with the digital and informed public through modern technologies, would not be reached. Non-systematic use of social media causes information asymmetry, while the concepts of democracy, civic engagement, and justice, might become put risk[29].

As regards serving the public interest, justice and other principles of democracy, the benefits of social media use must be also discussed in the context of potential risks and threats to the functioning of democratic state governed by the rule of law. In this sense, it is not suitable to omit the opinion of any relevant individuals or groups in policymaking process based on information shared only on social media pages.

Put differently, social media cannot be perceived as a key communication channel between public administration and citizens. On the other hand, we must agree with the opinion that citizens as a fundamental aspect of information society are directly dependent on cyberspace with its own reality, which is their main arena for gathering information.[30] Summing up, the Internet will probably be the main platform for gathering information, but for now some key actors might miss potential calls for participation or opinion that were published only on a social media networking site.

Broadly speaking, information communication technologies have brought new specific problems connected with the protection of privacy and personal data. This challenge of new modern technologies is sensitively discussed especially in the case of e-health, e-taxes, security of cloud solutions and overall cybersecurity. Using the words of K. Miňová, the main threat is not just the simple abusing and misusing of data, because it is important to deal with secondary impacts of these negative tendencies

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[27]   A.R. Shark, *Technology and Public Management*, New York 2015.
[28]   T.J. Snead, *Social Media Use in the U.S. Executive Branch*, "Government Information Quarterly" 2013, vol. 30, 1, pp. 56-63.
[29]   S.M. Zavattaro, J. Sementelli, *A Critical Examination of Social Media Adoption in Government: Introducing Omnipresence*, "Government Information Quarterly" 2014, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 257-264.
[30]   E. Župová, *Sociologické aspekty verejnej správy*, Košice 2019.

which change individuals´ behaviour and decisions influenced by disinformation.[31] In this sense, the relevancy and correctness of information published on social media is also questionable, because social media represent the main space for spreading disinformation and hoaxes.

2.3. Social media as the source of information for citizens

Based on the above-mentioned findings, the use of social media in the sphere of public administration can be recognized as a logical reflection of their current importance and use by individuals. Summing up, the advantages of social media use outweigh the disadvantages. Sophistication of social media use can be viewed especially in their potential to share information immediately and their ability to create a space for immediate and instant communication between public administration and citizens, which can be very beneficial especially in the context of public governance and policymaking at a local, regional, and national level.

The use of social media in the sphere of public administration can be recognized as a logical reflection of their current importance and use by individuals. We must admit that the number of similar studies based on content analysis has increased at all levels of government in the last few years, such as analyses of Facebook use in local self-government units,[32] measuring the use of social media by self-governing regions,[33] as well as the use by state administration.[34]

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[31]   K. Miňová, *Moral Aspects of the Security of Individuals in the Hyper-connected Society* [in:] *Security Forum 2020 – 13th Annual International Scientific Conference February 12th–13th, 2020 at Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia, Conference Proceedings*, J. Ušiak, D. Kollár (eds), Banská Bystrica 2020, pp. 179-191.

[32]   T. Jukić and B. Svete, *The Use of Facebook in the Slovenian Local Self-Government: Empirical Evidence*, "Central European Public Administration Review" 2018, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 7-22; M. Murray Svidroňová et al., *Can Social Media be a Tool for Participatory Governance in Slovak Municipalities?*, "NISPAcee Journal of Public Administration and Policy" 2018, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 81-101; N. Levkov, *How Macedonian Municipalities are Using Social Media for Public Communication*, "Annual of Faculty of Economics – Skopje" 2017, vol. 52, no. 1, pp. 199-210, http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12188/3525 (20.11.2021); B. Gesuele, *Municipalities and Facebook Use: Which Key Drivers? Empirical Evidence from Italian Municipalities*, "International Journal of Public Administration" 2016, vol. 39, no. 10, pp. 771-777; E. Bonsón et al., *Citizens' Engagement on Local Governments' Facebook Sites. An Empirical Analysis: The Impact of Different Media and Content Types in Western Europe*, "Government Information Quarterly" 2015, vol. 32, no. 1, pp. 52-62; A. Lev-On, N. Steinfeld, *Social Media…*, pp. 234-261; D. Agostino, *Using Social Media…*, pp. 232-234.

[33]   D. Špaček, *Social Media Use in Public Administration: The Case of Facebook Use by Czech Regions*, "NISPAcee Journal of Public Administration and Policy" 2018, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 199-218.

[34]   J. Callejo-Gallego, Y. Agudo-Arroyo, *Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis of Spanish State Audience on Facebook and Twitter*, "Profesional De La Informacion" 2019, vol. 28, no. 5, pp. 1-15;

The mentioned papers examined social media use mostly in a short period, while our paper analyses the posts published in a period of five years. Besides, the focus is put on the content included in the posts, which means that the centre of the paper's attention is the activity of cities on their official Facebook pages, while most previous studies concentrated their attention on general aspects of social media use or just the presence of local self-government units on social media, while the content and motive for information sharing was left behind. In our opinion, the purpose of published content and spheres of social life represent an aspect of social media use which needs to be examined more deeply in future research. The main reason is to provide information for the administrators of social media pages, which can be useful for more sophisticated standards and strategies on providing information through various social media networking sites.

Summing up, the use of social media represents one of the biggest challenges of contemporary governance processes. On the one hand, public administration organizations want to spread various types of information to as many individuals as it is possible. On the other hand, citizens want up-to-date and relevant information about the social space and territory they live in.

3. Methodology

The paper is focused on the analysis of the content and information published on official Facebook pages of regional cities in Slovakia. In this sense, the paper tries to answer these research questions: What content is included in the posts published on the official Facebook pages of regional cities? What is the purpose of the posts published on the official Facebook pages of regional cities?

The selected methodology aims to perform an in-depth analysis of Facebook use in the long-term period, concentrating mainly on the spheres of social life included in the posts and the purpose of posts published on the official Facebook pages of regional cities. The selected groups of indicators were inspired mainly by the methodologies applied in previous studies on social media use by local self-government units in different countries, such as the Czech Republic, Italy, Israel, Macedonia or Slovenia.[35] The indicators presented in Table 1 are characterized in detail in the next part of the study.

T. Jukić, M. Merlak, *The Use of Social Networking Sites in Public Administration: The Case of Slovenia*, "Electronic Journal of e-Government" 2017, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 2-18.

[35] T. Jukić, B. Svete, *The Use of…*, pp. 7-22; G. Lappas et al., *Facebook Content Strategies and Citizens' Online Engagement: The Case of Greek Local Governments*, "The Review of Socionetwork

Table 1: Set of Indicators

Group	Indicator	Indicator's value
Character of information included in the analysed posts published on Facebook pages	Purpose of the posts	Calling for participation; Calling for opinion; Information on future events; Information on live events; Information on past events; Service posts; Passive posts
	Spheres of social life included in the posts	Crisis management; Culture; Education; Environmental issues; Healthcare; Order and security; Other; Public infrastructure; Self-government issues; Social issues; Sport; Traffic

However, the method was slightly adjusted to the conditions of Slovak self-government. The spheres of social life included in the table are based on original and assigned competencies defined by relevant legal norms. The centre of our attention is the character of the information and the content shared by selected group of cities.

The research sample was selected intentionally. The study analyses the official Facebook pages of eight regional cities in Slovakia (Banská Bystrica, Bratislava, Košice, Nitra, Prešov, Trenčín, Trnava and Žilina). The selection of cities was determined by the fragmentation of local self-government and the importance of the regional cities in Slovakia. Local self-government is a specific public activity different from the state, which is focused on public issues, has a powerful impact on living standards and serves to promote the democratic values of society.[36] Selected cities (local self-government units) are mostly perceived as initiators of innovative solutions in Slovakia. Besides, the selected regional cities also represent the most populous cities.

The data were collected between 1 January 2016 and 31 December 2020. All data were obtained by analysing the official Facebook pages of regional cities in Slovakia. The obtained information and data were collected manually by examining the

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Strategies" 2018, vol. 12, pp. 1-20; D. Špaček, *Social Media…*, pp. 199-218; N. Levkov, *How Macedonian…*, pp. 199-210; A. Lev-On, N. Steinfeld, *Social Media…*, pp. 234-261; D. Agostino, *Using Social Media…*, pp. 232-234.

[36] C. Lentner, Sz. Hegedűs, *Local Self-Governments in Hungary: Recent Changes through Central European Lenses*, "Central European Public Administration Review" 2019, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 51-72; M. Vernarský, *Current State's Attitude Towards Municipal Self-Government in Slovakia*, "Slovak Journal of Political Sciences" 2019, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 49-74; M. Jesenko, *Territorialnyje samoupravljaemyje kompleksy i ich kompetencii v Slovackoj respublike* [in:] *Kuľturnoje mnogoobrazije v obrazovanii*, Sankt-Petersburg 2009, pp. 174-192.

official Facebook pages of a selected group of local self-government units (external desk research). The acquired data were processed by using methods of descriptive statistics. Only one purpose was assigned to each post. Besides, one post might include information about various spheres of social life. Altogether 19,466 posts were analysed, and all of them were checked manually.

4. Results and findings

The paper focuses on the content published on selected official Facebook pages between 2016 and 2020. The analysis was dedicated to the general features of Facebook use, spheres of social life mentioned in published posts, and purpose of the published posts.

4.1. Basic features of Facebook use

Basic features of the analysed official Facebook pages of Slovak regional cities represent the introductory part of our research. Information about the number of posts on the analysed Facebook pages during the selected period of five years are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Number of posts (2016-2020)
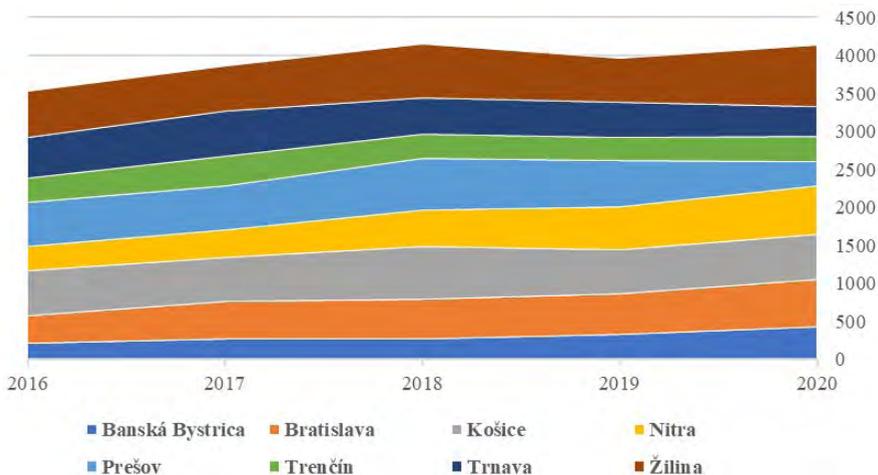
Source: Author

Altogether, 19,466 posts were published by the selected regional cities during the analysed period. The highest number of posts was published in 2018 (4,153 posts). The growing importance of social media activities is confirmed by the 17% growth of posts published from 2016 to 2020. The highest number of posts during the analysed period was published by Žilina (3,301 posts), while the least active was Banská Bystrica (1,520 posts). The official Facebook page of Žilina was the most active page with the highest number of posts published per year (811 posts in 2020).

The number of posts published per year vary between the selected cities. In this sense, we cannot identify an official Facebook page with a stable number of posts published during selected period. A significant drop in the annual number of posts could be identified in the case of Prešov in 2020 (48%).

4.2. Spheres of social life included in the posts

another important part of our research was focused on the spheres of social life mentioned in the posts published by selected cities. Figure 2 includes the occurrence rates of spheres of social life mentioned in the analysed posts.

Figure 2: Spheres of social life included in the posts (2016-2020)
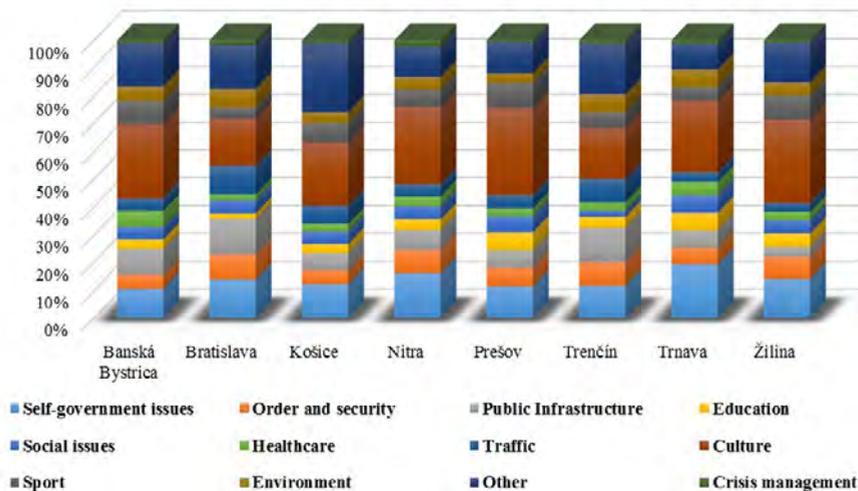
Source: Author

The research revealed that some spheres of social life are not mentioned very often by the selected group of cities. In this sense, we might identify spheres of social life

with an average occurrence rate lower than 10%. Healthcare, education, social issues, environmental issues, traffic information, sport and crisis management are not in the centre of attention of regional cities.

The development of public infrastructure is a complex group of posts (11.66% on average). This specific type of posts is closely connected with the development of the territory and is mostly associated with investments in the reconstruction of properties, the construction of roads, power or water supply, as well as the maintenance of school, healthcare, and cultural facilities. The cities which have shared information about the development of public infrastructure most frequently were Bratislava with 606 posts (23.88%) and Trenčín with 360 posts (21.70%). In these two cities, more than 20% of posts published during the analysed period include information about development of infrastructure.

Order and security are another important sphere addressed in the posts of selected cities (11.04% on average). Posts of this type mostly include information about various security threats, activities of police departments, organized cleaning of the public places, parks and gardens, as well as waste management information.

Self-government issues represent 20.99% of the posts on average. The difference between two cities on opposite sides of the scale is more than 20% (Banská Bystrica 15.39% and Trnava 36.18%). The posts of this type mostly include information about activities of the city's chief administrative office and elected representatives, local taxes, local development or opening hours changes.

The group of posts called "other posts" is the most inconsistent group. The difference between two cities on opposite sides of the scale is also almost 20% (Nitra 17.81% and Košice 36.12%). Other posts mostly contain passive information, photos without text or a change of the profile photo.

Culture is the most frequently mentioned sphere in the posts of the analysed cities (36.15% on average). The lowest occurrence rate was identified in the case of Bratislava with 815 posts (32.11%) and the highest in Prešov with 1,394 posts (50.27%). This high occurrence rate is caused by the wide range of activities associated with cultural events held by various entities.

4.3. Purpose of the posts

Based on the purpose of the posts published on the official Facebook pages, the activities of the selected cities were divided into seven groups (Figure 3).

Figure 3: The purpose of posts published (2016-2020)
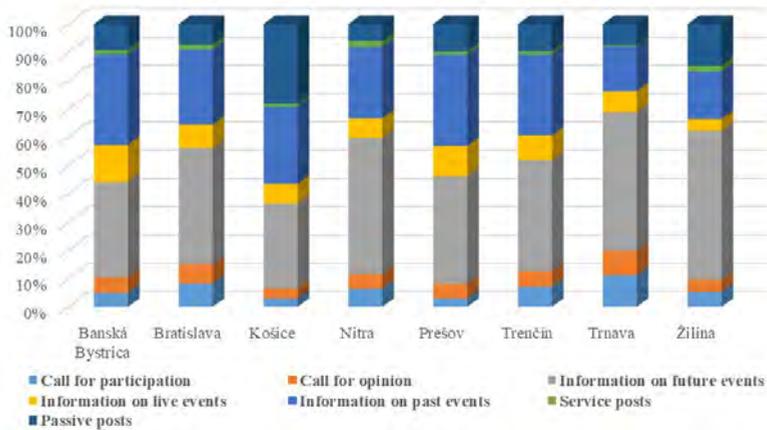
Source: Author

Altogether, 42.06% of posts include information about events, happenings or activities which will take place in a certain city. The highest occurrence rate was identified in three cities (Nitra 48.35%, Trnava 48.97% and Žilina 52.74%). These group of posts mainly include invitations to future cultural, sport, social, educational, and other events. In this sense, information about future events or activities are the most frequently mentioned type of posts.

The posts of the second most frequently mentioned type include information about previous events. These posts represent approximately 25% out of all posts of the selected cities over the five-year period. The highest average values were identified in the cases of Banská Bystrica (32.04%) and Prešov (32.17%), while the lowest occurrence rates were identified in the cases of Trnava (15.78%) and Žilina (16.84%).

The official Facebook pages of the selected regional cities include posts which invite citizens to participate and engage. In average numbers, both types of posts, the ones calling for participation (6.09%) and the ones calling for opinions (5.35%), reached a relatively low occurrence rate.

The posts calling for opinions include requests for surveys and questionnaires, opinions of citizens about realized activities and emotions of citizens associated with the actual or the latest events. The posts calling for citizens' opinions represent between 3% and 8% of all posts. The highest average occurrence rate was identified in the case of Trnava - 8.74%.

The posts calling for participation include information whose aim is to foster active participation of citizens, such as active participation in meetings of city councils, participation and engagement in preparing strategic and long-term documents, applications connected with the participatory budget of the city, invitations to public discussions on key issues. The posts calling for participation vary between 4% and 8% in the most cases. Trnava paid the highest attention to active participation of citizens, and in this sense, 11.17% of the published posts try to foster active participation of citizens.

The last two types of posts are not connected with the expected activity of citizens. Service posts represent a minimal part of the overall number posts with 1.38% on average. This type of posts mostly includes information about the number of fans, change of title photos or any change of the site's propositions. Passive posts as another type represent 12.36% of all the posts of regional cities. The highest occurrence rate was identified in the case of Košice (28.09%) These posts mostly include passive photos with no other description, as well as information about name days or just simple greetings.

5. Discussion

The use of Facebook by public administration still represents a relatively unexplored field of study, and possible negative aspects have not been examined satisfactorily so far. The question of legitimacy is raised automatically when we talk about these new platforms. The exclusivity of social media use at the expense of other communication channels is dangerous and nondemocratic in our opinion. Social media need to be perceived as complementary communication channels. However, there is no doubt that the importance of social media will grow in the coming years.

Regarding the significance of information technologies, the implementation of social media might help to improve the qualitative aspects of the contemporary concept of governance and e-communication. Summing up, social media should be characterized as a new platform for communication between public administration and citizens. We might argue that according to this fact, the official Facebook pages are a stabile part of cities' images. This statement was confirmed not only by the theoretical introduction, but also by the presented results. The number of posts and the intensity of use have grown during the analysed period, what was confirmed by the 17% growth of posts published from 2016 to 2020.

We might argue that posts of the analysed cities contain information about various types of spheres. According to content analysis, culture, other posts and self-government issues were the most frequently mentioned spheres of social life in the conditions of the selected regional cities in Slovakia. Besides, important part of social media activities of Slovak regional cities relates to sharing information about order and security and reports about the development of public infrastructure represent. Cities should publish information which is perceived as important and attractive from the perspective of citizens. These spheres of social life should be assessed as the spheres which citizens are identified with.

Our research revealed that culture is the most frequently mentioned sphere of social life in selected regional cities (36.15% on average). The analysis of the Slovenian municipalities also confirmed that culture is the most mentioned sphere with 44% out of all posts.[37] Other posts represent part of shared content, which is the second most frequent segment both in Slovak regional cities and Slovenian municipalities.

The quality of information is one part of the success, which must be complemented by an adequate purpose. According to our research, we might say that two types of posts reach higher occurrence rates than all other types of posts. The highest occurrence was identified in the type of posts with a strictly informational character. The research revealed that the dominant part of posts aims to inform citizens about future and past events and happenings.

According to our research, the content published by regional cities is mostly informational, because 74.92% of posts just inform citizens about future, present or past events. In Slovenia, 57% of posts include just informational content, while only 0.41% of posts call for citizen participation.[38] It was also confirmed by the research on Facebook activities of Greek municipalities that the most frequently utilized strategies are not those that were found as the most engaging.[39] What is more, only 0.80% of posts shared by Czech self-governing regions invite citizens to participate.[40] However, posts calling for opinion or participation of citizens represent 11.44% of all the posts published by Slovak regional cities.

Improving the quality of information and sophistication of the posts' purpose is the first step on the path to involve citizens in the decision-making process, enhance the relationship between public administration and citizens, and improve the quality of public services and quality of life. Social media represent a brand-new communica-

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[37]   T. Jukić, B. Svete, *The Use of…*
[38]   *Ibidem.*
[39]   G. Lappas et al., *Facebook…*
[40]   D. Špaček, *Social Media…*

tion platform between public administration and the public, which is thanks to their interactivity, simplicity, and immediacy, different from the interaction tools used so far.

The benefits of the performed analysis and the defined recommendations should be considered in connection with their limits. The research sample was selected intentionally, and the paper examines the official Facebook pages of eight regional cities. According to this fact, the widening number of organizations could be very useful both for theory and practice. The paper could foster future research. Moreover, the paper concentrates on Slovak cities, but its findings could be inspirational to public administration organizations around the world. In this sense, the international comparison seems to be very attractive. Besides, interesting findings might be revealed by examining specific situations, such as periods before elections, extraordinary situations associated with weather or environmental catastrophes.

6. Conclusions

The use of social media in the sphere of public administration can be recognized as logical reflection of their current importance and attractivity among individuals in the contemporary society of the 21st century. Sophistication of social media use can be viewed especially in their potential to share information immediately and their ability to create a space for two-way communication between local self-government units and citizens. According to our research, social media activities have mainly informational character in the case of Slovak regional cities. The research revealed that the dominant part of posts aims to inform citizens about future and past events and happenings, while calling for opinions and calling for participation represents a significantly lower part of total posts.

However, the paper tries to be an initial insight into the relatively new aspect of public administration activities on social media. This purpose is very important despite various similar short-term period research published. Public administration is just beginning to create standards and social media policies. In this sense, the widening of informational basis is very important for better sophistication of social media use.

Moreover, social media do not represent the final solution for more effective participation and engagement of citizens in governance and policymaking, but their use offers a strong communication mechanism, which cannot be overlooked by current democratic states governed by the rule of law.

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Zebrane w monografii artykuły naukowe dotyczą szerokiego spektrum zagadnień związanych z cyfrową transformacją administracji publicznej w Europie. Pierwsza część książki została poświęcona analizie e-administracji z perspektywy prawa europejskiego. Następnie cyfryzację administracji przedstawiono jako katalizator transformacji administracji otwartej, odpowiedzialnej i świadczącej e-usługi dla obywateli. Książka ukazuje również wspływ digitalizacji na funkcjonowanie polskiej administracji publicznej. Ostatnia część opracowania dotyczy e-administracji jako czynnika zwiększającego potencjał administracji w państwach członkowskich UE i państwach stowarzyszonych oraz na szczeblu międzynarodowym.

Monografia adresowana jest do badaczy zajmujących się administracją, prawem administracyjnym i europejskim, praktyków: sędziów, prokuratorów, urzędników państwowych, adwokatów i radców prawnych oraz studentów i doktorantów prawa, administracji i ekonomii. Mamy nadzieję, że publikacja poszerzy wiedzę na temat cyfryzacji administracji w Polsce i Europie oraz zachęci do dalszych studiów w tej dziedzinie.

WYDAWNICTWO
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