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"Nonverbal communication as an element of building of the image of politicians in Poland. On the example of presidential elections in Poland in years 1995-2020"

Abstract of the doctoral thesis

Body posture, way of moving, appearance, facial expressions, quality of voice, articulation, charisma in speech, i.e. nonverbal messages that can support the process of building of a coherent image are used increasingly frequently in an aware and consistent manner on the political scene. It is no longer a secret that effective development of political career becomes possible thanks to soft skills including, without limitation, those related to effective and coherent communication. The issue of nonverbal communication, presented in and key from the perspective of the dissertation, is a trendy and, thus, both popular and problematic notion. Therefore, when considering it, one must be aware of how superficial the popularised knowledge of nonverbal communication is and, thus, how this knowledge is detrimentally simplified and to what extent it is based on a reliable and in-depth research perspective. The universality of this issue, especially in the area of business and politics, has made nonverbal communication become the subject of research in the field of psychology, behaviourism or marketing which, on the one hand, draws our attention to the significant interdisciplinary potential of the subject to this dissertation and, on the other, exposes the somewhat fragmentary nature of perception of appearance, apparel or situational gestures noticeable in the conducted analyses.

For this reason, the author of the dissertation decided to take up the challenge of identification of the issue of nonverbal communication as an element of image development, paying special attention to its multi-dimensionality, ambiguity and interdisciplinarity. Concurrently, the adopted perspective enables filling-in of the gaps in the available source literature, presenting this issue from the scientific perspective, at the same time not omitting the issues found in textbook and training literature.

The dissertation focuses on the characteristics of nonverbal communication of candidates for the office of the President of the Republic of Poland presented during presidential debates and in advertising spots of individual candidates in years 1995-2020. The subject of this dissertation and research conducted in its preparation is, therefore, nonverbal communication, with consideration given to and emphasis placed on its interdisciplinary dimension comprising: psychology, political sciences with special emphasis placed on the marketing-based approach

to politics, communication sciences, sociology or, to a lesser extent, medicine. Nonverbal communication is defined here as "the process by which nonverbal behaviours are used, either singly or in combination with verbal behaviours, in the exchange and interpretation of messages within a given situation or context" (Malandro, Barker and Barker, 1989: 5) and, thus, is considered by the author as an element shaping the image credibility of those candidates, key from the point of view of conducted research.

It must be noted that the analyses of nonverbal communication and studies concerning the image of political actors carried out so far have referred to the nonverbal subject matter narrowly. They have emphasised the importance of gestures, appearance, presence, way of speaking, polish in appearing in the media. They have not reached beyond these fragments of nonverbal communication. Thus, they have ignored both the value of the holistic approach to the sphere of utterance as well as the multi-dimensional method of reading-out and interpreting nonverbal messages. Therefore, the author of the dissertation decided to carry out extended research and create her own classification of nonverbal messages and indicators supporting development of image credibility and image professionalisation, as explained in more detail in chapters three, four and five. Concurrently, this broad and interdisciplinary approach enables carrying out of a precise and professional analysis.

The main research problem tackled in the dissertation is identification, characteristics and analysis of nonverbal signals forming an essential information creating the politician's image credibility, of which recipients are often unaware. The foundation for the proposed approach is the model of political marketing put forward by Bruce Newman and the concept of the third age of political communication which, in the case of these issues, employ the essence of image and nonverbal communication translating into development of a credible, coherent and trustworthy image.

The timeframes adopted for the purpose of the dissertation (1995-2020) are significant from the point of view of such phenomena as mediatisation, professionalisation and personalisation of electoral campaigns. The presidential campaign held in 1995 was treated as the first post-modernisation presidential campaign in Poland (Farrel, 1996; Dobek-Ostrowska, 2001). This type of campaign indicates use of professional marketing activities, engagement of advisors, strong development of media activities, including those based on modern technologies, with the conveyed message relying on visuality, image, sound, i.e. elements of influence material for the research carried out for the purpose of this dissertation.

The main aim of the research presented in the doctoral thesis was identification and diagnosis of nonverbal messages presented by the candidates for the office of the President of

the Republic of Poland as elements shaping their image credibility as well as characteristics of the dynamics of professionalisation of the said image. Another important aspect was identification and definition of the role of nonverbal communication as a key element in the process of development of image credibility. As part of pursued research objectives, the tools that could be helpful in development of the image and building of credibility of the political actor were also presented.

The analysis covered campaign materials of candidates and presential debates they participated in. The research covered politicians who participated in the presidential elections at least twice as well as all female candidates for the office of the President of the Republic of Poland in the period from 1995 to 2020. The candidate's activity in at least two presidential campaigns allowed to carry out research to state whether the method of use of nonverbal messages shaping the image credibility changed over the years and if so, whether the process of professionalisation of the image of presidential candidates can be noted. On the other hand, evaluation of participation of women in electoral campaigns allows to analyse traits important for electoral success as well as determination of nonverbal signals used by women, whether their method of communication differs from the one adopted by male candidates and whether women use male image features to match the type of leader or figurehead functioning in the Polish culture. The research methods employed in the dissertation include: analysis of content composition, comparative analysis, analysis of individual cases (qualitative analysis) and hybrid methodology combining qualitative and quantitative analyses.