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THESIS:

**“Disinformation as a tool in political campaigns – How the audience
perceives the disinformation - case study Republic of North
Macedonia”**

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Introduction and the aim of the research

Introduction

Disinformation in the last 10 years has become a very important cause in many states' agendas as a threat to democratic values of the society and as an interruption to countries' developments towards democratisation. This also refers to North Macedonia, as being a country where disinformation has become a subject to many scholars and experts, government so as regulatory bodies. Social media has been increasingly used as a powerful tool for political engagement and expression. Political actors have used the benefits of digital media to shape public opinion, to control the flow of information online and to initiate particular political activity through political campaigns. Political actors have used rumor and other false information tools since ever, but modern technologies allow them to produce and disseminate disinformation faster and with a great effect. The speed, reach and low cost of online communication is increasing the consequences of disinformation. Therefore, the causes and impact of disinformation on democracy, human rights and the rule of law are the subjects which are constantly studied with particular attention by respective field experts and researchers.

The research project on computational propaganda by the University of Oxford (2019), revealed 70 countries worldwide of organized social media manipulation campaigns, from which in 45 countries these tools and techniques were used by political parties or politicians during the times of important political events, such as elections. Among other democratic and non-democratic states, in this report North Macedonia was examined as one of the countries where cyber troop activity took part through social media manipulation, respectively Facebook and Tweeter fake accounts: automated accounts –bots and human accounts. As the report reveals, in North Macedonia these strategies were used for attacking opposition, for spreading polarizing messages and for suppressing participation through personal attacks or harassments. (Bradshaw & Howard, 2019)

But, all of these wouldn't be possible and wouldn't reach so much attention and effect without the consumers' i.e. audience's consent and activity. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, a big number of users engaged to these intentionally organized package of news and help disseminate the un/truth information which threatens media pluralism,

jeopardizes the freedom of expression and weakens citizens' trust in institutions and media.

Different studies have provided very convincing data that people, especially young people, most of the time receive their news through social media. Thus, the possibility of being manipulated by deliberately packed information while concealing the facts is very high.

In the research by Vosoughi et al. (2018), where they tested the spreading of the fake news and true news in the same subjects and in the same manner by robots vs. humans, found that 'robots accelerate the spread of the false news and true news in the same rate, implying that false news spreads more than truth because humans are more likely to spread it'. Furthermore, false news was spread significantly more than the truth in all the subjects, but the effects were more pronounced for false political news than other category of information (Vosoughi, Roy, & Aral, 2018).

Research field

This research will concentrate on the consumer – the user, respectively on the users' perception on disinformation – how they perceive, what makes them engage, believe and be persuaded by fake news. Most of the research studies conducted so far in North Macedonia have focused on the problem of disinformation spread and their content analysis, but very few on the audience views, perceptions and behavior when facing disinformation. The results from this research can be used by various stakeholders in their programs and activities aimed at addressing the negative consequences from the intentional spread of disinformation and misinformation for political propaganda purposes: governmental institutions to develop their educational policies, regulatory institutions to implement and coordinate programs for media literacy, civil society to educate the users to access the social media news' environment critically and not emotionally, academic institutions to develop research projects for further studying of these phenomena, etc.

Hypothesis

The main hypotheses for this research is to check whether 'The way the audience perceives the political disinformation depends on their political affiliation in RNM.-

Also there are three sub hypotheses to the subject:

- (1) The audience is more persuaded by disinformation if it is shared by the people with the same attitudes and beliefs in RNM
- (2) The audience's perception of source credibility affects audience vulnerability to disinformation
- (3) Youngers are more resilient to false information than older ones are in RNM

Research questions

The main research question for the master thesis is:

Does the political affiliation impact the way the audience perceives the political disinformation?

The specific research questions are:

- (1) Does the audience is more vulnerable to disinformation if it is shared by the people with the same attitudes and beliefs in RNM?
- (2) Does the audience perception of source credibility in social media affects their vulnerability to disinformation?
- (3) Are youngers more resilient to disinformation and why?

Research Objectives

The basic objective of the empirical research to be conducted as part of the Master Thesis is to assess the need to increase media education campaigns which will have a direct impact on audience awareness regarding the dissemination of false information. From this basic objective, three specific goals emerge:

- (1) To assess the need for policy-making and implementation of the same in terms of media education of the audience - the education, which will reduce the dissemination of false information during election campaigns
- (2) In order to correct the current functioning of the social media landscape, to give recommendations based on Western Balkan Country analysis on how through existing mechanisms the phenomenon of disinformation can be combated.
- (3) To detect the audience's awareness toward disinformation through their perception and their behaviour when countering disinformation so as to identify the most vulnerable audience target group to disinformation in social media.

The first special goal consists of theoretical explanation of the concepts and questions elaborated in the master's thesis, elaboration of the existing theoretical conceptions and research approaches to dissemination of disinformation for political purposes and especially with theoretical understanding of socio and psychological mechanisms that are the basis of reception and interpretation of disinformation.

The second specific goal consists of exploring and comparing the media landscape in three Western Balkan countries Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia in regard to policy regulations, media actions and civil society reactions toward disinformation in order to make a comprehensive analysis of the current situation in these countries and to set and detect the most appropriate ways and methods for combating disinformation in liason to the local situation.

The third specific goal consists of conducting quantitative analysis of the survey data in order to determine the correlation between age, political affiliation and source credibility in regard to confirmation bias in perceiving disinformation.

Research Methodology

The research strategy to be employed in this empirical study is mixed method – that is the approach will be based on both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Quantitative methods will be used for testing hypothesis raised, by developing a questionnaire with qualitative elements and administering a closed-ended online survey with 150 – 300 respondents of different social status, age and gender, through nonprobability sampling.

In addition, for the first theoretical part of the study, literature review will be conducted - research studies conducted by other scholars so far in the field will be reviewed, such as: analysis by National Endowment for Democracy, reports from Computational Propaganda research group of experts from University of Oxford so as Reuters Institute, Reports, Codes of practice against disinformation and Action plans by European Commission and European Union.

In the elaboration of this research - scientific work, seeing the subject and goals of research, general and specific scientific methods and techniques will be used, with the help of which conclusions and recommendations will be reached.

The method of analysis is used, as part of the research that will be based on official documents and reports, scientific papers, various articles, laws and legal acts, regarding the impact of disinformation on the audience during political campaigns in the case of Western Balkan Countries.

From the general scientific methods or technique that will be used during the testing of hypotheses is the SPSS system that will enable analysis of the results from the questionnaire, which will serve us to get more accurate feedback on some questions about the perception of disinformation and the way the audience gets affected.

Structure of the thesis

The present master thesis is consisted by five chapters. The first chapter examined the theoretical aspects and literature review for the study of disinformation and perception of disinformation by the audience during election campaigns. Defining the framework and terminology of the notion Disinformation, the development and characteristics of the information manipulation through time, so as examination of the contribution of theories of media effects to the analysis of individual constrains for disinformation influence nowadays.

The second chapter makes an overview of the online media landscape in some of Western Balkan countries in the perspective of disinformation campaigns during elections. The social media landscape of Kosovo, Albania and North Macedonia were analysed, the legal framework for media freedom, the dissemination of disinformation in social media, so as cases of disinformation campaigns during last elections. Also, the vulnerability to disinformation in social media of these countries was identified.

The third chapter introduced the methodology used for this master thesis so as data collection and qualitative and quantitative research methods were presented.

Fourth chapter presented the results and elaboration of the same in terms of survey conducted in liaison with hypothesis raised. Presented results of the survey were made based on four thematic blocks that were used to prepare the questionnaire: A) Political

affiliation and voting behaviour; B) News consumption habits and attitudes for political news in social media; C) Engagement Preferences and attitudes for social media reliability and source credibility D) Perception of disinformation in social media during election campaigns in NRM. In addition, the elaboration and interpretation of the result were made to prove or refute the main hypotheses 'The way the audience perceives the political disinformation depends on their political affiliation in RNM' so as three sub hypothesis: 'The audience is more persuaded by disinformation if it is shared by the people with the same attitudes and beliefs in RNM'; 'The audience's perception of source credibility affects audience vulnerability to disinformation' and 'Youngers are more resilient to false information than older ones are in RNM'.

The fifth chapter reviewed all the chapters and made conclusions based on the analysis and the study conducted. Also, recommendation for future researchers on the subject and recommendation for improvement and further development of the mechanism for fighting disinformation were given.

Importance of the thesis

The thesis will bring enough gathered relevant information, analysis, elaboration of the research conducted so as recommendations that might help to go one step further in the fight against disinformation.

Furthermore, this research will examine the way the audience perceives disinformation during political campaign 2020 in North Macedonia in order to shed light and pave the way to journalists, fact-checkers, national authorities, researchers, civil society and experts of the field to improve detection, to raise awareness and to limit the impact of disinformation.

The recommendations derived from the analysis, research findings and elaboration of the same ones will make this thesis very reliable for the next researches in the field of social sciences, public diplomacy, psychology or political communication.

This research will reveal the elements and characteristics of what makes the users in North Macedonia believe and spread the disinformation connected to elections, how they face the disinformation and how aware are for the occupied social media space with manipulative information.

The research findings will help determine the next steps in fighting disinformation especially during political campaigns as being a serious threat to decision – making process in the democratic societies.

1. Literature Review

1.1.1 Disinformation vs. Fake news

Different stories around the world enlighten us about the influence that disinformation has for destabilizing, irritating, polarizing society, creating conflicts, initiating hate speech and, influencing decision making.

The often used term today 'fake news' refers to false information or deliberate information, has old roots. In 1983 year an Indian newspaper, managed by Russians 'The patriot' had a headline on AIDS that claims of how the U.S. government created the virus to kill African-Americans and gay people. The U.S. government weren't paying attention to this kind of false information thinking that if you reply to a fake story you dignify it. But, the same information was shared in 200 reports in 80 countries and the effects of it were felt for a long time. Ronald Reagan, the US President, for the first time created the Active Measures Working Group with experts to fight and reply against disinformation, (Times, 2018). The reports showed that Soviet KGB had called this campaign 'Operation Infection' and had used specific guidelines from the Active Measures, a textbook, playbook that was used from the 1950s (Taylor, 2016).

There are evidences that Nazis have used German Disinformation Service in the 1930s, the term disinformation is mostly associated with Soviet KGB, where the original term comes from the Russian "*dezinformatsiya*" (Merriam Webster, dictionary).

In recent years, the phenomenon has become a freely accessible mechanism to influence peoples' perception and attitudes. From the case of 1874s New York Herald's newspapers' fabricated story 'Animals escaping from the Central Park Zoo' (Uberti, 2016) to the Pizza-gate and Hillary Clinton's Health story during U.S. election campaign 2016, Pro-Brexit and Anti-migration stories during Brexit's Referendum in the UK, Anti- refugee "Lisa-Case" in Germany, '5 stars Movements' during election campaigns in Italy and so many other fabricated stories around the world, made disinformation a global phenomenon.

"Whatever its other cultural and social merits, our digital ecosystem seems to have evolved into a near-perfect environment for fake news to thrive,"as Mark Thompson New York Times CEO said (Thompson, 2016), taking into consideration the low cost, easy access, the

speed and the perfect infrastructure for information dissemination, that digital technology has enabled through social media.

The information disorder lately has become a concern for many researchers and experts. Although there is a different terminology when referring to information disorder by researchers and experts. Some use 'Fake news' to analyse the problem and some use false information or disinformation for the same issue.

According to Merriam Weber dictionaries, the adjective 'Fake' was rarely used in the 18th century, instead, the term 'False news' was used more.¹

The notion 'Fake news' began to be used more often in the U.S. electoral campaign 2016 and by the US President, Donald Trump. Marwick and Lewis 2017 argue that 'The term 'Fake news' was first used to describe sites that intentionally posted fictional partisan content as clickbait, but Donald Trump's administration quickly adopted it to discredit accurate but unflattering news items, ironically making the term itself a form of disinformation.' (Marwick & Lewis, 2017). Research from google trends showed that people started searching for the Fake news in the U.S. presidential elections between 6 and 12 November 2016 and also the web of science peer-review articles that used this word has increased dramatically in 2017 year (Derakhshan & Wardle, 2017).

A study of 34 academic articles from google Scholar and other academic databases published between 2003 year and 2017 year, suggested that the term Fake news was used for different notions and meanings referring to news satire, news parody, fabrication, manipulation, advertising, and propaganda (Edson C. Tandoc Jr., 2018). The study intended to contribute to further exploring and defining the typology of the term.

Also, there is a difference in audiences' perspectives and journalists, technology companies, policymakers, researchers' perspectives on how they percept 'fake news', as the research of Rasmus Kleis Nielsen and Lucas Graves (2017) conducted with 8 focus groups from the U.S. and other European Countries suggest (Nielsen & Graves, 2017):

'Tackling false news narrowly speaking is important, but it will not address the broader issue that people feel much of the information they come across, especially online,

¹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/the-real-story-of-fake-news>

consists of poor journalism, political propaganda, and misleading forms of advertising and sponsored content.'

The late definition for the word 'Fake news' comes from Claire Wardle, Ethan Zuckerman, Danah Boyd- researchers, and Caroline Jack and Margaret Sullivan - journalists from the Washington Post's, who say that the term isn't sufficiently describing the complex phenomenon of miss-information and dis-information.

Also, Bennett and Livingston (2018) suggest 'caution in adopting the term 'fake news' that has become a popular media reference on grounds that it tends to frame the problem as isolated incidents of falsehood and confusion. By contrast, disinformation invites looking at more systematic disruptions of authoritative information flows due to strategic deceptions that may appear very credible to those consuming them' (W Lance Bennett, 2018).

Derakhshan and Wardle (2017), argue that the term fake news is appropriate to use because of the tremendous use around the world especially by politicians in the cases where some news is not in their favour. This might become a mechanism of restraining freedom of the press (Derakhshan & Wardle, 2017). Also, some researchers can't accept the term 'fake news' to be used for describing news. The very first intention of the news is to inform whether they could be false or true. The news by itself can't be fake but information could be false, hence the term fake information or false information is preferable to be used instead of 'fake news'.

But, Nielsen and Graves (2017) believe that avoiding the term fake news won't happen easily because of the everyday usage of the ordinary people to express their frustration on the online media and because it is used already by media critics (Nielsen & Graves, 2017). Even though, it is important to distinguish and specify definitions and the usage of the term.

Also, a study revealed that there is a difference in the usage of the term among state official documents and other regulatory organizations' acts. According to BAYER, et al., (2019) there is a 'lack of constituency' and 'conflicting usage' of the terminology among scholars, human rights organizations and states' legislations when referring to deliberate information with the intent to deceive the public. For instance, a study revealed that the Joint Declaration by the special rapporteurs on freedom of expression acknowledges fake news in the title of the document, but talks exclusively about "disinformation" and "propaganda" throughout the

main body of the declaration. According to the key findings of this study, 'there is an emerging consensus' for using the term 'disinformation' instead of the term 'fake news' when describing a phenomenon of misleading information deliberately produced to cause public harm or for profit (BAYER, et al., 2019).

1.1.2. Definition of Disinformation

'Disinformation' is a broader phenomenon of intended manipulative information through media channels for political profiling with the intent to deceive and harm.

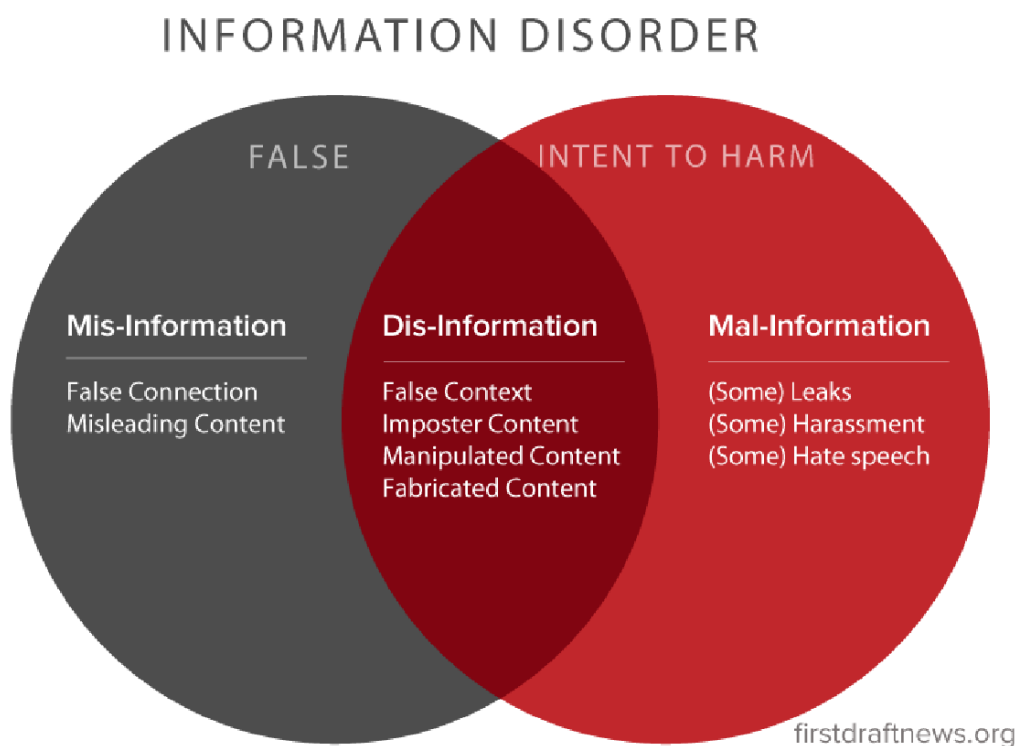
According to Ion M Pacepa and Ronald J. Rychlak (2013), disinformation is false or misleading information that is spread deliberately to deceive. The definition by Claire Wardle (2018), says 'Dis-information is when false information is knowingly shared to cause harm.' The best definition so far is brought by Woolley and Joseff (2020), which says that disinformation from the perspective of the intent 'is a broad term usually referring to the purposeful use of nonrational argument to undermine a political ideal, inflame social division, or engender political cynicism. The disinformation to be more influential 'it may contain a blend of truth and falsehood, or purposefully exclude important context' (Woolley & Joseff, DEMAND FOR Deceit: How the Way we think drives disinformation, 2020). Disinformation can also distort the context to achieve the desired effect. Disinformation has also been used interchangeably with misinformation in some cases. Distinguishing these two terms is the bottom ground to analyse the intent of the messenger. Misinformation is undoubtedly harmful because misleads the audience, but there is a decreased level of harm when comparing to disinformation. Thus, we must analyse the term disinformation separately from misinformation to understand the purpose of the costumed message.

Misinformation by Wardle and Derakhshan from the perspective of the messenger's intent is defined as 'is when false information is shared, but no harm is meant'. The person sharing the misinformation hasn't previous knowledge that the information he posts/shares isn't true. By this, he/she has no intention to harm.

Among Misinformation and Disinformation, Wardle and Derakhshan, are presenting Malinformation as a type of Information Disorder, which consist of true information with an intent to harm a person, organisation or a state by their history or ethnical, religious

background, 'often by moving private information into the public sphere', defined by (Martin-Rozumiłowicz & Kužel, 2019).

The figure below can be very helpful when trying to define what kind of information we are encountering. The figure presents the three types of Information disorder by the concepts of falseness and harm (Derakhshan & Wardle, 2017).



Source: Claire Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan, Information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making, CoE, 2017, p.25

1.2 Media Manipulation

In political communication 'A SPIN DOCTOR' is recognised as PR advisors or media consultants who prepared a misleading, deceptive and manipulative messages for an event occurred or a person intended to deceive public opinion. 'The father of spin' was the epithet attributed to Edward Bernays² as the best influencer of his time. He was the first to promote the term 'public relation' similar to propaganda but during peacetime. In his book 'The engineering consent' he provides a set of guidelines for the public relation counsellor on how to unconsciously affect people's/audience's behaviour. He used psychoanalytic principles of his uncle Sigmund Freud, for different campaigns. He starts his book by a very contradictory sentence for a democratic society, where he claims that the freedom of speech has allowed this tactic to take form:

'FREEDOM of speech and its democratic corollary, a free press, have tacitly expanded our Bill of Rights³ to include the right of persuasion. This development was an inevitable result of the expansion of the media of free speech and persuasion... All these media provide open doors to the public mind. Any one of us through these media may influence the attitudes and actions of our fellow citizens' (Bernays, 1947).

This is when marketing consummator persuasion begins and broadens in political campaigns to develop furthermore. Under these circumstances, when the voters' consent is engineered unconsciously, there is a doubt whether they will support next democratic government or no. Depending on who and for who they are persuaded. The idea of Bernays as Naom Chomsky considers, is that Bernays gives exclusive rights to the 'intelligent minority' to control or manufacture the public, who as Chomsky points they-the audience are only spectators and not participants to a democratic society (Chomsky, 1996).

At the 'Manufacturing Consent', Chomsky and Herman criticizes the news factory of 'Propaganda Machine' that media manipulation occurs from the big corporate media conglomerates 'giants that dominate the media universe' who serve to elite groups' interest.

² Edward Louis Bernays (November 22, 1891 – March 9, 1995) was an Austrian-American pioneer in the field of public relations and propaganda, referred to in his obituary as "the father of public relations".

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Bernays

³ Bill of Rights was signed on September 17, 1787, at the Pennsylvania State House, now known as Independence Hall, in Philadelphia. It guarantees civil rights and liberties to the individual—like freedom of speech, press, and religion.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Bill_of_Rights

News replaced by 'Infomercials' and accompanied with sensationalism occupy the media space and commercialized media eager for mass consume weakens any sense of community useful for civic life. Same as Bernays, Walter Lippmann⁴ was talking about 'smart people' who take action, run things, make decisions and have to take care of the 'bewildered herd', as he calls the ordinary people, who can't resonate and are not aware of the public interest. They are not totally inactive because in democracy they have the right to vote and choose their leader but then they should be spectators, as Chomsky puts it out 'spectators of the democracy'. And this 'bewildered herd' must be distracted and put their attention to something else in order to cause no action or trouble. This when Walter Lippmann established a new generation of professionals 'publicists' or public agents who will stand between the politics' organizations and media institutions, with the intent to influence the media coverage of their clients and as such, hopefully, the public opinion.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, these tendencies have accelerated and deepened, not only the 'practice of democracy' but also politics in all its formats is played out in front of a massive audience, using the electronic media, and this has made now Marshall McLuhan's metaphor for the planet as a "global village," into an indisputable truth.

As assumed latter by Chomsky, there was a hope that the new interactive media will bring up the constructive public debate worldwide in all levels of the society to help build democratic media system. The new media enables and encourages individuals and groups to mobilize, alert and take action for important issues. Marginalised community groups and different community cases have been raised up, demanded their rights, took global attention, and have been solved out. But there are limitations when taking in consideration the broader usage of the internet features. Beside this as Chomsky considers: 'the privatization of the Internet's hardware, the rapid commercialization and concentration of Internet portals and servers and their integration into non-Internet conglomerates-the AOL-Time Warner merger was a giant step in that direction-and the private and concentrated control of the new broadband technology, together threaten to limit any future prospects of the Internet as a democratic media vehicle' (HERMAN & CHOMSKY, 2002).

⁴ Walter Lippmann (September 23, 1889 – December 14, 1974)[\[2\]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Lippmann) was an American writer, reporter and political commentator, a major foreign and domestic policy critic and also a major theorist of liberal democracy. He is notably for his 1922 book Public Opinion. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Lippmann

Unfortunately, the online public space is captured by commercialised online media for profit, where the privacy on media is weakened and at risk in a high scale. The journalism profession has been replaced with PR agents. The propaganda model of Chomsky is applicable and even more strengthened with the online media, whereas 'virtual communities are organized to buy and sell goods, not to create or service a public sphere' (HERMAN & CHOMSKY, 2002).

The founder of the communication model of 5 Ws' ("Who (says) What (to) Whom (in) Which Channel (with) What Effect"), Harold Lasswell, sees the necessity of the strategy of propaganda in democracy, for the 'social disorganization which has been precipitated by the rapid advent of technological changes', argues that most of that which formerly could be done by violence and intimidation must now be done by argument and persuasion (Lasswell, 1927).

'The ever-present function of propaganda in modern life is in large measure attributable to the social disorganization which has been precipitated by the rapid advent of technological changes. Impersonality has supplanted personal loyalty to leaders. Literacy and the physical channels of communication have quickened the connection between those who rule and the ruled. Conventions have arisen which favor the ventilation of opinions and the taking of votes... Democracy has proclaimed the dictatorship of palaver, and the technique of dictating to the dictator is named propaganda.'

The idea of mass deception or 'manufacture consent' to conform small group's interest (political party, business enterprises, etc.) has always existed and continues to exist as will exist people who act refereeing to the obedience of the 'uneducated mass' who are 'ineligible' to take responsibility and make decision for public interest.

The essence of throwing back to the propaganda in its foundation is that the same tools and methods for persuading people's attitudes and behaviours are continually used and will be used in the future for Information control. The psychological analysis of the mass used today in social media manipulation are the same phenomenon used by 'the power' to control the 'bewildered herd' with more sophisticated tools of persuading the unconsciousness of the individuals, by changing the way the society thinks and acts. Media

system has helped to improve the modalities, shorten the time and broaden the influence to the audience.

1.2.1 Targeted –Manipulative campaigns on social media

The U.S. elections in 2016 year became a case study for many researchers, governments, and regulatory bodies, by considering more intensely disinformation phenomenon through computational propaganda for interfering in the democratic process of elections.

A story of Brittney Kaiser, a whistleblower from the Cambridge Analytica⁵, reveals the secrets of computational manipulation by data misuse of up to 87 million Facebook users attained by a personality test. In her recent interview for BBC, she said "Data-driven campaigning gives you the edge that you need to convince swing votes one way or the other, and also to get certain people to show up to the polls'. She has raised the #Ownyourdata campaign to make users aware of their behavioural data, social media possess on each individual. Hence, called 'weaponized' users' data for political campaigning. These methods are used by many countries around the world through engaging companies to use behavioural micro-targeting, used for the UK's Brexit Referendum and the U.S 2016 year's presidential campaign (Kaiser, 2019).

Bradshaw and Howard (2019), revealed social media manipulation campaigns in 70 countries, 48 countries in 2018 and 28 countries in 2017. A trend of gaining political points/votes by this method goes further. The authors argue that this grow indicate 'new entrants who are experimenting with the tools and techniques of computational propaganda during elections or as a new tool of information control.' Among other democratic and non-democratic states, in this report North Macedonia was examined as one of the countries where cyber troop activity took part through social media manipulation, respectively Facebook and Tweeter fake accounts: automated accounts –bots and human accounts. In North Macedonia these strategies were used for attacking opposition, for spreading polarizing messages and for suppressing participation through personal attacks or harassments (Bradshaw & Howard, 2019). In this sense, cross-national comparative research has discovered conditions which determine if a country is more vulnerable to online disinformation or more resilient to online disinformation. It is strongly related to the

⁵ UK political consulting firm which collapsed after the scandal

political, media and economic environment factors of the country. As Humprecht, et al. (2020) suggests, following factors are the most important indicators for the country to be more or less vulnerable to the use and spread of online disinformation: Polarization of Society, Populist Communication, Low Trust in News, Weak Public Service Media, More Fragmented, Less Overlapping Audiences, Large Ad Market Size and High Social Media Use (Humprecht, Esser, & Van Aelst, 2020). The authors have sorted countries in three groups according to this theoretical framework, where the group of countries with a history of polarized conflict, politicized and partisan media, and opinionated and less professional journalism adding to these the high percentage of the social media use, social polarization and populist communication and low percentage of trust in media and politics, are more vulnerable or less resilient to online disinformation (Esser & Pfetsch, 2020).

In North Macedonia posts on social media are the main source of information about domestic events (89%), Trpevska et al. (2019). Moreover, this study indicates that 80 percent of the population aged over 15 years use the Internet daily (70%) or several times a week (10%). Thus, the target group of age 15-49 years can be described as an audience that regularly uses the internet. The trend of using online media for getting informed is going up especially within the young generation (Trpevska, Mitrevski, & Micevski, 2019, p. 40).

Statistics from Council of Media Ethics of Macedonia (CMEM) (2019), showed that internet portals have the most number of complaints regarding the violation of ethical standards in North Macedonia. The biggest number of complaints are subject to the Article 1 of the Code of Ethics (68.3%): 'Incorrect and unchecked information, absence of 'second source of information' and absence of at least two mutual unrelated sources' (SEMM, 2020).

Nikodinoska (2020) identified 5 media models, media groups and individuals who spread disinformation, propaganda and hate speech in online media sphere in North Macedonia:

1. larger online newsrooms that maintain political clientelism relations with the centres of power and often disseminate disinformation and propaganda in their favour in a coordinated manner;
2. small tabloid-type online media ("one-man newsroom") that apologetically spread inappropriate information, disinformation, and often hate speech in support of certain centres of power;

3. public figures who through various online channels spread hate speech and offensive and inappropriate speech on political and nationalist grounds;
4. social media groups with a political and/or nationalist background;
5. individual social media posts and comments with inappropriate content of a political, national, sexual and other nature (Nikodinoska, 2020).

1.3 Theories of media effects

Confirmation bias in a relation with age, political affiliation and source credibility

Darkenshain and Wardle (2017) identify three elements for spreading disinformation: the agent, messenger, and interpreter. Since this thesis will seek to understand the audiences' perspective on disinformation and their vulnerability to disinformation, this section will concentrate on the third element: the interpreter. The new way of accepting news, reacting or share it, has made the media landscape a difficult fact-checking sphere where each of the interpreters could be also the agent who distribute or re-creates, re-shapes, or re-contextualise the news for their network out of the gatekeeping mechanism (Derakhshan & Wardle, 2017). The agents who prepare and disseminate disinformation use a strong knowledge of behavioural and cognitive strategies for individual manipulation. The same understanding should be used to reveal and understand what affects and what makes people react or behave in a particular way when imposed to disinformation.

The message is more engageable and persuasive when it provokes an emotional response when it has a powerful visual component, when it has a strong narrative, and when repeated, (Derakhshan & Wardle, 2017). The phenomenon of disinformation in the digital environment where the 'use of personally and emotionally targeted news produced by 'algo-journalism''⁶ is called as 'empathic media' (Bakir & McStay, 2017). Woolley and Joseff (2020) suggest, the most relevant theories for examining the influence of disinformation are tied to the psychology of information consumption and opinion formation: cognitive bias, such as attitude polarization, confirmation bias, and illusory correlation.

⁶ automated journalism - In automated journalism, also known as algorithmic journalism or robot journalism, news articles are generated by computer programs. These programs interpret, organize, and present data in human-readable ways. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Automated_journalism

The mass communication effects on audiences have gone through three phases of the study and development of media effect theories. The first assumption was that media has strong effects on audiences as Lippmann and Lasswell perceived the audiences as passive, powerless to resist the media influence through the notion of instinct and stimulus-response variables that induce the public to react mechanically and un-subconsciously conform to the agent's intent – creators of the message (Perse, 2001). The second phase has created a thought that media has a little or limited impact on people's attitudes, choices and behaviours, and the audience was perceived as active and powerful to selectively choose, and use the media content. Joseph Klapper (1960) through a published work *Effects of Mass Communication* suggested that the media does not have a direct effect on people's choices, but rather through a 'mediated two-step flow' model (Neuman & Guggenheim, 2011).

The third phase was characterized by the rise and adoption of television as the ultimate source of information. The creation of agenda-setting theory (McCombs and Shah, 1972), the media not to tell people what to think but to tell people 'what to think about' positioned the study on media effects in a different path. The cultivation theory of Garbner and Gross (1974) argued the amount of time spent on television has a great impact on people's view of the world. Thus, this period returned to the concept of powerful media effects (Perse, 2001).

Nowadays, it is not arguable whether media have influence, whether limited or strong effects, as Newman puts it 'media effects are neither characteristically strong nor are they characteristically minimal: they are characteristically highly variable' (Neuman R. W., 2018). But it is very important to notice that all the phases in which theories are developed contributed to a comprehension of how and to what extent media have effects.

The second phase of theoretical development of media effects was defined as limited media effects phase, but those theories brought an important dimension in the era of the new media environment, and emphasised the variables of social constraints and self-identity when imposed to media effects. Thus, as Klapper's thesis was viewed with scepticism among other scholars who were prominent about strong media effects, Klapper suggested that further research should be done to understand conditionalities under which media takes the strongest effects: (a) the psychological predispositions of audience members; (b) the situated social context of message reception; (c) the broader social, societal, and cultural context of

message reception; and (d) the structure of beliefs among audience members, not just the direction of beliefs (Neuman & Guggenheim, 2011).

Klapper's idea of selectivity in media use is today's most cited indicator when assessing the audience's motives for consuming news media. According to which people are influenced only by the media which they chose to watch depending on their previous attitude for the subject. Later, with the development of selective exposure theory was assumed that the audience selectively chooses messages that comply with their previous beliefs. In a social psychology a Cognitive Dissonance theory by Leon Festinger (1957) and later by Brehm and Cohen (1963) and Aronson (1969) (G.Shaver, 1977), suggests that when countering opposite information from one's preexisting beliefs or attitudes people tend to feel unrest and uncomfortable and tend to minimise or avoid that information or situation to achieve cognitive consistency (Knobloch-Westerwick & Kleinman, 2012). The concepts of dissonance and consonance were developed around the hypothesis that when the inconsistency occurs, the person tries to reduce it by avoiding information and situation which would likely increase the dissonance; and; when psychologically uncomfortable 'will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance' (Festinger, 1957). Even though this theory has been used as a grounded theory in social psychology and lately for misconceptions and misinformation in the news media environment, several scholars assume that not always the inconsistent information is avoided and not always the attitude –discrepant information are avoided but even sometimes acquired. (Knobloch-Westerwick & Kleinman, 2012). Klapper himself believed that the theory should be used for further research in defining the conditions in which the person acquires, achieves or not consistency. One of the factors that defines how the person will behave toward incoming messages is information utility, as prescribed earlier by Sears, D. O., & Freedman, J. L. (1967), pointing out the desire for the supportive, useful information, that one might have to decrease cognitive dissonance (Sears & Freedman, 1967). Knobloch-Westerwick & Kleinman (2012) similarly acknowledges the importance of information utility. The study examined the pre-election selective exposure in regard to confirmation bias and information utility among political affiliated individuals. The study found that the participants whose political party is likely to win the elections showed an increased level of confirmation bias, while participants whose political party is probably going to lose the elections showed an

increased motivation for information utility. According to this, authors suggested that the information utility can override confirmation bias and motivate exposure when the favored party is likely to lose the elections. There are four functions where the need for information serves: surveillance (i.e., keeping cognizant of changes in the environment, monitoring threats), performance (i.e., how to do things), guidance (i.e., how to feel about things), and reinforcement (i.e. confirm attitudes). The confirmation of the study's hypothesis(*Prior to an election, partisans of the party that is likely to lose the election, resulting in a government change, prefer political messages with the opponent, leading party's views*), might be motivated to consume discrepant-messages in order to predict future political decisions and political circumstances that probably will affect their lives (Knobloch-Westerwick & Kleinman, 2012).

Additionally, when exposed to political information discrepant or consistent to prior attitudes, the credibility of the source of information is another factor that was put into account by Metzger, Hartsell, and Flanagin (2020). Their research proved that partisan users consider as more credible sources that are consistent with their attitude or political affiliation rather than sources that challenge their attitude or political belief. Also, surprisingly and unlike other studies, the research proved that partisan users see credible sources that are unbiased and balanced, which raises optimism for debunking disinformation and let to be researched more on media consumption habits in the future. The study suggests a new perspective for further research which is based in perception on source credibility rather than psychological discomfort. Moreover, American Press Institute (2017), indicates that the audience believes the news more if it is shared by the persons who they trust. A phenomenon of echo chambers as homogenous groups gatherings, encourage sharing disinformation in an environment of mutual trust. As this finding notices, the audience believes more in the person who shares it than the organization who produce the news (American Press Institute, 2017). Personal Influence of Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) highlighted the idea that people talk with each other and are often used as a source of important messages. Lazarsfeld's student - Joseph Klapper though his work on Effects on Mass Media raised a question of the direct media effects. He believed that media does not have direct effect on people's choices, but through opinion leaders who interpret, shape and distribute the information for the public:

‘..only a tiny fraction of voters actually changed their vote intentions during an election campaign, that audience motivations and prior beliefs influenced the interpretation of persuasive messages, and that messages were often discussed among opinion leaders and friends, leading to a mediation via two-step flow...’ (Neuman & Guggenheim, 2011).

The time this model was created there was no television and internet and thus, later it was argued and was assumed that people do create their opinions from the news itself because of the possibility to be informed directly from the different news channels and in the internet age through the rapid information flow in social media. But, as studies suggests the interpersonal connections are still very strong. Yesterday’s opinion leaders might be today’s social media’s influencers. The relevancy of two-step flow model in the theory of political communication which as Southwel (2017) marks, lies in a social nature of humanity even though the evidences has shown the more complicated model of information flow than two step model. He suggests that future researches should *address questions of social network* genesis, the impact of conversational modality, and the role of environmental context (Southwel, 2017). Prioritizing a post from a friend rather than a credible source of information leads to accelerate the spread of disinformation or misinformation, as Vosoughi et al. (2018) and Shao et al. (2018) observed in their research. Vosoughi et al. (2018) tested the spreading of the fake news and true news in the same subjects and in the same manner by robots vs. humans and found that ‘robots accelerate the spread of the false news and true news in the same rate, implying that false news spreads more than truth because humans are more likely to spread it’ (Vosoughi, Roy, & Aral, 2018). Meaning that peer to peer engagement in social media helps the bots to increase the dissemination. As Shao et al. (2018) notices algorithmic design of social media platforms prioritize popular content versus trust worthy content (Shao, et al., 2018). But, alongside this findings, it is important to explore which are the characteristics of people who share the most disinformation or fake news. One of the determinants in the individual level that Guess, Nagler, and Tucker (2019) discovered for sharing and spreading false articles during the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign was age. The older users (over 65) shared an average seven times more false articles to a friend in social media than youngest age group. This result can be attributed to the strong ideology, party identification or as cognitive and social psychology suggests memory impairment which can lead to greater vulnerability to ‘illusions of truth’ or attitude

persistence with age. The other explanation might be lack of digital and media literacy of this group age. Also, the authors suggest that further research should be done to analyse the conditionalities of older users in social media under which this demographic group is more vulnerability to disinformation (Guess, Nagler, & Tucker, 2019). Considering this, Grinberg et al. (2019) through an analysis of registered voters on Twitter examined exposure to and sharing false news during U.S. presidential campaign 2016. The authors found that conservative orientation users, older users and users that mostly are engaged with political news were most likely to engage with false news sources (Grinberg, Joseph, Friedland, & Swire-Thompson, 2019).

2. Second Chapter:

An overview of the online media landscape in Western Balkan in the perspective of disinformation campaigns (Albania, Kosovo, and North Macedonia)

2.1 Introduction

World Press Freedom Index 2021 has ranked North Macedonia in the 90th place among 180 other countries ranked by this organization. Albania and Kosovo are not far from this place. Albania has been ranked in 83rd place from the World Press Freedom Index and Kosovo in 78th place. The high (level – 1 best press freedom performance, 180 – worst press freedom performance) world press freedom index in one country reflects the state in which media operates in that country in the context of media pluralism, media independence, media environment and self-censorship, legislative environment, transparency, infrastructures and abuses. The perfect environment for rising and developing the disinformation campaigns as an ultimate threat to the democratic values of that society are countries of post –war conflict, countries of most prominent polarized societies, countries with heritage of ethnic and religious divisions and differences, unregulated or fragile media systems, public low trust in media institutions so as high percentage of online and social media users. Humprecht et al. (2020) created a framework of societies who are more resilient to disinformation through measurable indicators⁷ for cross-national comparative analysis of the country factors, regrouping them in three main domains:

- Factors of the Political Environment Limiting Resilience
- Factors of the Media Environment Limiting Resilience
- Factors of the Economic Environment Limiting Resilience

Country clusters were grouped based on their systems such as Northern and Western European countries with democratic-corporatist media systems and liberal media systems; Southern European countries with polarized-pluralist media systems and United States as an exception because of its large advertising market. The cluster of Southern European countries⁸ are more vulnerable to online disinformation because of high levels of polarization, populist communication, social media use and low level of trust and shared

⁷ Polarization index, media trust index, strength of public service broadcasting, market size, populism index, shared media and social media index

⁸ Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain

media consumption, so as United States because of low trust, politicized, and fragmented environment (Humprecht, Esser, & Van Aelst, 2020). In this regard, South East European Countries as post-conflict and post-communist states striving to democratize and join EU, inheriting an interethnic and religious divisions as well as highly polarized and politicized societies with low media and government trust and low level of professional journalism; makes them more vulnerable to disinformation whether by domestic or foreign actors exploiting the unregulated online media system in the region. If such a case, disinformation is more a symptom of a fragile society of social and political division and disorder, rather than a cause as Greene et, al. (2021) report assumes for Western Balkan countries. Disinformation then, is an amplifier of an already divided society which initiates political tensions and interethnic resentment, decrease public trust in institutions and media, which in return creates collective quiescence. According to Balkan Barometer Statistics for 2017 until 2020, trust in government doesn't exceed 50 percent of the population in each of the Western Balkan Countries, which leads to low voter turnout numbers also in each country (Greene, Asmolov, Fagan, Fridman, & Gjuzelov, 2021).

Media has an existential role of being watchdog of democracy in one country by its critical attitude to the government and to the negative habits of the society, hence by being the monitor-er of checks and balances of the system, which prevents any government to exercise its power unanimously. When a journalist fails to present the facts to the public for political, economic, or other reasons, or even more presents no fact-based analysis – bias or hides information, misleads the audience and distorts public opinion. By objective, verified and impartial information, media can direct society's effort to be as democratic as possible. As Voltmer (2013) highlights, the prerequisite of the citizens to be able to make intelligent choices for their future is to receive high-quality information for the candidates and political parties.

'The failure of the media to provide the kind of information that fosters informed popular participation poses a serious risk to the viability of democracy'. Limited diversity of the media and media dependence reduce voters' ability to become fully informed and increases the possibility that bad politicians will be voted out (Voltmer, 2013).

Media environment has changed a lot in the recent years. Click-bait and sensationalists content has replaced the professional journalism, chasing for more views and clicks, and is

rightly defined as 'attention economy' by Marwick and Lewis (2017). The consumer habits towards seeking online information has changed also, which is closely linked to the psychology of news consumption, i.e. cognitive dissonance and selective exposure.

Based on recent analysis, the situation of freedom of media in Western Balkan isn't as likely as it should be, referring to pressures on journalists, obscure media ownership, general politicization of the media and government control over media content (Jankulovska, 2020). Western Balkan Countries during their transition to democratisation did unify their regulations and laws according to the European standards for media freedom, media pluralism and freedom of speech as prerequisites to accession to EU (BiEPAG, 2017), but they are yet struggling to implement and react on denunciation for violation of these rights and especially this becomes even harder with the transformation to information production and consummation in the online sphere.

Online disinformation is often the case in Western Balkan Countries, as such manipulative and destructive for shaping public opinion, especially during political activities such as election campaigns. The coronavirus pandemic caused political communication during the election campaigns to shift and take place mostly in the online sphere. When the audience is uncertain of which political decision to take and automatically demanding more information to ease their decision, an online sphere is fraught with fake news, fabricated information, a package of disinformation campaigns that serves to a political or business agenda of a group of interest. Online disinformation is a widespread phenomenon that attacks even the best democratic societies. But, societies with fragile democracies or countries in transition, are affected mostly. Countries like Kosovo, Albania and North Macedonia are also the target of disinformation campaigns during elections, coming from internal and external actors.

From the analysis of the two years' last elections taking place in the Western Balkan Countries, Greene et, al. (2021), came to conclusion that not only disinformation campaigns that share untruths or inaccurate information about candidates are the most prominent factors which undermines the integrity of the democratic process of elections, but there are also internal and external factors who equally contribute to the overall compromised process:

- low levels of participation;
- a proliferation of new parties;

- aspects of electoral systems that are more likely to weaken the integrity of the process (for example 'closed list' systems in which voters have no opportunity to select candidates);
- and external support for particular parties (including financial support and overt political endorsements).

Thus, the interruption of the democratic process in all the sectors in these countries is more domestic in nature than foreign Green et, al. (2021), considering here disinformation campaigns infiltrated from abroad also.

2.2 Kosovo has the worst performance for media freedom and transparency in the region, falling in the 78th place World Press Freedom Index ranking for eight levels comparing to the 2020 year in which Kosovo was ranked in 70th place. Reporters Without Borders see the media environment in Kosovo to increased instability due to the coronavirus crisis, assuming journalists and media are exposed to a hostile environment with physical and verbal attacks, cyber-attacks, pressure for self-censure, and lack of transparency for media ownership. Due to the coronavirus crisis, which led to a financial crisis, some newspapers had to stop their print production (Reporters Without Borders, 2021). During 2020 year, the number of 24 journalists who have been target of verbal and physical attacks is increased compared to 2019, according to Freedom House (2021) report for Kosovo, where the system of the country has been rated as transitional or hybrid regime. In addition, cases of party officials using intimidation language and incite physical violence through social media are existent (Freedom House, 2021).

Kosova is an exception from other Western Balkan countries regarding the origin of disinformation. As a country with a contested status and commitment to international recognition carries a great risk of foreign disinformation campaigns with a geopolitical interest which does not intend to interfere in domestic politics or daily politics, but with a broader sense of the very existence of the state of Kosova. These long lasting disinformation campaigns have an intent to delegitimise the state of Kosovo, to weaken relations with Europe and to destabilise its governance. As Green et. al (2021) underline three narratives contributing to this context:

- allegations that Kosovo is a mafia state, operating under the protection of Kosovo Force (KFOR) and thus with the implicit support of western powers;
- invention and/or exaggeration of threats to the safety and property of ethnic Serbs and other minorities living in Kosovo;
- insinuations that Kosovo is incapable of sustainable self-governance without support from Serbia (Greene, Asmolov, Fagan, Fridman, & GJuzelov, 2021).

During Kosovo Parliamentary Elections, 14 February, 2021, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) monitored election campaign in online news portals and social media from January 24 to February 13, 2021. NDI examined a sample of 3693 news articles, 1289 Facebook posts and 500 tweets relevant to the monitoring scope, from which 214 news articles and social media posts in Albanian language and 50 in Serbian language contained inappropriate information or inflammatory language. (National Democratic Institute, 2021). This report reveals that during election campaign, online portals and social media accounts contributed to divisive language, by creating and producing direct attacks and de-contextualising politicians' statements. Memes and fabricated stories with photos and videos were distributed in a high scale. Moreover, sexism was present to portals and social media, using inflammatory language to attack female candidates about personal life, physical appearance, etc., which NDI report identifies it, as misogyny. Bot activities and Russia supported media in Serbia created false and fabricated narratives about main politicians in Kosovo, which passed unnoticed or unidentified by the Kosovar media as manipulative information brought outside of the border. Among other intentional manipulative stories or news, the one that reached the high number of people in Facebook, was a story that has been created in Kosovo Parliamentary elections of October 6th 2020 and reactivated and brought again, the false accusations to discredit a female candidate for president, Vjosa Osmani. The post has reached 57,638 people in Facebook for 2021 parliamentary election campaign, as NDI (2021) reports. A public broadcaster (RTK) published an article in their website claiming that Russian influence in elections is done through a mutual friend of Vjosa Osmani and her husband, Dana Rohrabacher – pro Russian congressmen in Serbian parliament. The article is still featuring on the RTK website⁹.

⁹ See for reference: Gazeta amerikane: kongresisti prorus, mentor i burrit të Vjosa Osmanit, <https://www.rtklive.com/sq/news-single.php?ID=381283&fbclid=IwAR01jNiZaeRcZMjaKLHNuag0oUZyzuOhhuLbNvTqrgMz4QbNHb4ZdHX-ZrQ>

It is important to mention that the access to internet in Kosovo is the highest percent in the region with almost 95 percent of the population of which nearly 52 percent use social media daily (DataReportal, 2021).

2.3 Albania has improved to +1 place comparing the ranking from the 2020 year. Again Reporters Without Borders assume that Albania has the threat from defamation law, which has pending status in the Albanian parliament and which increases the threat to censorship to journalists and media. The defamation law was criticised by media, civil organisations, journalists' associations, international press freedom groups, European Commission, and Venice Commission for its generalised nature which makes it possible to be used as a weapon against journalists and media who are critical to the government. Despite other controversies, the law allows the Audio Visual regulatory body (AMA) to impose sanctions on news websites which would in return incite self-censorship (Reporters Without Borders, 2021). The online media landscape in Albania is characterised with physical and verbal attacks also and the authorities fail to punish the actors. Some journalists were arrested during demonstrations, and some media owners- critical to the government, were accused of organized crime, and drug trafficking. During the pandemic crisis, the government warned the citizens to be "beware of the media" and used as a pretext to sue 5 journalists and media outlets who 'spread panic' to the citizens (Vurmo, 2021). According to the Union of Albanian Journalists: 'over 40 percent of reporters had salary cuts and 47 journalists lost their jobs' (Gërguri, 2020) during coronavirus pandemic crisis. The government has a hostile approach to the journalist and media who criticize the government. Thus, 'Acromax Media', a German company invoking copyrights infringements, deleted videos that reveal or criticize government actions during election period of the 2020 year. The case was judged by the independent media and journalists as the government's attempts to restrict the freedom of the press and freedom of speech. The company has allegations that is working with the government (Laufer, 2020). Nevertheless, Albanian media achieved to create a platform for ethical self-regulation, which is an act to be greeted (Reporters Without Borders, 2021). Freedom of House (2021) report for Albania has categorised the country as transitional with a hybrid regime system considering also the independent media rating which has decreased (from 3.75 to 3.50) comparing 2020 year.

Disinformation campaigns in Albania are more domestic in nature and have political and financial intent rather than geostrategic intent. A strong pro-EU and pro-NATO consensus among the Albanian population limits the external actors to undermine its relations. According to Green et. al (2021) sensationalist reporting to boost – traffic without verifying the information is in the form of commercially oriented disinformation, and the other is produced for political purposes, where the actors are often high political or institutional representatives who disseminate false information to the public through their social media profiles. The Facebook analysis of this report reveals that also high-quality media(such as Top Channel, etc.) in the country are among those who produce and distribute disinformation (Greene, Asmolov, Fagan, Fridman, & Gjuzelov, 2021).

In the campaign of 25th April Parliamentary Elections in Albania, the scandal of the voter database, revealed 90000 citizens' personal information, contact details and vote preferences which were monitored by 'patronazhistët', of the Socialist Party. The 'patronage' are employers in the central and local public administration, so as employees in the institutions that doesn't allow by law the political activity of the employees, such as Republican Guard, The Armed Forces and the State Police. The portal Lapsi.al who revealed the existence of such a database in the hand of the Socialist Party, received a demand from SPAK (Special Prosecution and Special Investigation Unit for Prosecution and Investigation of Corruption, Organized Crime and Criminal Matters) to seizure their offices, equipment and telephones, that was later dismissed by the Strasbourg human rights court invoking the European law which gives journalists the right not to reveal the source of information (Passarelli, Peytier, Kostelac, & Nizharadze, 2021).

In Albania, the social media landscape is unregulated in the electoral legislation which creates a battleground for a political campaign to be performed by unknown financial sources. As BIRN (2021) reveals during the 2021 election campaign in Albania, in a Facebook page of the Untold Stories of Albania that ran a deep fake for the opposition leader of the Democratic Party, Lulzim Basha the source of finance was unknown and impossible to be revealed. The deep-fake with 203,844 views, on a page with only 1883 followers had spent approximately 300 dollars for the ad. Similar to this deep-fake, the page has run 2018 political ads from December to April 24th with millions of viewers financed by 'dark money' from an unknown origin (Likmeta, 2021). In general, Reporting Diversity Network 2.0,

identified the 2021 election campaign as tough among political figures with incidents of hate speech including derogatory, inflammatory, offensive and sexist language. Even though the media was attentive to these narratives, they were amplifiers of reporting what has been said several times instead of reporting cautiously by reflecting critically on the hate speech narratives (Hysa, 2021).

It is important to mention that there are 2.00 million internet users in Albania from which 55.6 percent use social media daily (DataReportal, 2021).

2.4 North Macedonia has improved for +2 places in comparison to the ranking of the 2020-year World Press Freedom Index. Nevertheless, North Macedonia has been criticized for its impunity culture continually. Threats and insults to media and journalists, such as verbal and cyber harassment continue to pass unpunished. The legal framework for realization of media freedom exists, but that often depends on political will and selectivity in case resolving. The number of attacks to journalists was raised to 12, comparing to registered 4 attacks in 2019. The country is making some attempts to improve the safety of journalists and media workers by drafting a new penal code by the Ministry of justice (Reporters Without Borders, 2021). The changes to the law include: same charges for assaulting a journalist or media as assaulting a police officer; decreased charges of defamation for journalists and media outlets and editors; so as introduction of the criminal offence of stalking which includes charges or jail sentences for stalkers who physically and also virtually threaten their victims (Marusic, 2021).

The media landscape in North Macedonia has changed a lot since the 2017 years where the media were in total control and served to the party's disinformation and propaganda campaigns. The change of political structures in government after the 2017, promised a new pluralist and democratic society. But yet, media landscape is captured by political powers and corruptions. Balkan Barometer survey (2020) on public opinion has reported 50 percent of the respondents see the media as politically dependent and 70 percent see the media as affected by corruption (Balkan Barometer, 2020). During the coronavirus pandemic, the government added a financial package to help the journalists overcome the crisis, the action which was not welcomed by the independent media and journalist invoking government control over the freedom of media. In 2019 and 2020 the government enabled a state funding for covering political ads, from which only three biggest political parties benefited.

Media professionals criticized the changes for possible violation to editorial independence by favouring specific media outlets (Bliznakovski, 2021). Freedom House (2021) characterizes the state as transitional or with hybrid system but the overall democratic score has improved considering its liberal-democratic principles and commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration.

North Macedonia is characterised by its conditional identity with geopolitical interests by its neighbouring countries such as Greece for contesting the name and Bulgaria for contesting its history. The identity of North Macedonia has been many times contested and thus its' EU integration process and NATO membership commitment has been harder than was thought. Until the 2017, the ruling party (VMRO-DPMNE) has directed a country into a nationalistic and anti – western spirit, which led the country 11 years away from the democratic processes. After 2017, some progress was made, the name changed, North Macedonia accesses to NATO (2020) and the pro-European spirit returned. Nevertheless, the government attempt to approach EU integration and NATO membership was not unanimously supported by citizens, the ideology of nationalistic party is still present. But, these are marginalised ideas that emerge only in certain cases. The political battle among the ruling party and the opposition (VMRO-DPMNE) now is going through the narratives of the protection of the identity of Macedonians and the state, and processes that brings closer to EU integration (such as the Prespa Agreement and contest with Bulgaria). North Macedonia is also a state with inherited interethnic divisions which led to war in 2001 and ended with the Ohrid Framework Agreement signed in the same year, the respecting and implementing of which is one of the conditions to EU integrations. In regard to these political complexities, disinformation in North Macedonia engages and develops around these narratives. Considering Greene et, al. (2020), recent years' disinformation campaigns include:

- narratives of Macedonian identity threats through the referendum for changing the name;
- disinformation campaigns mixing anti-Bulgarian, anti-Greek and anti-Albanian sentiment with fears that Macedonian youth would become 'cannon fodder' for NATO wars, and allegations that NATO would force the development of 5G technology with harmful effects for health and public safety;
- Fears of 'Greater Albania' actualized in a flow of events, such as an appointment of Talat Xhaferi, an ethnic Albanian, as parliamentary speaker in early 2017 and the adoption of legislation that enables the use of Albanian language as an official language;

- ‘Weaponization’ of COVID-19 for inciting ethnic tensions in North Macedonia (such as the case of the fake-news that Greece prohibits entering the country municipalities of North Macedonia that have most cases of Covid-19, alluding to Albanian- majority municipalities).

Geopolitical contests out of the border are often the cause of incitements for confusing and for deception of the local citizens in North Macedonia. Respectively, the intention to create interethnic tensions, undermine North Macedonia processes with neighbouring countries, such as Greece and Bulgaria, defocus North Macedonian’s EU integration perspective and to influence electoral processes such as Referendum for the name in 2018, Parliamentary Elections 2020, Population Census in 2021, etc.

Investigative journalists and fact-checker agencies in North Macedonia have discovered a large network of disinformation campaigns coming from Hungary and Slovenia companies, which are linked and financed by the President of Hungary Victor Orban, a friend of ex-premier of North Macedonia, Nikolla Gruevski, who under unclear circumstances won asylum in Hungary by bypassing the giving accountability in front of the legislative institutions and citizens. The disinformation campaigns of this kind include online media outlets who are right wing and media that supported and propagated for Gruevski's system (Meta.mk, 2019).

A recent study of NGO, Civilmedia (2020) for media reporting during the North Macedonian parliamentary election campaign held on 15th July 2020, daily followed the posts on the media and social networks that generated attention and a large number of reactions, which contained elements of disinformation, inflammatory language, insults to campaign participants and other actors. Over 80 cases of orchestrated content sharing containing defamation, disinformation, insults or hate speech, often in combination were revealed in this report. ‘This means that, on each day of the 21-day campaign, there were on average at least 4 attempts to organize and orchestrate the public debate, by publishing and disseminating hate speech or aimed at discrediting certain candidates, or individuals who at all did not participate in the election contest.’ Of these over 80 cases of observed orchestrated action to disseminate certain tendentious, violent or untrue content or communication, 14 are related to orchestrated sharing of misinformation. In 28 cases, an orchestrated content sharing incited hate speech, calls for murder or violence against campaigning politicians. In 21 of the cases, the victims of verbal violence are journalists,

activists, intellectuals or other entities and organizations, and even citizens who are not public figures, nor participate in the election process, but were the target of attacks due to expressed views and opinions. In 12 cases, the CIVIL monitoring team noticed incited discrimination, mockery or hate speech on ethnic and religious grounds, and racism and xenophobia. In 6 cases, the orchestrated content sharing contained elements of discrimination or hate speech based on gender/ sexuality (Saraqini, 2020).

There are 1.71 million internet users in North Macedonia, from which 57.6% of the total population are social media users (DataReportal, 2021).

3. Empirical study: “Disinformation as a tool in political campaigns – How the audience perceives the disinformation - case study Republic of North Macedonia”

Research methodology

After reviewing the literature on the role of disinformation as a tool during political campaigns, respectively how the audience perceives disinformation in the case of RMV, we designed a questionnaire to assess the impact of the same taking into account political affiliation and attitude consistent or discrepant information, age and perception of source credibility of information by the audience in the social media.

3.1 Data collection

The design of the questionnaire and at the same time its testing was carried out mainly with the citizens of RMV.

The questionnaire included the total of 24 questions, which is organized within 4 thematic blocks: A) Political affiliation and voting behaviour; B) News consumption habits and attitudes for political news in social media; C) Engagement Preferences and attitudes for social media reliability and source credibility D) Perception on disinformation in social media during election campaigns in NRM.

Also, the questionnaires were distributed randomly, and the questions were of a structural nature: dichotomous Questions, multiple- choice questions and Scaling Questions : likert scale questions and semantic differential scale. The sample provided for this study was a total of 300 inhabitants, where we received responses from only 150 citizens, the answers of which were developed with SPSS software for Windows and Microsoft Office for Windows (Word and Excel) that finds use in creating various reports, graphs and tables. Findings and results regarding the principle of transparency, participation and efficiency.

3.2. Findings and results regarding impact

Considering the credibility of the answers received by the citizens of RMV and the implementation of the SPSS software program, the results that will support or refute the main hypothesis and the auxiliary ones raised at the beginning of the study will be analysed.

3.3 Participants

The participants were mixed age groups, socio-economic, education and ethnicities. The respondents were also from the political party affiliation mixed group.

The age target was divided in five groups (> 18, 18-30, 31- 45, 46-59, 60 <). The sample generated 1.3 percent respondents from the first group, 30 percent respondents from the second group, 60 percent respondents from the third group, 7.3 respondents from the fourth group age and 1.3 percent respondents from the fifth age group.

3.4 Procedure and Timeline

The questionnaire was disseminated in the period of 9 July 2021 and was open to the public until 1 September 2021. The questionnaire was disseminated through group email to the academic and administrative staff and students of South East European University, and also was shared in social media Facebook and LinkedIn. The timeline of the dissemination of the questionnaire was chosen carefully because in that time there were no political party coalitions and bigger political movements in the political scene, since this will influence the politically affiliated respondents for answering the questions of the questionnaire. The original questionnaire was prepared in English language through thematic blocks, and then translated in Albanian and Macedonian language. For online creation of the questionnaire for both languages was used Google Forms.

3.5. Ethics and Limitations

This master thesis will be more completed if focus groups were engaged as qualitative method of the study in order to identify clearly their perception and attitudes for disinformation in support to the survey. Also, a wider mixed group of respondents would make the validation of hypotheses more stable. For example, youngest age group >18, and the oldest age group <60. The sample would be more supportive to the hypothesis if the Macedonian ethnicity respondents were higher in number, since the sample of Macedonian political affiliation respondents were few. The question 19 was used to identify the perception of the respondents to disinformation during 2020 Parliamentary Election campaign in North Macedonia, and all the other questions were cross-matched with this question, which not absolutely can identify respondents' perception on disinformation. The questionnaire would benefit if added another question with different content of existent

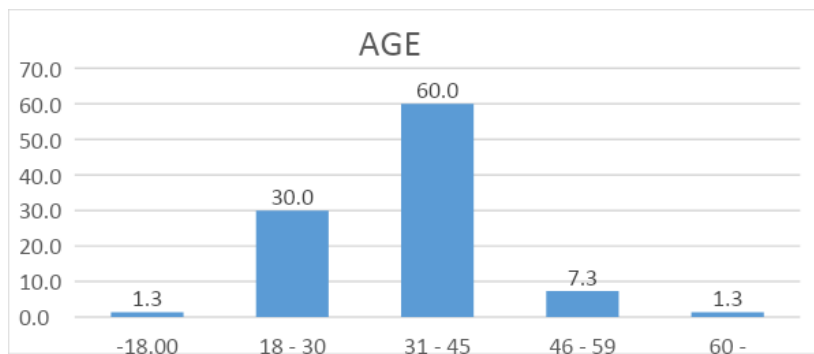
fake news in order to support the existing one. The political scene of the questionnaire distribution timeline was not politically active which was intentionally chosen, but this type of research can also be tested during election campaigns and analyse how respondents' responses and political affiliation change over time according to political scene movements and relation of the same with confirmation bias and perception of disinformation.

4. Fourth Chapter - Results and elaboration

4.1 Analysis of Results of quantitative research (survey)

The sample included 150 respondents out of 300 planned and was distributed randomly to different demographic group (age, gender, ethnic group, education and political affiliation)

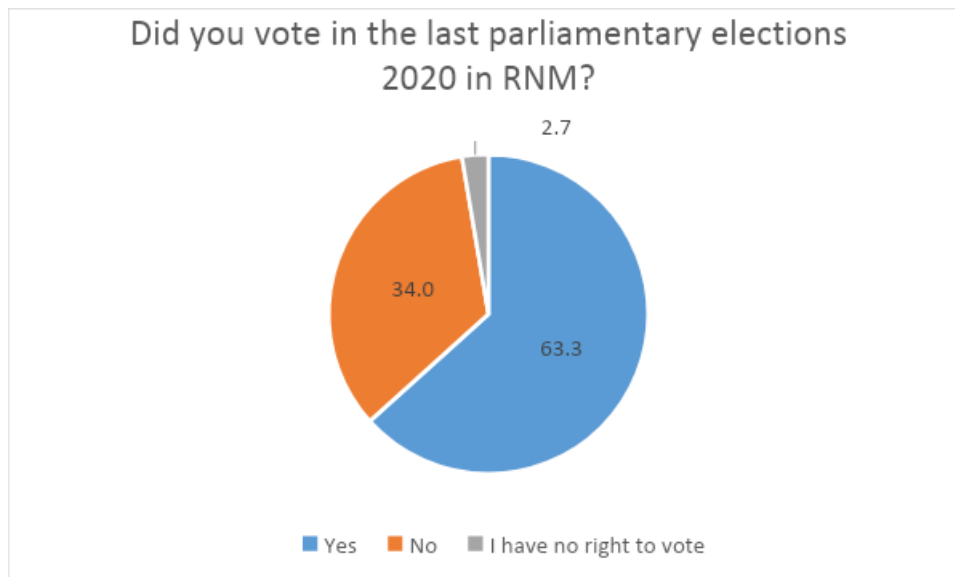
The age target was divided in five groups (> 18, 18-30, 31- 45, 46-59, 60 <). The sample generated 1.3 percent respondents from the first group, 30 percent respondents from the second group, 60 percent respondents from the third group, 7.3 respondents from the fourth group age and 1.3 percent respondents from the fifth age group. Age, is one of the variables that will be analysed further in this research by cross matching it with question 19 (true/false answers for eight different political fake news) of the questionnaire related to the third hypothesis of whether youngsters or older ones are more resilient or vulnerable to disinformation.



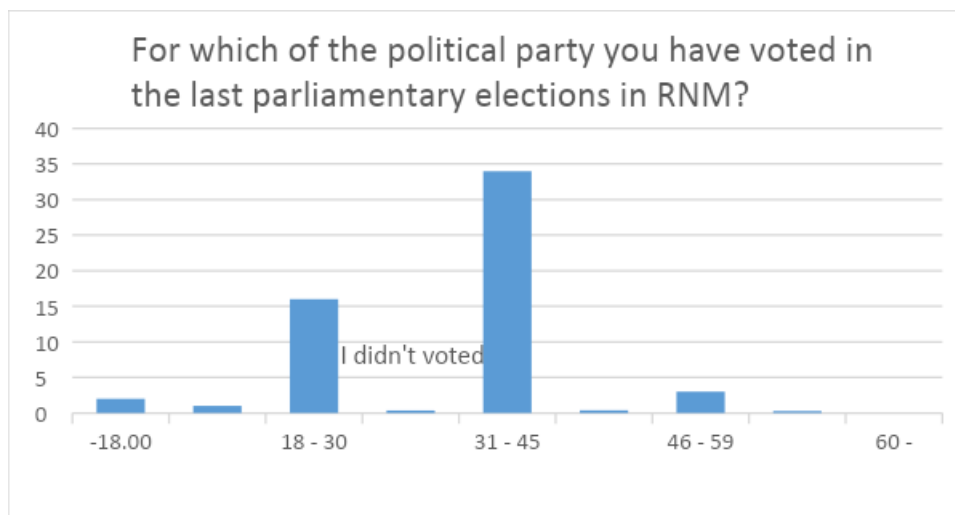
The sample generated the biggest percent (88 percent) of the respondents with an educational status of higher education, rather than secondary education with 10.7 percent and primary education of 0.7 percent. This questionnaire has more than a half, male respondents with 60.7 percent than female with 39.3 percent. Albanian ethnic group represented almost 95 percent of the respondents than other ethnic groups, even if the questionnaire was distributed equally to all ethnic groups and in both Macedonian and Albanian languages. To gain a real overview of the situation, and for the accuracy of the research, demographic group should be more mixed in the future, but this was unpredictable this time.

4.2 Political affiliation and voting behaviour

For measuring the political affiliation of the sample audience were employed 5 questions which were linked to voting behavior of the audience and political party preferences. The question 11 is of dyhotomus type (Yes/No) and enabled the audience to answer whether they voted in parliamentary election of 2020 year or no. Because the sample included also youngers >18, the option 'I have no right to vote' was employed. According to the results, 63.3 percent of the sample answered that they voted, and 34 percent answered that they didn't voted in the last elections and 3 percent didn't have the right to vote.

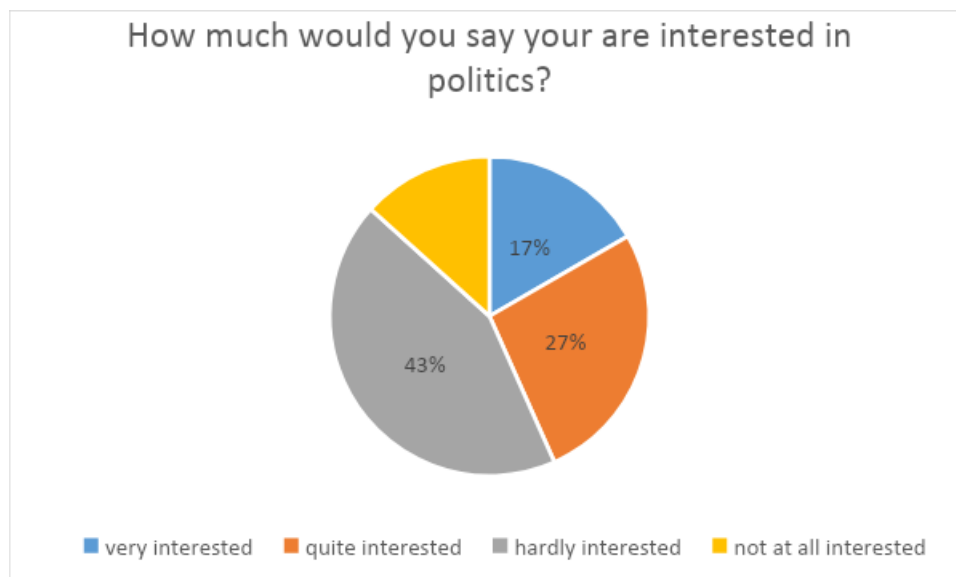


Moreover, it is interesting to see that 61.8 percent of the respondents that didn't vote, belong to the 31-45 age group, which is the most productive and active period of lifetime.



The results from this question also correspond with the results of the following question, whereas the highest percent of the respondents that are the least interested in politics, are of the same age group of 31-45 years, with 48.9 percent.

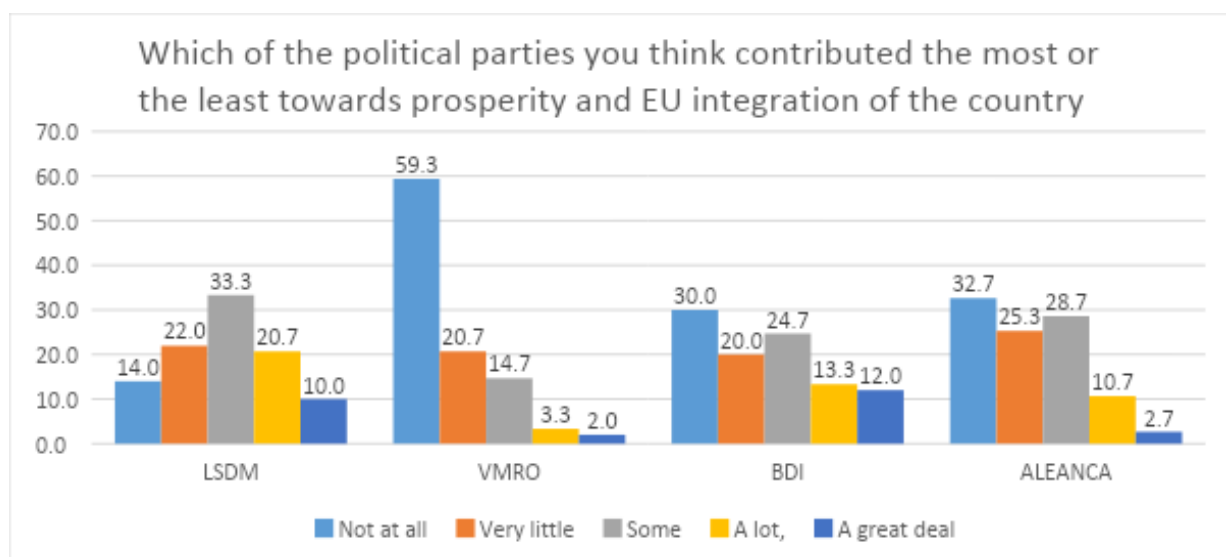
According to the question 8 of the questionnaire where the respondents were asked how much they are interested in politics, more than a half of the respondents are hardly interested (43.3 percent) and not at all interested in politics (13.3 percent), and less than a half are very interested in politics (16.7 percent) and quite interested (26.7 percent) in politics.



For attaining information about their political affiliation question, the respondents were asked which political party they have voted in the last parliamentary elections 2020, and 5 options for answers where given for four biggest political parties in the country adding one more if they have not voted at all. This question was employed not for gaining information on political votes but rather for cross matching it with the respondents' perception for political disinformation. The political affiliation was one of the variables used for supporting or refuting the hypothesis that political affiliation affects audience's perception for political disinformation. The respondents of 36.7 percent are also important in this research because they claimed they didn't vote in the last elections in the country, which we assume are non-partisan respondents and unpolitically affiliated respondents and will be taken as a sample

to refute or support the hypothesis of whether politically affiliated audience is more prone to disinformation or not.

The next question (13.) was aimed to measure the audience's opinion for political party's contribution for the prosperity of the country towards EU integration. This question is also linked to their political affiliation although it does not mean that hundred percent complies with political affiliation. The Likert scale from 1 – 5 was used to rate four biggest parties in the country (Not at all, Very little, Some, A lot, A great deal). The respondents rated each of the political parties separately and later the results where regrouped and generated the next table. To some extent, these results have no special significance for refuting or supporting the hypothesis, but they can be used to reinforce the political affiliation in the question 12 where respondents answered which political party they have voted in 2020 year parliamentary elections.



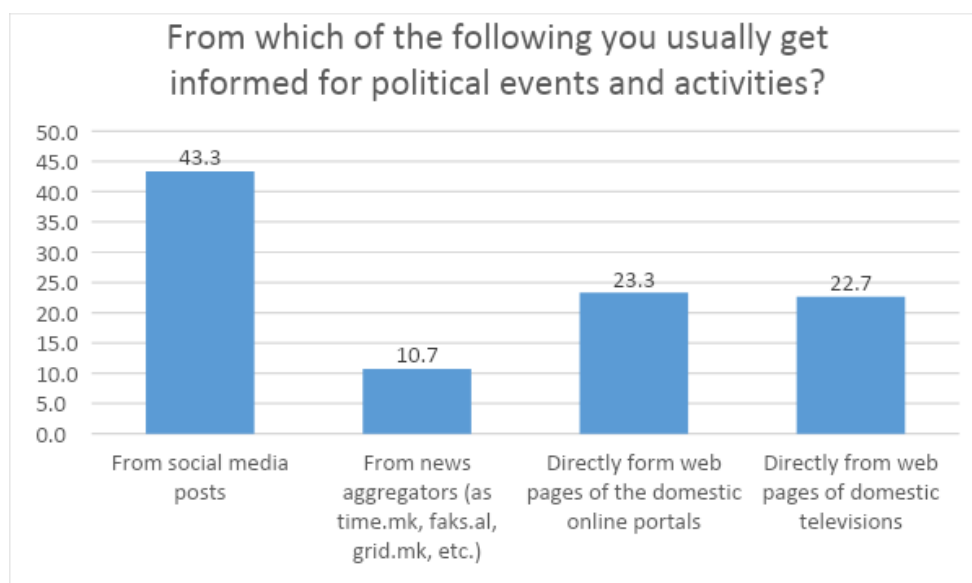
8, 11, 12, 13,

4.3 News consumption habits and attitudes for political news in social media

5, 6, 7, 9, 23, 24

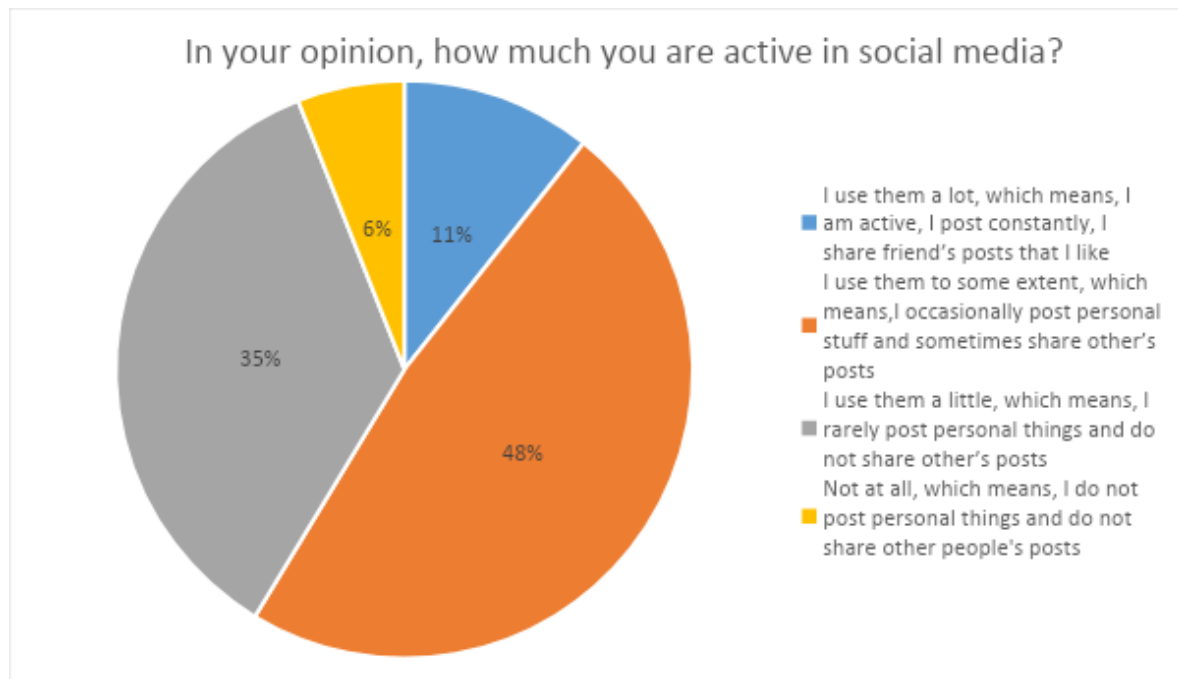
The second thematic block involved questions that are related to respondents' overall activity in social media so as activity regarding political news. Also, this thematic block resembles respondent's attitudes for social media news, their perception and opinion. Thus, in question 5 form the questionnaire, 78 percent of the respondents answered that are using internet for attaining news for domestic events, and only 20 percent from television

and 1.8 percent from radio. The other option given in this order is newspaper and only 1 respondent answered that he/she gets informed for domestic events through newspaper, respectively, 0.7 percent. The next question includes more specific options for answers, aiming to assure more information about online political news consume habits for those 78 percent of the respondents which are using internet for domestic events mostly. In regard to political events and activities a huge number gets informed from social media posts 43.3 percent, whereas 23.3 percent get their political news from web pages of the domestic online portals and 22.7 percent from web pages of online national television, and only 10.7 percent from news aggregators such as faks.al or grid.mk (see the following table 3.).

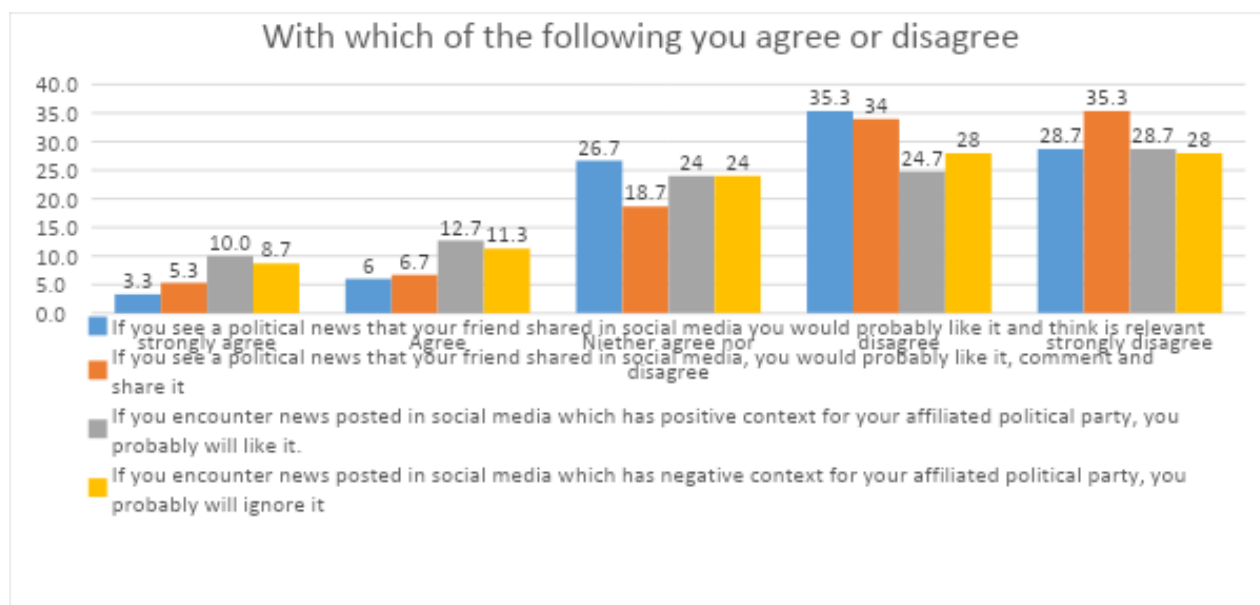


The questionnaire follows the order from general to specific questions. For frequency of political news consumer habits in social media, is employed question 7, whereas 18 percent responded that use social media daily for political news and 24,7 use most of the days' social media for information about political events. A few times a week use 10 percent of the respondents, 36 percent use only occasionally and 11.3 percent never use social media for political events.

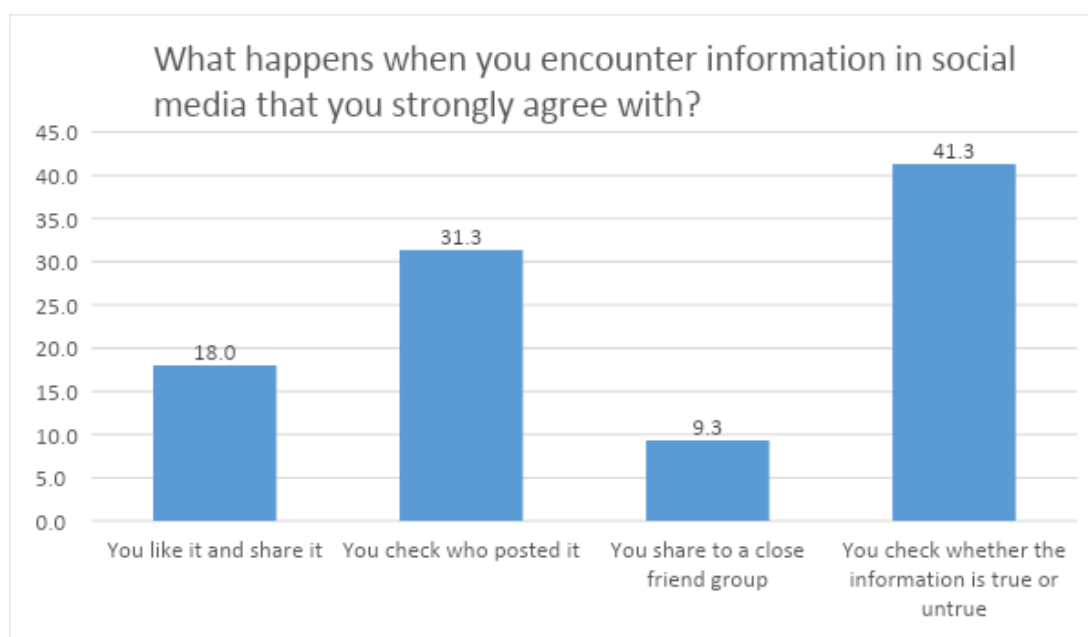
The activity and engagement of the respondents in social media is revealed in the question number 9. How much are active in social media and how much do they invest their time in social media. The following table shows that a considerable percent (48%) of the respondents use social media by occasionally posting personal stuff and sometimes share other's posts with their friends, and only 6 percent are not at all active (see table 4.).



The questions below were created to measure the impact of the attitude consistent or discrepant political news to the behaviour of the respondents in social media sphere and also does the person who shares the news impacts the behaviour of the audience in the social media, respectively, does peer to peer engagement is more reliable than the credible source of information. The Likert scale was used to value the statements with strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, Disagree and Strongly disagree. Resulted that respondents whether are aware or whether know how to differentiate a credible source of information, and they do not engage directly without checking the source of the information in social media. In addition, they differentiate the attitude discrepant or consistent messages and do not automatically share it or like it if it is consistent with their attitude or believes. But again, 22.7 percent of the respondents whether agree or strongly agree with the statement If they encounter news posted in social media which has positive context for their affiliated political party, they probably will like it and also, 20 percent of the respondents whether agree or strongly agree with the statement If they encounter news posted in social media which has negative context for their affiliated political party, they probably will ignore it. There is a need for more in deep analysis and research in order to say if the audience is in a level to differentiate the credible source of information and if they engage in an attitude consistent news more than attitude discrepant news. The table below shows the data:



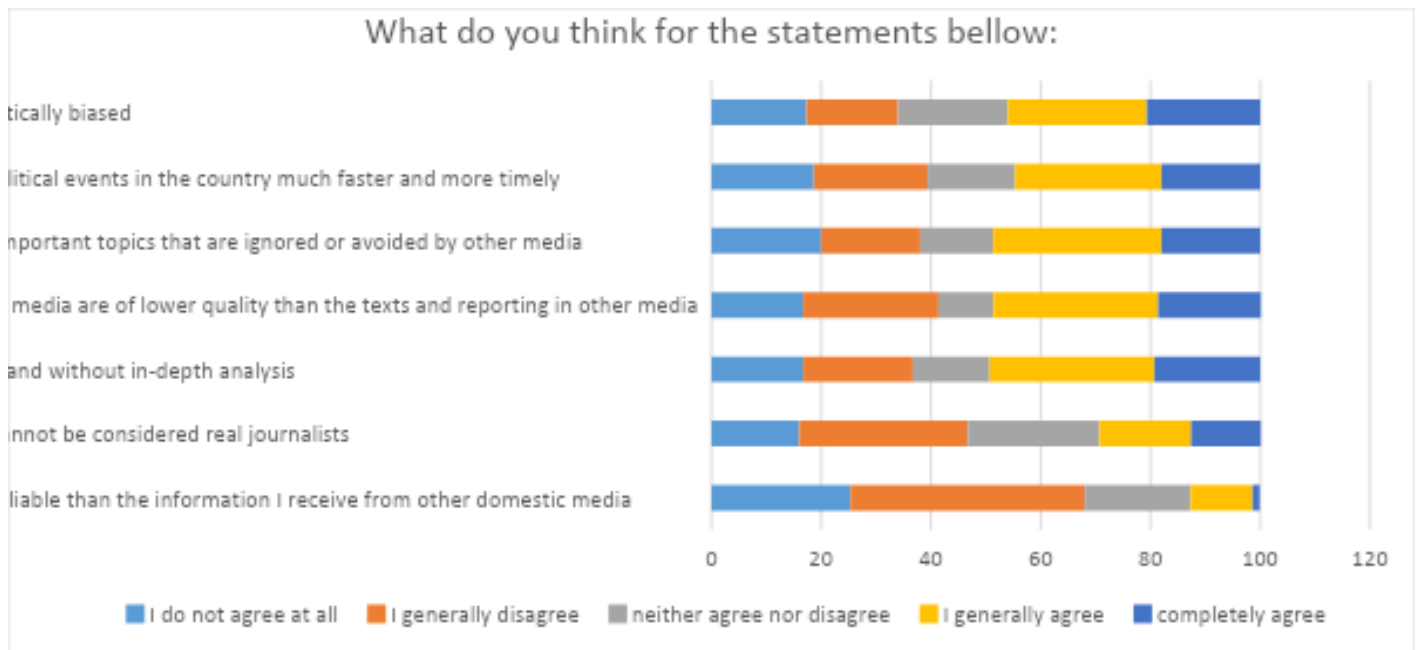
The 24 question was formulated to see how does the attitude consistent news affects the audience's engagement in social media. In a question of what happens when the audience encounters information in social media that they strongly agree with, 41.3 percent check first whether the information is true or untrue, and 31.3 check who posted the information with which they agree, and only 18 percent like and share the information, while 9.3 percent share the information automatically to a close friends group.



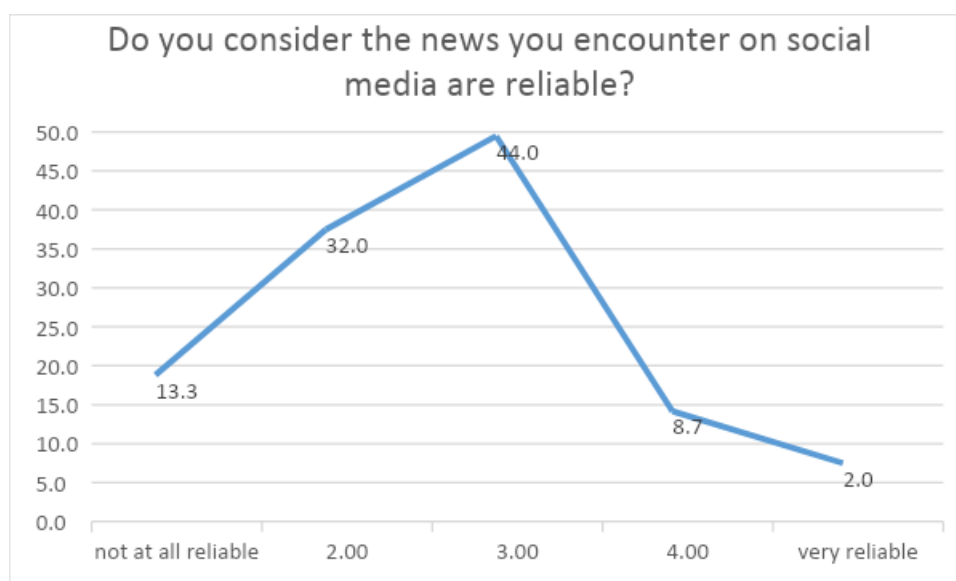
4.4 Engagement Preferences and attitudes for social media reliability and source credibility

10, 17, 20, 22

The third thematic block involves questions that has to do with the audience's engagement preferences, and attitudes of social media reliability and source credibility. The statements in the question 10 were formulated to reveal the attitude of the audience regarding the reliability of the news in social media. Three positive and three negative statements were given to rank from 1 - do not agree at all to 5 - completely agree. The respondents expressed their attitude for each statement separately related to their attitude for the news in social media. From the results below we can see that most of the respondents (42.7 %) generally disagree that the information available on the social media is more reliable than the information received from other domestic media. On the other hand, most of the respondents (30.7) generally disagree that the journalists on news aggregators in social media pages cannot be considered real journalists. Most of the respondents completely agree (19.3%) or generally agree (30 %), that information and news are superficially and without in-depth analysis on social media, also respondents agree (48.7 percent) that coverage of daily political events on social media are of lower quality than the texts and reporting in other media. They also completely agree (18 %) or generally agree (30.7 %) that social media allows comments, ie public discussion on important topics that are ignored or avoided by other media. The respondents agree (44.7%) that on the social media we can get information about daily political events in the country much faster and more timely and also agree that most of the news published on the social media are politically biased (46%).

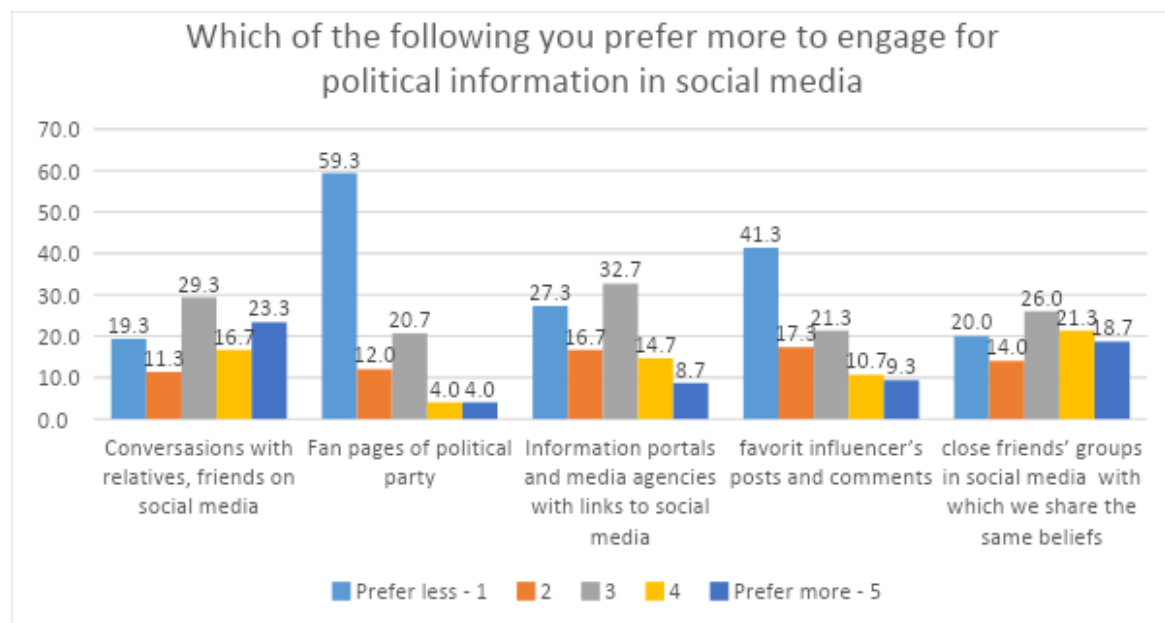


For examining the opinion of the audience related to the reliability of the news in social media, semantic differential scale was employed (question number 17.), where 1 is the news on social media are not at all reliable, and 5 is the news they encounter on social media are very reliable. From the table below we can see that most of the respondents don't believe that the news they encounter on social media are reliable, but again they percentage of engagement for attaining information in social media is high (referring to table 3, question 6).

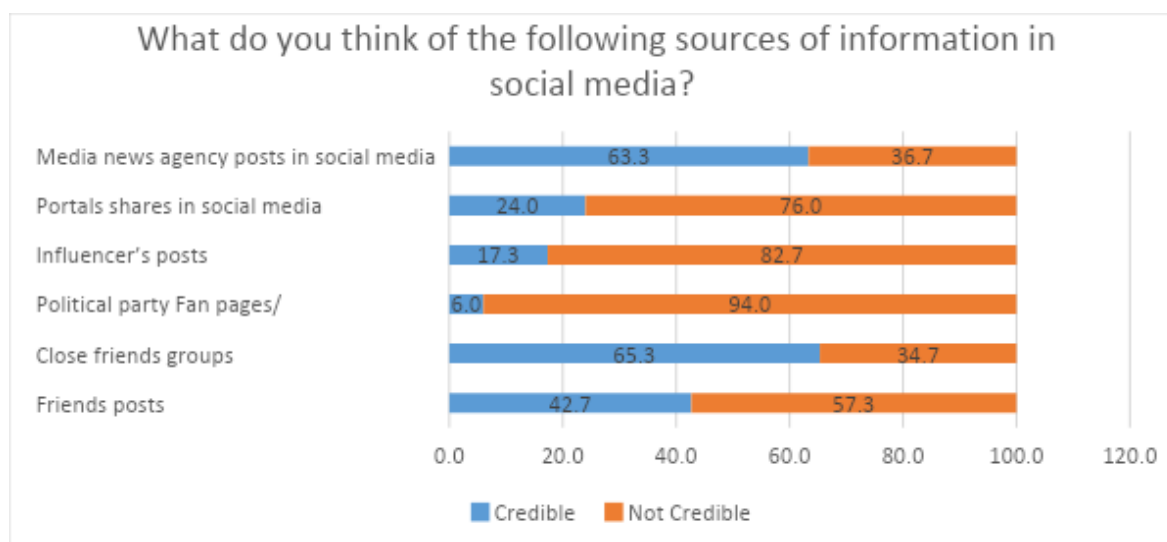


In, addition question number 20 tries to reveal the preferences of the audience's engagement in social media. Also, results from this question can be used to see how does

the audience reaches their political information, and where do they mostly engage for political news, respectively, which source of information do they trust. The scale from 1 – I prefer less to 5 – I prefer more, was employed to rank their preference. In an indirect way the respondents can refute or support the elaborated above direct answers for their political engagement in social media. The highest percent from the options given for audience's engagement preferences in social media, are at: conversations with relatives/friends on social media, and close friends' groups in social media with which they share the same beliefs.



The next question (number 22.) tries to understand what do the audience think of the next sources of information. Which of the following do they perceive as credible and which as not credible? The dichotomous question was used for this purpose and predictable options were given which the audience probably use as a sources of information in social media. The results obtained reinforced the results from the question nr.20, where the audience prefers more to engage in a close friends' groups and conversation with friends and relatives in social media. Hence, after the obvious credible source of information in social media attained the percentage of 63.3 respondents' opinion as credible, follows the close friend's groups with the highest percentage of 65.3 respondents who think the source is credible and also with 42.7 percentage that think friend's posts are credible source of information.



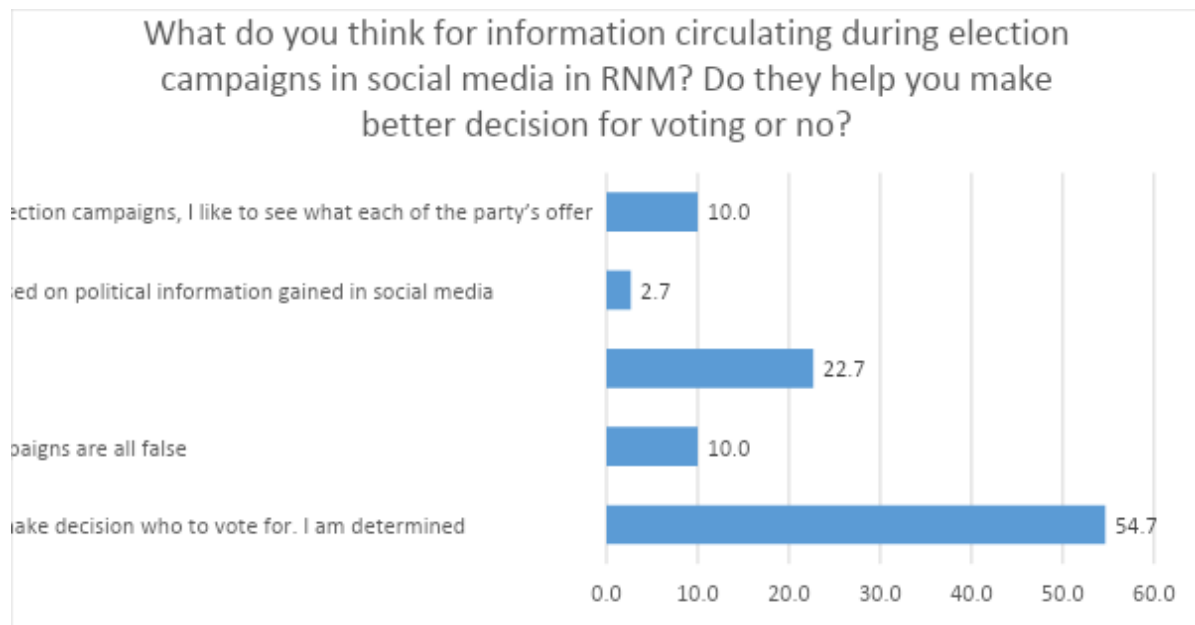
4.5 Perception on disinformation in social media during election campaigns in Republic of North Macedonia

14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21

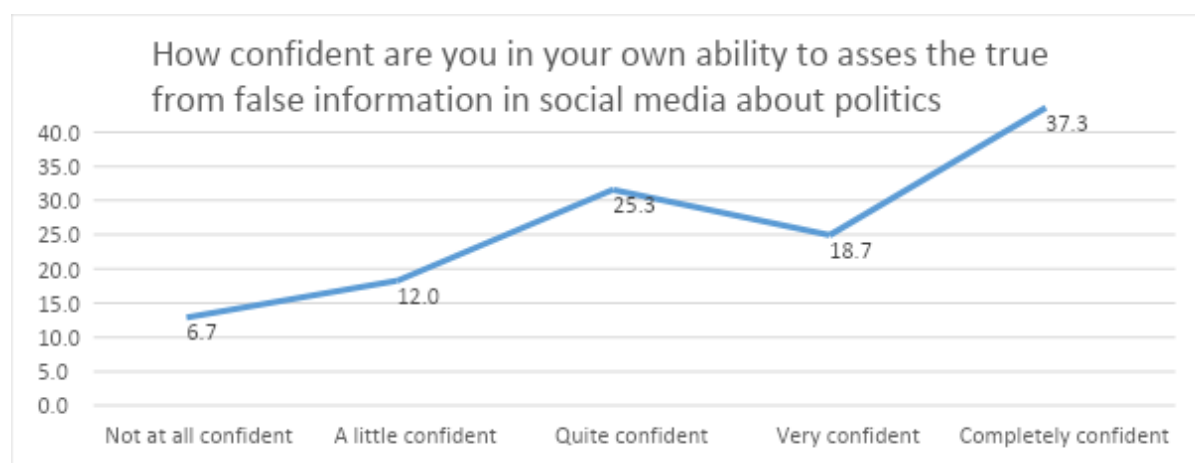
The thematic block of audience's perception and attitudes related to disinformation circulating during election campaigns in social media, involves questions of the veracity of the information for election campaigns in social media so as the audience's ability to differentiate the true from false information.

Regarding this, the question number 14, asks for respondent's opinion about information circulation during election campaigns in social media and if the information they encounter help them make better decision for voting. The respondents were asked to check only one option that applies with their opinion from five given options. The options given can reveal many phenomena related to their voting behaviour linked to engagement to information during election campaigns in social media and to the audience's decision to choose who to vote for. Two positive options for answers and two negative options were given for information circulating during elections campaigns in social media, while a neutral option is given which hasn't direct relation with information in social media but with the way the audience can decide who to vote for in the election. The best portion of the percentage (54.7%) winned the neutral option with more than a half respondents saying that they are determined and that they don't need too much information in order to make decision who to vote for. This also confirms some of the studies done so far for partisan users in social media, which are determined for one political party and are representing the most

vulnerable group which can be affected by disinformation and also can share disinformation by believing the information they share for their preferred political party is true. They remain closed to new and critical information that does not correspond to their political beliefs.



The Likert 5 scale was used in the next question (number 15) that requires to obtain information about the audience's perception of their ability to assess the true from false information in social media. The respondents are quite or completely confident in their ability to differ false from true political information in social media.

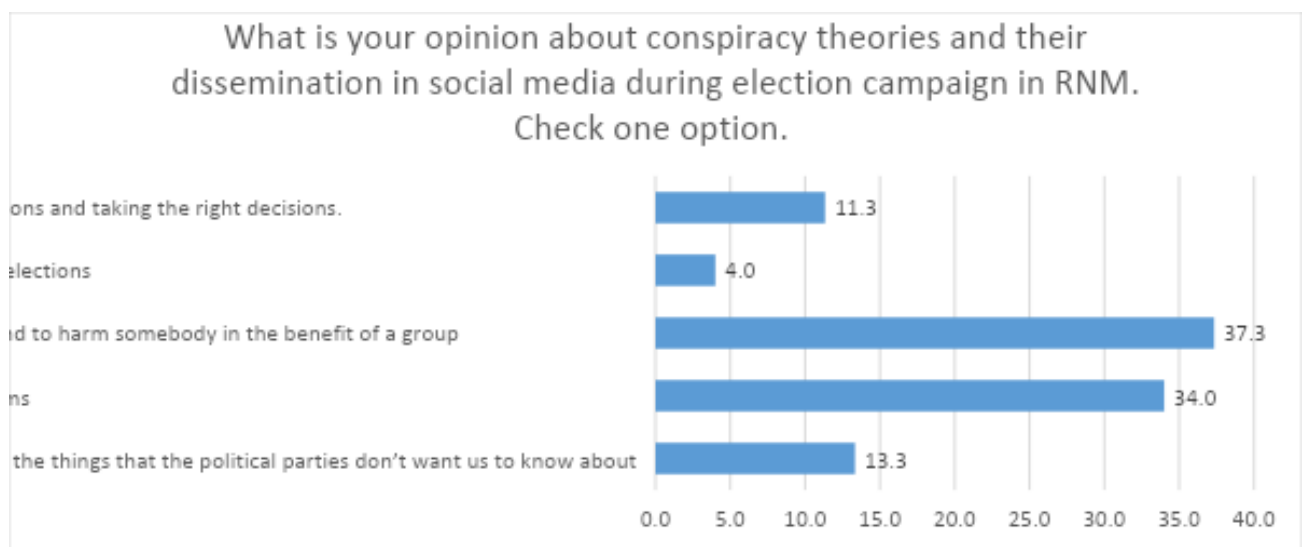


The next question is of the same scope but semantic differential scale was used to assess their opinion on how much they think there were fake news and deliberate manipulative

information shared in social media during election campaign 2020 in RNM, ranking from 1 – not at all to 5 most of the time.

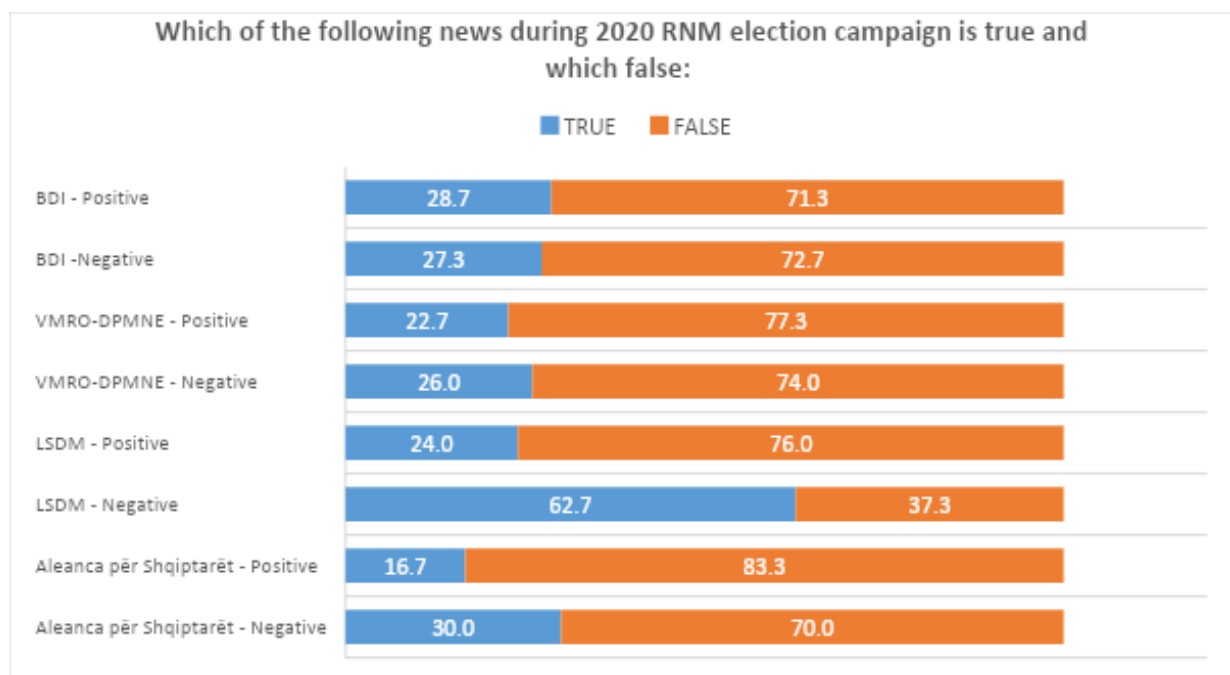


In addition, the 18th question gives five options in a form of statements to attain information of the opinion and attitude of the audience for conspiracy theories and their dissemination in social media during election campaign. One possible option is given to be checked that complies with their attitude. 37.3 percent of the respondents believe that they are deliberate information with the intend to harm somebody in the benefit of a group, while 34 percent believe that they distract us from the real societal problems.



The question number 19, is of special significance since it is related and will be cross matched with some of the questions above in order to reveal the ability of the audience towards disinformation and if their political affiliation and if their biases distracts them to

distinguish true from false political information. There were given actual fake news for each of the biggest political parties in the country. The information given were collected from different fact-checking agencies in the country, and they don't necessarily are defined as fake news, but include: spins, biased news, sensationalist news, de-contextualised events or activities of an political actor, propaganda news, etc. All of them are false but each political party has one positive and one negative fake news. The aim was to indirectly measure respondents' political affiliation and their biases in evaluating true from false information. The results below will be shown by attributing to the political party fake news with positive connotation and negative connotation, instead of showing all the actual fake news in order to have the best qualitative overview of the respondents' answers. The results will be further analysed to refute or support the given hypothesis of this paper.

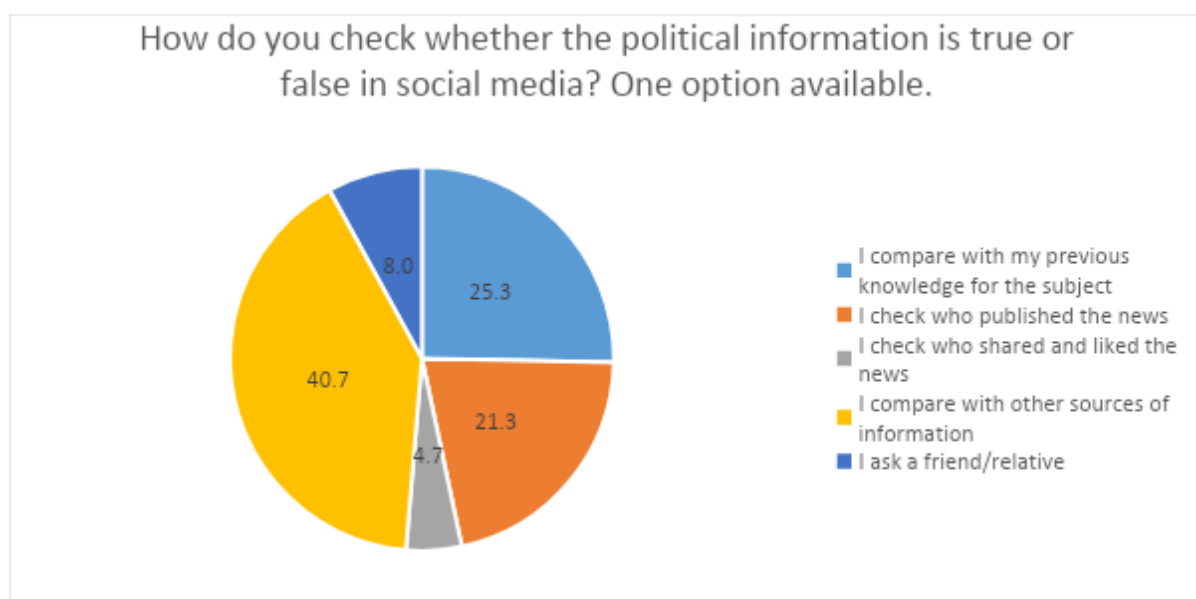


This thematic block of results is closed with the 21st question which aims to test audience's ability to check whether the political information is true or false in social media. From 5 possible answers, one option was available to be checked. As we can see in the table below, 40.7 percent of the respondents compare the information with other sources of information which is one of the best ways to figure out if the information is true or false. Even though, remains to be desired for this percentage to be as large as possible in the future. The other option possible that 21.3 percent of the respondents answered is to check who published the news for the truthiness of the information, which is the source of information?! But, this

might be disputable since the source of information might be not credible, and does the audience have the necessary skills for knowing if the source of information is credible or not?!

While, 25.3 percent of the respondents compare the news with their pervious knowledge for the subject, which is a natural unconscious process of receiving the new information, but does this means that comparing the new information with the information i.e. knowledge we already have might result in ignoring or resembling the new information based on personal believes and attitudes which we have already built?! The two other options have low percent respondents who ask a friend or relative (8%) and check who shared and liked the news (4.7%) for checking whether a political information in social media is true or false. This two options means that the audience believes more in the person who shares it and like it rather than the organization who produce the news. Social ties and peer to peer engagement are still very strong and persons are used as a source of information, that results in influence, and opinion formation. By checking who shared and liked the news, the person relies their reasoning more on their affection for the personalities that shared and liked the information (who can be influencers, friends, relatives. political partisans or opinion leaders), rather than seeking a credible source of information.

The results from this question are significant when gathering all four options while we have more than a half of respondents, i.e. 59.3 percent, that can be vulnerable to disinformation, and doesn't have the necessary skills to check whether the information is true or not.



1.2. Elaboration of the research objectives and testing hypothesis

Confirmation bias in a relation with political affiliation, age and source credibility

Within the thematic blocks that helped to construct the questionnaire, cross matching was used to link questions with the others in order to anticipate refuting or supporting hypotheses. The SPSS system was used to generate results from the questionnaire and also to cross match questions, specifically variables of political affiliation, age and source credibility and their dependence on each other regarding the confirmation bias and the vulnerability of the audience to disinformation.

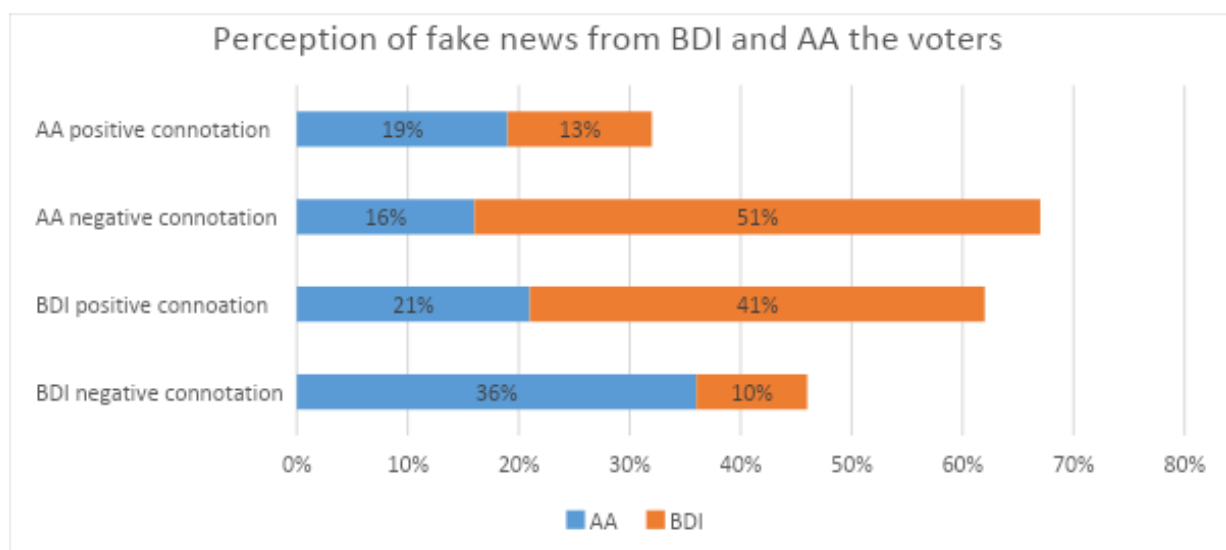
The way the audience perceives the disinformation depends on their political affiliation in RNM

Does the political affiliation make more vulnerable the audience to disinformation or no?! For achieving results and testing this hypothesis were employed two different question. One, which collects information of how the audience has voted in the last parliamentary elections in 2020 in RNM, specifically for which political party, for identifying political affiliation of the respondents; and second, were presented eight fake news that circulated in social media during parliamentary election campaign of 2020 year in RNM for 4 political parties. Fake news included also, sensationalism, hyperbolism, biased and propagandistic news for four biggest parties competitive in 2020 years' elections. For each of the political parties were presented one fake news with positive connotation and one with negative connotation. The intend was to see how the audience will respond to each of them, bearing in mind their political affiliation answered in the question 12.

Nowadays, the analysis of the impact of disinformation should be seen from the perspective of media effects that as such are variable and dependent on digital and social change. Thus, when we talk about the individual characteristics that are explored daily to provide a frame of reference for future researchers to analyze the impact of disinformation on the audience in social psychology, Leon Festinger (1957)'s theory of Cognitive Dissonance or selective exposure is most cited, where the notion of confirmation bias arises. Cognitive Dissonance is the unconscious tendency of people to achieve cognitive consistency with pre-existing

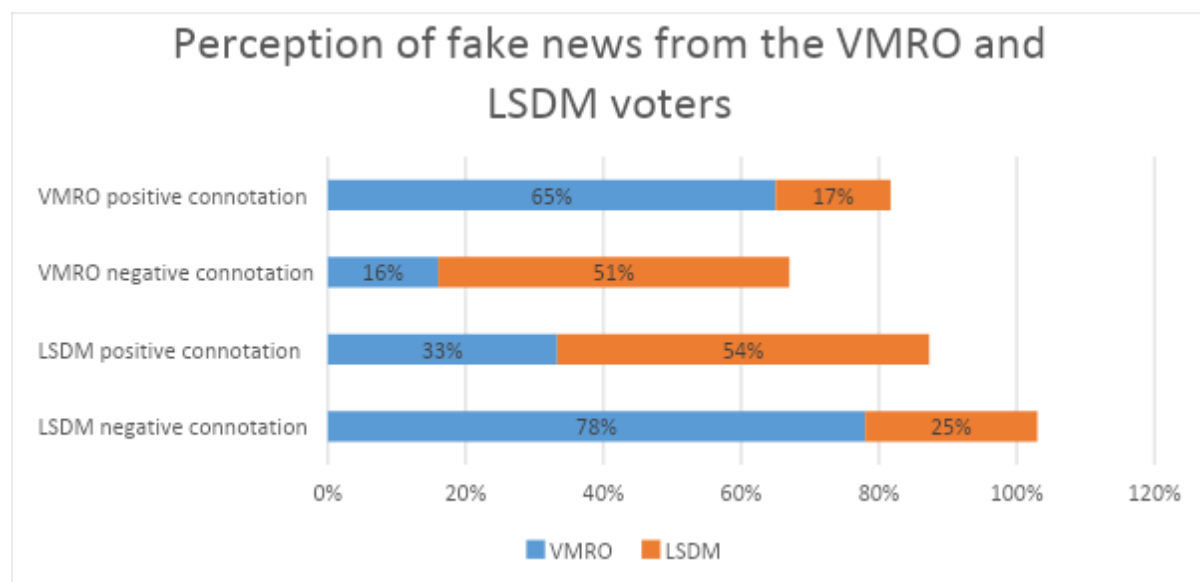
beliefs or attitudes by avoiding or minimizing information or situations that are contrary to their beliefs and motivating the person to try to reduce dissonance and achieve consistency.

Based on this, politically biased individuals tend to believe, accept, and share information that is consistent with their political beliefs, whether that information is true or not, and ignore other information that is inconsistent with their beliefs. In this regard, the respondents answers were analysed based on their political affiliation, thus, the content of the fake news is not so much relevant then the connotation (negative or positive) and the political affiliation. The below table will show how the respondents who answered that voted Aleance for Albanians have assesed as true two of the fake news for their political party (positive or negative connotation) and true for oponent politcal party (positive or negative connotation). Also, how the respondents who voted BDI have assesed as true fake news for their politcal party(positive or negative connotation) and as true fake news for the oponent political party (positive or negative connotation). From the results we can assume that repsondents who voted for AA have assesed as true the fake news that is in positive connotation for their political party in higher percentage in relation to negative connotation for their political party. Also, the same repsondents have assesed in higher percentage as true the fake news with negative connotation for the oponent politcal party (BDI) and with lower percent as true the fake news with the positive connotation for the oponent political party. The same applies to the respondents who voted for the BDI and their assesment as true for fake news of their politcal party and the oponent political party. More clearly the table presented in percentage shows the difference in their perception.



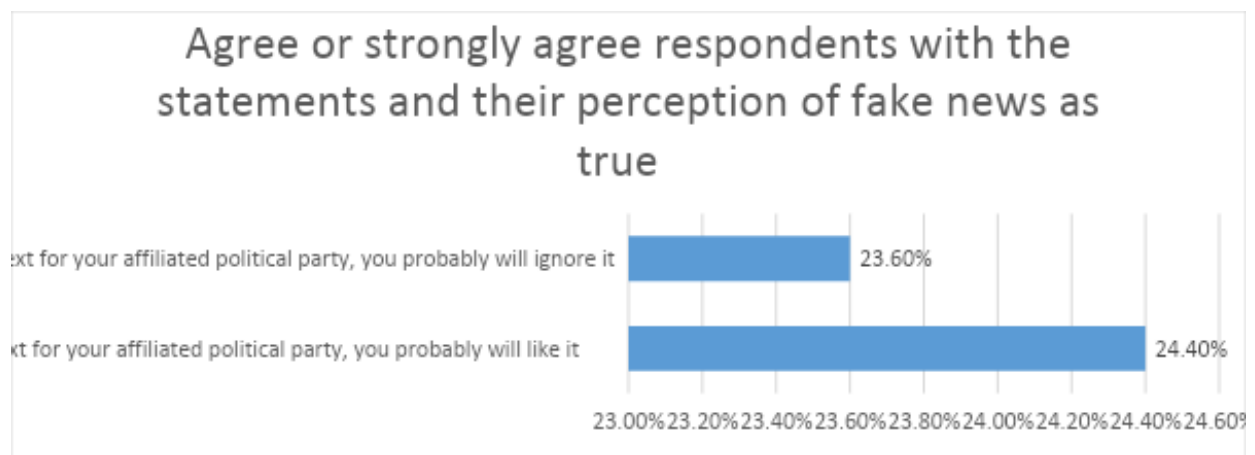
However, it is very important to take into account the time when the survey is conducted, because the political atmosphere between the opponents in the pre-election and post-election period can change from time to time depending on the pre-election and post-election coalitions. This survey was conducted between 9 July 2020 until 30 August 2021, where there were no active election campaigns.

Eventhough, there were few respondents from the Macedonian part of the audience, the results show the same trend as in Albanian respondents perception. The content of the fake news is also very important and carefully chosed. It must correspond with the political context of the time when the research is conducted.



In addition, in the 23 question of the questionnaire were included 4 statements, and 2 of them tests how does the respondents behave if they encounter politically consistent or discrepant news with their beliefs and attitudes in social media. Resulted that 22.7 percent of the respondents whether agree or strongly agree that If they encounter news posted in social media which has positive context for their affiliated political party, they probably will like it and also, 20 percent of the respondents whether agree or strongly agree that if they encounter news posted in social media which has negative context for their affiliated political party, they probably will ignore it. The percentage of the respondents who agree and strongly agree with the above mentioned statements, was analysed to see how they perceive false political news. Proved that the respondents who agree and strongly agree that If they encounter news posted in social media which has positive context for their affiliated

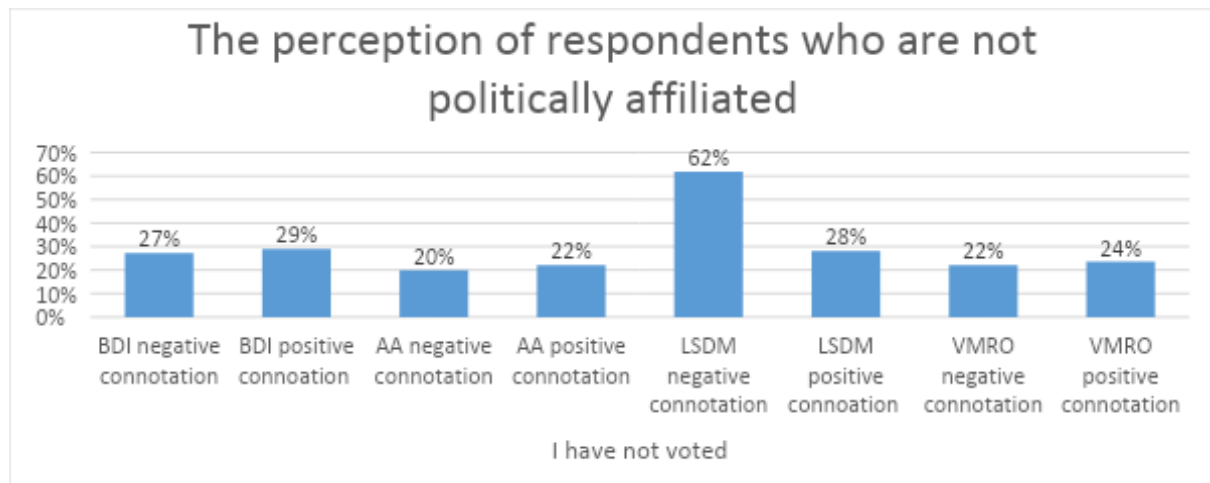
political party, they probably will like it, 24.4 percent of them perceive false political news as true and 23.6, and the respondents who agree and strongly agree that if they encounter news posted in social media which has negative context for their affiliated political party, they probably will ignore it, 23.6 percent of them perceive false political news as true.



In supporting this hypothesis, a question 24 was employed of how do the respondents behave if they encounter information in social media that they strongly agree with, 41.3 percent check first whether the information is true or untrue, and 31.3 check who posted the information with which they agree, and 18 percent like and share the information, while 9.3 percent share the information automatically to a close friends group. This question was employed to check how each of the respondents of these answers perceive political disinformation. Resulted that the respondents who like and share the information with which they strongly agree are more vulnerable to disinformation with 27.4 percent of them who can't detect as false political fake news.



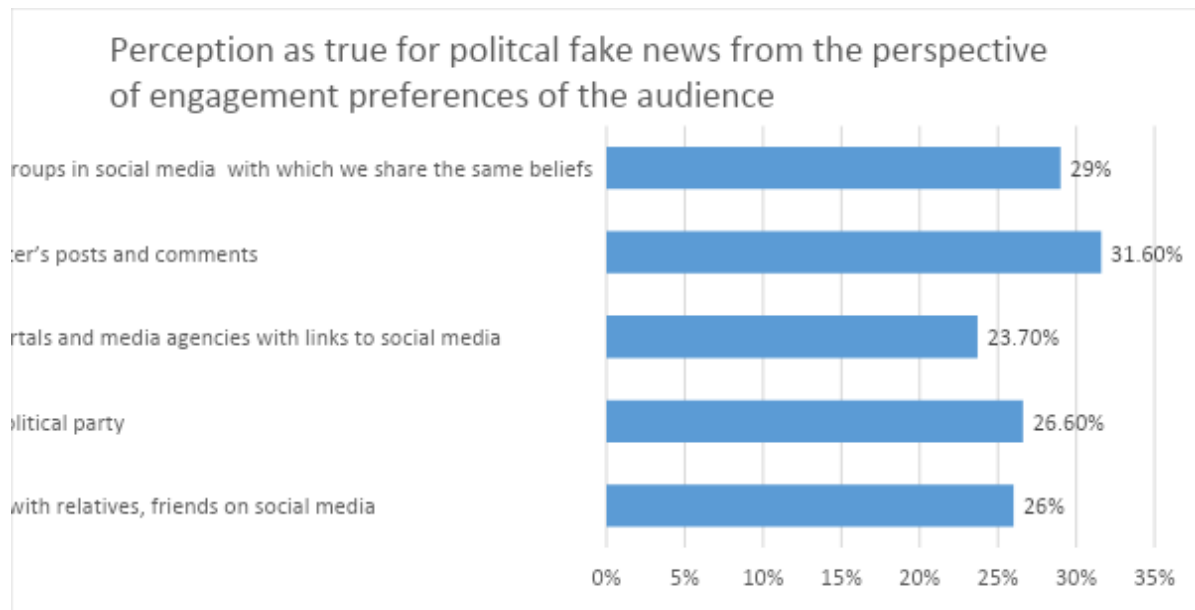
Further, if we analyse the data received from the respondents who answered that they have not voted in the last parliamentary elections in RNM of 2020 year, and we consider them as politically non-affiliated audience, we can assume that these part of the audience is not depended on their political beliefs and attitudes to perceive the disinformation as true or false. The table below shows that the trend of their assessment is constant for all the political parties and is not biased. With exception to LSDM fake news with negative connotation, which we can separately analyse and conclude what has affected to rank this fake news in higher percent as true information. In this case, we bring the content of the fake news: 'SDSM government has apparently deepened so much in the election campaign and has engaged its members in institutions in this regard, that it has completely forgotten the citizens. Citizens angry and desperate because their legal compensation is overdue and it is not yet known when they will receive it'. This trend shows the disposition of the audience against SDSM as political party and their disappointment from their governance. But this does not show a comparison data with another political party, with positive or negative connotation that has higher or lower percent of the disinformation perceived.



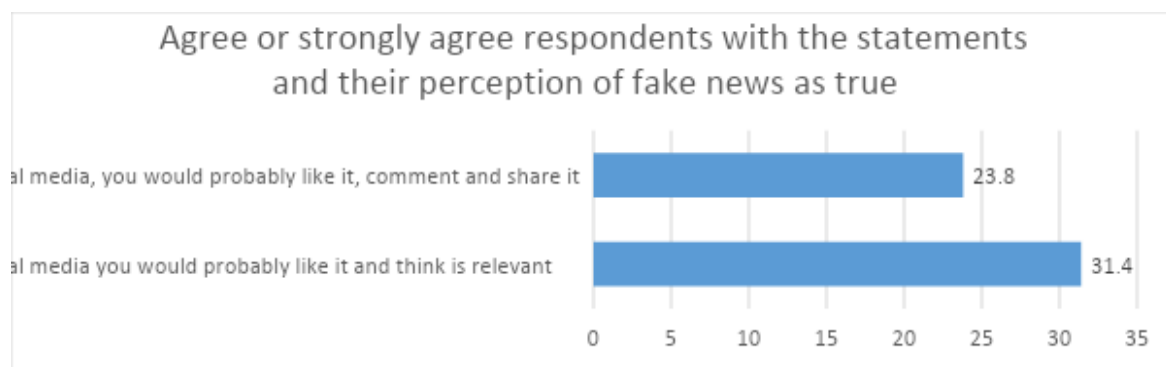
Considering this, we can raise another hypothesis not planned beforehand in this research, but relevant to consider for further examination. That is: *'Politically affiliated individuals are more prone to disinformation than the rest of the audience who are not-politically affiliated.*

The audience is more persuaded by disinformation if it is shared by the people with the same attitudes and beliefs in RNM

In regard to the hypothesis raised for assessing whether the audience is more persuaded by disinformation if it is shared by the people with the same attitudes and beliefs in RNM, we have included more than one indirect question to see what are the respondents' news political engagement preferences in social media, comparing it with their perception on political parties' fake news. The question for engagement preferences for political news in social media included Likert Scale to rank each of the possible engagement in social media. From the results we can conclude that for political news in social media respondents prefer (4) and prefer more (5) to engage with conversations with relatives/friends on social media (40%), and close friends' groups in social media with which they share the same beliefs (40%), in comparison with fan pages of political parties (8%), favourite influencers' posts and comments in social media (20%), and information portals and media agencies with links to social media (23.4). But does this target audience is more influenced and more vulnerable to disinformation or not? Cross matching analysis from respondents' engagement preferences and their perception as true for political fake news, resulted that respondents who prefer more to engage for political news in social media with favourite influencers' posts and comments (31.6%), and close friend's groups in social media with which they share the same beliefs (29%) following with engagement preferences in fan pages of political party (26.6%) and conversations with relatives and friends in social media (26%) have the highest percent of perception of political fake news as true. This result is very significant and needs more attention and further research in the perspective of the homophilic interactions in social media, i.e. echo chambers that enable keeping and reinforcing own opinions and attitudes within a group of 'same-minded' and doesn't allow the user to encounter different viewpoints in social media information sphere. These confirm the audience's preferences to engage in the social environment where his/her beliefs and attitudes are confirmed and consistent and does not favour environments where his beliefs are challenged. The target audience which engages in preferable above mentioned sources proved to be more vulnerable to political disinformation because their percentage is higher in perceiving fake news as true.

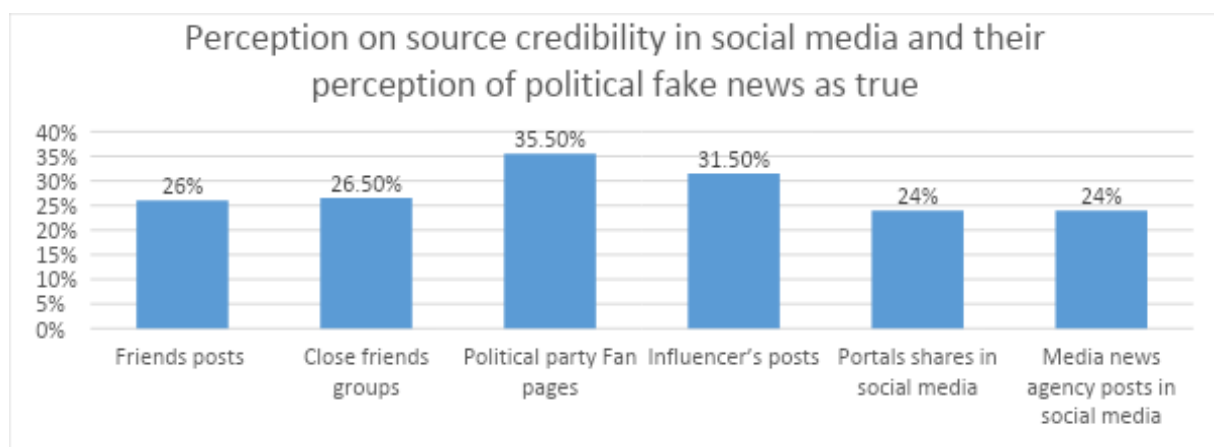


In addition, in the question 23 of the questionnaire were included 2 statements to test this hypothesis and check how do the audience behave if they encounter political news shared by their friend in social media. We cross-matched these two questions with the question 19 where the audience detects true and false political fake news, and resulted that respondents who like and think is relevant political news shared by their friend in social media, 31.4 percent of them weren't able to detect 8 political false news, and the respondents who like, share and comment political news shared by their friend, 23.8 percent perceived as true 8 political fake news.



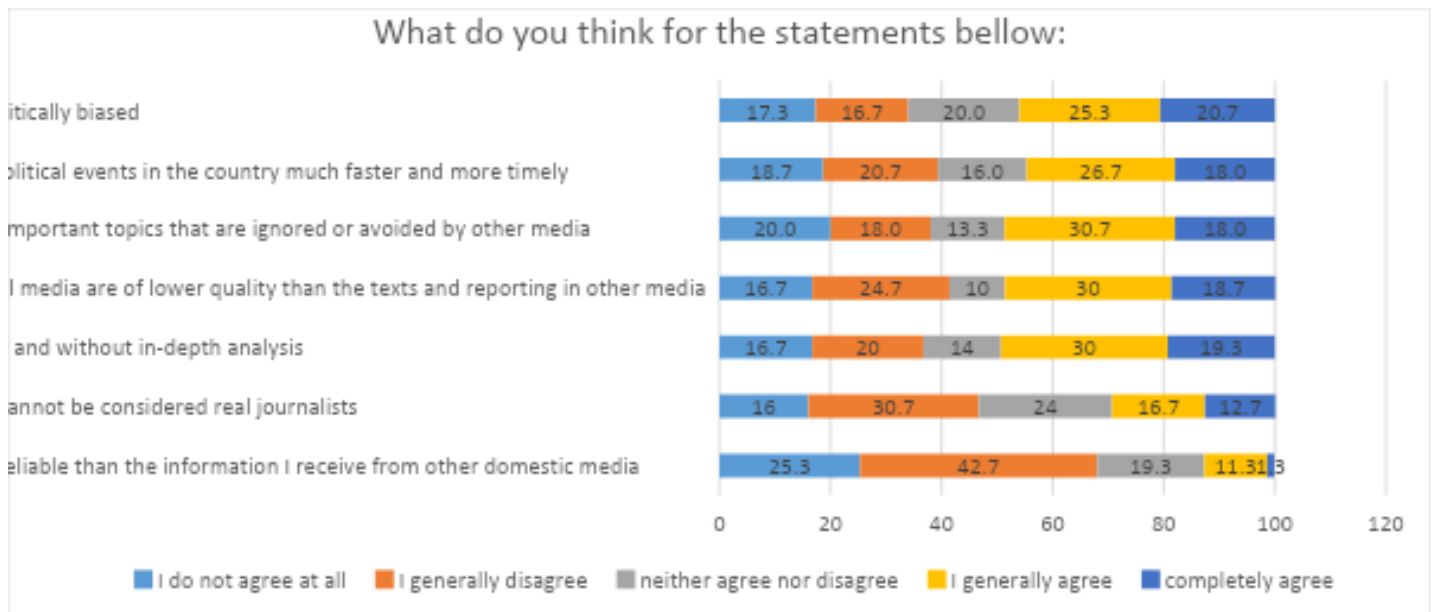
The audience's perception of source credibility affects audience vulnerability to disinformation

The audience perception on source credibility in social media is tested by the question number 22 where the respondents see as more credible close friends' groups with 65.3 percent following with media news agency posts in social media with 63.3 percent, and friends posts with 42.7 percent as presented beforehand in these paper within the thematic block of Engagement Preferences and attitudes for social media reliability and source credibility, table nr.. This result by itself represents the audience's vulnerability to disinformation since close friends' groups and friends' posts are not credible sources of information, but to reinforce this attitude we have analysed these results matching it with dichotomous true/false question for political fake news. Obviously, the respondents who think that the political party fan pages, influencers' posts so as close friends groups and friends posts are credible sources of information proved to be more prone to disinformation than the other part of the respondents who think that portal shares in social media and media news agencies posts in social media are credible sources of information. Although social media portal posts and news agencies on social media have from time to time been proven as sources that publish and disseminate disinformation, in this context we consider them as more credible sources of information because to some extent, however, these online media follow a minimal journalistic editing process compared to friend posts, influencers posts, political party fan pages, etc. Percentages of these two cross-matched questions' analysis and results are presented in the table below:

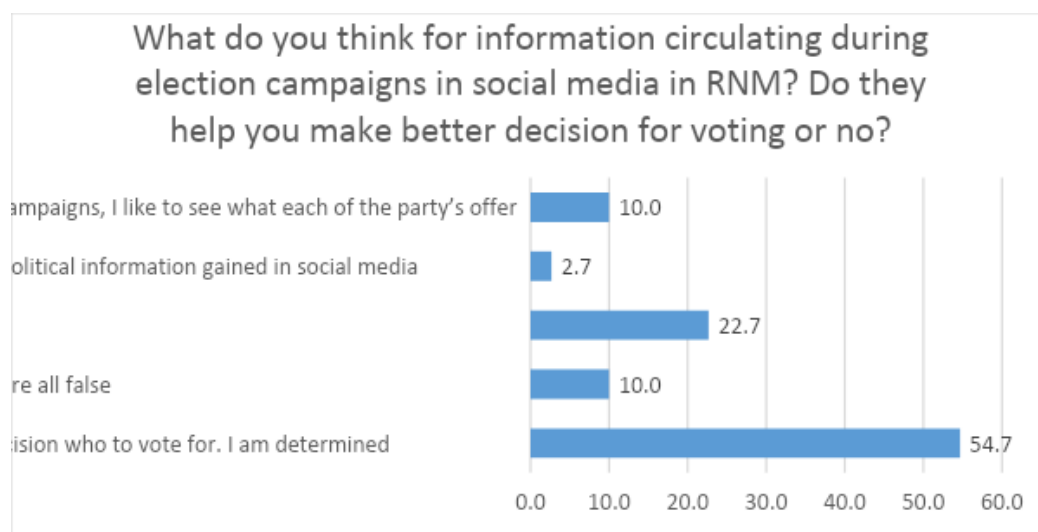


Following the general audiences' perception and attitude for social media news credibility here are presented some analysis of the statements that represent percentages of their agreement or disagreement for social media reliability.

Respondents completely agree and generally agree (49.3 percent) that information and news on social media are superficially and without in depth analysis following with 48.7 percent who believe that the text and coverage of daily political events on social media are of lower quality than the texts and reporting in other media, that the news published on social media are politically biased with 46 percent, and most of the news published on the social media are politically biased with 45.5 percent. But they also completely agree and generally agree with 48.7 of respondents that social media allows comments, i.e. public discussion on important topics that are ignored or avoided by other media and with 44.7 of respondents that on the social media they can get information about political events much faster and more timely. In contrast to this, 68 percent of the respondents do not agree and generally disagree that the information available on the social media is more reliable than the information they receive from other domestic media and 46.7 percent of the respondents who don't agree and generally disagree that journalists on news aggregators in social media pages cannot be considered real journalists. This does not have direct impact in refuting or supporting the raised hypothesis, but it is significant to measure their attitude and perception of social media news reliability and credibility when there is a high percent of respondents who answered that they mostly use internet for information about domestic events (78 percent) whereas specifying with social media usage for information about political news and events with 43.3 percent of the respondents.



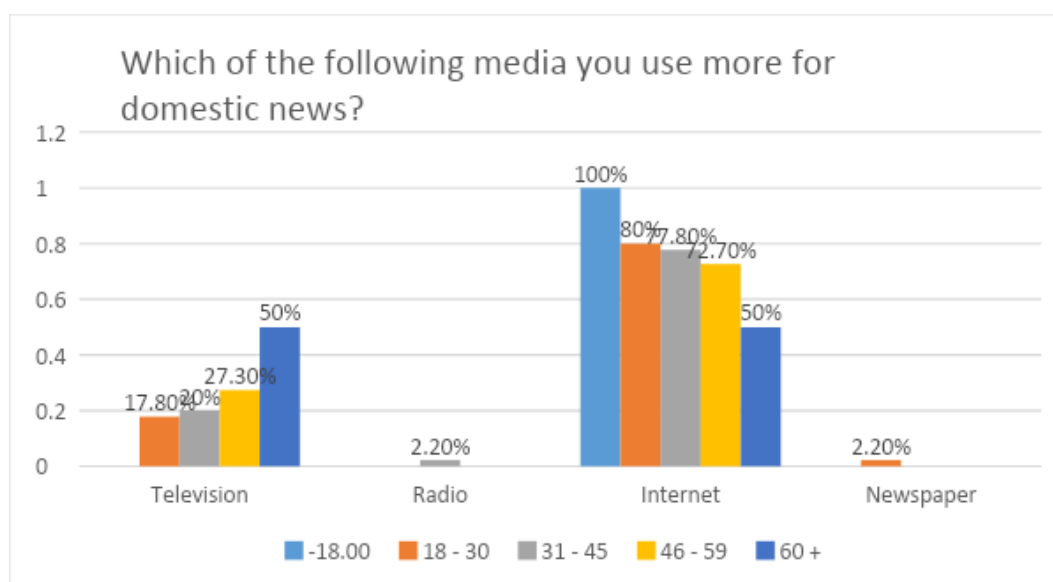
Moreover, in these context we can use the results from the question number 14 where were measured audiences' opinion for information circulating during election campaigns in social media in RNM and do they help them to make better voting decision or no? From the results obtained, respondents are in high percent convinced that they do not need to much information in order to decide who to vote for (54.7 percent). How does this target audience of 54.7 percent perceive fake political news in social media?! Are they more vulnerable or more resilient to disinformation? Also, how does the other part of the audience who don't trust news in social media and think the information in social media during election campaigns are all false, perceive disinformation during election campaign in RNM? These are some of the questions that future studies might address.



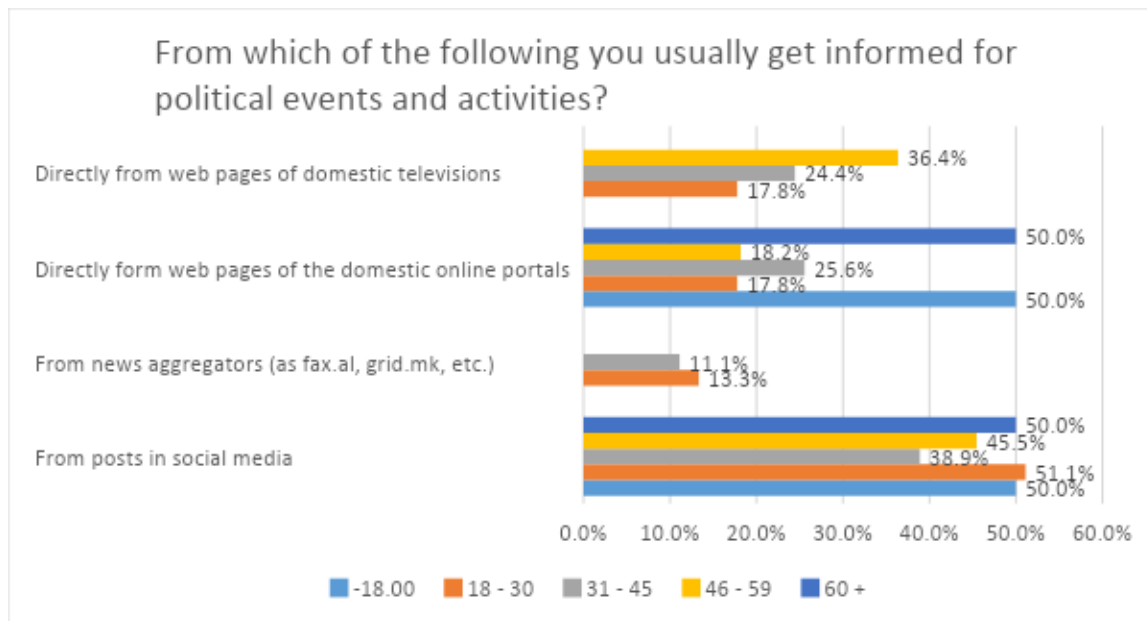
Youngers are more resilient to false information than older ones are in RNM

There are some scientific papers cited in the literature review of this paper, that prove that older age is more affected by disinformation than younger age. Considering the fact that young people are more active in social networks than older people, the sample of this study could not generate a larger example of older people, for example over 60 years. For this reason in the analysis of the results obtained from this questionnaire will be analyzed as the oldest age group 46-59 and age group over 60 years (which includes only two respondents). Also, there are few representatives from the youngest age group of – 18 years, therefore the younger age group will include – 18 years' group and 18 – 30 young group. Hopefully this hypothesis can be explored in other research as well, with more representatives of the older and youngest age group.

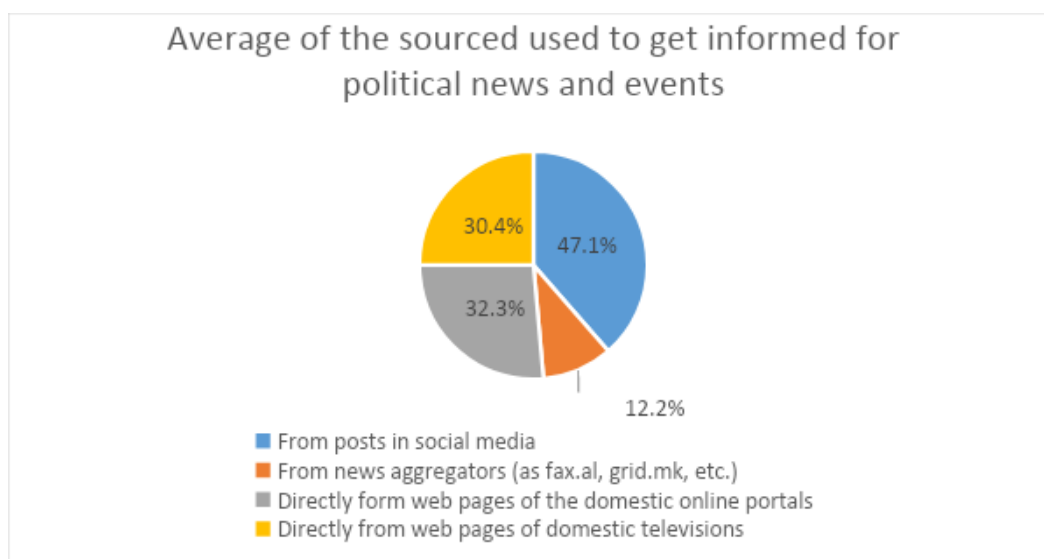
For analysing each of the age groups in this research it is important to see their preferences and engagement for political news consumption in social media. Thus, for example, in the table below are represented where do each of the age group attain information for domestic events. Mostly all of the age groups get informed from internet. Television is also present as a source of information, especially to older age groups: 46-59 and 60+.



Regarding political events and activities most of the respondents from each age group get informed from posts on social media.

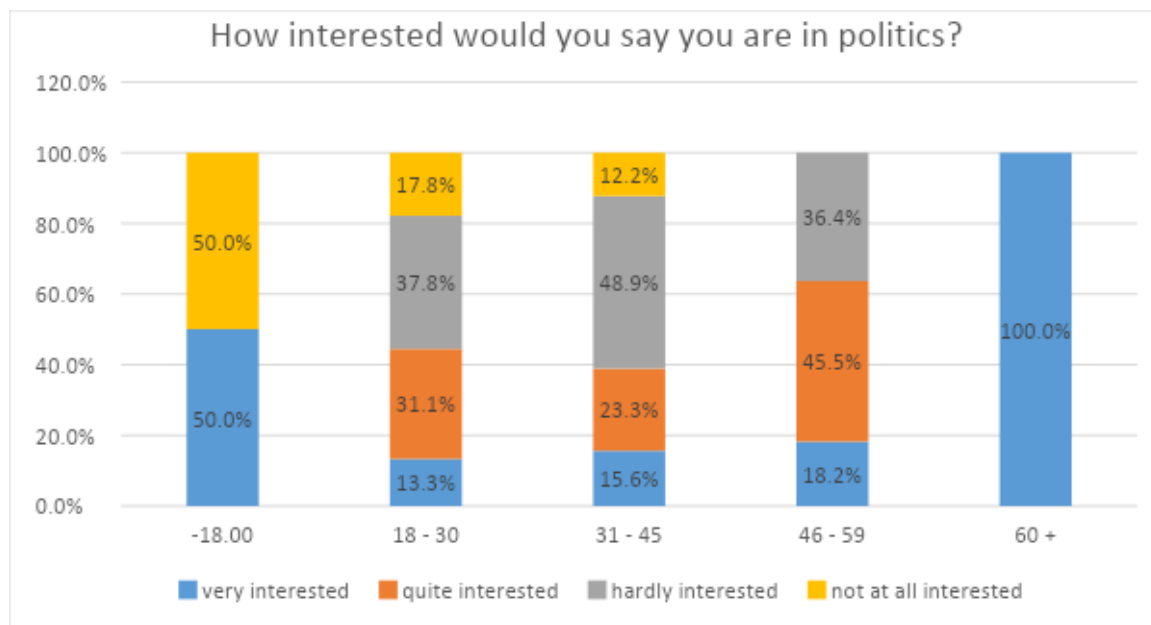


On average, for political events and news respondents get informed 47 percent from posts on social media.



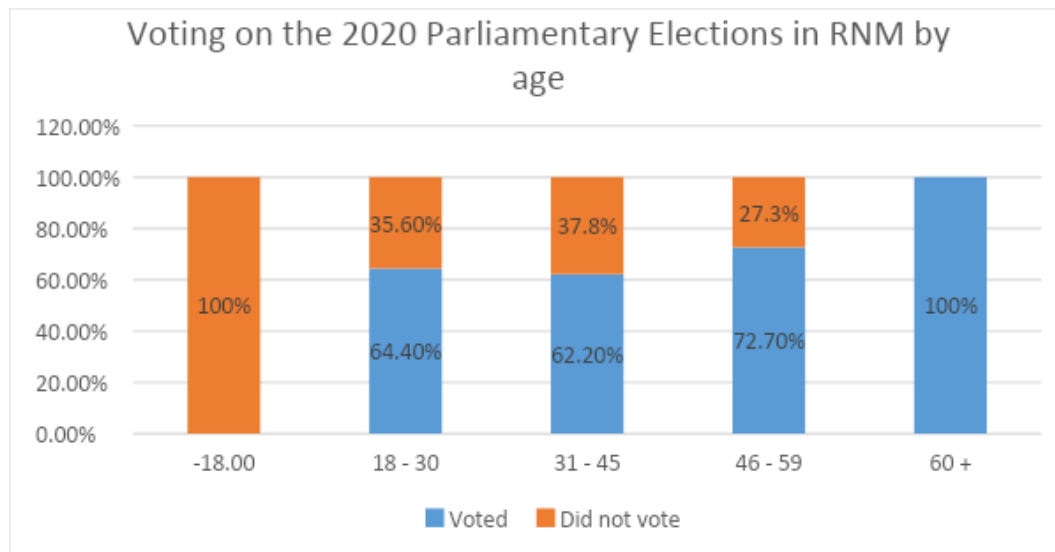
The question for measuring the interest in politics of each age group has helped to create an overview for further analysis of age groups and their interest in domestic politics in order to determine whether the ones who are most interested for politics are or not more affected by disinformation as logically those who are interested in politics are also the biggest seekers and searchers for political news on social media. Resulted that older respondents of 60 + years and 46 – 59 years are the age group which are very interested or quite interested in

politics.

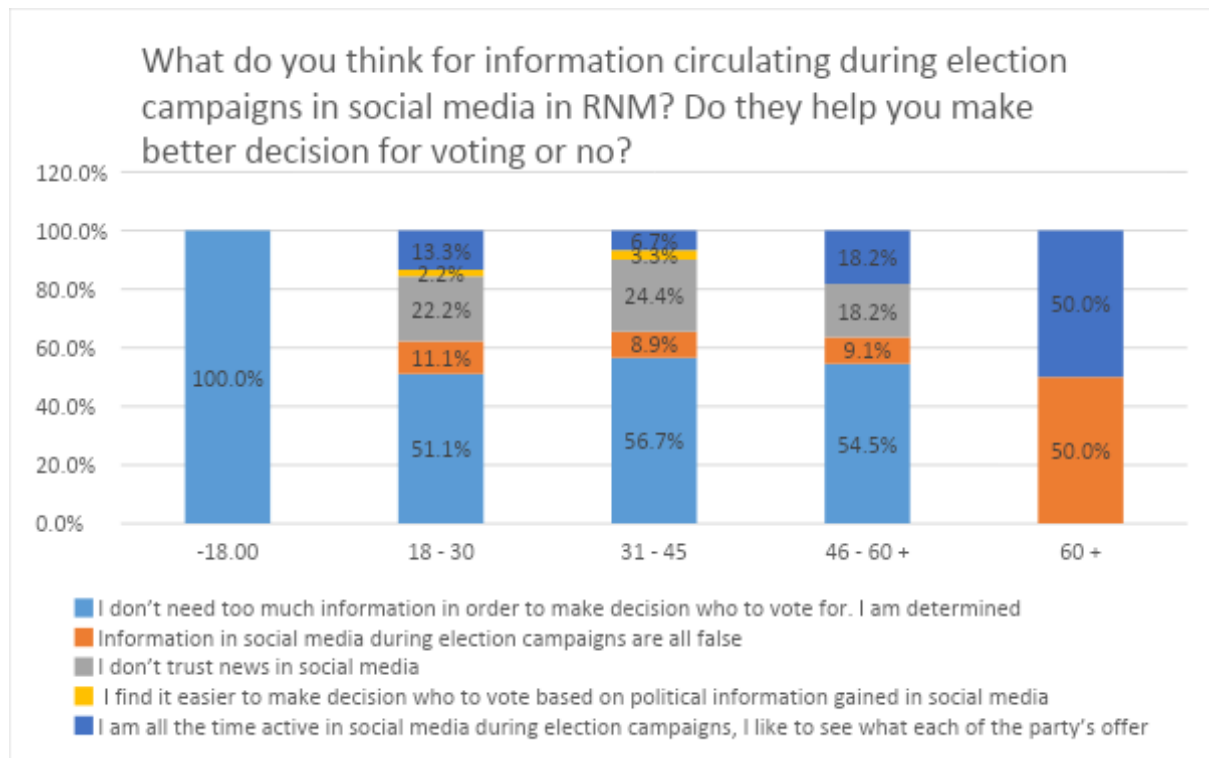


This result is in full compliance with the results of voting behaviour in 2020 year's Parliamentary Elections in RNM, where the respondents were asked for which political party they have voted. The results were summed up and analysed by each age group. Resulted that a very interesting phenomenon occurs. The age groups that are most interested in politics are the same age groups with the highest voter turnout. Indicative is the fact that the age groups that should be at the peak of activity, both political and professional, are less interested in politics and with higher percentage of non-voting comparing to other age groups. If this thesis will prove that these age groups are more vulnerable to disinformation, than the selection of people's representatives as a democratic process is also violated. These parameters are worth analysing by a wider group of experts at the national level. See the

details at the graph below.

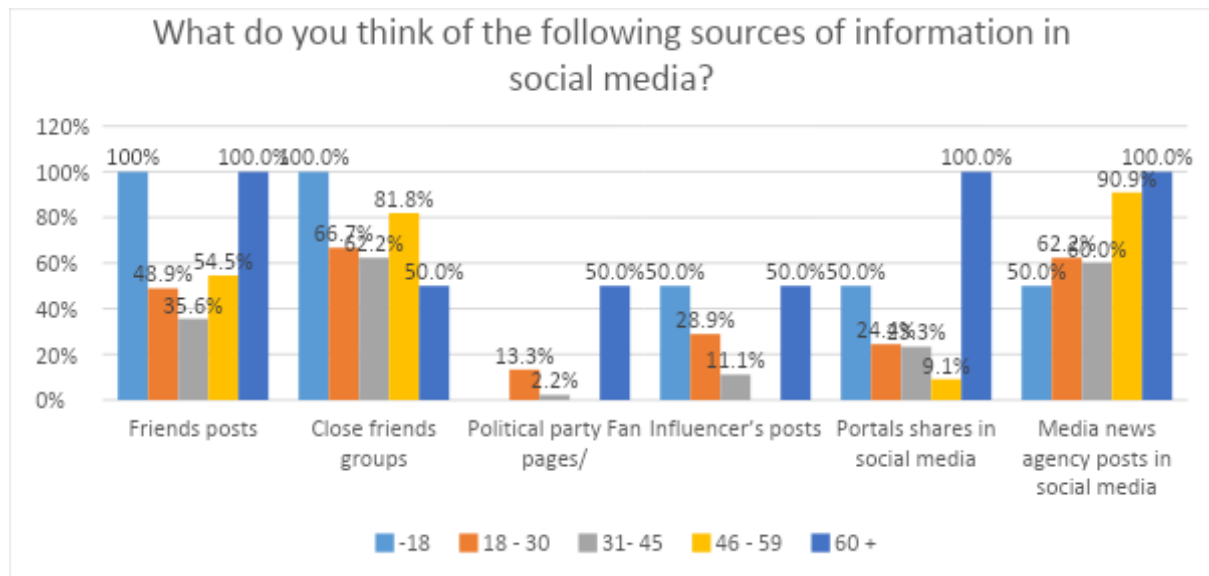


Audience's attitudes for political news circulating in social media during election campaigns were also assessed and results were analysed by the perspective of each age group. It is more obvious that mostly respondents are determined and do not need much information to decide who to vote for. From the presentation of linear results from the questionnaire resulted that 54.7 percent of the respondents are determined. Again, we can conclude that mostly the older age are searchers of political information in social media during election campaigns, with 50% the age group of 60 + years is all the time active in social media during election campaigns and like to see what each of the political party offers, but the age group of 46 – 59 year is 54.5 percent do not seek for information in order to make a better decision for voting. If the exemplar of 60+ age group was bigger, probably the results would differ or would be more accurate.

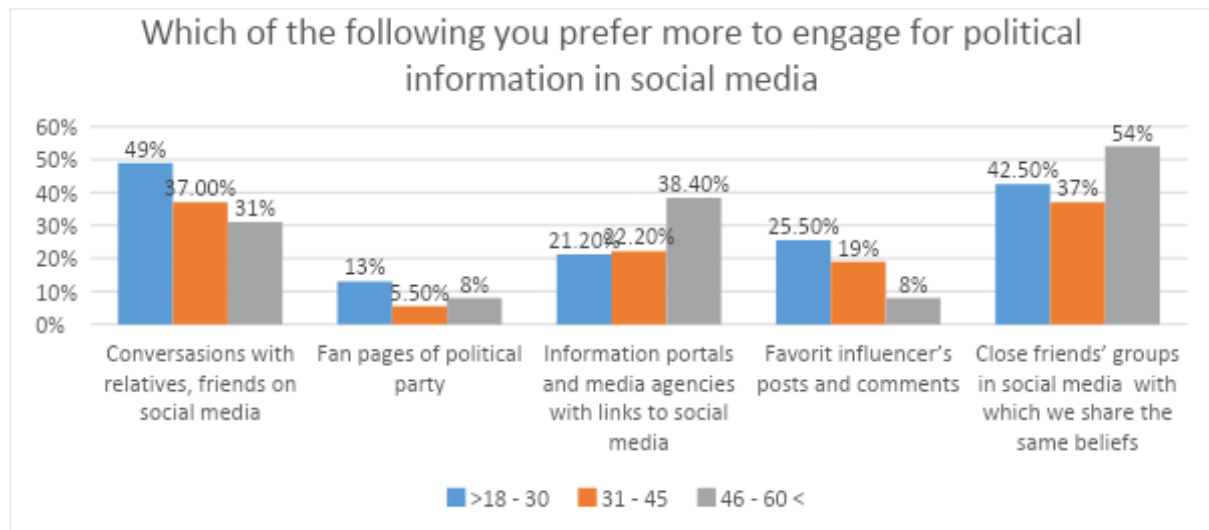


Regarding the source credibility and the vulnerability of the audience by age we almost have analysed the data based on audience's perception where the results obtained showed that most of the audience think that close friends' groups and friends' posts are credible sources of information. But, which of the age groups in higher percent believe that these sources are credible. Since we have determined vulnerability based on source perception, probably the vulnerability by age group will be visible in this context.

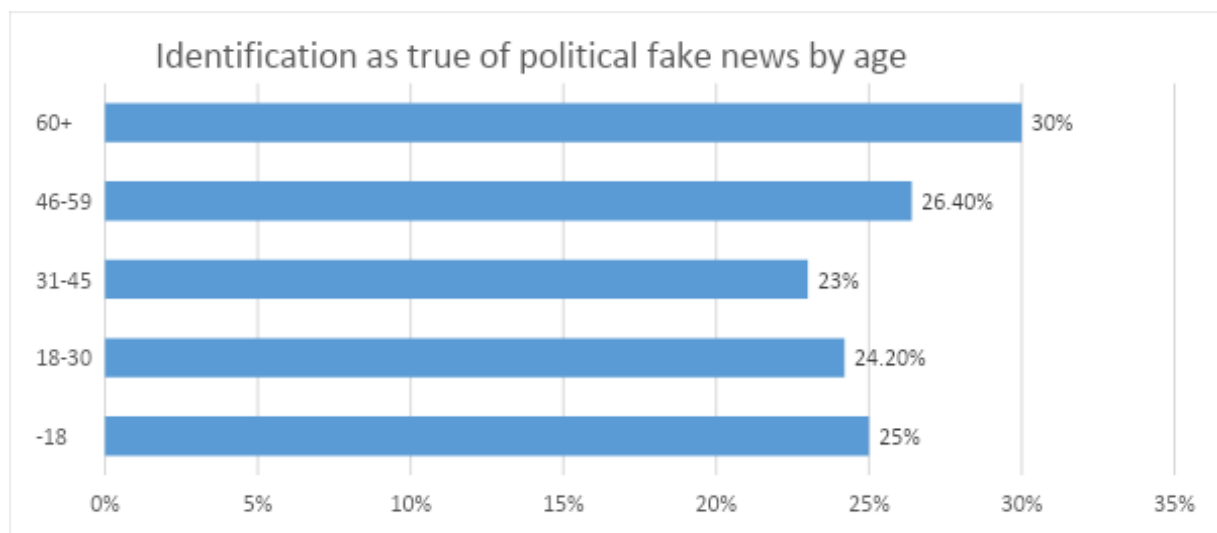
Among, Media news agency posts in social media which is visibly credible source of information the higher percent are accumulated in the friends posts and close friends groups. The age group of 46 – 59 years, identified with 54.5percent the friends posts as credible source of information, and close friends groups with 81.8 percent as credible source of information. Also the age group of 60 + identified with 50 percent friends posts as credible source of information and with 100 percent friends close groups as credible source of information. If we measure vulnerability by this graph we can conclude that also the age group – 18 is vulnerable, gradually lowering the degree of vulnerability with the older group age and increasing it again to an oldest group age of 46-59 and 60 +.



Aiming to generate more accurate results we have regrouped youngest group ages and oldest group ages to three groups: >18 – 30, 31 – 45 and 46 - 60 <. In these analysis represented are respondents' preferences in social media source engagement for political news. The assignment of the question was to rate each of the sources from – 1 prefer less – to 5 prefer more. For the purpose of this analysis were regrouped values of 4 and 5 for more preferable source engagements for political news. As we can see from the graph below conversation with relatives/friends on social media and close friend's groups with which they share the same beliefs are the most rated sources of engagement preferences. If we analyse by age groups, it turns out that the group age of 46 – 60 < has the highest percentage (54%) of preference to engage to close friend's groups with which they share the same beliefs, following with 49 percent of the group age of > 18 – 30 who mostly prefer engagement with conversation with relatives and friends for political information in social media.



In this contexts, the ability of the respondents to identify eight fake news as false, regrouped by the age group, resulted that the older age groups are less capable to differentiate fake news as false, respectively the age group 60 + with higher percentage of 30 % and the age group 46 – 59 with 26.4 percent responded in a higher rate and identified fake news as true. See the table below:



One of the determinants of social media users that has proven to be a vulnerability to misinformation is age. Apart from other elements that were researched, the respondents in the age group of 46-59 years (26.4%) and over 60 years (30%) were not able to completely distinguish the false from the true news, in contrast to the younger age groups. Even though in the analysis the age group – 18 and 18 – 30 showed a slightly high percentage of

vulnerability, following the oldest group, again the oldest groups showed more noticeable vulnerability to disinformation.

There are studies that believe that the vulnerability of this group is due to the lack of digital skills and media literacy in this age group, and also due to the beliefs and ideology that are strengthened with age, or as they call Gess, Nagler and Tucker (2019) "Illusions of truth" or persistence of attitude with age. In addition, we can say that no target group can be completely resistant to disinformation. Thus, the research resulted in the fact that no target group of respondents was able to completely identify all the fake news as false.

Fifth Chapter – Conclusions and Recommendations

By defining the disinformation phenomenon and analysing the social media landscape and disinformation dissemination in the North Macedonia and the region, this thesis has identified the relationship of the individual characteristics of the audience and their vulnerability to disinformation.

The definition of the term disinformation was envisaged by analysing the latest research works on this question through comparing with the earlier usage and definition of the phenomenon which arises faster and with greater effect with the help of the technological development in social media sphere. The first chapter analysed different research works and reports for disinformation and formulated a basic framework of the usage of the notion disinformation in relation to fake news, misinformation and malinformation. This pathway of literature review should help future researchers to know where to start when analysing issues related to disinformation and its usage and its meaning. The best cited article so far for defining the phenomenon of disinformation is Information Disorder by Claire and Darkenshan (2017), from where each standpoint of analysing disinformation should start.

This study has also made a comprehensive analysis of the development and creation of the notion of PR with that of propaganda, in order to view a true and comparative picture about the media and information manipulation of the audience in different times and circumstances to date. Noam Chomsky, one of the best philosophers of the 21-st century, has defined this phenomenon through his work on Propaganda and engineering consent where the audience is only spectator of the democracy and the politicians or business and media conglomerates are the intelligent people 'elite' who run the democracy. The psychological analysis of the mass used today in social media manipulation are the same phenomenon used by 'the power' to control the 'bewildered herd' with more sophisticated tools of persuading the mass, by changing the way the society thinks and acts. Media system has helped to improve the modalities, shorten the time and broaden the influence to the audience. Under these circumstances, when the voters' consent is engineered unconsciously, there is a doubt whether they will support next democratic government or no. Depending on who and for who they are persuaded.

The U.S. elections of 2016 year, are the best evidence-based elections where computational propaganda was used for interfering the process of elections. By default, a populist and conservative president was chosen, which loosed the elections after 4 years. But, the same methods of weaponized user's data through behavioural micro-targeting are used around the world for defining and interfering the results of elections. The study revealed that states which are transitional or with hybrid regime that attempt for democratization, suffer more from this phenomenon, and there the dissemination and the influence of the disinformation is much higher than other developed democratic countries, which also may not be fully resilient to disinformation. The low trust to institutions and media, the fragile judiciary and justice systems, high polarised societies with an history of interethnic divisions and tensions so as long-time suppressed societies, with low educative system overall and especially for critical thinking and media literacy, has shown to be more prone to disinformation. Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia are striving to improve its legislations for media freedom and for fighting disinformation and some attempts has shown to be successful, but the harmonization and utilisation of existing mechanism to free media and fight disinformation will benefit three countries, so as attempting for new successful mechanism in support of three countries will make the disinformation phenomenon less influential in each of the countries. The disinformation raised from Russian propaganda has been shown to interfere in each of the country's political and geostrategic orientation. From all, North Macedonia is more prone to Russian propaganda since the connection of population to Slav, orthodox church and language are stronger in this country, hence its geostrategic orientation often suffers from eastern influence.

Nowadays, the analysis of the impact of disinformation should be seen from the perspective of media effects, which as such are variable and dependent on digital and social change. Thus, when we talk about the individual characteristics that are explored daily to provide a frame of reference for future researchers to analyze the impact of disinformation in social psychology, Leon Festinger (1957)'s theory of cognitive dissonance or selective exposure to information is most cited, where from the notion of confirmation bias has arisen. Cognitive dissonance is the unconscious tendency of people to achieve cognitive consistency with pre-existing beliefs or attitudes by avoiding or minimizing information or situations that are

contrary to their beliefs and motivates the person to try to reduce dissonance and achieve consistency.

To fully comprehend the phenomenon of disinformation it is important to see them from the user's point view, i.e. the audience. How they perceive disinformation and who is most affected by disinformation, which target group. This is also the task of this research. For this purpose, quantitative research was employed (questionnaire), which also had qualitative research elements. Perceptions, Attitudes, behaviour and engagement of the audience were questioned, related to voting, social media use, political affiliation and disinformation. There are studies who suggest that political affiliation is dependent to the perception of the audience towards disinformation. Namely, this is the main research question for this study. Political affiliation of the audience prevents the audience to objectively assess information. Which means that, the negative information for one's affiliated political party is assessed as false by the audience and the positive information for one's affiliated political party is assessed as true. This hypothesis will benefit if tested in the future with wider audience, since the Macedonian respondents were few, and the results for proving this hypothesis weren't very convincing on the Macedonian part of the audience, contrary to Albanian part of the audience.

Based on this, politically biased individuals tend to believe, accept, and share information that is consistent with their political beliefs, whether that information is true or not, and other information that is inconsistent with their beliefs, they ignore it.

Additionally, the first hypothesis brought a new supporting hypothesis for relation to political affiliation and perception of disinformation. Hence, the study confirmed that the audience part who aren't politically affiliated have ability to objectively asses the information. To put it more clearly, the non- affiliated individuals are more resilient to disinformation and does not percept positive or negative information which is false for one or the other political party. This hypothesis deserves more attention and needs to be analysed more deeply in the future researches.

The results of the research also show how the audience gets to political information and where they mostly engage for political news, from where it can be identified which are their sources of influence and disinformation. According to the obtained results, for political

information on social media, the respondents prefer to engage in conversations with relatives /friends on social networks and with groups of close friends on social networks with whom they share the same beliefs. The results showed that social ties are still strong and that people are still used as a source of information instead of credible sources of information.

This proves once again that homophilic interactions on social media, ie. Echo chambers that enable the retention and strengthening of their own opinions and views in a group of "like-minded", and do not allow the audience to come across different views on social media. Similarly, Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) though Personal Influence brought an idea that people talk with each other and are often used as a source of important messages as later Joseph Kappler believed that media does not have direct effect on people's choices, but through opinion leaders who interpret, shape and distribute the information for the public. Translating it to today's circumstances of information technology, American Press Institute (2017), indicates that the audience believes the news more if it is shared by the persons who they trust or share the same beliefs.

Prioritizing a post from a friend rather than a credible source of information leads to accelerate the spread of disinformation or misinformation, as Vosoughi et al. (2018) and Shao et al. (2018) observed in their research. Our study revealed that this target audience is more vulnerable to disinformation, respectively, the audience who see as more credible close friends' groups and friend's posts, following with political party fan pages, influencers' posts as credible sources of information proved to be more prone to disinformation than the other part of the respondents who think that portal shares in social media and media news agencies posts in social media are credible sources of information.

Hence, preference of engagement for political news in social media with favourite influencers' posts and comments and engagement preferences in fan pages of political party so as perception of the same as credible source of information are relatively the same percent of the target group who reveals to be more vulnerable to disinformation. Thus, the first and second research question to this study are proved where the specific aim was to measure if the audience is more vulnerable to disinformation if it is shared by the people with the same attitudes and beliefs in RNM and also to identify if the audience's source

credibility perception in social media affects their vulnerability to disinformation during election campaigns.

One of the determinants of social media users that has proven to be a vulnerable to disinformation is age. Apart from other elements that were researched, the respondents in the age group of 46-59 years (26.4%) and over 60 years (30%) were not able to distinguish the false from the true news, in contrast to the younger age groups. There are studies that believe that the vulnerability of this group is due to the lack of digital skills and media literacy in this age group, and also due to the beliefs and ideology that are strengthened with age, or as Gess, Nagler and Tucker (2019) call it "Illusions of truth" or persistence of attitude with age. In addition, we can say that no target group can be completely resistant to misinformation. Thus, the research resulted in the fact that no target group of respondents was able to completely identify all the fake news of election campaign as inaccurate. Therefore, the third research question to this study was partly confirmed, where the oldest age group proved to be more vulnerable to disinformation during election campaign, but the youngest age group didn't prove to be fully resilient to disinformation during election campaigns.

Recommendations

The first special goal of this research was theoretical explanation of the concepts and questions elaborated in the master's thesis, elaboration of the existing theoretical conceptions and research approaches to dissemination of disinformation for political purposes and especially with theoretical understanding of socio and psychological mechanisms that are the basis of reception and interpretation of disinformation. From this specific goal the study revealed that not all the research studies and regulations are using the same framework to address the problem of disinformation. The concise framework and terminology should be unified and used accordingly in future studies and state and international regulations, for easier understanding and implementation of the regulations and mechanism to fight disinformation. But, if all the regulatory state and international mechanisms are in place, again the education of the mass based on individual characteristics of the audience who show higher percent of vulnerability will be missed if the media education initiatives do not take into consideration this part of the story.

The second specific goal for this study consists of exploring and comparing the media landscape in three Western Balkan countries Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia in regard to policy regulations, media actions and civil society reactions toward disinformation in order to make a comprehensive analysis of the current situation in these countries and to set and detect the most appropriate ways and methods for combating disinformation in liason to the local situation.

As countries emerging from communist systems strive for democratization and EU accession through an attempt to unify legislation under the EU conditions and at the same time improve respecting the human rights declaration, they share some similar characteristics. Some of the characteristics that we could consider as benefits towards prosperity and improvement of the current situation:

- All countries are oriented or tend towards the European Union and NATO, which makes them less influenced by the disinformation of the eastern camp. In particular, Kosovo and Albania with 100% civic convictions;
- Existence of joint online portals in the Albanian language - Regional cooperation without having language barriers for disorientation or debunking of disinformation in an organized way;
- Developing countries towards democratization, which enables current governments to include a genuine media education curriculum for new generations;
- Eradicating oligarchic culture and strengthening and investing in media people and media capacities;
- National strategy for investing in the professional profiling of the new generations in order to aim for more employment opportunities and not to percept the political party as the only possible employer for overcoming financial family crises. Thus, political affiliation would be more realistic and based on offered political platforms and critical thinking;
- Unify and strengthen regulations for free speech and media freedom and promote existent fact-checking agencies in each of the countries who so far are doing great job;
- Extend further and develop the national strategy for fighting disinformation

- Strengthening the juridical system where the perpetrators of disorders in social media will be punished and will receive the punishment deserved in order to educate the masses and to increase trust institutions.

Although the media are considered observers of democracy in a country, they nevertheless need self-regulatory mechanisms, because it can not be claimed to be corrective of social and political distortions if they (the media) themselves are not immune to negative influences. This principle applies especially to the media which are highly exposed to online disinformation and as such they instead of exerting their influence on the consolidation of public opinion, on the contrary are becoming destroyers of this consolidation. This is especially noticeable in the unprofessional approach of the media to politics, which are often turning into extensions of political parties or their headquarters during elections.

On the other hand, internet access, on a fairly large scale, is not in direct proportion to media education, because the spread of the internet is not always a reflection of the media culture on social networks. Thus, the media education needs to be applied in all instances of the society.

Through this study, the third specific goal to determine the correlation between age, political affiliation and source credibility in regard to confirmation bias in receiving disinformation was completed. The analysis of the results proved that the vulnerability to disinformation for one target groups is due to social and psychological constrains of the individual. Understanding of these constrains should be used for future research but more importantly to be used as basis to media education initiatives. The social and psychological knowledge for the audience vulnerability to disinformation should be expended further in order to understand why the dissemination of disinformation is very present and in a large scale. Confirmation bias in relation to political affiliation, source credibility and age are the components who need more attention in the future, especially if the studies multiple time show that these components affects the dissemination of disinformation and reception of the disinformation by the audience. Media education of the masses should be based also on this knowledge, where the masses will be aware of the individual constrains which make them more vulnerable to disinformation. As revealed by this research none of the age groups was fully resilient to disinformation during election campaigns, the media education should be addressed to all age groups.

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Pyetësor për dezinformimin gjatë kampanjave zgjedhore në Republikën e Maqedonisë së Veriut/ Прашалник за дезинформации за време на изборните кампањи во Република Северна Македонија

Të nderuar/a,

Në vijim keni një pyetësor që ka të bëjë me dezinformimin gjatë kampanjave zgjedhore në Republikën e Maqedonisë së Veriut. Nuk do të ju marrë më tepër se 10 minuta kohë. Të dhënat nga ky pyetësor do të jenë anonime dhe do të shfrytëzohen vetëm për nevoja të hulumtimit dhe në asnjë mënyrë nuk do të keqpërdoren.

Ju faleminderit.

Edlira Palloshi Disha

Почитувани,

Долунаведено е еден прашалник поврзан со дезинформации за време на изборните кампањи во Република Северна Македонија. Нема да ви одземе повеќе од 10 минути време. Податоците од овој прашалник ќе бидат анонимни и ќе се користат само за истражувачки цели и нема да бидат злоупотребени на било кој начин.

Ви благодарам.

Едлира Палоши Диша

* Required

1. 1. Gjinia / Пол *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Mashkull/Машко

☐ Femër/Женско

2. 2. Arsimimi / Образование *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Fillor/Основно

☐ I mesëm/Средно

☐ I lartë/Високо

3. 3. Përkatësia etnike / Этничка припадност *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Shqiptar/ Албанец
- ☐ Maqedonas/ Македонец
- ☐ Turk/ Турчин
- ☐ Other: _____

4. 4. Mosha / Возраст *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ - 18
- ☐ 18 - 30
- ☐ 31 - 45
- ☐ 46 - 59
- ☐ 60 +

5. 5. Cilët nga mediat e mëposhtme i përdorni më shpesh për lajme vendore? / Кои од следните медиуми ги користите почесто за да се информирате за домашните настани? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Televizion/Телевизија
- ☐ Radio/Радио
- ☐ Internetin/Интернет
- ☐ Gazeta ditore/Весници

6. 6. Nga cilat burime zakonisht informoheni për ngjarjet dhe aktivitetet politike? /
Од кои извори се информирате почесто за политичките настани и активности? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Nga postimet në mediat sociale/Од постовите на социјалните мрежи
- ☐ Nga agregatorët e lajmeve (si psh. [fax.al](#), [grid.mk](#))/од агрегатори на вести (како [fax.al](#), [grid.mk](#))
- ☐ Drejtpërdrejtë nga ueb faqet e portaleve online vendore/Директно од веб-страниците на домашните онлајн портали
- ☐ Drejtpërdrejtë nga ueb faqet e televizioneve vendore/Директно од веб-страниците на домашните телевизии

7. 7. Sa shpesh i përdorni mediat sociale për lajme politike? / Колку често ги користите социјалните медиуми за политички вести? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Asnjëherë/Никогаш
- ☐ Vetëm herë pas here/Само повремено
- ☐ Disa herë në javë/Неколку пати неделно
- ☐ Shpesh herë /Најчесто
- ☐ Çdo ditë/Секој ден

8. 8. Sa i/e interesuar mund të thoni se jeni për politikë? /Колку би рекле дека сте заинтересирани за политика? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ shumë i/e interesuar/Многу заинтересиран/а
- ☐ mjaft i/e interesuar/доста заинтересиран/а
- ☐ pak i/e interesuar/ малку заинтересиран/а
- ☐ aspak i/e interesuar/ воопшто заинтересиран/а

9. 9. Sipas mendimit tuaj, sa aktiv jeni në rrjetet sociale?/Според вашето мислење, колку сте активни во социјалните мрежи? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ I përdori shumë, që do të thotë, jam aktiv, postoj vazhdimisht dhe shpërndaj postime të shokëve që më pëlqejnë/Ги користам многу, што значи, активен сум, објавувам постојано, спodelувам објави на пријател што ми се допаѓаат

☐ I përdor në një masë të caktuar, që do të thotë, postoj herë pas here gjëra personale dhe nganjëherë ndaj postimet e të tjerëve/Ги користам до одреден степен, што значи, повремено објавувам лични работи и понекогаш ги спodelувам објавите на другите.

☐ I përdor pak, që do të thotë, rrallë postoj gjëra personale dhe nuk shpërndaj postime të të tjerëve./ Ги користам малку, што значи, ретко објавувам лични работи и не спodelувам објави на други луѓе

☐ Aspak, që do të thotë, nuk postoj gjëra personale dhe nuk shpërndaj postime të njerëzve të tjerë./ Воопшто не, што значи, не објавувам лични работи и не спodelувам објави на други луѓе

☐ Other: _____

10. 10. Çfarë mendimi keni për pohimet e mëposhtme:/Какво мислење имате за
долунаведените изјави: *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Nuk pajtohem aspak/ Воопшто не се согласувам	Nuk pajtohem/ Не се согласувам	As pajtohem as nuk pajtohem/ Ниту се согласувам, ниту не се согласувам	Pajtohem/ Се согласувам	Plotësisht pajtohem/ Потполно се согласувам
Informacioni i disponueshëm në mediat sociale është më i besueshëm se informacioni që marr nga mediat e tjera vendase/ Информациите достапни на социјалните медиуми се поверодостојни од информациите што ги добивам од другите домашни медиуми.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gazetarët tek agregatorët e lajmeve në faqet e mediave sociale nuk mund të konsiderohen gazetarë të vërtetë/ Новинарите на агрегаторите на вести на страниците на социјалните мрежи не можат да се сметаат за вистински новинари	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Në mediat sociale, informacioni dhe lajmet janë sipërfaqësore dhe pa analiza të mirëfillta/Ha социјалните медиуми, информациите и вестите се површински и без длабинска анализа.



Tekstet dhe pasqyrimi i ngjarjeve të përditshme politike në mediat sociale janë me cilësi më të ulët se sa tekstet dhe raportimet në mediat e tjera/Текстовите и покривањето на дневните политички настани на социјалните медиуми се со понизок квалитет од текстовите и известувањето во другите медиуми



Mediat sociale lejojnë komente, dmth diskutim publik për tema të rëndësishme që injorohen ose shmangen nga mediat e tjera/Социјалните медиуми дозволуваат коментари, односно јавна дискусија за



важни теми
што другите
медиуми ги
игнорираат или
избегнуваат.

Në mediat
sociale mund të
marr
informacione
rreth ngjarjeve të
përditshme
politike në vend
shumë më
shpejt dhe me
kohë/Na
социјалните
мрежи можам
да добивам
информации за
дневно-
политички
настани во
земјата многу
побрзо и
понавремено.

☐☐☐☐☐

Shumica e
lajmeve të
publikuara në
mediat sociale
janë politikisht
të njëanshme/
Повеќето вести
објавени на
социјалните
мрежи се
политички
пристрасни.

☐☐☐☐☐

11. 11. A votuat në zgjedhjet e fundit parlamentare 2020 në RMV? Дали гласавте во последните парламентарни избори 2020 год. на РСМ? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Po/Да
☐ JO/НЕ
☐ Nuk kam të drejtë vote/Немам право да гласам

12. 12. Për cilën nga partitë politike keni votuar në zgjedhjet e fundit parlamentare 2020?/За која од политичките партии сте гласале во послендите парламентарни избори 2020? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ LSDM/СДСМ
- ☐ VMRO/BMPO
- ☐ BDI/ДУИ
- ☐ Aleanca and Alternativa/Алеанца и Алтернатива
- ☐ Nuk kam votuar/Не сум гласал/а
- ☐ Other: _____

13. 13. Cila nga partitë politike mendoni se ka kontribuar më së shumti ose më së pakti për prosperitetin dhe integrimin në BE të vendit?/Која од политичките партии според вас придонесол повеќе или помалку кон просперитет и инеграција на земјата во ЕУ? *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Aspak/ Воопшто	Shumë pak/ Многу малку	Pak/ Малку	Shumë/ Многу	Më së tepërmi/ Повеќе
LSDM/СДСМ	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
VMRO/BMPO	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
BDI/ДУИ	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Aleanca and Alternativa/ Алеанца и Алтернатива	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tjetër/Друго	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. 14. Çfarë mendimi keni për informatat që qarkullojnë gjatë kampanjave zgjedhore në rrjetet sociale? A ju ndihmojnë që të sjellni vendim më të mirë për kend do të votoni ose jo? / Какво мислење имате за информациите кои циркулираат во време на изборните кампањи во социјалните мрежи? Дали тие ви помагаат да донесете подобра одлука за тоа кого да гласате или не? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Nuk kam nevojë për shumë informata në mënyrë që të marr vendim për kë të votoj. Jam i/e vendosur/ Не ми требаат премногу информации за да донесам одлука за кого да гласам. Решен сум.
- ☐ Informacionet në mediat sociale gjatë fushatave zgjedhore janë të gjitha të rreme/ Информациите во социјалните медиуми за време на изборните кампањи се сите лажни
- ☐ Nuk i besoj lajmeve në rrjetet sociale/ Не им верувам на вестите на социјалните медиуми
- ☐ E kam më të lehtë të marr vendim për kend do të votoj bazuar në informacionin politik të marrë në mediat sociale/ Сметам дека полесно донесувам одлука за кого да гласам врз основа на политички информации стекнати во социјалните медиуми
- ☐ Unë jam gjatë gjithë kohës aktiv/e në mediat sociale gjatë fushatave zgjedhore, më pëlqen të shoh se çfarë ofrojnë secila prej partive./ Јас сум цело време активен во социјалните мрежи за време на изборните кампањи, сакам да видам што нуди секоја од партиите.

15. 15. Sa keni besim në aftësinë tuaj për të vlerësuar të vërtetën nga informacioni i rremë në mediat sociale në lidhje me lajmet politike?/ Колку сте сигурни во вашата сопствена способност да ги проценувате вистините од лажните информации во социјалните медиуми за политиката? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Aspak besim/Воопшто убеден
- ☐ Pak besim/малку убеден
- ☐ Mjaft besim/Сосема убеден
- ☐ Shumë besim/Многу убеден
- ☐ Plotësisht kam besim/Целосно убеден

16. 16. Sa mendoni se ka pasur lajme të rreme dhe informacione të qëllimshme manipuluese të shpërndara në rrjetet sociale gjatë kampanjës zgjedhore 2020? Renditeni nga 1 – 5/ Колку според вас имаше лажни вести и намерни манипулативни информации споделени во социјалните мрежи за време на изборната кампања 2020 година? Рангирај од 1 - 5 *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
aspak / воопшто	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	shumicën e kohës / Најчесто

17. 17. Sa i konsideroni të sakta lajmet që i merrni në rrjetet sociale? / Дали сметате дека веста со која се среќавате во социјалните медиуми е точна? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
aspak të sakta / воопшто точни	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	shumë të sakta / Многу точни

18. 18. Cili është mendimi juaj për teoritë e konspiracionit dhe përhapjen e tyre në mediat sociale gjatë fushatave zgjedhore? Koe e вашето мислење за теориите на заговор и нивното ширење во социјалните медиуми за време на изборните кампањи? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Ato zbulojnë sekrete dhe natyrën e vërtetë të ndodhive për të cilat partitë politike nuk duan që ne të dijmë./ Тие ги откриваат тајните и вистинската природа на работите за кои политичките партии не сакаат да знаеме
- ☐ Ata na tërheqin vëmendjen nga problemet e vërteta shoqërore /Тие нè одвлекуваат од реалните општествени проблеми
- ☐ Ato janë informacione të qëllimshme me qëllim që të dëmtojnë dikë në dobi të një grupi/ Тие се намерни информации со намера да наштетат некому во корист на некоја група
- ☐ Ato na ndihmojnë të marrim vendime më të mira në zgjedhje/ Тие ни помагаат да донесеме подобри одлуки на избори
- ☐ Ato na ndalojnë të bëjmë veprimet e duhura dhe të marrim vendimet e duhura. / Тие не спречуваат да преземеме вистински активности и да донесуваме правилни одлуки

19. 19. Cilat nga lajmet e mëposhtëm gjatë fushatës zgjedhore 2020 mendoni se janë të vërteta dhe cilat janë të rreme:/ Кои од следниве вести за време на предизборната кампања во 2020 година сметате дека се точни, а кои лажни: *

Mark only one oval per row.

	I vërtetë / Точен	I rremë / Лажен
Sekretari i përgjithshëm i Aleancës për Shqiptarët, Arben Taravari gjatë periudhës sa ka ushtruar postin e Ministrit të Shëndetësisë, i ka ndarë TENDER dhe i ka paguar përmes disa transaksioneve 43 milion denarë apo 700 mijë euro dajës së Krsto Mukoskit, deputetit të VMRO-DPMNE-së./Генералниот секретар на Алијансата за Албанците, Арбен Таравари, за време на неговиот мандат како министер за здравство, дистрибуираше ТЕНДЕР и преку неколку трансакции плати 43 милиони денари или 700 илјади евра на чичкото на Крсто Мукоски, пратеник на ВМРО-ДПМНЕ..	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Merr fund monopoli i EVN-së! ASH-AAA e hap tregun e rrymës (DOKUMENT)/ Монополот на ЕВН завршува! AA-AAA го отвора пазарот на електрична енергија	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Qeveria e LSDM-së me sa duket aq shumë është thelluar në fushatën për zgjedhjet dhe i ka angazhuar anëtarët e saj nëpër institucione në këtë drejtim, sa që i ka harruar fare qytetarët. Qytetarët e mllefosur dhe të dëshpëruar sepse kompensimet e tyre ligjore janë me vonesë dhe ende nuk dihet se kur do i marrin ato. /Владата на СДСМ очигледно толку навлезе во кампањата за изборите и ги ангажираше своите партици во институциите на ова поле, што тотално заборави на граѓаните. Граѓаните се бесни и очајни затоа што нивните законски надоместоци доцнат и неизвесно е кога ќе ги добијат.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Një dramë e vërtetë ka ndodhur mbrëmë: Ambasadorja Amerikane ka kërcënuar Mickovskin, nëse ai e anulon edhe 15 korrikun, atëherë ajo do të lejojë Zaevin të shkojë në votime i vetëm pa opozitën!! / Вистинска драма се одвивала синоќа: Американската Амбасадорка му се заканала на Мицковски, ако го откаже и	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15-ти јули тогаш ќе му дозволи на Заев да
оди сам на избори без опозицијата!!!

(ФОТО) SASHO MIJALLKOV DHE ZORAN
ZAEV TAKOHEN NË "MARRIOTT"? A
nënshkruhet koalicion i ri zgjedhor ??? Zoran
Zaev mbërriti me Porsche-n e tij në hotelin
elitar "Marriott" në orën 12 të mëngjesit,
arsyeja e vizitës në këtë vend është takimi
me ish-drejtorin e DSK-së Sasho Mijallkov. /
(ФОТО)СРЕДБА САШО МИЈАЛКОВ И
ЗОРАН ЗАЕВ ВО МЕРИОТ? Дали се
потпишува нова изборна коалиција ???
Зоран Заев пристигнал во своето возило
марка Порше во елитниот хотел Мериот
изутрина во 12 часот, причината за
посета на ова место е да се сретне со экс-
директорот на УБК Сашо Мијалков..



Me vendosmëri dhe drejtpërdrejt në sy,
Mickoski i dha një mësim Zaevit. /
Решително и директно во очи, Мицкоски
му одржа лекција на Заев



Artistët që e bënë spotin e BDI-së,
turpërohen nga pjesëmarrja e tyre në këtë
spot / Уметниците кои го направија
промотивното видео на ДУИ се срамат од
нивното учество во овој спот



Qendra intensive e krijuar nga Osmani, sot
shpëton shumë jetë nga Koronavirusi. /
Одделот за интензивна нега создаден од
Османи, денес спасува многу животи од
Коронавирусот



20. 20. Ku preferoni të angazhoheni më tepër për informacione politike në mediat sociale: Rangoni nga 5 - preferoj më tepër deri në 1 - preferoj më pak./ Каде преферирате да се ангажирате повеќе за политички информации во социјалните медиуми: Рангирајте од 5 – Повеќе преферирам – до 1 помалку преферирам *

Mark only one oval per row.

	5	4	3	2	1
Biseda me të afërm, miq në rrjetet sociale/Разговори со роднини, пријатели на социјалните мрежи	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Faqet tifozerie të partisë politike / Фан страници на политичка партија	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Portalet e lajmeve dhe agjencitë e mediave me lidhje në mediat sociale/Информативни портали и медиумски агенции со врски до социјалните медиуми	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Postimet dhe komentet e Influencuesit më të pëlqyer/објави и коментари на фаворизиран инфлуенцер	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Grupet e miqve të ngushtë në mediat sociale me të cilët ndajmë të njëjtat qëndrime/групи на блиски пријатели во социјалните медиуми со кои ги делиме истите верувања	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

21. 21. Si kontrolloni nëse një informacion politik është i vërtetë apo i rremë në mediat sociale? Како проверувате дали една политичка информација е точна или лажна во социјалните мрежи? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ E krahasoj me njohuritë e mija paraprake për këtë temë/ Ja споредувам со моето претходно знаење за ова тема.
- ☐ Kontrolluj se kush e ka publikuar lajmin/Проверувам кој ја објавил веста
- ☐ Kontrolluj se kush e ka shpërndarë dhe pëlqyer lajmin/Проверувам кој ја споделил и дапаѓал веста
- ☐ E krahasoj me burime të tjera të informacionit/Ja споредувам со други извори на информаци
- ☐ Pyes një mik/të afërm/ Прашувам пријател/роднина

22. 22. Çfarë mendoni për burimet e mëposhtme të informacionit në rrjetet sociale? / Што мислите за долунаведените извори на информаци во социјалните медиуми? *

Mark only one oval per row.

	I besueshëm/ веродостоен	Nuk është i besueshëm/ Не е веродостоен
Postimet e miqve/Објави на пријатели	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Grupet e miqve të ngushtë/ групи на блиски пријатели	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Faqe tifozërie të partive politike/Фан страници на политички партии	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Postime të influencerëve/ Објави од инфлуенцери	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Postimet e portaleve në mediat sociale/објавите на порталите во социјалните медиуми	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Postime e agjencioneve të lajmeve në rrjetet sociale/ Објави на медиумски агенции во социјалните мрежи	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

23. 23. Me cilët më poshtë pajtoheni ose nuk pajtoheni? / Со кои од следните се согласувате или не се согласувате? *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Aspak nuk pajtohem/ Воопшто не се согласувам	Nuk pajtohem/ Не се согласувам	As pajtohem as nuk pajtohem/ Ниту се согласувам ниту не се согласувам	Pajtohem/ Се согласувам	Pajtohem plotësisht/ Потполно се согласувам
Nëse shihni një lajm politik që miku juaj e ka shpërnda në rrjetet sociale, ju mesiguri do ta pëlqeni dhe mendoni se është relevant./Ако наидете на политичка вест што ја споделил вашиот пријател на социјалните мрежи, вие веројатно ја допаѓате веста и сметате дека е релевантна	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nëse shihni një lajm politik që miku juaj e ka shpërnda në rrjetet sociale, ju mesiguri do ta pëlqeni, komentoni dhe shpërndani./ Ако наидете	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

политичка
вест што ја
споделил
вашиот
пријател на
социјалните
мрежи, вие
веројатно ќе
ја
допаднете,
коментирате
и ќе ја
споделувате
веста

Nëse hasni
lajm të
postuar në
rrjetet sociale
i cili ka
kontekst
pozitiv për
partinë tuaj
politike të
parapëlqyer,
ju me siguri
do ta pëlqeni
këtë lajm./
Ако наидете
на вест
објавена на
социјалните
мрежи која
има
позитивна
конотација
за вашата
омилена
политичка
партија,
веројатно ќе
ја допаднете
веста

☐☐☐☐☐

Nëse hasni
lajm të
postuar në
rrjetet sociale
i cili ka
kontekst
negativ për
partinë
politike të
parapëlqyer,

☐☐☐☐☐

политичка
вест што ја
споделил
вашиот
пријател на
социјалните
мрежи, вие
веројатно ќе
ја
допаднете,
коментирате
и ќе ја
споделувате
веста

Nëse hasni
lajm të
postuar në
rrjetet sociale
i cili ka
kontekst
pozitiv për
partinë tuaj
politike të
parapëlqyer,
ju me siguri
do ta pëlqeni
këtë lajm./
Ако наидете
на вест
објавена на
социјалните
мрежи која
има
позитивна
конотација
за вашата
омилена
политичка
партија,
веројатно ќе
ја допаднете
веста

☐☐☐☐☐

Nëse hasni
lajm të
postuar në
rrjetet sociale
i cili ka
kontekst
negativ për
partinë
politike të
parapëlqyer,

☐☐☐☐☐

ju me siguri
do ta injoroni
këtë lajm./
Ако наидете
на вест
објавена на
социјалните
мрежи која
има
негативна
конотација
за вашата
омилена
политичка
партија, вие
веројатно ќе
ја
игнорирате
веста

24. 24. Çfarë ndodh nëse hasni një lajm në rrjetet sociale me të cilin pajtoheni plotësisht?/ Што се случува кога ќе наидете на информација во социјалните мрежи со која потполно се согласувате? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ E pëlqeni dhe e shpërndani lajmin/Ja dopаѓате и ја споделувате веста
- ☐ Kontrolloni se kush e ka postuar lajmin/Проверувате кој ја објавил веста
- ☐ E shpërndani në grupin e shokëve të ngushtë/ Ja споделувате со група на блиски пријатели
- ☐ Kontrolloni a është informata e saktë apo e pa saktë/Проверувате дали информацијата е точна или не
-

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