The Politicization of Selfie Journalism: An Empirical Study to Parliamentary Elections

3 authors:

Theodora A. Maniou
University of Cyprus
40 PUBLICATIONS   **30** CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Kosmas Panagiotidis
3 PUBLICATIONS   **3** CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Andreas Veglis
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
128 PUBLICATIONS   **502** CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:

Selfie Journalism View project

Data Journalism View project

The Politicization of Selfie Journalism:

An empirical study to Parliamentary Elections

1. Introduction

While the phenomenon of selfie photographs has been extensively analysed by academics in recent years – not only in the area of Cultural Studies but also in the Visual Studies sector and the media, *Selfie Journalism* was recently introduced (Omar, 2015; Maniou & Veglis, 2016) and constitutes one of the most notable phenomena within the current digital media environment, linking its outspread to the use of smart digital devices (phones, tablets, etc.). This digital revolution seems to have converted citizens into potential creators of images for newsworthy events; as such, Selfie Journalism can be viewed as a form of participatory and citizen journalism.

In this perspective, it was only a matter of time for this new phenomenon to be incorporated in the current journalistic practices, raising – at the same time – a number of issues, relating to notions of infotainment and impartial reporting, especially in 'difficult' sectors of reporting, such as politics. In fact, as the engagement of selfies in politics grows more and more everyday that goes by, following the fast growing tendency to involve *microblogging* and *social networking* in order to increase political participation, issues of reliability and trustworthiness of Selfie Journalism emerge, especially in relation to the specific characteristics of this new tendency in citizen/participatory journalism.

This article attempts to investigate the specific characteristics of Selfie Journalism in politics and political reporting. Based on both quantitative and qualitative research, the study analyses these characteristics in the period of parliamentary elections of 2016 in the Republic of Cyprus. The greater scope of this study evolves around the argument that Selfie Journalism, as a new species of participatory journalism, has penetrated the media in an effort to attract larger audience, especially in 'difficult' sectors of reporting, such as politics. In this perspective, the aim of the research is dual: first, to examine the extensive use of Selfie

Journalism in political campaigning and, secondly, to examine the impact of this phenomenon upon the media and, in turn, media engagement in such political tactics.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Definition and characteristics of Selfie Journalism

From 'life-streaming' (Freeman, 1997; Marwick, 2013) to selfies, the rhetorical art of 'streaming' visuals, photographs, audio and/or video, to curate a self-identity has become a common everyday practice (Wargo, 2015). With their origins in the areas of Art and Photography, today selfies are perceived as '*gestural images*' (Frosh, 2015) and, as such, their aesthetics cannot be purely understood and interpreted through Visual Studies but we need to engage in the analysis of communication and media theories, in order to fully understand their performativity in journalistic practices.

The basic criterion that made selfies become the new 'journalistic tool' in the digital media environment is the practice of sharing and, thus, distributing to a wide audience highly personalized 'stories' (moments, events, etc.), following the fast growing tendency for people to broadcast themselves ('life-streaming'). The practice of sharing digital content seems to be the fundamental and constitutive activity of Web 2.0, describing both the processes of distribution and communication within the digital environment (John, 2012). Selfies are analogous to '*the communication situation of broadcasting, which displays reporters in various locations and where experiences are mediated to an audience which has no first-hand acquaintance with them*' (Peters, 2001, p.717). Banita (2012) describes this phenomenon as '*media witnessing*' (see also, Koliska & Roberts, 2015, p.1674). Reading (2009, p.72), also, calls images taken with mobile devices as '*mobile witnessing*' and describes this procedure as data exchange via global networks.

It is not the selfie itself that changes the current journalistic practices, but the technology evolved around and beyond it. Smart technology, deployed through portable devices – such as smartphones and tablets - has eliminated issues of time in the process of sharing and globally distributing witnessing tokens. Additionally, HD cameras incorporated in this infrastructure allow the up-to-the-minute disclosure of witnessing tokens, deescalating - most of the times - the reportage itself: once shared a video or a photograph, there is no need for instant description, since a title (usually in the form of a hashtag) is simply enough (Maniou & Veglis, 2016). In this perspective, the news (information/reportage) does not derive from the photograph but it

rather is itself the photograph, while the journalistic analysis and interpretation follows and does not precede the story.

In fact, selfies go way further beyond than reflecting personal moments; as Koliska & Roberts (2015) argue, they are also communal experiences of modern life, while creating a constant flow of visual artefacts of personally witnessed events. As such, the practice of sharing selfies can be viewed as a form of participatory journalism and understood in fact as '*the combination of citizen journalism with multiple personal points of view (selfies provided by different people*)' (p.1677). In essence, digital revolution seems to have converted citizens into potential creators of images of newsworthy events, since there is a growing tendency during recent years for media to invite citizens to participate, by sending in photographs and/or videos of such events (Guerrero-Garcia & Palomo, 2015).

In the early years of social media development, journalists tended to be more selective concerning the material they imported from the social media into their news stories (Chen, 2013, p.87). But, as technology evolves and alternative modes of digital story-telling arise, this newly formed digital public sphere tends to overwhelm the agenda setting process of the media, bringing forward issues, events and/or individual people previously highlighted by the social media. The rapid rise of Instagram and Snapchat, for example, is the solid proof for this argument: politicians, actors, singers and various 'celebrities' prevail the current public sphere almost solely based on their selfie portraits in the digital world. They operate according to a kind of '*attention economy'* (Goldhaber, 1997; Lanham, 1994; Lankshear and Knobel, 2002), in which users attempt to attract the attention of other users and then display that attention as part of their own displays (Jones, 2009, p.118). Even the 'paparazzi' techniques today seem meaningless, since celebrities themselves choose to publicize their most private moments, using the most popular social networks[1].

The semiotics and functions of such pictures are perplexed. Like conventional portraiture, these displays are multifunctional, operating as aesthetic objects: as representations of individuals' characters or histories, as documents of identity or of particular physical traits and as communicative gestures in the ongoing interaction among users (Jones, 2010).

In this perspective, engagement is now the key and Selfie Journalism constitutes the new trend bringing Mobile Journalism a step forward: counting how many Facebook likes our

---

[1] We do not imply that the 'paparazzi practices' are nowadays vanished; however, social networks seem to offer a way to the 'celebrities' to please their fans by 'posting' more casual/personal/intimate moments.

stories get or tallying YouTube views for a video, is the previous social media strategy. Nowadays we want to know how people are commenting, starting conversations, and more importantly, how are they sharing journalistic content (Omar, 2015); in example, what kind of hashtags are accompanying the selfies or whether these hashtags are preserved or changed, when the selfie is reposted by different users in the digital media.

As such, a huge issue arises concerning the content itself of Selfie Journalism. Selfies' main value tends to be more emotional than aesthetic, since they are based on rather amateur than professional techniques (i.e., see analysis at Tifentale & Manovich, 2015). However, even these techniques have been changing lately and selfie photographs posted in the digital media environment are being edited in more professional ways with the use of digital tools, like Photoshop or Instagram filters, before being posted on the Web. In fact, the smart element of all portable devices refers to its ability to be reconfigured and repurposed by users through downloadable apps of their choice (Watkins, Hjorth & Koskinen, 2012), that can edit and re-shape content (i.e., edit a photograph, amend possible undesired elements, etc.). In this way, individuals can re-create their own identity by broadcasting themselves as they would like to be and not as they actually are.

In any case, selfies used to reproduce journalistic content do not depict isolated objects, but they are proven records of events, since they include background information and/or items/activities/other people/gestures framing the 'author' of the photograph. In this way, it is this exact 'framing' that becomes today's news, putting the author into the story; for example, by pinpointing an object or premises of the background scenery, the author automatically draws attention to it, placing this object in the centre of the viewers' interest and, thus, brings the frame forward as the main issue of the news story.

As such, elections can offer a unique example of how individuals and politicians can participate in an important media event as co-creators via multiplatform reality formats (Hammelburg, 2015, p.92); as Berry (2011, p.143) puts it, since the restructuring of the web and web-based social media into streams, the user, with his responsibility to act, '*is expected to desire the real-time stream, both to be in it, to follow it and to participate in it'*. With the growing importance of user-generated content, it is more and more the case that an event does not exist as such, but is being co-created as it is being reported through media, (Hammelburg, 2015, p.93) and this is how content published in the media for an event can influence the event itself. As such, Selfie Journalism seems to be affecting the way history is now documented. To this perspective, are the events of timeliness documented via Selfie Journalism as they are

happening or as we (or others) want to see and interpret them? If the latter is the case, the question that arises is up to which extend can Selfie Journalism be trustworthy.

Additionally, digital platforms offer a variety of categorised or uncategorised personal data that can be analysed algorithmically, creating in this way a digital profile for each individual. Most scholars are concerned with privacy issues around media use of personal data (Goggin, Martin & Dwyer, 2014). However, in the case of parliamentary candidates during the pre-election period, as the following analysis will show, it is the politicians themselves that seem to be embedding elements of direct infotainment characteristics in matters of political and social life (such as personal moments with family and friends). As Gomez-Cruz and Thornham (2015) argue, the issue here is how the combination of visual, material and digital elements of selfies create new forms of surveillance and '*sousveillance*', reshape what privacy, public and intimacy are and can, in this perspective, generate softer and more effective forms of power.

Based on the above analysis, Selfie Journalism could be described as a new tendency in participatory and citizens journalism, exercised via mobile devices and based on the practice of posting self-photographs (and/or videos) in social media and - in this way - reproducing content, not based on isolated objects/people/images, etc., but on artefacts framing the 'author' of the photograph; most of the times, these artefacts (either objects/premises or other people) constitute elements of the author's private life, which, thus, becomes intentionally public, aiming to attract other people's attention and provoke (positive) reactions in public. For the purposes of this study a clear distinction should be made between Selfie Journalism exercised by citizens and relevant practices used within political campaigns by political candidates performing in this way; the latter is the case-study of this research.

2.2 Infotainment, Politics, Reporting and Selfie Journalism

Among others, selfies demonstrate the discursive connection between creative practice and individual subjectivity (Wargo, 2015). As such, their engagement in the process of political campaigning was only a matter of time, following the growing tendency to involve microblogging services and social networking in order to increase political participation in favour of the acting politician and/or political group. Obama's presidential campaign in 2008 led the way, while dozen of others followed since then, either in national or local political level globally.

It is not in the immediate goals of this study to analyse the tools of political campaigning; thus, the uses and gratification of social media in such practices have been extensively analysed the last decade by several scholars, mainly, of the political communication sector. In any case, there is one point upon which all these analyses agree: microblogging and social networking considerably contribute in approaching 'difficult' groups of the society, such as young citizens, and engage them in the voting process (Chen et al, 2009; Wattal et al, 2010; Bond et al, 2012; Hobbs, 2015). Undoubtedly, this is partly due to reasons related to infotainment tactics of presenting political issues and candidates, which can easier attract these 'difficult' groups of voters. Even decades before the development of social networks, tabloid media exercising infotainment tactics, were more likely to approach this category of voters; for example, in UK almost every candidate since 1979 supported by *THE SUN* has won the elections (Worall, 2015).

But although tabloid journalism can undoubtedly attract large audiences, it was never known to be related to impartial reporting. In this perspective, the issue here is whether Selfie Journalism can be acknowledged as a form of tabloid journalism or it only includes some forms of tabloid and whether or not it can be trustworthy. These questions have already been raised since 2014, concerning the accuracy and reliability of selfie photographs in regards to other aspects of public information, i.e. health issues (Chadwick, 2015). In the case of politicians, it is well established that they tend to use selfies as a strategic self-promotion tool and take advantage of their wide dissemination through social media, which proves how the practice of self-portraits facilitates new forms of '*performative politics*' (Farci & Orefice, 2015). Performativity theories focus on debating relationships between theory and practice and encourage practical interventions in every aspect of life (Cabantous, Gond, Harding & Learmonth, 2016). Performative politics foregrounds the politician as an actor, whose performance on the public stage is continuously judged in terms of authenticity, honesty and 'character' (Corner and Pels, 2003) and, in this way, proves the growing convergence between popular culture and the political system (van Zoonen, 2005), while opens the way for a paradigmatic shift from deliberative democracy rooted in civil society to '*audience democracy*' (Manin, 2010) based on the conversion of politicians in media narratives.

3. Research Questions & Scope of Study

The greater scope of this study evolves around the argument that Selfie Journalism, as a new species of journalism, has penetrated the media in an effort to attract larger audience,

especially in 'difficult' sectors of reporting, such as politics. The aim of the study is dual: first, to examine the extensive use of Selfie Journalism in political campaigning and, secondly, to examine the impact of this phenomenon upon the media and, in turn, media engagement in such political tactics.

In this perspective, four primary questions guided this work:

RQ1: Which are the basic characteristics of Selfie Journalism that are most evident in political reporting?

RQ2: Up to which extend and in which ways Selfie Journalism is exercised by politicians?

RQ3: Up to which extend the media engage in such political tactics by promoting and publicising selfie photographs in an election period?

RQ4: Based on which criteria the media select and promote specific selfies?

3.1 Research Methodology

The research is deployed in two levels; first, a quantitative content analysis was conducted regarding the amount of selfie photographs posted in the social media profiles (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) of the parliamentary candidates. The unit of the analysis was the selfie photograph. For the Content Analysis, classification systems were devised to identify different features of the photographs; all photographs that were located and extracted through the candidates' profiles were examined and categorised via a code book that included variables based on the specific characteristics of Selfie Journalism (as analysed above). Specific criteria on the form and visual presentation of each photograph were not set *a-priori*, as the intention was to include as many units of analysis as possible in the research (Maniou, Photiou & Ketteni, 2016). In the course of the study, three researchers were trained in the implementation process of the particular codebook, while a pre-test and a post-test were conducted to ensure that the researchers comprehended in a similar manner the additional variables (Mellado & Lagos, 2014, pp. 2095-2096). The tests yielded overall inter-coder reliability 0.71 (pre-test) and 0.69 (post-test), employing the KRIPPENDORFF's ALPHA test.

Second, a qualitative analysis of the photographs was conducted in order to reach safe conclusions regarding the selection criteria upon which, the media are based in order to publicize specific selfie photographs. In this perspective, the visual social semiotics approach of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996; 2001) was employed and all photographs comprising the

final sample were examined in terms of representational, interactive and compositional meaning (see also van Leeuwen, 2005). For Kress and van Leeuwen, pictures, like language, do not only represent the material reality but also the interpersonal interaction of social reality - such as the relation between viewers and the people represented in the pictures (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). Taking the analysis one step forward, the approach of Kress (2010) was undertaken, in order to reach safe conclusions regarding the interactive dimension of selfies that were published in the media, since the semiotic potential of signifiers, action and objects is drawn upon by people, when communicating with each other (Rose, 2016). Although Kress and van Leeuwen's approach presents several disadvantages concerning the sociological interpretation of images, it was deemed appropriate in this study, since it can provide a descriptive framework and bring out hidden meanings of the images (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001, p.154).

3.2 Sample of the Research

The research was conducted in the Republic of Cyprus during the pre-election period of 2016 (April and May 2016) and the post-election period (a week after the elections); the elections took place in the 22nd of May 2016. In total, the social media profiles (Instagram, Facebook and Twitter) of 494 parliamentary candidates were investigated, coming from eight political parties: the left wing-communist *AKEL*, the right wing-conservative governing party *DISI* [Democratic Rally], the center-right *DIKO* [Democratic Party] (Katsourides, 2003), the right wing- newly created *Solidarity*, the extreme right wing-ultranationalist *ELAM* [National People's Front], the social-democratic *EDEK* [Movement of Social Democrats], *Ecologists* [the Green party] and the populist *Citizens Alliance*; 56 of these candidates were elected. The final sample consists of 85 selfies, deriving from the profiles of both female and male parliamentary candidates and all political parties, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: *The sample of the Research*

	Total number of Selfie Photos	Male candidates' Selfie Photos	Female candidates' Selfie Photos	Selfie Photos publicized in the Media
AKEL	19	9	10	3

DIKO	17	16	1	2
DISY	43	16	27	1
EDEK	0	0	0	0
ELAM	1	1	0	0
Ecologists	4	4	0	0
Citizens Alliance	1	1	0	1
Solidarity	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	**n=85**	47	38	7

3.3 Cyprus: A brief historical overview

An island nation in the east Mediterranean Sea, the Republic of Cyprus has memberships in the UN (since its independence in 1960), in the European Union (since 2004) and in the Eurozone (since 2008). The majority of its population is of Greek descent, with other large ethnic groups including Cypriots of Turkish, Armenian, Latin and other Christian Catholic origins[2], as well as large communities of European and non-European citizens. The Greek-Cypriot community is frequently affected by the social, political and financial changes in Greece, due to their affiliation with the Greek language and their shared history and religion (Maniou, 2017).

The island was divided in 1974 following a coup against the President, which led to its invasion by Turkish military forces, their occupation of the northern half of the island and the splitting of the population with most Turkish-Cypriots in the north and the Greek-Cypriots in the south. Historically, in Cyprus there exists a long and noteworthy political juxtaposition between the two main political parties, the right-wing *DISI* and the left-wing communist *AKEL*, which occurred in the mid 1940s (Chrysanthou, 2008); this is evident in every aspect of social, political and economic life, while the national issue of the occupation of Northern Cyprus and the division of the country in two separate areas prevails every aspect of political news and debates from 1974 and onwards.

---

[2] Although statistics regarding the ethnicity of the population in Cyprus have been a bit sketchy since 1974, at that time it was estimated that 85% of the population was of Greek-Cypriot origin, 12% were Turkish-Cypriots, and the Armenian, Latin and other Catholic groups comprised the remaining 3% of the population (PRIO, 2010).

4 Findings

4.1 Quantitative Research

4.1.1 The characteristics of Selfie Journalism

From the total number of selfies examined in the parliamentary candidates' social media profiles, only 38,8% included a title or a hashtag, while 98,8% of them were reflecting a positive mode (style), in terms of depicting happy, informal moments/events/initiatives. As Table 2 shows, 98,8% of them included other people, while 51,8% of them included objects (signs, premises, etc.) that disclosed proof of space, time and event the specific selfie was taken.

Table 2: *Depiction of other people and objects.*

	Depiction of other people	Depiction of objects
Yes	98,8%	51,8%
No	1,2%	48,2%
Total	100%	100%

Concerning the identity of other people depicted in the politicians' selfies, Table 3 shows that 67,1% of them are family and friends and another 18,8% were voters or citizens. In matters of selfies' content, 62,4% of them depicted family or personal moments, while only 28,2% depicted social or political events.

Table 3: *Identity of others and content of the selfies.*

	Identity of others	Selfie's content
No other people	1,2%	-
Celebrities/ social & political events	12,9%	28,2%
Family & friends/personal & family moments	67,1%	62,4%
Voters, citizens /political activities	18,8%	9,4%
Total	100%	100%

The majority of the selfies examined received up to 100 'likes'/reactions (64,7%) and no reports/retweets (88,2%), while only 34,1% of them received more than 101 'likes'/reactions and 1,2% of them were reposted/retweeted more than ten times, as Table 4 shows.

Table 4: *Number of 'likes' and reposts/retweets.*

	Numbers of 'likes'	Number of reports/retweets
None	1,2%	88,2%
Up to 100 'likes'/ 10 reposts	64,7%	10,6%
Above 101 'likes'/11 reposts	34,1%	1,2%
Total	100%	100%

All these characteristics mentioned above were examined in relation to the politicians' age, electoral district, electoral order[3] and gender. As the Pearson chi square tests show in Table 5, the only significant dependence found was between the politicians' gender and the depiction of objects in the selfies, the politicians' electoral district and the content of the selfies', and finally, the politicians' electoral district and the number of 'likes'/reactions these selfies acquired.

Table 5 : *Crosstabs of all variables with age, electoral district, electoral order and gender.*

	Age	Electoral district	Electoral order	Gender
Depiction of others	p=0.575 x^2=2.898, df=4	p=0.462 x^2=2.572, df=3	p=0.193 x^2=4.722, df=3	p=0.366 x^2=0.818, df=1
Depiction of objects	p=0.575 x^2=2.898, df=4	p=0.594 x^2=1.896, df=3	p=0.084 x^2=6.647, df=3	**p=0.004** x^2=8.841, df=1
Identity of others	p=0.705 x^2=12.549, df=16	p=0.007 x^2=27.095, df=12	p=0.156 x^2=16.835, df=12	p=0.160 x^2=6.578, df=4
Content	p=0.054 x^2=20.737, df=12	**p=0.000** x^2=52.445, df=9	p=0.006 x^2=23.178 df=9	p=0.161 x^2=5.145, df=3

---

[3] We use the term 'electoral order' in our study to state the ranking position in which every politician was elected in his/her district (i.e., first, second, third, etc.).

| Number of 'likes' | p=050 x^2=31.385, df=20 | **p=0.000** x^2=120.128, df=15 | p=0.060 x^2=24.318, df=15 | p=0.148 x^2=8.159, df=5 |
| Numbers of reposts | p=0.067 x^2=10.602, df=8 | p=0.040 x^2=13.174, df=6 | p=0.228 x^2=8.142, df=6 | p=0.226 x^2=2.978, df=2 |

4.1.2 Politicians and Selfie Journalism

A number of variables were examined concerning the politicians' characteristics when posting a selfie in the social media. Specifically, these variables describe the way(s) politicians manage their social media profile, as far as selfies' posts are concerned. We found that 89,4% of all selfies examined were posted before the elections, while 96,5% of them were posted via a mobile phone. The most popular social network remains Facebook, since 82,4% of all selfies were initially posted there, while 11,8% were initially posted on Instagram and 5,9% on Twitter. 71,8% of all politicians preserve more than one accounts in the same social medium while only 61,2% of them have active accounts in all three social media.

As the Pearson chi square tests have shown, there is statistical significant relation between the age of the politician and his/her active presence in the social media. Other important factors concerning the way they manage their social media profile, as far as selfies' posts are concerned, are the politician's electoral order and electoral district, since candidates in the capital district, that got elected with the higher number of votes, tended to post more selfies than those coming from smaller electoral district and either didn't get elected or got elected with lower number of votes. These findings suggest that Selfie Journalism - exercised within political campaigns - tends to follow traditional patterns of performativity regarding the use of social media (Usher, 2016). Finally, as Table 6 shows, the politician's gender is important only in matters of active presence in all social media, with female candidates tending to be more active than their male colleagues.

Table 6: *Pearson x^2 tests concerning age, electoral district, electoral order and gender.*

	Age	Electoral district	Electoral order	Gender
Initial social medium of post	p=0.087 x^2=13.805, df=8	**p=0.000** x^2=38.866, df=6	**p=0.001** x^2=24.004, df=6	p=0.020 x^2=7.792, df=2
Number of politicians' accounts in the same medium	**p=0.001** x^2=19.540, df=4	**p=0.000** x^2=49.230, df=3	**p=0.000** x^2=30.099, df=3	p=0.186 x^2=1.750, df=1
Active presence in all three social media	**p=0.000** x^2=79.644, df=8	**p=0.000** x^2=37.594, df=6	**p=0.001** x^2=22.868, df=6	**p=0.000** x^2=21.208, df=2
Publicization of selfies in the media	p=0.617 x^2=2.657, df=4	p=0.357 x^2=3.231, df=3	p=0.014 x^2=10.564, df=3	p=0.054 x^2=3.705, df=1
Device used for post	p=0.500 x^2=3.359, df=4	p=0.484 x^2=2.453, df=3	p=0.039 x^2=8.383, df=3	p=0.113 x^2=2.514, df=1

It has to be noted that there seems to be no statistical relation between politicians' characteristics and the number of selfies' posted in the traditional (print) media. Towards this direction, a qualitative research was undertaken in the selfies' sample, in order to distinguish the specific characteristics these photographs need to have, in order to be published by the media.

4.1 Qualitative Research: Media's engagement in Selfie Journalism

From the total number of 85 selfies extracted out of the parliamentary candidates' profiles (following methods analysed previously in the Methodology Section), only 7 of them (9,4%) were publicised in the traditional media (both print and web). In this study, all selfies were examined within the context of their use (the social media page or/and the web/printed media page published) in terms of representational, interactive and compositional meaning, as earlier mentioned. Sites of display were also used in order to examine the interaction between the display and those who react to it ('followers'/'friends'), since these sites work to organize the social relationships between and among those using them (Jones, 2009).

The most noticeable one was a selfie taken by a candidate (named here *Candidate A*, for the purposes of this study) of the right wing party *DISI* – who got elected first in his electoral district - inside the surgery room, immediately after his wife had given birth to their son. Both him and his wife are depicted happy, although slightly tired, in hospital robes; in the background, specific sites of display, such as medicine and surgery infrastructure, state clearly that the selfie was taken immediately after the birth of the baby. At the same time, Candidate A is conveniently located by his wife's side, as all responsible husbands are expected to stand by their wives, in the eyes of his political party conservative voters. Representing what could be described as, maybe, the most private moment in one's family life, the photograph was initially posted in Tweeter and shared via Facebook and Instagram, receiving hundreds of 'likes' and dozens of re-posts, while all the traditional media immediately published it. What was even more noticeable was the fact that the candidate had put the hashtag #Candidate'sName#DevelopmentPower#Bythecitizen#son'sBirth, directly connecting his electoral campaign to his son's birth. As Jerslev & Mortensen (2016) argue, the performativity of such image itself can create a sense of immediacy, by putting on public display its own coming into being, adhering in this way in Selfie Journalism practices.

Another noticeable example in Facebook, depicted a parliamentary candidate of the left wing party AKEL(named *Candidate B*, for the purposes of the study) with his daughter, in the occasion of her name day celebration, under the title "*today is the name day celebration of my beloved daughter E.* (name deleted for the purposes of this study) *and I wish to everybody celebrating today happy name day, with health, prosperity for soul and critical thinking*". Both of them are well prepared and dressed. Their faces lean towards each other while touching, revealing this way the family intimacy between father and daughter and the love for each other. Again, the selfie acquired dozens of likes and re-posts, while the title was directly linking the candidate's family life with his electoral campaign, wishing to voters critical thinking for the elections, which were taking place the next day. The performativity of such practice emphasizes on a specific paradox Selfie Journalism can create in political campaigns: although selfies (perceived as news/information) can narrow the gap between politicians and their followers, at the same time they can maintain the differences across this gap (Jerslev & Mortensen, 2016), in order to build fame through self-display (Usher, 2016).

Moreover, selfies with friends and 'celebrities' also found their way into the traditional media, such as the one posted by a parliamentary candidate of the left wing party AKEL (named *Candidate C*, for the purposes of this study), under the title "*We continue… with strength*

deriving from our history". This selfie depicted the candidate with her co-candidates in the same electoral district and a famous sport player of the team *OMONOIA* (translated as *Concord* in English), while the words 'strength' and 'history' directly connected the left political party's electoral campaign to young voters. The closeness among people depicted, directly refers to values of unity and concord, which happens to be the name of the team. The photograph was published mainly in sports media pages, targeting specific audiences, such as sports fans and younger citizens, also adhering - in this way - to Selfie Journalism practices.

Overall, selfies published in the media were mainly depicting either private moments of the candidates' lives or celebrities joining candidates in several events. The more private the moment depicted in the photograph, the higher was the interaction among users regarding this photograph. Furthermore, the more 'informal' the candidate was depicted in the selfie, the more intense were the reactions of users, thus, most likely was to be published by the traditional media.

On the other hand, selfies that received average or low number of reactions by social media users but were not published by the traditional media, tended to depict candidates in rather 'self-directed' portraits, intentionally orchestrated to promote his/her image. Following practices of Selfie Journalism in this case indicates that these kind of selfies, in their projection as casuals, seem to be hiding a more deliberatively performative disposition (Baishya, 2015). A characteristic example of such a case, was the photograph posted by a candidate, supported by the right wing governing party of *DISI* (named *Candidate D*, for the purposes of this study), who got elected second in her electoral district. In the selfie, the politician is depicted in a happy moment with a young girl by her side, probably either a voter/citizen or a member of her staff - in any case, posing in a (self)directed casual way to express slightly friendly affiliation, although not very intimate; both of them are smiling, while they are well dressed and prepared. Hints of premises in the background reveal that the selfie was taken while entering a specific building for a social event. The selfie presented no hashtag or title, while it received an average number of reactions.

Figure 1: *Candidates' selfie* [Caption added for the purposes of the study].
(*Adapted from Facebook, Instagram and Twitter candidates' social profiles*).

As Papacharissi (2010) argues, politicians' selfies, to a certain extent, constitute examples of *civic 'narcissism'*: released from its pathological sense, *narcissism* in a social network is

the ability to use political thoughts not always with the explicit intention of increasing '*civic engagement*', but as a mode to '*express yourself* ' (see also, analysis in Farci & Orefice, 2015). Finally, all candidates tended to look directly into the camera, in an effort to send the message that they have transparent and straightforward relation with the citizens.

5. Discussion of Findings

The main device via which politicians administer their self-profile is the mobile phone and the prevailing social network remains Facebook, although Instagram is rapidly rising when it comes to selfies, since it is a social network created for this purpose. As the research has shown, the vast majority of selfies posted in the political candidates' social media profiles included other people, mainly people with personal/family ties to the candidate. This category of selfies depicted the candidates pleasantly engaging and having fun with friends and/or family members. Half of these photographs included objects or premises that offered to the public a hint of the candidate's home and/or private space, creating the illusion of sharing personal experiences, through Selfie Journalism practices.

Towards this direction, another category of selfies included people and objects/premises that represented significant personal moments for the candidate, i.e., the birth of his/her child, the celebration party of a family member, etc. This category of selfies were most likely to be published by the media, since they received the higher number of positives reactions and re-posts by the candidates 'followers'/'friends', creating in this way the illusion of participation in the candidate's very important personal experience. Additionally, all these show that politicians can use selfies in order to create the sense of '*the person beyond the role*' (Goffman, 1974; see also, Farci & Orefice, 2015), and, as such, adhere to Selfie Journalism practices.

Another category of selfies included the depiction of the candidate with celebrity personalities, well known to the local society, such as athletes (celebrities). These selfies included depictions of objects/premises that revealed the selfie was taken either in an event related to those celebrities or that the candidate had met them in their own professional space (i.e., the offices of a sports team). Again, this seems to be another popular category of selfies that receive high number of positive reactions and are published in the traditional media, while the politician uses '*celebrification*' (West and Orman 2003; Dakhlia 2010) or '*entertainmentization*' (Karvonen 2009), in order to reach specific target groups. As such, Selfie Journalism practices seem to be emphasizing on phatic communicative functions

performed by politicians framed with celebrities in the media in order to keep fans (potential voters, in this case) updated (Jerslev & Mortensen, 2016) and connect the politicians to the celebrity notion.

Finally, the study showed that self-directed selfies depicting candidates with citizens/voters, either with hints of premises/objects that reveal the place and time or not, are not that popular, neither to the candidate's followers nor to the traditional media. Most of the times these selfies seem deliberately orchestrated by the candidate in order to promote a specific self-portrait, by displaying a more casual and colloquial image (Savoulescou & Vitelar, 2012); however, this kind of selfies were most likely to receive negative or/and neutral reactions/comments by the audience, although again initiating a discussion about the candidate in the social media sphere. In this case, Selfie Journalism performativity strives for balance between authority and authenticity, using the political self as a spectacle to direct voters towards specific actions (Usher, 2016).

There are three important factors that seem to affect the way politicians administer their self-profile in the social networks. First, the politician's gender, since women tend to be more active in self-promotion than men. Second, the politician's electoral district seems to play a significant role, especially when it comes to the content of the selfies posted and the amount of reactions these selfies receive; it is deemed logical that the nearest to the capital of the country the district is, the most populated they are and, in this way, the higher the number of followers and, consequently, their reactions will be. On the other hand, the more distant from the capital of the country the district is, the most likely is for its citizens to deal more with their local issues/problems and least with national and/or metropolitan centred affairs.

It has to be taken under consideration, as this study showed, that there seems to be significant correlation between the candidate's electoral success and the number of selfies he/she posts [4]; additionally, there is significant correlation between the candidate's electoral success and the number of reactions, either positive or neutral/negative, these selfies acquire. This finding is supported by previous studies concerning social media metrics (number of comments/reactions), which show that users tend to get affected by these metrics in shaping an opinion (Antonopoulos, Giomelakis, Veglis, Gardikiotis & Dimoulas, 2016) about the person posting the message, either in the form of text or/and photo, video. In this perspective, selfies

---

[4] Undoubtedly, there are a number of other parameters and dimensions that play significant role in the electoral success for every politician (such as his/her position within the political party, the years of active political presence, his/her broader socio-political network, etc.); all these parameters are taken under consideration, although not included in the immediate goal of this study.

resonate wider socio-cultural and political practices and the way we approach them has political and ideological significance (Gomez-Cruz & Thornham, 2015); subsequently, Selfie Journalism can be highly politicised and adheres to the candidates' main target: to penetrate various groups of voters, interact with them and increase the level of political participation via infotainment tactics.

6. Conclusions, Limitations & Future Research

This study has shown that selfie photographs posted in a pre-election period by politicians themselves can act as a journalistic tool and, therefore, can lead to a new tendency in journalism; Selfie journalism, as a part of participatory and citizens (politicians - in this study, but in no case professional journalists) journalism, presents specific characteristics, the most noticeable ones being the depiction of others in the selfie, especially family and friends in personal moments. In this way, political selfies reproduce and promote infotainment trends in political campaigning, distracting citizens' attention from the political debate to 'lighter' issues. Furthermore, by engaging in such tactics, the politician 'allows' voters/citizens to take a snapshot of their private life, creating in this way the illusion of participation in it.

As this analysis has shown, the success of the candidate in the elections (electoral order) is directly connected to his/her presence in the social media and the way he/she administer their self-profile via them; for example, candidates with the higher number of votes were the ones that posted the more selfies and, especially, the more personal ones. Additionally, the more 'active' the candidate is in more social networks, the more popular seems to become and the most likely he/she is to penetrate large groups of voters, thus, by exercising Selfie Journalism practices.

As expected, selfies that received the higher number of reactions seem to be finding their way into the traditional media, since they can attract larger audience. In fact, the most private the selfie is, the most likely gets to be published by the traditional media, although these media tend to be rather selective in terms of publicising politicians' selfies; although dozens of politicians' selfies are posted in the social media, only a limited number of those can in fact become 'news' via the traditional media, namely the most personal ones and/or the ones depicting celebrities.

Although this study has shown the extend up to which, the ways politicians can engage in Selfie Journalism and the way traditional media comprehend with this phenomenon, there is

one limitation: the reactions of the audience in such tactics. This research has shown a direct affiliation of Selfie Journalism tactics to electoral success, which could be perceived as the politicians' ultimate goal. However, further research could be based on the audience's reactions to Selfie Journalism exercised by political candidates, in order to examine the effects of this new tendency in journalism and the extend up to which it can be considered trustworthy and reliable. Towards this direction, an audience survey could offer significant data concerning the reactions of specific target groups in relation to their specific characteristics.

References

Antonopoulos, N., Giomelakis, D., Veglis, A., Gardikiotis, A & Dimoulas, Ch.. (2016). Web-Third Person Effect Hypothesis: Do likes and Shares Affect Users' Perceptions? Journalism and Mass Communication, December, 6 (12), 711-729 DOI: 10.17265/2160-6579/2016.12.001

Banita, G. (2012). 9-11 trauma and visual witnessing in Helen Schulman's A Day at the Beach. *Critique*, 53 (1), 1-15. Doi:10.1080/00111619.2010.511317

Baishya, A. (2015). #NaMo: The Political work of the Selfie in the 2014 Indian General Elections. *International Journal of Communication*, 9, 1686-1700.

Berry, D.(2011). *The philosophy of software: code and mediation in the digital age*. Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke.

Bond, R. M., Fariss, C. J., Jones, J. J., Kramer, A. D. I., Marlow, C. & Settle, J. E. (2012). A 61-million-person experiment in social influence and political mobilization. *Nature, 48* (7415), 295–298.

Cabantous, L., Gond, J.P., Harding, N. & Learmonth, M. (2016). Critical Essay: Reconsidering Critical performativity. *Human Relations,* 69 (2), 197-213. DOI: 10.1177/0018726715584690.

Chadwick, R. (2015). Selfies, Personalisation and Bioethics. *Bioethics*, 29 (3):ii doi:10.1111/bioe.12159.

Chen, D., Tang, J., Li, J. & Zhou, L. (2009). Discovering the staring people from social networks. *WWW'09: Proceedings of the 18th international conference on World Wide Web*. ACM, New York, 1219–1220.

Chrysanthou, Chr. (2008). *Mass Media: Martyrs and Lead Actors*. Nicosia: Armida (in Greek).

Corner, J. & Pels, D. (2003). *Media and the restyling of politics: Consumerism, celebrity and cynicism*. London: Sage.

Dakhlia, J. (2010). Une chute du 'mur français de la vie privée? La peopolisation politique des années 2000. *The Web Journal of French Media Studies*, 8. Available at http://wjfms.ncl.ac.uk/. Accessed on December 20th, 2014.

Farci, M. & Orefice, M. (2015). Hybrid Content Analysis of the most Popular Politicians' Selfies on Twitter. *Networking Knowledge*, 8 (6) November, 1- 25.

Freeman, E.T. (1997). *The Lifestreams Software Architecture*. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

Frosh, P. (2015). The Gestural Image: The Selfie, Photography Theory and Kinesthetic Sociability. *International Journal of Communication*, 9, 1607-1628.

Goldhaber, M. (1997). The Attention Economy and the Net. *First Monday*, 2 (4-7) April. Doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.5210/fm.v2i4.519

Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame Analysis. An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Goggin, G., Martin, F. & Dwyer, T. (2014). 'Locative News'. *Journalism Studies*, 1-19. Doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2014.890329

Gomez-Cruz, E. & Thornham, H. (2015). Selfies beyond Self-Representation: The (theoretical) f(r)ictions of a practice. *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture*, 7. Doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.3402/jac.v7.28073.

Guerrero-Garcia, V. & Palomo, B.. (2015). The crisis of photojournalism: rethinking the profession in a participatory media ecosystem. *Communication & Society*, 28 (4), 33-48. Doi: 10.15581/003.28.4.33-48

Hammelburg, E.. (2015). # stemfie: reconceptualising liveness in the era of social media. *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis*, 18 (1), 85-100.

Hobbs, T. (2015). Although the election outcome is still unclear, Labour emerges as the Twitter top dog. [online] *Marketing Week*. https://www.marketingweek.com/2015/05/07/although-the-election-outcome-is-still-unclear-labour-emerges-as-the-twitter-top-dog

Jerslev, A. & Mortensen, M. (2016). What is the self in the celebrity selfie? Celebrification, phatic communication and performativity. Celebrity Studies, 7 (2), 249-263 DOI: 10.1080/19392397.2015.1095644.

Jewitt, C. & Oyama, R. (2001). Visual Meaning: A Social Semiotic Approach. In Th. van Leeuwen & C. Jewitt (ed.), *Handbook of Visual Analysis* (pp.134-157). London: Routledge.

John, N.A.(2012). Sharing and Web 2.0: The emergence of a key-word. *New Media and Society*, 15, 167-182.

Jones, R. (2009). Technology and sites of display. In C. Jewitt (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Multimodal Analysis*(pp.114-126). London: Routledge.

Jones, R. (2010). Cyberspace and Physical Space: Attention Structures in Computer mediated Communication. In A. Jaworski & Cr. Thurlow (ed.), *Semiotic Landscapes: Language, Image, Space* (pp.151-168). London/N.York: Continuum.

Karvonen, E. (2009). Entertainmentization of the European Public Sphere and Politics. In J. Harrison & B. Wessels (eds), *Mediating Europe: New Media, Mass Communications and the European Public Sphere* (pp.99-127). Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Katsourides, Y. (2003). Europeanisation and Political Parties in Accession Countries: The Political Parties of Cyprus. Paper presented to the EpsNet 2003 Plenary Conference.

Koliska, M. & Roberts, J. (2015). Selfies: Witnessing and Participatory Journalism with a Point of View. *International Journal of Communication*, 9, 1672-1685.

Kress, G. & Van Leeuwen, T. (1996). *Reading Images – The Grammar of Visual Design*. London: Routledge.

Kress, G. & Van Leeuwen, T. (2001). *Multimodal Discourse – The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication*. London: Arnold.

Kress, G. (2010). *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication*. London: Routledge.

Lanham, R. (1994). The Economics of Attention. *Proceedings of 124th Annual Meeting, Association of Research Librarians*, Austin, Texas, http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/ARL/Proceedings/124/ps2econ.html

Lankshear, C. & Knobel, M. (2002). Do we have your attention? New Literacies, Digital Technologies and the Education of adolescents'. In D. Alvermann (ed.), *Adolescents and Literacies in a Digital World*(pp.19-40). New York: Peter Lang.

Manin, B. (2010). Principi del Governo Rappresentativo. *Icon*, *39* (051).(in Italian)

Maniou, Th. (2017). Political Conflicts in the Cypriot Football fields: A Qualitative Approach through the Press. *Soccer & Society*, Doi: 10.1080/14660970.2016.1267630. Accessed online http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14660970.2016.1267630

Maniou, Th. & Veglis, A. (2016). Selfie Journalism: Current Practices in Digital Media. *Studies in Media and Communication*, 4 (1), 111-118. Doi: 10.11114/smc.v4i1.1637.

Maniou, Th., Photiou, I. & Ketteni, E. (2016). Mediating Patriotism and Triumph through the National Press: Newspaper Content and Journalistic Perceptions. *International Journal of Social Science Studies*, 4 (6), 65-76. Doi: 10.11114/ijsss.v4i6.1588.

Marwich, A.E. (2013). *Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity, and Branding in the Social Media Age*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Mellado, C. & Lagos, C. (2014). Professional Roles in News Content: Analysing Journalistic Performance in the Chilean National Press. *International Journal of Communication*, 8, 2090 – 2112.

Omar,Y. (2015). Selfie Journalism: When the smartphone meets storytelling + sharing'. *RJR*. Retrieved in April 2015 at http://rjr.ru.ac.za/rjrpdf/rjr_no35/selfie%20journalism.pdf

Papacharissi, Z. (2010). The Virtual Sphere 2.0: The Internet, the Public Sphere and beyond. In A.Chadwick & P.N. Howard (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics* (pp.230-245). Abingdon: Routledge.

Peters, J.D. (2001). Witnessing. *Media, Culture and Society*, 23 (6), 707-723. Doi: 10.1177/016344301023006002.

PRIO group (ed.), (2010). *Media Narratives, Politics and the Cyprus Problem*. Nicosia: PRIO Cyprus Centre.

Reading, A. (2009). Mobile witnessing: Ethics and the camera phone in "the war on terror". *Globalizations*, 6 (1), 61-76. Doi:10.1080/14747730802692435

Rose, G. (2016). *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials*. London: Sage.

Săvulescu, R. & Viţelar, A. (2012). Pics or It Didn't Happen: Analysing Facebook Photographs of Romanian Women Politicians. *Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations*, 1(2012), 7-20.

Tifentale, A. & Manovich, L. (2015). Selfiecity: Exploring Photography and Self-Fashioning in Social Media. *Boston University Law Review*, 94, 2046 – 2086.

Usher, B. (2016). Me, You and Us: Constructing political persona on Social Networks during the 2015 UK general elections. *Persona Studies*, 2 (2), 19-41.

Wargo, J. (2015). Every selfie tells a story…: LGBTO youth lifestreams and new media Narratives as connective identity texts. *New Media & Society*, 1-19. Doi: 10.1177/1461444815612447.

Watkins, J., Hjorth, L. & Koskinen, I. (2012). Wising Up: Revising Mobile Media in an age of smartphones. *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 26 (5), 665-668. Doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2012.706456

Wattal, S., Schuff, D., Mandviwalla, M. & Williams, C. (2010). Web 2.0 and politics: The 2008 U.S. presidential election and an e-politics research agenda. *MIS Q, 34*(4), 669–688.

West, D. M. & Orman, J. (2003). *Celebrity Politics.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Worral, P. (2015). FactCheck: does the Sun win elections. [online] *Blogs.channel4.com.* http://blogs.channel4.com/factcheck/factcheck-sun-winelections/20827

Van Leeuwen, T. (2005). *Introducing Social Semiotics*. London: Routledge.

Van Zoonen, L. (2005). *Entertaining the Citizen: When Politics and Popular Culture Converge*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.