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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FUNDS SPENT ON THE CAMPAIGN WITH REGARD TO THE RESULTS OF THE ELECTIONS IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC*

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Abstract The research study thematically focuses on the effectiveness of financing selected campaigns of political parties in elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic. The authors examined the relationship between the funds spent by selected political entities on the election campaign with regard to the final ranking in the elections. The analysis confirmed a new trend of declining financial resources spent in the election campaign since the parliamentary elections in 2020, which occurred after the validity of legislation that limits the amount of money spent on the campaign in the Slovak Republic. The research also showed that the leaders and managers of political parties have not yet begun to focus on the effectiveness of the funds spent on the campaign, as they have to spend twice as much money on 1% of the election profits as two years ago. The authors recommend for campaign organizers use of the latest marketing methods and techniques to be able to more effectively convince potential voters in an increasingly challenging election campaign.

Keywords: political party; finance; campaign; economics; Slovak Republic

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1. Introduction

“Election campaigns aim to reinforce or change people’s voting behaviour. Pressure groups use campaigns to alert the public to a particular issue, to influence the public’s opinion on that issue, and to mobilize support and pressurize those in power to take some desired action. Access to the mass media is often crucial for a pressure group’s successful campaign” (Watson, J. Hill, A. 2006: 34). The election campaign in Slovakia is specifically regulated by Act 181/2014 Coll. on the election campaign and the amendment of Act no. 85/2005 Coll. on political parties and political movements, as amended. This law characterizes an election campaign as any activity of a political party, political movement, a coalition of political parties and political movements, candidates and third parties under § 8, for which remuneration is usually paid to promote their activities, goals and program to obtain the elected office according to a special regulation (Act No. 85/2005 Coll.).

Majority authors agree with the statement that in the current era, full of competition and instability in demand, it is much more important to use modern strategies. The election campaign has certain rules or criteria, which follow from the law, regarding the duration of the campaign itself. The election campaign begins on the day of the publication of the decision to declare elections in the Collection of Laws of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as the “declaration of elections”) and ends 48 hours before the day of the elections. (Act No. 85/2005 Coll.) The election campaign has limitations not only in terms of duration but also in terms of funding. This restriction is also based on Act no. 181/2014 Coll., Specifically from § 3. A political party and a political movement (hereinafter referred to as a "political party") may spend a maximum of EUR 3,000,000, including value-added tax, on its election campaign in the elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic and the elections to the European Parliament. The limit of the political party's costs under the first sentence shall also include the difference between the price of the gift or other gratuitous performance specified in the contract and the usual price and the political party's promotion costs incurred 180 days before the election day. In particular, however, this Act regulates the conditions for the election of the President of the Slovak Republic, the election of local authorities or the election of mayors and mayors, or deputies of the city council.

2. Theoretical background

According to Lincényi and Fabuš, the election campaign also influences the public through the media. (Lincényi, 2015). There are many theoretical approaches to defining an election campaign. It is necessary to realize that just as many phenomena from social life went through development, so the election campaign itself went through certain stages. The stage of the premodern campaign can be included in the period of the end of the 19th century, which is associated with the granting of universal suffrage, the development of civil rights and the arrival of mass political parties. Today, this stage is characteristic of second-category elections such as municipal elections. The leader is surrounded by a small group of advisers, with the party press or local press playing an important role (in the case of municipal elections). In the early 1950s, nationwide television broadcasting was created, and so the premodern campaigns changed to modern campaigns. Modern campaigns have been professionalized and centralized. An important aspect of the campaign is also the use of marketing. According to Smaliukien and Monni (2019), social marketing comes to the fore. According to several authors, it is important to follow current trends in political marketing in order to increase the number of supporters (Brosius et al. 2020) (Geurkink et al. 2020) According to several authors, technology innovation is essential (Ignatavičius et. al. 2015) Of course, this also applies to election campaigns, where technology is no longer necessary.

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The period of modern campaigns could also be called the period of media campaigns because they are worked out exclusively by experts in political communication, survey analysts, marketers and managers. Participation of ordinary people, volunteers or common party members is disappearing here. During this period, it was very important that everything the leader says and does looks good on the screens and thus has the greatest possible effect in terms of gaining public confidence. The last period is the period of the postmodern campaign and dates back to the early 90s of the 20th century. During this period, politicians are partially returning to the premodern management of the campaign. It is a kind of mix of two previous periods with the addition of new knowledge. Politicians are again partially managing the campaign, on the other hand, they are using the services of marketing experts or communication consultants. A novelty that is crucial for this period is the Internet, or social networks, which can be understood as the current attractiveness of the global reach. (Rybanská, Košičiarová, Nagyová, 2015). Political communication is shifting to social networks as part of the election campaign. The most popular social networks for communication about politics include Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, especially social media are increasingly used for sharing content, ideas, opinions, experiences and are basically an extension of the web. They are important participants who conceive and interpret political events in the world (Bulanda, Vavrečka, 2019). The digital world has caused many changes in the field of marketing communication which affects almost all areas of our lives, including political (Světlik, Bulanda, 2019). Political leaders are thus closer to their constituents. They talk to them on a daily basis through statuses or comments. "The Internet and social networks have made it possible to spread information on an unprecedented scale and faster than ever before. Having a profile on a social network is a membership in an interconnected globalized society, so we can be in touch with anyone and have information from anywhere in the world. Also, creating content on social networks and video sharing portals is becoming easier and more accessible to the masses." (Laczkó, 2020:105) However, current postmodern political campaigns also have their downsides. Today, it is very easy to involve unclean means such as misinformation, hoaxes or conspiracies in the campaigns, which are reached especially by populist and extremist political parties. The vast majority of misinformation is currently concentrated and disseminated by cyberspace, the Internet and social networks. The reasons are logical. Social networks mean low information dissemination costs, different target groups, global reach and unprecedented speed of information flow (Laczkó, 2019; Lincényi, Laczkó, 2020). In connection with the campaign, Fabuš (2015) emphasizes the need for cost-effectiveness.

3. Research objective and methodology

The main goal of the presented research was to analyze the relationship between the funds spent in the political campaign and the results of the elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic.

The secondary goal of the research was to find out whether the amount of money spent affects the result of political parties in elections.

As part of research planning and design, we preferred the concept of creating research questions to identifying research problems. We have identified the following 2 research questions (SRQ) and another 2 secondary research questions (SRQ):

RQ1: What are the development tendencies of the volume of spent financial resources of political parties in the election campaign in the Slovak Republic?

Explanation RQ1: We assume that in the Slovak Republic since the parliamentary elections in 2020, there has been a decrease in the volume of financial resources spent by political parties on the election campaign. The reason is the amendment to Act 181/2014 on the election campaign of 2019, which since 2020 introduced a

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maximum permitted limit for the election campaign of EUR 3 million per candidate subject or the abolition of third party support in the political campaign.[†]

SRQ1: How much financial resources did the political parties spend on the election campaign for the selected parliamentary elections in the Slovak Republic?

Explanation SRQ1: Information on the funds used in the elections will be drawn from the final reports of political parties, which are published by law on the website of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic.

RQ2: What was the relationship between the money spent and the results of the parliamentary elections?

Explanation RQ2: We think that it is possible to observe increased effectiveness of the financial resources spent in the campaign concerning the results of political parties in the parliamentary elections in the Slovak Republic. We assume that leaders and managers of political entities are aware that the amount of financial resources spent by a political party is not equal to electoral success and it is necessary to focus on the effectiveness of financial resources spent. We believe that campaign organizers will use new marketing methods and techniques to be better able to convince potential voters in such a challenging battle and competition. In order to confirm this statement, we need to analyze the relationship between these two variables.

SRQ2: What electoral success did the political parties achieve in the monitored elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic?

Explanation SRQ2: To analyze the relationship between the money spent and the election results, we need to further parse how each political party turned out in the elections. We will draw the election results of individual political parties from the website of the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.

4. Results and discussion

In the research, we analyzed the relationship between the funds spent and the results of the parliamentary elections. The authors intended to analyze all parliamentary elections since the establishment of the Slovak Republic in 1993: the elections in 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2012, 2016 and 2020. It should be noted, however, that political parties have been obliged to publish the number of resources spent on the campaign only since the 2012 parliamentary elections. From the above, we were forced to limit the research set to 2012, 2016 and 2020 elections.

Analysis of elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic in 2012

Early elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic in 2012 took place on March 10, 2012. A total of 26 political entities ran in the elections, which was 8 more than in the previous elections in 2010. Of the 28 political parties running, 6 parties entered parliament. In the parliamentary elections in 2012, the clear winner was the Smer - SD party with a gain of 44.42%. However, it should be noted here that the Smer-SD party used EUR 3.3 million in the election campaign, thus using the most funds for the election campaign. Immediately behind her, as far as the funds spent are concerned, was the SDKÚ - DS party. However, we can observe that although almost 2.2 million euros were spent on the campaign, the party gained only 6.09%. The Slovak National Party (SNS) invested just over 1.2 million euros in the campaign, yet it failed to overcome the necessary electoral quorum to enter parliament. The SaS political party spent almost 1.2 million euros on the political campaign, so

[†] ACT of 29 May 2014 on the election campaign and the amendment of Act no. 85/2005 Coll. on political parties and political movements, as amended. Amendment: 501/2019 Coll.

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almost one million euros less than the SDKÚ - DS party, nevertheless had a similar election result. The political party MOST - HÍD invested 1.1 million euros in the political campaign with an election result of almost 7%. The last party analyzed is KDH, which invested 1 million euros in the campaign, while the electoral success overtook the parties that invested more funds in the campaign (more in Table 1).

Table 1. Results of the 2012 parliamentary elections

Order of success in elections	Political party	The result of the election (%)	Budget (eur)
1	Smer - SD	44,41	3.309.656,59
2	KDH	8,82	1.054.523
3	OĽaNO	8,55	500.399
4	MOST - HÍD	6,89	1.144.588,20
5	SDKÚ - DS	6,09	2.152.913,10
6	SaS	5,88	1.189.287,15
7	SNS	4,55	1.212.971

Source: Own processing based on publicly available data

Analysis of elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic in 2016

Elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic in 2016 took place on March 5, 2016. A total of 23 political entities ran in the elections. Of the 23 political parties running, 8 parties entered parliament. Also in 2016, the winner was again the Smer - SD party, which spent almost 3 million euros on the election campaign. In second place is the two-party coalition OĽaNO - NOVA, which invested 2.4 million euros in the election campaign with a gain of 11% of the vote. In third place is the MOST-HÍD party, which has spent a similar amount of money as the OĽaNO-NOVA two-party coalition, but with an election result almost half as low. The Smer party invested 2.1 million euros in the election campaign. The electoral quorum exceeded by only a few thousand votes. On the contrary, the KDH movement spent 1.5 million euros on the campaign but failed to reach the electoral quorum to get into parliament. The Slovak National Party (SNS) won almost 9% of the vote in the elections, spending 1.3 million euros on the campaign. SMK invested 600,000 euros in the campaign but won only 4% in the election, so it failed to get into parliament. The opposite example is the SaS party, which invested only 400,000 euros in the campaign, with an election result of 12%. Sme rodina movement spent similar funds, with almost half the success of the SaS party. According to the final reports of the political parties, which are submitted to the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic, the SNS party spent only 1,000 euros on the campaign. Despite almost no financial budget, this political party managed to win 8% in the elections (more in Table 2).

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Table 2. Results of the 2016 parliamentary elections

Political party	Budget (eur)	The result of the election (%)
Smer - SD	2.976.832	28,28
SaS	424.764	12,1
OLaNO - NOVA	2.412.853	11,02
SNS	1.315.719	8,64
ĽSNS	1.050	8,04
Sme rodina	373.460	6,62
MOST- HÍD	2.392.045	6,5
Siet'	2.157.020	5,6
KDH	1.555.554	4,94
SMK	625.225	4,04
SDKÚ - DS	250.639	0,26

Source: Own processing based on publicly available data

Analysis of elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic in 2020

So far, the last Elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic took place on February 29, 2020. The coalition of the parties PS - Spolu spent the most funds on the election campaign, but it did not manage to get into the parliament, despite the high financial resources. As it was a coalition of two parties, the quorum is not a standard 5%, but increases to 7%. The second party that spent the most money is the Smer - SD party, which with a similar budget won 18% in the elections. In third place was the OĽaNO movement, which won 25% of the election, making it the winner of the election. The Za ľudí party invested 1.7 million euros and won 5.7% of the vote in the election. The MOST - HÍD party invested 1.5 million euros in the campaign but failed to obtain the necessary quorum for the election to parliament. There were many more political parties that spent bigger financial amount and did not get into parliament in these elections. The SNS party, which was in the governing coalition in the last election period, invested 1.4 million euros in the elections but won only 3% in the elections. The newly formed Vlast party invested 1.1 million euros in the campaign and only 2.9% of people expressed confidence for them in the election. A Dobrá voľba party used 1 million euros in the election campaign, but only 3% of people expressed confidence in it. On the contrary, parties such as Sme rodina and ĽSNS invested something around 700,000 euros in the election campaign with an election result of around 8% (more in Table 3).

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Table 3. Results of the 2020 parliamentary elections

Political party	Budget (eur)	The result of the election (%)
PS- Spolu	2.521.627	6,96
Smer- SD	2.371.686	18,29
OĽaNO	2.030.630	25,02
Za ľudí	1.722.362	5,77
SaS	1.535.287	6,22
MOST – HÍD	1.480.342	2,05
SNS	1.359.655	3,16
VLASTĽ	1.127.796	2,93
Dobrá voľba	1.066.062	3,06
KDH	1.047.427	4,65
MKO- MKS	937.534	3,9
Sme rodina	760.324	8,24
ĽSNS	651.055	7,97

Source: Own processing based on publicly available data

Discussion

As mentioned above, in analyzing the development trends of the volume of financial resources spent by political parties in the election campaign for the National Council in the Slovak Republic, we relied on publicly available sources, which political parties are obliged to publish by law since the 2012 elections. For the analysis, we used data from six political entities (Smer-SD, KDH, OĽaNO, MOST-HÍD, SaS, SNS), because these subjects ran in all three analyzed elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic (2012, 2016, 2020).

In the first research question, we assumed that in the Slovak Republic since the parliamentary elections in 2020, there has been a decrease in the number of financial resources spent by political parties on the election campaign. We stated this because an amendment to Act 181/2014 on the election campaign of 2019 has been in force since 2020, which introduced a maximum permitted limit for the election campaign of EUR 3 million per candidate, or the abolition of third party support in a political campaign. This change in legislation was reflected in the development trends of the funds spent in the campaign. Although the candidate parties in the 2020 parliamentary elections we examined together invested more financial resources in the campaign than in 2012, the total amount of money spent on these parties in the campaign was even higher in the 2016 parliamentary elections. More on Figure 1.

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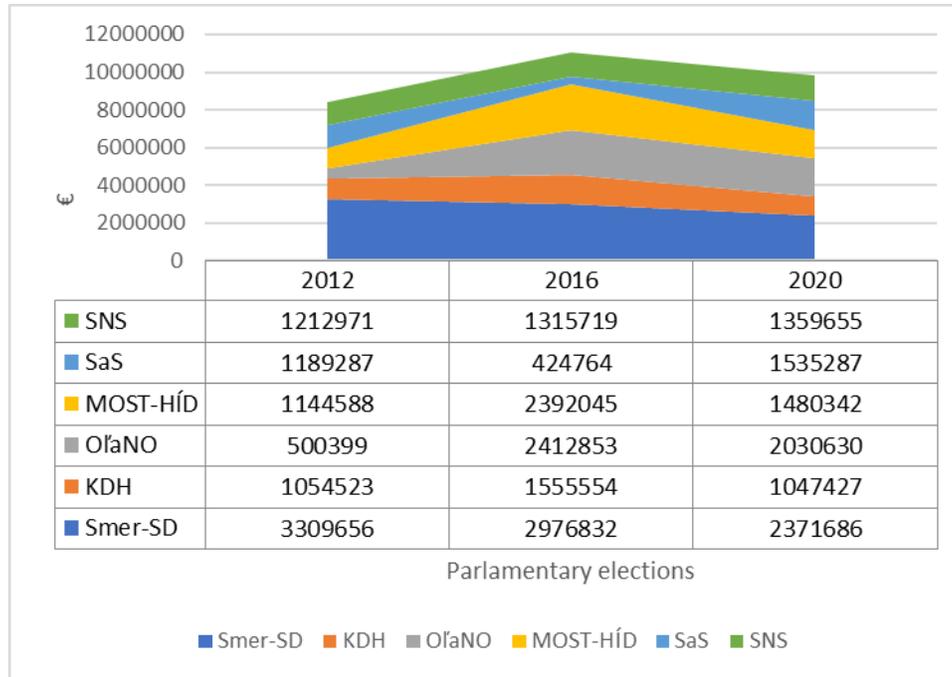


Figure 1. Development tendencies of spent financial resources in the campaign of selected parliamentary elections in the Slovak Republic
 Source: Own processing

In the second research question, we stated that it is possible to observe increased effectiveness of financial resources spent in the campaign with regard to the results of political parties in the parliamentary elections in the Slovak Republic. We thought that it was possible to observe increased effectiveness of the financial resources spent in the campaign concerning the results of political parties in the parliamentary elections in the Slovak Republic. We assumed that the leaders and managers of political entities are aware that the amount of financial resources spent by a political party is not equal to electoral success and it is necessary to focus on the effectiveness of financial resources spent. We believed that election campaigners would use new marketing methods and techniques to be more able to convince potential voters in such a challenging battle and competition. To confirm this statement, we analyzed the relationship between these two variables. Thus, we divided the volume of financial resources spent by the candidate party (see Figure no. 1) by the real number of% won in the parliamentary elections (see Table 4). The analysis did not confirm an increase in the effectiveness of the financial resources spent by the candidate parliamentary parties in the elections in the Slovak Republic. The candidate parties in the 2020 parliamentary elections that we examined had to spend twice as much money on the 1% election gain as they did in the 2012 parliamentary election campaign. It should be added, however, that slight differences can be observed in the effectiveness of the campaigns of individual candidate parties (more in Table 5).

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Table 4. Overview of the success of political parties in parliamentary elections in the Slovak Republic

Column 1	2012	2016	2020
Smer-SD	44,41	28,28	18,29
KDH	8,82	4,94	4,65
OPaNO	8,55	11,02	25,02
MOST-HÍD	6,89	6,5	2,05
SaS	5,88	12,1	6,22
SNS	4,55	8,64	3,16

Source: Own processing

Table 5. Efficiency of spent funds (€) on 1% of gain in elections in the Slovak Republic

Column 1	2012	2016	2020
Smer-SD	74525	105262	129671
KDH	119560	314889	225253
OLaNO	58526	218952	81160
MOST- HÍD	166123	368006	722118
SaS	202259	35104	246830
SNS	266587	152282	430270
Total	887580	1194495	1835302

Source: Own processing

5. Conclusions

Based on the quantitative analysis of the effectiveness of funds spent on the campaign with regard to the results in selected elections in the Slovak Republic, several starting points and conclusions follow:

In the Slovak Republic, the volume of financial resources spent in the election campaign in the parliamentary elections has been declining since 2020. This is a consequence of the current legislation on the election campaign, which since the beginning of 2020 has limited the maximum permitted amount of funding for the election campaign to the amount of EUR 3 million. It means that the Slovak Republic will not go the way of billions of election campaigns, as we know from the US presidential election.

Paradoxically, a clear trend of a decrease in the efficiency of financial resources spent in the parliamentary elections in the Slovak Republic can be further observed from the results of the analysis. Candidate parties in the 2020 parliamentary elections had to spend twice as much financial resources on the 1% election gain as they did eight years ago in the 2012 parliamentary elections. From the above, it is clear that it is much more difficult for the candidate political entities, but also more expensive to get a real vote in the parliamentary elections in the Slovak Republic. It seems that the leaders and managers of political parties have not yet focused on the effectiveness of the financial resources spent in the political campaign. Therefore, we recommend campaign organizers to use new marketing methods and techniques in the future to be better able to convince potential voters in such a challenging battle and competition.

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By carrying out this research study, the authors do not claim a comprehensive view of the analysis of the effectiveness of the funds spent concerning the results in selected elections in the Slovak Republic. The research topic offers several other and interesting research subjects for further elaboration. One of them is the research of the effectiveness of the election campaign with regard to the types and intensity of the use of political marketing tools. It would be beneficial for science and practice to examine the effectiveness of the funds spent on the campaign in the future parliamentary and other elections in the Slovak Republic. It would also be interesting to compare the results from Slovakia with other countries of the Member States of the European Union.

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