

Influenced by peers. Political effects of Facebook as an information resource among young people.

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Abstract

The study examines the role and impact of Facebook as a central political information resource among university students. Over the last few years, Facebook has become one of the most important information sources about politics for the young. However, Facebook as an information tool differs in many respects from other professional media. One of the most important differences is that political contents are created, filtered and distributed on Facebook by peers as opposed to professional journalists. The study hypothesizes that the growing role of Facebook as a political information resource means the returning of the two-step flow of information model: political views and experiences of the less interested majority are largely shaped by the communication of the fewer politically interested peers. Based on a survey among university students in Hungary the study justifies that Facebook is the primary political information resource for university students and the most successful medium in reaching the politically less interested students. Underscoring political impact of Facebook the findings show that being informed from Facebook has a significantly negative effect on the satisfaction with function of democracy controlling party affiliation, sense of subjective uncertainty and political interest. Also, the results indicates that only a politically interested minority of university students post or share political contents on Facebook, but posting is significantly shaped by the dissatisfaction with the function of democracy. Based on these findings it can be assumed that the negative evaluation of democracy by students informed about politics by Facebook results from the fact that on this platform information and opinions are mostly provided by their discontented peers. The results offer an indirect evidence for the thesis that in accordance with the two-step flow model of communication the political views of young people informed by Facebook are largely shaped by their peers communicating on politics.

Introduction

There is reason to think that the patterns of political information consumption can exert influence on citizens' political behavior. For example, the revolt of the generation of 1968 was often connected to the changing media consumption habits. They were the first 'television generation' grown up in front of the screen. The reality presented by television, however, differed from that directed by previous generations which result in gaps between generations (Bodroghkozy, 2001). Social and technological changes are persistently forming the political information environment and their effects should be reflected by political science (Bennett – Iyengar, 2008).

Political information environment has significantly transformed during the last few years. The biggest change is related to rise of social media. Social media is increasingly pervading our everyday life which is even strengthened by the development of mobile technologies enabling constant presence. However, this change in the political information environment resulted by rise of social media is qualitatively differs from earlier transformations. Those all remained in the field of professional journalism, changing formats was throughout operated by journalists and media experts. In contrast, the information universe of social media is formed by ordinary people and their communication.

The purpose of the study is to contribute the understanding what effects this changing information environment have on political behavior. The study suggests that growing importance of social media, especially Facebook, in political information consumption result in the revitalization of two-step flow model of communication (Lazarsfeld et al, 1948, Katz – Lazarsfeld, 1955) proposing that political behavior are strongly affected by social influences. The general hypothesis regarding the presence of social influences on Facebook are demonstrated indirectly by testing two sub-hypotheses. These sub-hypotheses are connected by a variable measuring the satisfaction with the way democracy works which is deduced from the thesis of the dominance of negativity in Facebook political communication. The hypotheses are tested in a university student sample. The results show that dissatisfaction with democracy is a strong predictor of Facebook political communication, and, accordingly, being regularly informed about politics from Facebook leads more negative beliefs about the way democracy works.

The first part of the study discusses the growing importance of social influences on political behavior owing to Facebook. Next, I argue for the dominance of negativity on Facebook political communication which justifies the use of satisfaction with democracy variable. The second part of the study traces methods and variables followed by the results and conclusions.

Facebook and return to the social influences

Technological and social changes can shape what kinds of influences are exerted on citizens' political behavior. Different effects could emerge from or be amplified by the different patterns of information acquisition about politics. Therefore, as Facebook is becoming increasingly crucial in many people's political orientation, it may have consequences in terms of political behavior. There are some reasons to believe that the increased importance of Facebook is associated with growing social influences on political behavior. This implies that citizens' political communication is becoming more important, because the political behavior of majority being informed through social media is shaped by the minority communicating about politics there.

Obviously, social influences on political behavior are not a new idea in political communication research. Concerning the role social communication plays in social processes, Gabriel Tarde asserted as early as the end of 19th century: "if people did not talk, it would be futile to publish newspapers...they would exercise no durable or profound influence; they would be like a vibrating string without a sounding board" (Tarde, 1898; cited by Katz, 2006: 265). Few years later, American war propagandists put Tarde's thought into practice reflected in the "four-minute men". To create a war-supporting public, the US Committee on Public Information recruited local opinion leaders and provided them with scripts and instructions for everyday conversations with neighbors on weekly basis (Ewan, 1996: 117-121.). However, following the WWI, the direct media effects approach, hallmarked by Harold Lasswell (1930, 1935), was becoming prevalent. Emerging European totalitarian political systems and extending mass media were a fertile ground for the image of passive recipient citizen. However, this image had been refuted by the Columbia School's election studies in the middle of the 20th century and social influences came to the fore again. Paul Lazarsfeld and his colleagues found that voters more relied on the opinion leaders in their personal contexts than the mass media in their voting choices (Lazarsfeld et al, 1948). This result led the authors to form the two-step flow mode of communication (Katz – Lazarsfeld, 1955) arguing that the political behavior of the wider, politically uninterested public is shaped by a small number of highly interested

peers. The latter group, however, is active mass media consumer indicating that mass media could exert influence on larger public through the mediation of them.

Although the two-step flow of communication model has become a prominent theoretical approach of communication research, less attention has been paid to the theory in political communication research during the last decades. Often claimed trends like weakening traditional social ties, growing individual control over information (Bennett – Iyengar, 2008) as well as taboo nature of politics in social conversation (Eliasoph, 1998) turned scholars' focus on other influences on political behavior. Empirical investigations showed that people rarely talk about politics (Conover et al, 2002) and even when they do, these conversations take place in tight circle with close ties (Huckfeldt – Sprague, 1995; Wyatt, et al, 2000) and like-minded people (Smith, 2015). As a result, attitude or political behavior changes are hardly expected to occur by these everyday political conversations. In addition, Bennett and Manheim proposed that the increased possibility of direct targeted strategic communication and narrowcasting techniques also weaken the empirical validity of the two-step flow model and argued that a one-step flow of communication model can be more applicable in current social and technological context (Bennett – Manheim, 2006).

However, the rise of Internet, especially the social media, has opened the door again to bring back the idea of social influences in political communication research. Already in the web 1.0 period Norris and Curtice proposed that the actual relevance of political web sites is to reach directly the opinion leaders rather than voters in general. Their results demonstrated that those small segments of voters who follow such web sites are more likely talk about politics with their families or friends (Norris – Curtice, 2008). However, the web 2.0 in general, and Facebook in particular changed the relevance of citizens' political communication. Facebook has become an important information resource about politics for a number of voters, which information in turn is largely created and disseminated by their peers, more specifically by the communication of their peers. On Facebook the reach of ordinary citizens' communication has grown to such an extent which could never be experienced before. Any communicative acts performed in Facebook public can be potentially seen by near all offline acquaintances of the performer, including family members, friends and colleagues and so on. As a result, although past research showed that only a minority talk about politics offline, on Facebook even the voice of a few can be heard far away.

Despite these facts, only a few studies investigated how the citizens' political communication affects political behavior and attitudes in this new communication context. The strongest evidence about the influence of personal Facebook friends directed information on political behavior is offered by an experiment conducted by a researcher of Columbia University. The experiment secretly involved 61-million Facebook-users, and treatment groups got a call-for-voting statement at the top of their news feeds during 2010 US congressional election day. One group was shown the statement displaying how many Facebook-friends had already voted together with the profile pictures of some of them. The members of other group could see this information without showing their already-voting friends. The results showed that users who saw their voting friends were more likely to vote than those who did not see such information (Bond et al, 2012). In a laboratory experiment, Turcotte and his colleagues examined the effects exerted by social mediation on the judgement of the source of the message. The results showed that news sources are more trusted when their contents are appeared by the mediation of Facebook friends rather than they are seen in themselves. In addition, the perceived credibility of the news source increased when the mediator Facebook friend was thought

to be politically informed and honest about politics (Turcotte et al, 2015). The importance of social cues appearing in messages was also supported by Messing and Westwood's laboratory experiment. The study found that even the partisan bias is suspended by users in the news selection as long as social cues turn up in the news. Moreover, in this research the social cues were impersonal, as only the number of users recommending the articles were shown for the treatment group (Messing – Westwood, 2014).

Importance of social influences on political behavior through social media was also supported by a few survey based researches. Vitak and her colleagues examined the effect of Facebook usage on political participation among students from the Midwestern University during the US presidential election of 2008. They found that even being exposed to Facebook friends' political activities is positively associated with political participation (Vitak et al, 2011). Diehl and his colleagues also showed that the more intensively users use social media the more frequently they change political opinions based upon that someone influential to them posted on social media (Diehl et al, 2015).

According to the two step flow model of communication social influence occurs because the citizens communicating about politics are opinion leaders in their local contexts. A few empirical results suggest that users' personal traits who communicate about politics on Facebook correspond with some features usually being ascribed to opinion leaders. Examining Facebook communication about climate change among republican voters, Vraga and her colleagues found that the more a user perceive herself as an opinion leader the more she is apt to political communication on Facebook, especially about climate change (Vraga et al, 2015a). Another recent study also showed that so-called "prosumers", who intensively communicate about politics on social media, are more likely to consider themselves opinion leaders and try to persuade other people of their own opinion (Weeks et al, 2015). Furthermore, my own previous research based on a non-representative online sample also demonstrates that higher activity in online political communication is positively associated with opinion leadership (Bene, 2014).

All in all, there are signs that the relevance of social influences on political behavior has increased owing to social media in general, and Facebook in particular. This may mean that citizens or opinion leaders communicating actively about politics play again an important role in shaping political behavior and public opinion. However, the literature just discussed doesn't address the question of how these social influences relate to other media effects. For example, an important question could be whether social influences are different from the effects of other media consumed by citizens in terms of their forms or sizes. It is important because most people are informed not only from Facebook, but they are also exposed to political contents from other media either accidentally or on purpose. Another deficiency of the few studies examining social influences on social media is that they were seeking the influence on the activity level, especially on political participation and failed to focus on how peers shape political attitudes in a longer run. However, social influences could play an important role in long-term political opinion formation through shaping political experiences and perceptions for a long time – this could be especially important for young people who often hold less solid or fixed political preferences. Most political information is acquired through indirect rather than direct way, hence political situation perception is highly shaped by these indirect experiences. Facebook has increasingly become an integral part of people's everyday life, therefore the experiences stemming from here can strongly shape people's political and reality perception.

This overview leads this research to the following general hypothesis

H1: Being informed from Facebook entails that political attitudes are highly shaped by peers' Facebook political communication.

If this hypothesis gained empirical support, it would mean that in the modern information context dominated by social media the two-step flow of communication model is adequate again in understanding political behavior. However, the general hypothesis is tested indirectly rather than directly by breaking it down into two sub-hypotheses. The two sub-hypotheses are connected by a complementary variable based on the idea that citizens' political communication on Facebook is characterized by intense negativity.

Negativity on Facebook political communication

Citizens' negative attitudes, growing cynicism and distrust toward politics were a well-discussed and popular topic in political science literature during the last decades (see, Cappella – Jamieson, 1996; Norris, 1999 etc.). There is reason to believe that this negativity gets voice in citizens' political communication as well, and it is especially dominated political communication on Facebook.

Political communication on Facebook is mostly driven by expressive motives (see: Svennson, 2011, Marichal, 2013). This means that the acts performed publicly here essentially aim to the actor's self-presentation and make an impression on her social context. Even when there are other motives behind the act (e.g. instrumental motive of persuading others or the wish to reach a mutual understanding based on communicative rationality), users always must be aware that their communication can be seen by the whole circle of their acquaintances – any utterances are part of their publicly presented selves. As a result, supposedly those people communicate about politics on Facebook whose self-image intended to be publicly presented includes some political aspects.

The notion of expressive motives driven by political communication fits well to Lance Bennett's personalized political identity approach. Bennett suggests that growing fragmentation, individualization and consuming culture result in personalized political identities (Bennett, 2012). It is mainly the investigation of new and successful social movement that leads Bennett to the conclusion that in modern, digitalized political sphere the broad and inclusive action frames are gaining relevance. These are such action-stimulating contents that do not require strong identification. Their central features are that people can connect to them with different reasons and narratives, they can be easily personalized, and different identities can be performed and experienced by means of them. As a result, they can easily and quickly spread through digital networks. Through this a new kind of political action has emerged called by Bennett and Segerberg as connective action (Bennett – Segerberg, 2012). However, this connectivity can be extended beyond the movement sphere and used for understanding the changing approaches towards politics: those political contents, issues and events are appreciated and become subjects of citizens' political communication that can be applied for performing, experiencing and shaping individual, personalized identities and involve little identification burden and rather than those contents that aim to transform these identities and fit them into a homogenized collective identity-block. There is reason to believe that connective action can be more easily carried out on negative rather than positive ground. Positive connection to any political subjects entails greater identification burden than negative connection to anything. Performing personalized identity is easier by refusing something rather than identification with

something. Moreover, the 'collapsed contexts' (Marwick – boyd, 2011) and the dominance of weak ties (Vraga et al, 2015b) on Facebook also urge users not to undertake too much identification burden. They are forced to present a self-image in their public communication that they could undertake in front of their distinct, heterogeneous (Diehl et al, 2015), offline separated, but on Facebook 'collapsed' social contexts.

Some empirical findings stemming from investigations of citizens' reactivity on politicians Facebook pages support the claim regarding the dominance of negativity on citizens' Facebook political communication. Larsson found that critical Facebook posts were mostly commented and second most liked on Norwegian party leaders' Facebook pages during the parliamentary elections of 2013 (Larsson, 2014). In US, Xenos and his colleagues also found that opponent-attacking posts were more liked and commented than self-promoting posts on congressional and gubernatorial candidates' pages during the elections in 2010 (Xenos et al, 2015). Similar results were unfolded from my recent study of the reactivity of Hungarian parliamentarian candidates' Facebook posts during the latest election in 2014. Among the examined post elements negativity was the most commented and shared by the candidates' followers. In contrast, the presence of positive element within the content of posts did not significantly affect the number of likes, comments or shares (Bene, 2015). On the whole, these findings all indicate that followers of politicians Facebook pages are more likely to connect to negative contents and are used to perform political communication activities in front of the members of their networks.

From the used database a variable measuring satisfaction with the way democracy works relates mostly to political dissatisfaction and negativity. A crucial benefit of using this variable is that it is sufficiently general and broad to capture long-time political experiences. Asking a general evaluation about the political situation, respondents are forced to draw on their impressions. These impressions may come from different sources. Kovács found that degree of satisfaction with the way democracy works is shaped by subjective financial well-being, degree of uncertainty about future and party affiliation (Kovács, 2014). This result indicates that personal experiences and party identity convey important impressions for the evaluation of the way democracy works. However, crucial impressions may stem from indirect information about politics. It could matter what kind of political reality is unfolded through the respondents' mediated experiences.

The general hypothesis is examined through direct testing of two sub-hypotheses. As argued above, I expect that using negativity is attractive on Facebook political communication because negative political contents are easily applied for connective political actions rather than positive ones which entails larger identification burden. Based on this assumption,

H1.1 I hypothesize that political communication on social media is influenced by dissatisfaction with the way democracy works. The more dissatisfied one is with democracy, the more she communicates about politics on social media.

As long as H1.1 hypothesis is supported, we can reasonably assume that Facebook political communication is dominated by dissatisfied minority's political critics. It follows that

H1.2. I hypothesize that being informed from Facebook has a significantly negative effect on satisfaction with the way democracy works. The more one being informed through Facebook, the more dissatisfied she is with the way democracy works,

because political contents spreading on Facebook may provide important impressions used for the evaluation respondents made. If both hypotheses are supported, that offers an indirect verification for the general hypothesis: the effect of being informed from Facebook on political behavior can be connected with the communication the minority of young people performs on Facebook.

The supposed strengthening of social influences owing to Facebook implies the revival of two-steps flow model of communication. However, the model states too that citizens communicating about politics (a) are opinion leaders; and (b) consume mass media contents in larger degree than general population. One aspect of being an opinion leader is the intention to exert influence on social context, thus

H2 I hypothesize that intention of convincing others is positively associated with political communication on Facebook

and

H3 I hypothesize that frequency of consuming professional mass media is positively associated with political communication on Facebook.

Both political communication on Facebook and satisfaction with the way democracy works can be shaped by several other variables which are needed to be controlled. Several studies demonstrated that political communication on Facebook is strongly affected by political interest (pl.: Vitak et al, 2011, Vromen et al, 2016). Moreover, since Facebook communication was described above as guided by expressive motives and connected to identity, the effects of the intensity of political identity on that can be assumed.

Kovács study showed that satisfaction with the way democracy works are shaped by subjective financial well-being, degree of uncertainty about future and party affiliation (Kovács, 2014). Also, political interest may influence dependent variable, because it affects the cognitive processing of information (see: Kazee, 1981; MacKuen, 1984). Last, the effect of Facebook as an information resource on the examined attitude can be settled as long as the potential effects of other information resource are controlled. Moreover, the effect sizes of different information resources can be directly compared to each other.

Methods

The database used in this study is stemming from a survey research among Hungarian university students conducted by Active Youth in Hungary Research Group. The sample consists of 800 students recruited from 35 universities and asked via face-to-face interviews. The sample was weighed based on next considerations: The composition of the institution's faculty; the distribution of men and women within the faculty, the distribution of the levels of training within the institution and the faculty (university-college, BA, MA, undivided training, PhD). (more information is needed)

Variables

Dependent variables

Political communication on social media: To investigate the first hypothesis two dependent variables are employed: sharing and posting political content on social media sites. Both variables imply

political content creation activities on social media. However, while in case of sharing the created post is a mere reproduction of an already published material, in case of posting its content is created by the user. Respondents were asked to answer yes-or-no questions as follows: “Have you ever shared events, pictures, videos, posts about public affairs or social problems reflecting to your opinion on social media sites?” and “Have you ever posted about public affairs or social problems?”. For both variables 0 means ‘no’ answer and 1 means ‘yes’ answer.

Satisfaction with the way democracy works: Respondents were asked on a 4-point scale to what extent they are satisfied with the way democracy works in the country, where 1 = ‘I’m not at all satisfied with it’, 2 = ‘I’m not really satisfied with it’, 3 = ‘I’m more or less satisfied with it’ and 4 = ‘I’m completely satisfied with it’. In the first model-pair as an independent variable it is used in its original form. However, in the second model-pair as a dependent variable the scale was dichotomized collapsing the first two values as well as the 3 and 4 values. Its 0 value indicates dissatisfaction and 1 value means satisfaction with the way democracy works.

Independent variables

Political information resources: Respondents were asked: ‘How often are you informed about political issues from the resources listed below?’. The question offers three answer categories such as ‘regularly’, ‘sometimes’ and ‘never’. Based on the listed information resources I distinguished five information resources variables, representing different media: news portals; television; radio; daily newspaper; Facebook. The questionnaire listed four concrete news portals: the two most visited Hungarian news portals (index.hu, origo.hu), the leading radical right-wing portal (kuruc.info) and one which is really popular among young people (444.hu). The ‘regularly’ category of the collapsed news portal variable includes respondents who follow regularly any of the listed news portals, the ‘sometimes’ category is consisted of respondents reading sometimes any of the listed news portals and those young people who never visit any of these portals belong to the ‘never’ category. These outlets are entered separately in the second part of the second model-pair in order to test alternative explanation regarding different outlets may cancel out each other’s effects. The questionnaire made a distinction between public and commercial types of television and radio but in this analysis the different types are collapsed in one television and one radio variable. Daily newspapers and Facebook were distinct answer categories in the questionnaire.

Professional mass media consumption: All political information resources variables except Facebook were collapsed into one variable. All respondents who follow regularly any professional media (news portal, television, radio, daily newspaper) belong to the ‘regularly’ category of the professional media consumption variable, ‘sometimes’ category includes all respondents following sometimes at least one professional media and those who never follow any professional media are assigned to the ‘never’ category.

Urge to vote: This is a proxy variable for opinion-forming intentions. The questionnaire asked respondents: ‘Have you ever urged somebody to vote during a campaign?’. 0 value indicates ‘no’ and 1 value means ‘yes’ answer.

Intensity of political identity: Intensity of political identity is measured by two variables. These variables are distinct measures for the intensity of right-left as well as conservative-liberal political identities. These variables based on questions which ask respondents to locate themselves on a 7-

points right-left and conservative-liberal scale. For measuring intensity of political identity two new variables with four categories were created from these identity variables, where the highest values are the original variables' extremes (strong identity) and the lowest values are the original variables' middle value (ambivalent).

Control variables

Political interest: Political interest is measured by a five-point scale answering the question of 'to what extent are you interested in politics?' where 1 means 'not at all' and 5 means 'very' interested.

Sense of personal uncertainty: Sense of personal *uncertainty* is measured by a five-point scale answering the question of 'to what extent do you perceive your future secure?' where 1 means 'not at all' and 5 means 'very' secure

Subjective financial well-being: The respondents were asked 'By and large how do you evaluate your financial situation?' The original answer categories were as follows: 1 = 'I do not have financial worries; 2 = 'I make ends meet by budgeting well'; 3 = 'I can just make ends meet from my salary'; 4 = 'I have financial problems every month'; 5 = 'I live in deprivation'. So that the sense of personal uncertainty and subjective financial well-being variables point to the same direction, I reversed the values of latter variable. It means that 1 indicates the worst and 5 the best situation.

Party affiliation: The questionnaire asked respondents to check which party they would vote for if the elections were held the next Sunday. In this question four left-wing opposition parties which ran in coalition at 2014 parliamentary election but in distinct lists at 2014 European Parliamentary election were separately asked. In the analysis these parties were collapsed into one category called left-wing parties. The other categories include Fidesz-, Jobbik and LMP-voters as well as 'other party'-voters. A distinct category represents respondents who did not choose party or refused to respond to the question.

Results

First, it is worth taking a look at the descriptive statistics of political information resources and posting and sharing activity. As Table 1 shows, Facebook has become the most important political information resource among university students. Half of them acquire political information from Facebook regularly and a further third does it sometimes. Another crucial information resource is online news portal, while television and radio seem to be relevant when it comes to casual exposure for political information. The popularity of news portals, however, may not be independent from Facebook, as the biggest share of news portal visitors comes from Facebook¹. On the other hand, it is a smaller share of young people, a third of them, who actually create political contents on social media sites. This means that while a big share of university students are informed about politics from Facebook, this information are mostly created and distributed by a small active segment of them. This finding raised the question of what influence they have on their more passive peers.

Table 1: How often are you informed about politics from resources listed below?

	regularly	sometimes	never	N
online news	43%	44%	13%	798

¹ See: <http://www.businessinsider.com/facebook-v-google-referral-traffic-2015-8>

portal				
television	26,4%	41%	32,6%	797
radio	18,5%	38,8%	42,7%	799
daily newspaper	7,6%	27,6%	64,8%	799
Facebook	51,6%	33,9%	14,5%	799

Table 2: Have you ever done activities listed below?

	no	yes	N
sharing	68,3%	31,7%	798
posting	76,7%	23,3%	797

The first step of the indirect demonstration applied here is to examine people who create content on social media. What factors account for sharing and posting behavior? Table 3 shows the logistic regression models for sharing and posting activity on social media. In accordance with previous findings, political interest is a strong predictor of sharing and posting behavior. Surprisingly, the results indicate that the intensity of political identity does not matter when it comes to Facebook political communication. However, the hypothesis 1.1 also gains a strong support, since the results show that sharing and posting behavior are triggered by dissatisfaction with the way democracy works. The more dissatisfied the students are with democracy the more likely they to express themselves politically on social media sites. Also, as hypothesis 2 suggests, the strongest predictor in both models is the proxy variable of opinion forming intentions, the 'urge to vote' variable. It may indicate that people who create contents on social media are generally more inclined to attempt to form their peers' political attitudes. However, hypothesis 3 is rejected, because those who communicate about politics on social media are not characterized by stronger professional mass media consumption.

Table 3: Logistic regression models of sharing and posting about politics on social media

	Sharing		Posting	
	B (SE)	Odds Ratio	B (SE)	Odds Ratio
Satisfaction with democracy	-,482 (,103)***	,617	-,325 (,112)**	,722
Urge to vote	,870 (,229)***	2,387	1,055 (,235)***	2,871
Intensity of left-right identity	,010 (,095)	1,010	-,073 (,105)	,930
Intensity of liberal-conservative identity	,134 (,089)	1,144	,137 (,097)	1,147
Professional mass media consumption				
Regularly	,955 (,650)	2,600	1,525 (1,046)	4,596
Sometimes	,895 (,654)	2,447	1,606 (1,049)	4,984
Political interest	,369 (,074)***	1,447	,484 (,082)***	1,623
Constant	-2,153 (,694)**	,116	-3,780 (1,081)***	,023
χ^2	91,063***		93,417***	
R ² (Nagelkerke)	,157		,173	
N	765		764	

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

The second step of the indirect demonstration is to investigate the effect of being informed from Facebook on satisfaction with way democracy works. The logistic regression model indicates that perception of working of democracy is strongly shaped by party affiliation and perception of personal uncertainty. All non-Fidesz voters, including those who don't have clear party affiliation, conceive functioning of democracy worse than Fidesz-voters. In addition, students, perceiving their future to be insecure, are more dissatisfied with the political system. Interestingly neither political interest nor subjective financial well-being affects the satisfaction with democracy. Among the political information resources, only Facebook and television influence the dependent variables. However, the directions of effects are opposite: while being informed from television influence positively the satisfaction with democracy, Facebook as a regular information resource decreases the level of satisfaction. Although being sometimes informed from Facebook also negatively influence the dependent variables, this effect is not significant. This may bolster the above discussed claim that Facebook has a long-term effect on political attitude by shaping young people's political reality perceptions. This may occur by exposed political content regularly for a long time rather than only sometimes.

Since this model contains only media, an alternative explanation can be raised for the inefficacy of most of them: different outlets stimulate distinct perceptions of the state of democracy and within an aggregate variable they may cancel out each other's effects. As the questionnaire contains some particular online news portal outlets, in their case this alternative explanation can be tested. The second model includes four news portal outlets instead of the collapsed news portal variable: two openly government-opposition sites (index.hu, 444.hu), a more neutral site (origo.hu) and a radical right-leaning site (kuruc.info). The data show that only one variable influence significantly the dependent variables, but the casual visiting of kuruc.info increases the satisfaction with functioning of democracy rather than decreases it. Following regularly or occasionally opposition news sites has no effect on the dissatisfaction with functioning of democracy – unlike being regularly informed from Facebook.

Table 4: Logistic regression model of the satisfaction with the way democracy works.

		1. model		2. model	
		b	Odds Ratio	b	Odds Ratio
Facebook ^{***}					
	regularly	-,976 (,256) ^{***}	,377	-,997 (,260) ^{***}	,369
	sometimes	-,348 (,253)	,706	-,359 (,255)	,698
Online news portal					
	regularly	,314 (,290)	1,369		
	sometimes	,275 (,274)	1,316		
index.hu					
	regularly			,349 (,309)	1,417
	sometimes			,367 (,267)	1,443
origo.hu					
	regularly			,281 (,285)	1,325
	sometimes			-,294 (,216)	,745
444.hu					
	regularly			-,613 (,319)	,542
	sometimes			-,175 (,207)	,840

kuruc.info					
	regularly			,298 (,501)	1,347
	sometimes			,689 (,249)**	1,992
Television**					
	regularly	,758 (,251)**	2,135	,671 (,257)**	1,956
	sometimes	,662 (,220)**	1,939	,662 (,224)**	1,939
Radio					
	regularly	,216 (,257)	1,241	,212 (,262)	1,237
	sometimes	,145 (,197)	1,156	,133 (,200)	1,142
Daily newspaper					
	regularly	,028 (,331)	1,029	,081 (,338)	1,085
	sometimes	,025 (,196)	1,025	-,013 (,201)	,987
Party***					
	left-wing parties	-2,720 (,416)***	,066	-2,764 (,422)***	,063
	Jobbik (radical right party)	-2,457 (,321)***	,086	-2,664 (,339)***	,070
	LMP (green party)	-2,215 (,341)***	,109	-2,251 (,349)***	,105
	others	-3,466 (,797)***	,031	-3,513 (,804)***	,030
	No party affiliation/not response	-1,823 (,282)***	,162	-1,893 (,287)***	,151
Sense of personal uncertainty		,228 (,098)*	1,256	,204 (,100)*	1,226
Subjective financial well-being		,204 (,125)	,815	,201 (,127)	,818
Political interest		,031 (,076)	1,031	,041 (,079)	1,042
Constant		,381 (,644)	1,464	,624 (,652)	1,866
χ^2		147,498***			162,832***
R ² (Nagelkerke)		,238			,261
N		788			788

Conclusion

The study hypothesizes that growing importance of Facebook in political information environment result in stronger social influences on political behavior. The results showed that Facebook is the primary information resource about politics for university students. However, while many young people are informed from Facebook, only a minority of them share or post political contents there. The research indirectly demonstrated the presence of social influences. Unlike previous research, not the direct, short-time effects manifesting into concrete action was investigated, but I assumed that social influences takes place on the level of political attitudes as well by forming the long-time political perceptions. This assumption was tested through the judgement of democracy working

based on the thesis that negativity is dominant in Facebook political communication. The results showed that political posting and sharing are strongly influenced by the dissatisfaction with democracy, and, accordingly, those who are regularly informed about politics from Facebook also perceive the working of democracy negatively. Satisfaction with democracy was negatively affected by no other media, only Facebook. There is reason to think that this effect results from that young people mostly see their dissatisfied peers' negative political content and this experience shapes their political reality perceptions. In addition, the results showed that in accordance with the original two-step flow model, willingness to convince politically others are positively associated with Facebook political communication. However, one building block of the theory is not supported because students sharing and posting political contents on Facebook do not consume more intensively mass media. As a result, opinion leadership has a slightly different meaning in the context of social media than in the original theory.

All in all, the demonstrated social influences point to recurrent relevance of the two-step flow model of communication. That means that owing to changing patterns of political information consumption, political behavior of young people is significantly shaped by their peers communicating about politics. Moreover, the study detected influence which is manifested in attitude level through long-time shaping of political perceptions. This means, that if we wanted to understand ordinary people's political behavior, it is worth turning to the communication of politically engaged citizens. In this approach the main question is that how and what these active people communicate about and which factors influence these communications.

The study has, of course, several limitations. The most significant limitation emanates from the method of indirect demonstration. Although strong arguments exist that support of the two sub-hypotheses proved the general hypothesis, this cannot be clearly stated in the lack of direct evidences. Moreover, the indirect demonstration is based on an assumption which could not be empirically tested in this study. This assumption is that as long as dissatisfaction with the way democracy works significantly influences political posting and sharing, that also means these posts are generally negative or critical political contents. The wording of some variable may also be problematic. The applied survey asked respondents about posting and sharing in social media in general, while the question regarding political information consumption pertains to Facebook in particular. While I indicated this difference in word use, the research design treated them as pertaining to the same thing. This decision may be justified by the fact that social media use of Hungarian young people are still dominated by Facebook, all other platforms are rarely used (see: Kitta, 2012). Another problem is that while in case of most media the questionnaire asked media type, online news portal was asked with specific outlets. Although it had advantages in the second model-pair, this constraint should be considered understanding 'online news portal' variable. Some respondents may wrongly be assigned to 'never' or 'sometimes' category, while they actively follow online news portals different from the listed four.

There are several possible future directions based on this study. First, it would be important to know what exactly means that young people's political behavior are shaped by peers' political communication on Facebook. This study highlighted only one aspect, the political negativity, but there may be many other characteristics of citizens' political communication on Facebook which can affect young people's political behavior. I hope that the results discussed above vindicate that examining the content of young people's political behavior is strongly needed. Furthermore, one

should raise the question of how Facebook is used as political information resource. It can be assumed, that political contents are generally seen accidentally, in a context which is dominated by personal contents. How is political information consumed in this context? These political contents may exert influence on political behavior of users by being not processed extensively. Political information may be processed in forms of titles, short notes or quick impressions. That's why investigation of the processing of Facebook political information should be very useful. In addition, an important question is that what role professional media play in this context dominated by citizen communication. To what extent and how do citizens communicating about politics draw upon mass media contents? All of these questions should be subject of future investigation.

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