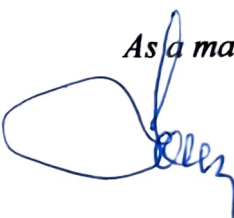


**Federal State Budgetary
Educational Institution higher education
RUSSIAN ACADEMY OF NATIONAL ECONOMY
and CIVIL SERVICE
under the PRESIDENT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
North-West Institute of Management**

Agarkov Konstantin Yurievich

As a manuscript


**Political Technologies for Managing Public Opinion through Social Networks
(Based on the Example of St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Region)**

Specialty - 5.4.5. Political Sociology

Abstract of the dissertation

for the degree of candidate of sociological sciences

Scientific supervisor:

Doctor of Political Science, associate professor

Vetrenko Inna Aleksandrovna

Saint Petersburg 2026

Relevance of the dissertation research topic

Over the past 20 years, social media has reached the majority of the Russian population and become not only a means of communication but also a platform for promotion, including a political tool in the election cycle. During the campaign period, social media employs political technologies to shape public opinion alongside traditional methods. This study examines the role of social media during the campaign period and methods for assessing their effectiveness. The development of information and communication technologies has led to a division of political communication into technological (information transmission) and semantic (information perception) components. The role of traditional media is declining: 65% of Russians watch television daily, more than two-thirds use online-resources, and approximately 80% use social media and instant messaging apps. The relevance of this topic stems from the insufficient study of the role of social media in the electoral process and its impact on voter acquisition.

The degree of development of the problem. The research topic of this dissertation covers a wide range of issues explored in the works of a number of scholars. Max Weber studied the nature of political power through the prism of the state, C.R. Mills studied the formation of political elites, and P. Bourdieu studied social space as a field of struggle for resources, which is applicable to competition for voters' votes. G. Tarde and B.A. Grushin contributed to the understanding of "public opinion," while P. Sorokin studied political stratification (in particular, he demonstrated that formal equality in the electoral law does not guarantee the victory of the party that suits the majority). T. Parsons substantiated the concept of rational voter choice, and G. Simmel explored the expression of the interests of social groups in politics. K. Marxist conceptualized power as the organized violence of one class over another; in the study, this is correlated with the use of administrative resources in elections. D. Easton examined the distribution of resources by government institutions, G. Almond—the dynamics of the political process through communication between government and society, G. Spencer – the harmony between government and the population, P. Sztompka – the problem of the superiority of some people over

others in politics. T. Hobbes and J.-J. Rousseau formulated the concept of the "social contract", applicable to the analysis of society's demands and government proposals. Issues of mass psychology and manipulation were studied by G. Le Bon, S. Siegel, N. Machiavelli; modern Russian scholars (I. A. Vetrenko, A. I. Solovyov, G. V. Pushkareva, and others) – political technologies and methods of influencing society. The problem of consciousness manipulation was developed by M. Castells, V. N. Panin, A. V. Kiva, S. G. Kara-Murza, V. M. Bekhterev, and A. Gramsci. The practical application of political technologies in elections in Russia was studied by M. G. Anokhin, V. V. Fedorov, S. V. Lvov and others; foreign practitioners were studied by O. V. Popova, I. M. Bunin and others. Issues of social networks and political communication are covered in the works of L. V. Smorgunov, J. Thompson, R. -J. Schwarzenberg, J. Moreno, J. Barnes, G. Lasswell; the use of social networks for campaigning was analyzed by K. L. Zuykina, S. V. Volodenkov, A. Yu. Suvorova and others. Thus, the role of social networks in election campaigns is studied from different perspectives, but it remains a complex task to determine their significance as a platform for promoting parties and candidates in order to obtain votes.

The purpose of the dissertation research is to study political management technologies public opinion to develop methodological recommendations aimed at assessing the effectiveness of using social networks on the Internet to promote a political actor in elections at various levels with a high level of political competition.

An important part of the research is the study of the experience of using political technologies used in social networks in election campaigns and their impact on the electorate.

To achieve the stated goal, the following **tasks of the dissertation research were defined and solved:**

1. To identify sociological approaches to political technologies in foreign and domestic science.
2. To study political technologies as a tool for policy implementation.
3. Consider ways of shaping public opinion in social networks using political technologies.

4. To identify the specifics of social networks as a space for conducting political campaigns.

5. To conduct an empirical sociological study aimed at identifying the extent to which candidates use social media during the campaign period in elections at different levels of government.

6. To highlight the methods of political communication used in social networks for political campaigning during the campaign period for elections at various levels.

7. To determine the influence of political technologies used in social networks on the public opinion of the electorate during the campaign period of election campaigns at various levels of government.

8. To develop methodological recommendations for assessing the effectiveness of social networks in promoting a political actor in elections with a high level of political competition based on the author's research.

The object of the dissertation research is the process of managing public opinion through social networks on the Internet.

The subject of the research is political technologies for managing public opinion through social networks in election campaigns.

The field of study corresponds to the research directions, 5.4.5. Political sociology. Dissertation research completed V scientific and problematic And semantic the content of the following positions passports: "1. Specifics of the sociological approach to the study of political processes and phenomena"; "16. Electoral behavior as a form of political behavior"; "18. Public opinion as a systemic element of power relations"; "19. Mobilization and manipulative political technologies in the formation and management of public consciousness and public opinion."

Theoretical Framework and Main Research Methods. The theoretical foundation of the study is formed by P. Bourdieu's theory of the political field as a market for political products and network theory, which considers communities of interest as a platform for political communication. Based on G. Lasswell's theory, the

functions of mass communication in social networks (informing, interpreting, and transmitting information) are identified; the communication – technological approach includes social networks in a system of communication techniques and methods using technical means. The methodological base includes a network approach for studying the interaction of social groups and candidates. The following methods were used for empirical research: content-analysis of social networks, secondary data analysis, comparative, partially exploratory and cohort methods, document analysis (to assess financial expenditures and election results), sociological observation (to assess user reactions to content).

The information base includes an analysis of political parties' campaign publications supporting nominated candidates and candidates' campaign content for election campaigns, assessing their relevance to voters on the social network. The final financial reports of candidates and political parties are examined for funding for the promotion of campaign publications on social media. Based on the votes received following the election results, an indirect conclusion is drawn about the effectiveness of using social media during the campaign. The study analyzes elections at various levels: federal, regional, and municipal. Federal elections include the 2024 presidential election of the Russian Federation, with four registered candidates. The study examines regional elections using the 2024 gubernatorial election of St. Petersburg, with four registered candidates. Municipal elections are examined using 28 municipalities of the Leningrad Region in 2024, with nine hundred and nine registered candidates.

Validity and reliability of results. The scientific validity and reliability of the study results are confirmed by a combination of interrelated factors. The theoretical and methodological framework of the study incorporates proven scientific approaches and modern analytical methods, ensuring the reliability of the findings. The validity of the findings is ensured by the internal logic of the study, the consistency of the solution of the tasks, and the alignment of the developed recommendations with the stated objectives. Further confidence in the reliability of the results is provided by the consistency of the findings with the provisions of current strategic documents and the

practice of using social media communication. This approach confirms the scientific value and practical significance of the study results.

Scientific Novelty. Political technologies are the subject of interdisciplinary research, but their sociological dimension remains underdeveloped. The author's methodology for sociologically studying political technologies on social media allows for more effective planning of campaign content. Although it is widely believed that social media campaigning influences election results, the study refuted this notion and revealed more complex mechanisms of electoral behavior. It has been proven that the effectiveness of social media campaigning depends on the level of the election: it is most effective at the regional level due to voter engagement and support from administrative and financial resources. Criteria for assessing the effectiveness of political communication on social media are defined: relevance of publications, frequency and quality of content, funding, and choice of delivery channel. The developed methodology offers a new tool for assessing the role of social media in shaping public opinion during the campaign period. Recommendations for assessing the effectiveness of social media in highly competitive political environments are formulated: the key factors are content quality, campaign budget, and the final election outcome.

The author's key findings, which are being defended, include the following: The concept of "political struggle" in a democratic society is explored as a competition between parties and leaders, where society evaluates the relevance of their proposals. The importance of communication channels with society, particularly social media, is emphasized; however, a single criterion for assessing their effectiveness has not yet been established. The study identified parameters for assessing the effectiveness of social media during the campaign period: frequency and quality of publications, user engagement, funding for content promotion, and voting results. The role of parties in promoting candidates is also examined. The results showed that in the 2024 presidential election in Russia, the role of social media was insignificant: with the participation of the incumbent president and the

absence of opposition from traditional media, social media does not influence the outcome of the campaign;

- At the regional level (using the St. Petersburg gubernatorial elections as an example), the hypothesis about the role of social media was confirmed: due to media competition and the erosion of the target audience, social media proved to be more effective, although the current governor is assisted by administrative resources;

- At the municipal level (elections of deputies in the Leningrad region), social networks turned out to be unclaimed: candidates and parties practically did not use them, there was no funding, and campaigning did not produce the desired effect.

Total: the hypothesis was confirmed by 33% (regional level) and not confirmed by 66% (federal and municipal levels).

The theoretical significance of this study lies in its potential for further evaluation of the effectiveness of social media for promoting political actors in highly competitive environments. The results can be used in both theoretical and applied courses for political scientists and sociologists, and in courses such as "Political Consulting," "Political Sociology," "Electoral Sociology," and "Organization and Conduct of Electoral Campaigns."

Practical significance of the study: Metrics for assessing the effectiveness of social media during the campaign period are proposed. These can be compared with election results and competitors' performance to evaluate the political technologies and resources employed. The study's findings help develop effective social media campaigning strategies, including for attracting supporters throughout the election cycle. The findings also provide practical benefits for political consultants and candidates planning their campaigns.

Testing of research results and publication.

The dissertation work is reflected in a number of articles, including those published in journals from the list of the Higher Attestation Commission and the Russian Science Citation Index:

1. Agarkov K. Yu. Using social networks in making project decisions: gender perception of information and indirect influence during the election campaign / K. Yu. Agarkov // Management Consulting. - 2022. - No. 8 (164). - P. 28-35.

2. Agarkov K. Yu. The Impact of Political Campaigning in Social Networks on Voter Sympathies During the Campaign Period of the 2024 Russian Presidential Elections / K. Yu. Agarkov // Sociodynamics. -2025. - No. 1. - P. 54-68.

3. Agarkov K. Yu. Social networks as a channel of political communication of parliamentary parties of Russia / K. Yu. Agarkov // Power and management in the East of Russia. -2025. - No. 1 (110). - P. 136-144.

4. Agarkov K. Yu. Indirect influence in the election campaign on users of social networks / K. Yu. Agarkov // Scientific works of the North-West Institute of Management of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration. - 2023. - Vol. 14, No. 5 (62). - P. 44-48.

5. Agarkov K. Yu. Political communications in social networks of local government bodies / K. Yu. Agarkov // Russian society today: values, institutions, processes: Proceedings of the All-Russian scientific conference, St. Petersburg, November 16-18, 2023. - St. Petersburg: OOO Publishing House "Scientia", 2023. - P. 188-191.

6. Agarkov K. Yu. Social capital of politicians and mechanisms for converting it into electorate support / K. Yu. Agarkov // Russia's role in shaping a multipolar world: challenges, opportunities, prospects, management decisions: a collection of articles following the VII International Nevsky Forum, St. Petersburg, June 21-23, 2023. - St. Petersburg: Federal State Budgetary Educational Institution of Higher Education "Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration", 2023. - P. 13-18.

The results of the work were also presented at scientific conferences:

1. IV International Scientific and Practical Conference "Women in Public Service", March 4, 2022, Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration.

2. International scientific and practical conference "Seleznev Readings", November 17, 2022, Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration.

3. The First International Pitirim Sorokin Research Paper Competition in Sociology, February 26, 2023, Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration.

4. V International Scientific and Practical Conference "Women in Public Service", March 3, 2023, Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration.

5. XIV April Conference, April 4, 2023, Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration.

6. VII International Nevsky Forum, June 21-23, 2023, Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration.

7. XVII All-Russian Scientific Conference "Kovalev Readings. Russian Society Today: Values, Institutions, Processes", November 16–18, 2023, Saint Petersburg State University.

8. Scientific and practical seminar of the North-West Institute of Management of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration and the Shanghai Administrative Institute "Digitalization of the Social Sphere of Society in Russia and China", November 23, 2023, Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration.

9. VI International Scientific and Practical Conference "Women's Agenda in the Modern World", March 6, 2024, Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration.

10. VIII International Nevsky Forum, June 20-21, 2024, Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration.

11. VII International Scientific and Practical Conference "Women's Agenda in the Modern World", March 6, 2025, Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration.

12. IX International Nevsky Forum, June 26-27, 2025, Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration.

13. VIII International Scientific and Practical Conference “Women's Agenda in the Modern World”, March 5, 2026, Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration.

Structure of the dissertation research. The work consists of three chapters, ten paragraphs, an introduction, a conclusion, a list of sources and literature, and four appendices.