

Joanna Kozierska
The University of Wrocław

**Methodological approaches to studying political campaigns.
Toolkit for the study of elections and election campaigns**

*Election campaign - the period of time immediately before
an election when politicians try to persuade people to vote for them.
(Cambridge Dictionary)*

The purpose of this study is to present a modern understanding of the essence of the elections, the functions they perform, but first and foremost to show the election campaign as a phenomenon without which modern democracy cannot function.

Considering the development of democracy in a very synthetic way, it can be noted that the political system was most often found in classical (direct) and contemporary (indirect) forms. The essence of the classical model was the direct exercise of power by authorized citizens. The shaping of the modern model of democracy (since the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries) significantly changed the character of the political system. As a result of many social and political changes, the essence of the contemporary model of democracy is focused on representatives, who govern on behalf of citizens (sovereign). To achieve this, the institution of elections had to be identified and expanded. As part of systemic solutions adopted in modern democracies, there are also institutions of direct and semi-direct democracy, however representative form is definitely the dominant solution. Along with the election, an election campaign appeared, and over time its role in the act of voting is still increasing.

The study will focus on the issue of election campaigns and will be divided into several sections:

1. Elections and their functions.
2. Ways of defining election campaigns.
3. Typology of election campaigns.
4. Duration of election campaigns.
5. Election campaign tools and threats to the modern election campaigns.

The election campaign in its present form is a relatively new phenomenon, especially if we take Central and Eastern European countries as a reference point, however it enjoys great interest from political scientists, sociologists, lawyers, media experts and other public space researchers. The further development of this phenomenon will concern the political perspective; however, it is impossible not to include other perspectives in the analysis.

There are a number of questions about election campaigns. However, the basic and most important of them is: what an election campaign is? We can find a number of definitions, and although many of them are relatively similar, small differences in their formulation are very significant. Much of them are also very general, which again gives many possibilities for interpretation.

Charles Tilly noticed that the democracy must consist of four obligatory elements: a pluralist party system; universal suffrage; fair, competitive and periodical elections and freedom to run an election campaign and access to the media of all political forces. So the election campaign is an immanent element of the democratic system of the state. However, it should be emphasized that it is the state system, the implemented electoral system or the functioning party system that will determine the type of election campaigns, their organization and course. Because of these components only, there are no two the same election campaigns. Campaigns in every country are different, and attempts to compare them sometimes are very problematic.

To achieve electoral success, campaign participants use all their technical and financial resources, but most importantly, they must remember the legal restrictions resulting from the duration of the campaign. So, another aspect worth examining is the precise determination of the actual duration of the election campaign. While part of the definition treats this element very generally (e.g. "time before elections" or "time just before elections") in many countries, accurate timing is important primarily because of the implementation of principles of law. Issues related to the organization, conduct and settlement of election campaigns remain at the interface of electoral, press and financial law. But in the era of new media, are we able to accurately determine when the campaign starts and what is and what is not an election campaign?

Today, a professional election campaign cannot function without political marketing tools. Of course, they should be adapted to the scale of election activities. Other tools will be used in local elections and others in national ones. Participants of election campaigns must be flexible in choosing the right tools, but it can be said that currently campaigns are primarily focused on the classic form of advertising, direct contact with the voter and public relations activities. Of course, one should not forget about moving a significant part of the campaign into the sphere of the Internet and the threats that come with it. Electoral campaigns are not limited to the traditional marketing but it has also marked its presence on digital media. Social media provides a place for electoral activities where candidates, government officials, and political parties can drive public opinion in the desired direction. However social media has also become a very powerful tool for voters, where they can express opinions, views and ideas. The purpose of introducing new media for political communication was to encourage everyone to debate, regardless of age, religion and gender. In addition, it was emphasized that the new media also meant e.g. a lack of authoritarian media control, ubiquitous freedom of speech, interactivity and two-way communication, low costs, speed of communication and, above all, globality. However, the threats of using new media began to be seen over time. Freedom of speech had to collide with hate speech, and the Facebook–Cambridge Analytica data scandal in 2018, showed that the personal data of millions of people's Facebook profiles were used it for political advertising purposes without their consent.