

POLITICAL BRANDING IN SOCIAL NETWORKS (USA PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN'24 IN TIK-TOK)

Svetlana Stankova
Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

Abstract. The subject of this paper is the communication strategies through which the candidates for the US presidency in 2024, Kamala Harris and Donald Trump, imposed their individual political brands in the social network Tik-Tok. The last three weeks of the election campaigns of the two candidates on Tik-Tok – the period between the 15th of October 2024 and the 5th of November 2024 – spans the timeline covered by the current study. This final stage of the campaign is often referred to as the phase of most intense “bombardment” of the public with political messages. The focus here is laid on the specific image-building techniques and messages used by the two presidential candidates. The methods of data processing and interpretation used in the study include detailed information search, empirical evidence extraction, monitoring, discursive and comparative analysis of the data obtained. As a result, the current paper leads to the observation that Kamala Harris and Donald Trump demonstrated a high degree of adaptability to the new communication platform, effectively coding their brand messages in line with the expectations and attitudes of specific audiences.

Keywords: USA presidential campaign; communication strategies; political branding; brand message; social network Tik-Tok; lingvodidactology

Introduction

In a context of increasing digitalization and media fragmentation, political branding is becoming an increasingly complex and multilayered process. Whereas until recently the main intermediary between politicians and their voters was the traditional media, which informed citizens about the political process while filtering and often framing their interpretations of political events, in the age of information and communication technologies this function has been „shared“ or even displaced by social networks that rely on algorithms and visual communication in a digital environment (Daud 2021).

According to data provided by Pew Research from 2024, 48% of users between the ages of 18-29 follow political issues on Tik-Tok, and election campaigns adapted to the platform's algorithmic model demonstrate quantifiable increases in the attention and engagement of the voters (McClain 2024).

The emergence of social networks that host brief video content, such as TikTok, introduced a novel format for political communication. This format places emphasis on factors such as emotion, creativity, humour, and the potential for content to proliferate rapidly across the internet. This transformation requires new techniques. It also necessitates different approaches to analysing political communication. This is especially true during election campaigns. In these campaigns, the need for visibility (salience) and credibility reaches its climax. (Zeng 2021).

Within the US election campaign of 2024, the social network TikTok for the first time evolved to a part of the political toolkit in the race between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris. It became a stage not just of a clash of differently constructed and established political images, but also of different communication strategies for political branding that is supposed to reach the voters.

This article will address precisely the communication strategies by which the candidates for the US presidency in 2024 established their political brand on the social network Tik-Tok¹. It focuses on the visual and linguistic image techniques and messages Kamala Harris and Donald Trump employed to create narratives about themselves on the social network. The study is based on a discourse analysis of an empirical corpus comprising 648 communication units in the form of video posts from the personal and official TikTok profiles of the two presidential candidates. For the sake of research fairness, the following clarifications are also required:

1. To avoid the influence of the social network algorithm, which offers users content pre-selected in lieu of their interests and behaviour on social media, each video was manually verified and included in the analysis only after independent verification of its source and authenticity;

2. In accordance with the social network's policies for public figures, the study only considered posts from the officially verified TikTok accounts of Kamala Harris and Donald Trump, which are flagged on the platform with a blue authenticity checkmark. As a result, the analysis focuses on the content of the candidates' own political messages, rather than on content created by their supporters, third parties, or unofficial accounts.

1. Tik-Tok's characteristics

At the time of the presidential campaign in 2024, TikTok was a relatively new social network. It relied mainly on short video formats, where every frame, gesture and sound carried a semiotic implication. The platform integrated video, text, music and the possibility of interaction in the range of a few seconds to 30 minutes. The formats did not just enable content creation, much more, they structured it. From a platform perceived as a place where teenagers spend their digital time, Tik-Tok gradually became a space where different generations coexist online, each with their own voice. This ability of the social network to adapt to the interests and needs of different audiences turned into the key to its success. Its inherent characteristics

to combine customised algorithms with relevant content made it an ideal vehicle for conveying messages of various nature. Initially created to capture the attention of young audiences through trending and viral content, Tik-Tok now functions as a major political space where audiences actively participate in discussions, debates and initiatives that differ significantly from those on other social networks. With the help of memes, trending topics and emotionally impactful narratives, reinforced by the platform's algorithm, the audience is informed about important events so that the messages of politicians who use the social media reach the public in one form or another. Unlike platforms like Facebook, where content is determined by your network of contacts, Tik-Tok relies on personalized selection on the For You page, built on the basis of behavioural data collected. This often results in the display of ideologically curated or varied content without conscious choice on the part of the user. Also relevant is the so-called self-identification in Tik-Tok, which is tied to algorithmically collected feedback. The interaction between artificial intelligence and personality representation leads to a process where users adapt their political identity according to the responses they receive from the platform. This relationship complicates traditional perceptions of the mechanisms of persuasion and influence, and suggests future construction of political attitudes (Jones 2024).

While a significant proportion of TikTok users in the US engage with political content, the majority use the platform for entertainment. This gives TikTok a unique position in contemporary political communication: it is an entertainment platform, but also a source of political information with the ability to influence public opinion. (McClain 2024).

2. The US political context before the presidential election in November 2024

The country's political context ahead of the 2024 presidential elections was characterised by a mix of economic hardship, cultural transformation and a crisis of the democratic foundations. Over the past years, factors such as rising inflation, soaring house prices and the perceived erosion of democratic norms had altered the political landscape, intensifying divisions and misunderstandings between parties and shaking the credibility of institutions. This period of turmoil did not arise suddenly, but constituted the culmination of trends that had been evolving over the past decades, thus establishing the presidential elections as one of the most contentious and strategically important electoral events in modern American history (Mitchell 2024).

Experts at the University of Cambridge provided additional context by linking the political dynamics that characterized the country in recent years to economic and social cleavages. They argued that there is a growing divide between urban and rural areas, as well as a sense of alienation among voters who feel left behind by further progress of globalization. All these factors created conditions in which democratic ideals are under pressure. For these voters, choice is important because

they felt that the democratic system was threatened not only by external factors, but also by the institutions that protect their rights and security (Brown 2023). The profound political ideological schism was manifestly evident in the antithetical messages of the two leading political parties. An AP VoteCast poll surveyed over 115,000 voters nationwide and revealed that the future of democracy was cited as the most important factor by a large majority of Harris supporters. For them, the 2024 election represented a referendum on the nature of American government (Boak 2024). Conversely, Trump supporters were motivated by different priorities, such as inflation, migration and healthcare. Trump appealed to his voters with messages of economic nationalism and strict immigration policies, which resonated with those convinced that only radical policy changes could restore the country to its former glory (Collinson 2024).

These opposing narratives were not simply reflections of different political views, but embodied deeply divergent notions about the very nature of American identity. For Harris supporters, the election was a matter of ensuring that America would remain a model of democracy and respect for human rights, that it would further exist as a country that respected being different and upheld the rule of law. This vision focused on social justice, civil rights and the protection of minorities. The history and greatness of the United States was important to Trump supporters. Ideological divides were further exacerbated by the growing influence of social media, which skilfully conveyed political messages to reach the deepest fears and ambitions of its audiences.

3. Political messages and image techniques in Kamala Harris' communication strategy for political branding in Tik-Tok between 15th of October and 5th of November 2024

During her presidential campaign, Kamala Harris used two different Tik-Tok accounts, a personal and an official one, which were aimed at forming a coherent digital communication strategy focusing on building a positive political brand and engaging with followers.

Her personal account, @kamalaharris, was created on 27/07/2024. She herself announced that since she ended up on Tik-Tok's For You page anyway, she decided to take advantage by making a personal account as well. The account had about 9.2 million followers, with an average number of views of about 6.1 million per video, demonstrating serious user interest. The total number of likes reached 69.5 million, with each video averaging around 675 thousand likes. Impressions include 1.5 million comments, 14.5 thousand per video, and 1.5 million shares².

In a polarized ideological environment, Kamala Harris' political messages and image techniques focused on empathy, fashioning her image as a progressive leader. She addressed both sociopolitical issues and those related to her personal values. The dominating messages centred around the idea of unification, social justice and

restoring trust in democratic institutions. Kamala Harris built an image of a candidate who did not simply represent a political party, but who offered a vision of a more just society. A variety of content styles were to be traced in the account, both impulsive personal presentations and strategic, professionally prepared, political messages.

The launch of the campaign was marked by a video entitled: “*I think it was only a matter of time before I joined*”³. In this first video, Harris welcomed her audience and set the basic tone for all subsequent posts, which was to evolve around the credibility and intimacy with which she reached people through emotion. Against a backdrop of original sound effects, she addressed the audience with a smile and enthusiasm. The former Vice President looked confident while exuding warmth and sincerity. This approach helped followers perceive her as a down-to-earth person who was willing to share her thoughts and experiences with them. Among the image techniques used, the “one of us” technique stands out – a combination of casual demeanour, language, clothing and setting. Harris often appeared with a cup of coffee, on the street or interacting with people, which aimed at removing the traditional distance between politician and voter, but also adapted her image to the concise and engaging style of content characteristic of Tik-Tok. This technique also unfolded in the videos in which she told stories from her childhood or shared memories of family traditions. The inclusion of the lexemes “family”, “values”, “home”, “support” demonstrated that behind the political figure is a woman who places great importance on her family roots and moral convictions.

Another commonly used technique is “all in the same boat”, which emphasised the broad support for her candidacy. The video, which spiralled a viral effect, showed her arriving at a rally in Detroit, with the footage interspersed with the inspirational lyrics from the song Freedom, performed by Beyoncé. The camera captures not only her confident walk, but also the energy of the enthusiastic crowd. By participating in the rally, Harris turned the event into a stage where she presented herself not only as a political figure, but also as a woman of colour fighting for justice and equal rights. The political message encouraged people to unite for a change towards a common progress. The repeated use of the lexemes “struggle”, “victory”, “change”, “unity” reinforced her image as a leader with a clear position.

The content of her personal account often included behind-the-scenes footage of events, moments from her daily life, her relationships with family and friends, and personal reflections. During the period under review, there was a significant increase in both the number of followers and likes, comments and shares, highlighting the wide reach and influence of the content posted on the social platform.

The official TikTok account for the presidential campaign was created on 12/02/2024. Its content reflected on current political events and strategic campaign highlights aimed at attracting supporters and future voters. Of note is the evolution of the account. On 21/7/2024, it was transformed after Joe Biden ended his re-elec-

tion campaign and endorsed Kamala Harris as a presidential candidate. The re-branding of the account to “Kamala HQ” marked a significant strategic shift away from traditional political communication and towards an approach that relied on viral trends and user-generated content (Bensinger 2024). This approach indicated a conscious re-evaluation of political communication, which was strongly dominated by algorithms, meme culture, and short videos. A tech-savvy but also politically interested young audience, most often Gen Z, were targeted by the profile. The importance of this platform for reaching a younger audience in the polarised online environment was stressed by Harris’s campaign spokesperson, Seth Schuster (Lee 2024). The account had seen consistent growth, reaching 5.6 million followers. Data showed that videos received high engagement, with 109.9 million likes on average from 312,500 users. Total likes exceed 102.8 million and comments were over 744.5 thousand, both figures reflecting active audience participation and reinforcing Kamala Harris’ positioning on social media⁴. There was also a significant number of shares – over 6.3 million – suggesting that her messages were reaching a wider audience. The steady increase in all these indicators demonstrated an effective communication strategy that had managed to hold the attention and elicit a reaction from followers, and the steady growth in the number of comments, likes and views was a clear sign of successful management of Kamala Harris’ online presence on the social network⁵. Also of note is the professional quality of the posts, the attention to detail in lighting, composition and sound performance. These contrasted strongly with the often spontaneous and unstructured content otherwise characteristic of Tik-Tok. The political brand thus formed was that of a leader who understood the new generations and was willing to speak their language. The sound effects, transitions and cultural references used resonated with the youngest voters. And although some of the target group were not of voting age, they provoked wide discussions on social media, which in turn had the potential of influencing the opinions and behaviour of those eligible to exercise their vote. Harris’ vision was that politics was not an isolated activity limited to elections, but a long-term political dialogue that spanned multiple generations. The profile used the platform’s unique features to create a dynamic and engaging image, combining humour and accessibility of political messaging. Through it, Kamala Harris’s image was successfully established not only as the one of a serious and responsible political leader, but also as a casual and interesting person. The visual aesthetic used in the profile reflected on contemporary pop culture – emblematic was the neon green hue inspired by Charli XCX’s ‘Brat’ album. These visual implications were not a random choice, but a calculated communication move that positioned Harris as the “cool and approachable leader” who spoke the language of young voters, while also featuring the gravitas expected from a figure of this magnitude. The memes that are the product of her public statements were not only seen as a winning strategy by her supporters, but became a metaphor for her unique political style – that of a leader able to interact

with and fit into the new trends of internet culture. Harris gave advice in a humorous, offbeat way, but also emphasized her serious commitment to key political issues. Videos often included close-ups in which she spoke directly to the camera, creating a sense of personal contact with viewers. Her frequent use of colloquial expressions such as “*bro*”, “*vibe*”, but also of hashtags, and sound effects contributed to her image as a “*trending*” politician. By deliberately avoiding the formal, bland language of traditional politics and replacing it with the friendly and conversational tone consistent with the jargon of platforms like Tik-Tok, Kamala Harris created a casual narrative about her candidacy, thus making the content of the account feel like organic, authentic social activity⁶.

Engaging with followers was a key aspect of Kamala Harris’s election communications strategy. Some of the videos were interactive, provoking the audience to ask questions and urging. Some of these characteristics became evident in phrases such as “Join the fight” or “Tell us what you think” etc. Responding to comments and sharing user-generated content built community. Not only did this approach attract supporters and increased engagement by encouraging people to create their own Harris-related videos, but it also created a sense of a joint cause – users were part of a community that had the power to change.⁷

The recurring themes on both Kamala Harris accounts were specifically about hope and the desire for change. Her rhetoric focused on words like “*we*”; “*together*”; “*community*”. Her core political message, “*When We Fight, We Win*” expressed the belief that any challenge can be overcome through collaborative effort – a vision of the future based on shared values and belonging.

It can be summarized that the accounts created on Tik-Tok to promote Kamala Harris in the 2024 US presidential race presented her as an accessible and progressive leader. Her political brand promise conveyed through the social network was one of belonging to something larger, one of solidarity and hope in an uncertain political reality. In doing so, the former senator was positioning herself as an alternative to traditional, conservative political orders and showing young voters that politics could be both serious and fun. Viewed through the prism of a humorous-memetic aesthetic, it became a combination of entertainment and civic engagement, without the alienating language of classic campaigns that distanced the candidate from the public. Young voters saw a leader who not only understood their world, but who also invited them to actively co-author the political narrative.

4. Political messages and image techniques in the communication strategy for building Donald Trump’s political brand in Tik-Tok in the period between the 15th of October and the 5th of November 2024

Since 2016, Trump has been actively demonstrating his engagement with social media, which has allowed him to significantly hone his skills in presenting himself on digital platforms over the years. Through a combination of serious political top-

ics and entertaining, viral content, he's attracted the attention of both his hardcore supporters and audiences who had not interested in politics up until now.

During the US presidential race in 2024. Donald Trump, like his opponent, Kamala Harris, used two different Tik-Tok accounts – a personal one and an official, one, specifically created for the pre-election period. Through them, he was able, on the basis of his well-recognised persona, to combine purposefully constructed political messages with thoughtful image techniques and build a strong political brand.

Donald Trump's personal account, @realdonaldtrump, according to metadata, was created on 02/06/2024. The account had about 15.2 million followers, with its audience increasing during the period under review. The average number of views was around 16.9 million per video, indicating a strong interest from users. The total number of likes reached 34.7.3 million. The content had a total of 833.5 thousand comments, with an average of about 33.3 thousand per video. The shares were on average around 65.8 thousand. Total engagement was 37.2 million⁸. The predominant posts entailed personal addresses, reactions to political events, and rhetorical attacks on his political opponents. Videos shared were a mix of political commentary, personal opinions and negative media assessments. The content was centred on his own policy positions and direct criticisms, reflecting Trump's unfiltered and arrogant communication style. He positioned himself as a decisive politician who was not afraid to take radical action and make tough decisions.

Already with his first video in early June 2024, Donald Trump set the framework and basic tone for the content that would follow in the account for the upcoming period. He demonstrated his famed confidence with appropriately dynamic editing, dramatic music and patriotic symbols. The video captured the audience's attention, putting emphasis on his determination and leadership image⁹. The video presented him with his unique characteristic – "a rebel against the system". His aggressive rhetoric, expressive and often attacking tone remained dominant – he did not hesitate to address harsh criticism to his political opponents and the media. This approach branded him as the presidential candidate who does not compromise and was ready to fight against the established political establishment¹⁰.

The idea of the outsider fighting against political elites, corruption and bureaucracy was a key part of his political branding. The term "elite" was used negatively and was intended to emphasise the divide between ordinary people and the political establishment. Trump positioned himself as a defender of their interests and constructed a narrative of himself as a leader unafraid to speak the "truth" and stand up to the "fake news" media. Trump employed unconventional image-building techniques, such as humour, boastfulness, anecdotes, and loud promises of prosperity for Americans. He presented himself not only as a defender of the interests of ordinary people, but also as a victim of persecution by the media, his opponents, and the judiciary. Through this narrative of the strong advocate who was unfairly

blamed, Trump gained the support and loyalty of his audience by showing that he remained steadfast despite the odds. The content of the posts aimed to create a personal connection with the audience by engaging them emotionally. Through the use of the recurring keywords such as “*America*”, “*fight*”, “*truth*” and “*victory*”, Trump succeeded in reinforcing his image as a leader who defied pressure and stood up for the interests of his voters.

Like Harris, he relied on the “one of us” image technique. For a series of video contents, he disguised himself as a McDonald’s employee, a garbage truck driver, etc. In this way, he presented himself as someone who understood and shared everyone’s problems. The video content used symbols and elements from pop culture, and the emotion associated with the experiences and encounters contributed to branding him as a leader who was attuned to the needs and demands of ordinary people¹¹.

Unlike his personal profile, @teamtrump aimed at spreading the campaign’s political message and motivate voters and supporters to commit to supporting it through Tik-Tok’s digital tools¹². The videos had generated a total of 1.5 billion views, 125.8 million likes, 2.9 million comments and 11.1 million shares. On average, a video garnered 8 million views, 651.9 thousand likes, 15.2 thousand comments and 57.7 thousand shares, with an average duration of 32 seconds¹³.

The profile combined official videos from rallies with sarcastic comments ridiculing his opponents with excerpts from Trump’s speeches related to his policy positions and promises. The messages conveyed through @teamtrump were centred around three main themes – patriotism, economic prosperity and strong leadership. The use of audio snippets, dynamic cuts and vivid visuals “transcribed” the political spectacle into the language of the digital platform¹⁴. The videos showed Trump’s willingness to engage in internet skirmishes, using the platform as a weapon against anyone who wanted to hurt him. Collaborations with personalities like Jake Paul and Antonio Brown helped the videos go viral and reach users who otherwise had no interest in political topics¹⁵. Although the account was created in the summer of 2024, its content, full of energy, sardonic and peppery language and brutal revelations, gave it an edge in the battle for engaged supporters. Underpinning his political brand was the enduring motif of patriotism, the thread that united all his videos and formed the core of his campaign. This constant motif, expressed through his iconic message “*Making America Great Again*” (MAGA), reflected his vision of a strong and united America. In the content of Donald Trump’s official campaign profile on Tik-Tok, the use of superlatives and hyperbolic expressions clearly stood out. The lexemes “*great*” and “*greatest*” were used frequently to highlight both his personal qualities and the effectiveness of his policies. By making references in his political messages to traditional American values and US military strength, Trump fashioned himself as a defender of American interests and a guardian of conservative traditions. He built his political brand with his trademark rhetoric of economic

growth, security and stability. The brand promise evolved precisely around revitalizing the country's economy through tax relief and deregulation, ensuring national security by implementing tough immigration policies, and putting the interests of American citizens first. His style of speech, populist and informal, was a key element in his communication strategy – Trump retained a working-class accent throughout, which helped his self-portrait of being a politician who is connected to the concerns and woes of ordinary people. The use of short, common linguistic intensifiers, such as “really”, “unbelievable”, “a lot”, were much more easily perceived than political formal language. With clear and sharp language, Trump branded himself as a politician willing to take radical action for the life improvement of the Americans, relying on the emotional and the provocative stance. By the end of the campaign, the use of aggressive vocabulary increased, reflecting a focus on conflict. The combination of engaging content, direct interaction, and populist political messaging elicited strong reactions among audiences that, while not always positive, contributed to keeping the engagement high and making Trump the centre of attention. Donald Trump's electoral communication strategy was in fact based on the principle “Let Trump be Trump”. Corey Lewandowski, his campaign manager, pointed out that the best way for Trump to win was to be himself (Lord 2024).

It can be summarized that through his Tik-Tok accounts, Trump positioned himself as a politician who was distinguished by originality and authenticity. By combining his business skills with unfiltered, provocative communication, he challenged traditional norms of political communication and succeeds in capturing the attention and trust of his voters. They felt engaged and close to the “real” politician – the one who did not pretend at official events and stated his radical ideas and views for his country unwaveringly. In both of his Tik-Tok profiles, Trump presented himself as a determined leader who defied the elite and spoke “without a filter,” building a sustainable political brand notwithstanding sovereignly the criticism coming from the mainstream media.

Conclusions and summary

Following the 2020 pandemic, TikTok has firmly established itself as the preferred platform for Generation Z. Not only do they use it to entertain and express themselves, but they also use it to keep up to date with political developments. In 2024, it was also a political communication channel for presidential candidates Donald Trump and Kamala Harris for the first time, complementing existing media intermediaries and upending the hierarchies of access, representation, and visibility. This evolution in communication strategies reflected broader social changes driven by technological advances, media fragmentation and emerging cultural paradigms in the digital age. Political communication became decentralised, with complex political debates reduced to memorable slogans and videos lasting a few seconds.

In addition to providing a platform for alternative viewpoints, TikTok gave Kamala Harris and Donald Trump the opportunity to build a political brand that would resonate with young people thanks to its interactivity and emotional intensity. Through the social web, both candidates did not only further contributed to topics set by traditional media, but also created their own narratives. The current analysis shows that Kamala Harris's political brand on the social network was based on unification, empathy and accessibility, whereas Trump's relied on rhetoric associated with brazenness, power and control. While some voters perceived Trump's aggressive political brand as authentic and immediate, others saw Harris's consistency and clarity as an alternative that aligned with classical liberal values. Whether Trump's directness or Harris's discipline was preferred, it was clear that the value of a political brand depended on its ability to be recognised and engaged with – not just in the traditional one-hour television studio, but in the fifteen-second social media video.

NOTES

1. Here, the term “political brand” will be used to denote an identity tool that earns the emotional loyalty and trust of supporters.
2. The data included in the analysis is available from <https://exolyt.com/user/tiktok/kamalaharris>
3. This and subsequent examples used for the current analysis are available at <https://www.tiktok.com/@kamalaharris>
4. The data included in the analysis is available at Kamala Harris HQ. Overview: Account influence. In: Exolyt, 2025. Available from: <https://exolyt.com/user/tiktok/kamalahq>
5. Ibid.
6. The videos discussed in this paper are available from Kamala HQ.¹⁰⁰ [online]. In: Tik-Tok, visited on 25/10/2024. Available from: https://www.tiktok.com/@kamalahq/video/7429457662074473770?_r=1&_t=ZN-8tmBCYgr8Ja
7. Ibid. Kamala HQ. 8 [online]. In: Tik-Tok, 28.10.2024. Available from: https://www.tiktok.com/@kamalahq/video/7430896064552521003?_t=ZN-8tmB41HZXwk&_r=1
8. See Donald Trump – personal profile. In: TikTok, [2024]. Available from: <https://www.tiktok.com/@realdonaldtrump> [cited 11.02.2025]
9. See Trump, Donald J. Launching my TikTok at @UFC 302 [online]. In: TikTok, 02.06.2024. Available from: https://www.tiktok.com/@realdonaldtrump/video/7375744699140721963?_r=1&_t=ZN-8to67wYidwk
10. See Trump, Donald J. KAMALA, YOU'RE FIRED! [online]. In: TikTok, 25.07.2024. Available from: https://www.tiktok.com/@realdonaldtrump/video/7395392016563047710?_r=1&_t=ZN-8to6FR8x6b0

11. See Trump, Donald J. HOW DO YOU LIKE MY GARBAGE TRUCK? [online]. In: TikTok, 31.10.2024. Available from: <https://www.tiktok.com/@realdonaldtrump/video/7431703427366898974>
12. See Team Trump - campaign profile. In: TikTok, [2024]. Available from: <https://www.tiktok.com/@teamtrump>
13. Data included in the analysis is available from Donald Trump. Overview: account growth. In: Exolyt, 2025. Available from: <https://exolyt.com/user/tiktok/realdonaldtrump>
14. See Team Trump. GET OUT AND VOTE! MAGA [online]. In: TikTok, 05.11.2024. Available from: https://www.tiktok.com/@teamtrump/video/7433767175657164075?_t=ZN-8tppvu39Hk6&_r=1
15. See Team Trump. Jake Paul endorses President Trump [online]. In: TikTok, 31.10.2024. Available from: <https://www.tiktok.com/@teamtrump/video/7431970016423071018>

Acknowledgement

This study is financed by the European Union – NextGenerationEU, through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Republic of Bulgaria, project № BG-RRP-2.004-0008-C01

REFERENCES

BENSINGER, K., 2024. Harris Joins TikTok, Another Sign of the App's Value in Reaching Young Voters. *New York Times* [online], [accessed 9 February 2025]. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/26/us/politics/kamala-harris-tiktok.html>.

BOAK, J.; SANDERS, L., 2024. AP VoteCast: Harris voters motivated by democracy, Trump supporters by inflation and immigration. *The Associated Press* [online], [accessed 16 February 2025]. Available from: <https://apnews.com/article/ap-votecast-elections-harris-trump-voters-d5cf4e3611f50ec4349d93ddc7f037cd>.

BROWN, T.; METTLER, S., 2023 *Sequential Polarization: the Development of the Rural-Urban Political Divide, 1976 – 2020*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, ISSN: 1537-5927, vol. 22, Issue 3, pp. 630 – 658.

COLLINSON, S., 2024. Trump will win second term, CNN projects, in historic comeback after losing four years ago. *CNN* [online], [accessed 16 February 2025]. Available from: <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/11/06/politics/trump-wins-election/index.html>.

DAUD, R., 2021. The Role of Political Communication in Shaping Public Opinion: A Comparative Analysis of Traditional and Digital Media. *Journal of Public Representation and Society Provision* [online], vol. 1, Issue 2, pp. 80 – 89. [accessed 16 February

2025]. Available from: <https://psppjournals.org/index.php/jprsp/article/view/241/383>.

JONES, M., 2024. Algorithmic Bargaining: Negotiating Identity with Artificial Intelligence. *A Journal of Global Studies*, [online], [accessed 27 April 2025]. Available from: https://www2.hu-berlin.de/transcience/Vol15_No2_S25_S47.pdf

LEE, C., 2024. Kamala Harris Is Using Social Media to Reach Young Voters. *Time*, [online], [accessed 9 February 2025]. Available from: <https://time.com/7017076/kamala-harris-memes-social-media-young-voters>.

LORD, J., 2024. They Helped Let Trump Be Trump. [online]. *The American Spectator*, [online], [accessed 23 February 2025]. Available from: <https://spectator.org/they-helped-let-trump-be-trump>.

MCCLAIN, C., 2024. About half of TikTok users under 30 say they use it to keep up with politics, news. *Pew Research Center* [online], [accessed 27 April 2025]. Available from: <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/08/20/about-half-of-tiktok-users-under-30-say-they-use-it-to-keep-up-with-politics-news>.

MCCLAIN, C.; ANDERSON, M.; GELLES-WATNICK, R., 2024. How Americans Navigate Politics on TikTok, X, Facebook and Instagram. *Pew Research Center* [online], [accessed 25 April 2025]. Available from: <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2024/06/12/how-americans-navigate-politics-on-tiktok-x-facebook-and-instagram>.

MITCHELL, L., 2024. analyzing The 2024 Election's Impact: Domestic Politics, Politics, And America's Global Image. *America At A Crossroads: The 2024 Presidential Election And Its Global Impact* [online], New York: The Academy of Political Science, pp.1 – 2.

ZENG, J.; ABIDIN, C., 2021. #OkBoomer, time to meet the Zoomers“: Studying the memefication of intergenerational politics on TikTok. *Information, Communication & Society* [online], 24(1):1-23, pp. 2459-2481 [accessed 25 April 2025]. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353640503_’OkBoomer_time_to_meet_the_Zoomers’_studying_the_memefication_of_intergenerational_politics_on_TikTok.

✉ Dr. Svetlana Stankova, Assoc. Prof.
ORCID iD: 0000-0002-2977-227X
Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”
Sofia, Bulgaria
E-mail: svetlanais@uni-sofia.bg