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**USING THE WEB TO CREATE A “CITIZEN-ORIENTED” CULTURE FOR A POLITICAL PARTY:
EVIDENCE FROM THE GREEK SOCIALIST PARTY**

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In recent years the Internet has become an important means of communicating directly to an organisation's audience, for sharing information and opinions and for building communities of people with common interests.

To take advantage of the benefits that the Internet can offer, political parties have developed web sites in order to attract new members, voters and to improve communication with the public. Yet there are little empirical studies on how the Internet can support political marketing campaigns.

In Greece, after twenty years in power, the Socialist party PASOK lost the General Election. Moving forward under a new leader, the reformation of the Party and the change in its political culture has strengthened its direction and resulted in greater participation from the citizen.

The framework of this reformation and the realisation of what the web has to offer have created a system of communication that has the ability to make the transfer of information within the party easier. It encourages its supporters, its members and voters to work together by communicating and participating within the web pages of www.pasok.gr and www.democracy.gr

During the last PASOK conference on 3rd March 2005 the Internet, with the help of a team of “web volunteers” proved a vital marketing tool that functioned in the following ways:

- As a means of communication for the President, the voters, the members, organisers and through the MPs which incorporates mobile phone text messaging (SMS), electronic forum and real time communication (chat) etc.
- As a means of expression and communication for all, regardless of their geographical location, since the content of the website could be constantly updated by local organisers.
- As a source of information incorporating links to news, information and specialist periodicals.

This paper analyses the ways in which a political party (PASOK) used the Internet for both more efficient internal organization and external communication. Its objective is to bring insight into whether, and under which conditions, the web can become an effective marketing tool to support a “citizen-orientation” for a party as well as to enhance citizens’ participation and active role in political life.

1. Introduction

The changes that have taken place over the last years in political communication and the pre-election campaigns of political parties are considered of great importance, as they allow people to discuss radical changes of the traditional forms of political Communication and civic participation in the local, national or even European political spheres.

In western democracies the objective of a political party and especially the interest of its team for the pre-election campaign is that their message reaches the potential voters, to influence and convince them, aiming directly at making gains at the elections (Norris 2002, Marshment and Lilleker 2001, Marshment and Ingram 2002). The citizens, from their own angle are exposed to the messages of political parties, especially during the pre-election period, try to decode the messages and interpret them, so that they can vote taking into consideration their interests, their ideological preferences and their feelings. However, the continuous decline in voters, especially of the younger voters, going to the ballot boxes is a worrying phenomenon, since the attendance in the elections and vote is one of the most nodal forms of attendance of citizens in politics.

The last three decades show that with the innovation of new technology and the move on of political marketing its usage has become a vital tool for political parties of all sizes and ideological hues. They use the computer as a means not only to reach potential supporters and bypass the traditional media, but as a means to network with their members and to share information and resources. The development of PC networks, such as the Internet, gives hope to overcome the “democratic deficit”, to enhance the “democratic aspects” and motivate the civil society organizations and the citizens to find an access to political information and an interest to participate in decision making (Bryan et al 1998). Thus, there is some indication that a distinct new generation of citizens may be entering the public life.

The growth of internet particularly during this period of change in the structure of parties' will probably be a strong tool that will help to organize and to support their functions in three phases. Firstly, it gives the local politicians the opportunity to participate at informing political thesis directly, from distance, without local or regional barriers to a version of "electronic democracy". Secondly, it can support the daily activities of the workers of the parties' thanks to the databases, by using various applications such as office and e-mailings and reducing overall financial expenditure etc. Third, it can provide political information through micro sites and blogs to guarantee some level of collaboration between the offices and departments within the party in order to distribute letters and texts safety, quickly and effectively. (Gibson and Ward 1999, Margolis and Resnick 2000, Budge 1996, Norris and Curtice 2003, Norris 2004, Kostikopoulou 2002).

Internet in modern democracy can offer more possibilities of communication between political parties and citizens than other traditional media. The parties could build relations with their voters that are based on companionship and trust. This means that the parties should not simply communicate with the voters but seek to understand their wishes and their needs, and also to encourage their feedback and their attendance. (Lusoli and Ward, 2004)

As the citizens familiarize themselves with the Internet and email, the web pages of parties can offer an alternative political democracy. Also, the parties using email can create a channel of communication in the form of a newsletter to support and mobilize the continuous contact with the voters, tying up and strengthening their relationship and giving them the possibility of being in open communication with the public during their period of service. (Jackson 2004).

Email and newsletters can help to promote party policies, and can also give the recipient of the message a sense of empathy to the sender. New Media gives citizens the possibility to communicate without mediators, directly with the executives and the Chairman to convey their opinions (Jackson 2004). Furthermore, it gives citizens more information and more control over their information.

According to Fishkin, (1992) we already live in a electronic democracy due to the influence of media, and in particular media polling, talk shows and focus groups. He also argues that we need to redesign electronic democracy, making it more representative and more deliberative in order to serve democratic ideals (Fishkin 1992).

At the same time, studies that have been carried out in America and in Europe (Gibson and Ward 1998, 2000, Norris 2002, 2004) present the ways that the parties use the World Web. The web pages analysis of bigger parties reveals that the parties use their web pages more for the benefit of information and for networking, rather than as a searching tool for its citizens or as a means of interactive communication .(Stowers1999, Thomas and Streib 2003, Allen et al 2001, Haque 2002, Fountain 2001). Web marketing campaigns on political issues have not really targeted younger citizens and there are no links from political sites towards youth engagement sites. Also there is little observable cooperation among the sites of NGOs, missing opportunities to connect and to create interest networks among civic networking movements. According to Bennett and Xenos the vast potential of the internet as a marketing tool for mobilizing youth engagement was largely unrealized during the 2002 American elections. (Bennett and Xenos 2004). Thus, the purpose of this paper is to examine the way a political party can design its marketing strategy using New Technologies and especially the Internet.

2. Use of the Internet by political parties in Greece.

Since the beginning of the 1990's the role of political communication consultants and professionals of political marketing has become increasingly important in Greece. Political parties have been using modern techniques, methods and tools of marketing such as political TV advertisement, surveys and the

publication of their results in order to, firstly, make voters perceive them positively and, secondly, attract them or maintain those who are on the verge of changing voting behavior (Demertzis 2002).

Fanaras (2004) opinion pollster, underlines a characteristic difference between most recent and older electoral contests. He supports that before the development of “new technologies”, in the electoral contests there was what he called “party concept”, that is, electoral campaigns focused mainly on the party and its values; the objectives had not always been clearly defined and the focus was on the general framework of values supported by the party. With the use of “new technology”, there was a shift from “party concept” to “marketing concept”; that is electoral campaigns have been more concrete and focused on the electoral objective, but less comprehensive.

In the national elections of 2000 all parties used New Technology in some form or other the Greek political parties decided to embrace the Internet and use it to its full potential. The delay of the use of the Internet in Greece did not prevent the Greek parties making smaller or bigger steps towards the Internet. From the two big parties only PASOK appeared to have a communication strategy for the use of the Internet. The smaller parties in Greece do not fully recognise the possibilities of the new medium for web pre-election campaigns but they show interest in its use (Kostikopoulou 2002).

In this period in Greece there has been some research on the political use of the Internet, the experimentation of e-political marketing tools and the political culture of users, particularly during the pre-election period in 2000. Although the political use of the Internet is very limited and the results cannot be generalized, the research draws the profile of politicised users among the younger generations. (Demertzis and Armenakis 2003; Zisouli and Dimitriadis 2003). The “online political citizens” are a small group of highly politically involved citizens; they identify themselves as Centre-leftists and do not have sentimental bonds with a specific party. They expect an ongoing briefing from and communication with politicians not only during the pre-election period but during other times too. They also believe that the web sites offer more possibilities for communication and information than other traditional media.

Yannas and Lappas study during 2002 Greek municipal elections reveals that geographical location and party affiliation play a role in the decision to run a Web campaign strategy. The majority of web municipal candidates originated from the greater Athens area and their first web presence had underutilized the abilities of the Internet. Greek municipal candidates experimented the new medium and it is expected that features that appeared in small numbers during the 2002 municipal election cycle will increase in the future (Yannas and Lappas 2005). Further the researchers believe that the Internet unlike other media seems the most democratic medium for political marketing, offering equality to all political candidates irrespective of their finances, their political power and their political careers (Yannas and Lappas 2005).

Today, in Greece the Internet is an important part of election campaigns. Political parties use web sites and e-mail campaigns to promote political issues (Demertzis et al 2003). Whilst the presence of Greek citizens to the Internet has increased, the presence of parties using the Internet has developed too. All with one common aim and that is to attract voters.

For better comprehension of the size of statistical information of the web page and PASOK choice to e-democracy, we mention the research that the company VPRC realized in first three months of 2004 on behalf of the National Network of Research and Technology (EDET).

According to this research the average users were aged between fifteen and thirty four years old, educated to either middle or high school standard and were working people. The research found that one out of three houses had a computer, one out of four people were users of computers and one out of five people were users of the Internet. Also presented was the rapid increase of the younger users. It showed as increase of a percentage 12% in 2000 increased to 32% in 2004. (VPRC and EDET 2004)

A study of the web page of PASOK (the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Party) shows that during periods of important political events, there was an increase of interest in the search for information through political web pages (Zisouli and Dimitriadis 2003). The study also showed that citizens reacted to

important political events with more frequent visits to the political pages and with more communication by email.

3. PASOK Congress and the role of internet in the change its culture

In January 2004, after twenty years in power, the Socialist party PASOK lost the General Election.

Moving forward under a new leader, the reformation of the Party and the change in its political culture has strengthened its direction and resulted in greater participation from the citizen.

A year later, on March 3rd 2005, PASOK organized its Pan-Hellenic Congress of Views that guide the party through a modernisation process, in order to follow the new technological, political and social realities and to correspond to the ideology of today's socialism.

PASOK, as other major political parties in Europe and America used techniques and tools of political marketing, to become a Market-Oriented party (Lees- Marshment 2001). A Market-Oriented party uses market intelligence to identify voter demands, and then it designs its strategy to suit them (Apospori, Avlovitis and Zisouli 2005). PASOK in the Pan-Hellenic Congress did not attempt to change what people think, but to deliver what they need and want. The reformation of the party and the change in its political culture will strengthen its direction towards greater participation from the citizens.

In this Pan-Hellenic party Congress the slogan “We change PASOK to change Greece”, was launched, also presented along side the original logo of a half green sun, was a larger image of the new logo that shows a green tree with the words participation, knowledge, equality, etc., on its leaves. The exploitation of new technology and the Internet helped substantially in the change of culture, organisation and operation of the party in the pre-congress period, during the congress and after the congress.

In developing this analysis, we study the three political phases on the PASOK site along with reforming its organization, inventorying the interactive features that facilitate political participation.

3.1. Re-organization of PASOK with the use of New Technology

In this section of study we will document the nature and the tools of New Technology and Marketing that the party used to reform its own organization.

In the context of this reformation and the realisation of what the web can offer, PASOK created a communication system that has the ability to make the transfer of information within the party available and the communication and cooperation among its members and executives easier. We present here some of the changes that were introduced in PASOK's organisation since the adoption of the New Technology in order to facilitate the inter- democracy (democracy inside the party).

- The creation of an Internet Technology Group to control and support the services of telecommunications, computer and Internet in side the party's organization. It is controlled by a network of Internet volunteers all over the country that will help the local organization to have access to New Technology. The Group for the New Technology is in charge of the electronic support of PASOK's e-structures, of the local organization pages and of all their technological needs, such as the use of debate services at www.democracy.pasok.gr, the support of briefing of the local executives for www.pasok.gr and the recording of all available e-mails for both members and friends. The Internet Technology Group and volunteers have also designed a section on the site to be run the MediaWiki, free server-based software that can manage image and multimedia files and is stored in the filing system, for various working groups in all sections of the movement.

- The creation of an Institute of Training Education, here the mission is to educate and to build an alternative social infrastructure for more democratic ways of support and encouragement within the intra party debate. The Institute organizes training programmes for party politicians, members and friends in the use of computers and in the exploitation of the Internet, thus giving the possibility to more and more regional

executives and members to participate. These programmes can help to increase the number of Internet users, especially in local organizations. The institute also offer a training network of professional teachers and lecturers on various specialised subjects within the political sphere. Here the Internet is used as an important tool for communication and to aid the training process.

- The reforming of the Institute Andreas Papandreou and its enrichment political scientists and boffins in many issues. The mission of this Institute is to study and to analyse the Greek society in the international Environment, the promotion of innovative scientific research and the enforcement of the democracy, knowledge and pluralism of politics ideas. The Institute provide consultative science pleadings to PASOK for quality modernization of the party.
- The creation of new web pages for different Political issues and for the local organisations. With the help of the Internet these pages are used to target in two separate directions: those who provide the positions, the policies and the actions for special groups and political places as well as for the young, women, minorities, education, the economy environmental etc. and those who corresponded in geographical places and provide local issues, policies and actions. These technological developments operate by a simple application of project management with tools such as MediaWiki that are managed by the local officers and work groups to encouraged the decentralization and the equal participation of members, friends and citizens in the political decisions.
- The creation of a fast and secure network of information exchange (Virtual Private Dialup Network-VPDN) that covers the needs of the central organisation of PASOK in Athens aiming at its growth in regional committees.

1. The VPDN development at www.pasok.gr has two levels. One which is the intranet – www.in.pasok.gr that includes a helpdesk application at <http://helpdesk/> and offers information and briefings between the officials, the sectors of policy, the members of parliament and the local organisations of the party by an ADSL or an ISDN line and the other

is the extranet that is at www.pasok.gr offers information to external visitors to PASOK and supports the citizens participation. Every sector of the party has the responsibility to provide its information and activity on its pages in intranet or extranet. The press office for example provides its activities at (www.press.pasok.gr or www.press.in.pasok.gr). This briefing helps in a more effective co-ordination of the different party bodies, in training, in long distance collaboration and in their more relevant and direct briefing.

2. The application of a new network VPDN system that gives PASOK's organization the possibility of offering many services such as personalized access (mypasok), text management (push- pull), Citizens Relationship Management (CRM) for the management of the members and friends file along with many others useful capabilities. The CRM can manage access to all the files both at central and regional levels, and can contribute decisively in record keeping. It also enables friends and members of PASOK to register electronically via www.democracy.pasok.gr without bureaucracy. Therefore, PASOK offers personal e-mails to all officers, politicians, members and friends of PASOK in the form of mail@pasok.gr to facilitate their communication.

- The access through the intranet to the service of briefing and indexing of the Greek national newspapers, offered by the briefing office. This office offers briefings to 50 Greek local newspapers with the collaboration of a media company and also gives access to several international magazines, newspapers and databases of the Hellenic and European Parliament as well as of other Organizations. At the same time giving access to three newsletters one daily, one weekly and one monthly with brief of actions and information that are sent to party officials. The introduction of these newsletters is good for informing officials on single-issue policies.

- The service of mass SMS, used by local organisations and policy sectors, that sends mass messages via the webpage www.sms.pasok.gr to motivate the members, friends and executives and to inform them of meetings and events. PASOK has created a database with around 100.000 mobile telephone numbers,

across many geographical areas. It also operates a call centre for mass mobilisation of citizens, staffed by employees and volunteers for briefing on events, on electoral processes and on verification of elements, etc.

- Finally, PASOK with the use of new technology and the Internet have lowered its costs, especially the cost of phone calls. It moved its telephone services from the Greek telecommunications company to a web telephone company (VoIP) and decreased its telephone costs by half. In addition to the telecommunication costs other saving have been made with regard to the printing of letters, leaflets, political briefings etc. and their distribution via the post office thus also saving money on postage etc.

Therefore PASOK, exploiting the administrative and organizational advantages of internet, used it as a tool for interactive information and communication, as a tool for cooperation, self-organization and mobilisation. With the contribution of New Technology, PASOK has decreased the party's bureaucracy and made considerable savings on human resource costs.

3.2. Using the Internet for e- democracy

3.2.1 Citizens to party communication

“The most powerful message of new technology is that, from knowledge and learning we can get to know how to use our strength in order to shape the conditions of our existence, how to transform the need into possibility and how to renew democracy and our role in it.”

Georges A. Papandreou 23.02.2005

In this part of our study we will present how the Greek socialist party use the Internet as a marketing tool that helps to reverse the decline of citizens' participation in political life and bear up the civic engagement. PASOK, and especially his new leader Georges Papandreou, believe that a political web site is part of the online political sphere that includes campaign sites, political media sites, discussion groups and other online outlets.

According to research in America, Online Political Citizens are a small group of highly politically involved citizens whose influence stretches far beyond their numbers. They are disproportionately “influential” and highly communicative. They participate in many community and neighbourhood activities as “Influentials”. Thus, according to this research the majority of them have been involved in politics in the past (I.P.D.I 2004). In order for PASOK to gain the advantages of Online Political Citizens New Technology and the VPDN network needed to be used to encourage its supporters, its members and voters especially the younger generations to work together, to communicate and participate within its web pages www.pasok.gr and www.democracy.pasok.gr. The advantages of the use of the Internet for PASOK during its Online marketing strategy to enhance citizen participation and communication towards the party are the following.

- Efficiency and easy access to information. PASOK and New Media gives citizens more information and more control over the information. During the pre- congress period, the two last months of 2004 and the first two months of 2005 more than 1500 new texts were added on www.pasok.gr pages and more than 500 new texts on www.democracy.pasok.gr. In that period there were about 60.000 different visitors monthly at www.pasok.gr, and about 35.000 different visitors monthly at www.democracy.pasok.gr. PASOK gives its visitors the possibility for personalized access (mypasok) where they can choose the kind of information they want, so it arm themselves better with information that they need in order to participate in politics (Arterton, 1987). The web page has about 8.000 registered users that have access to the information and technological aspects they prefer.
- Interactivity. PASOK offers the possibility to citizens through a market survey to express their needs and desires, called “pollster democracy”. Through www.democracy.pasok./content/surveys.gr poll and voting page citizens can shape their ideas and their political preferences as it’s easier for them to respond to questions about politics than to write their opinions and political theses (see Figure 1). Every week new questions are online and send about 15000 emails are sent to inform citizens to participate at

poll and response to the questions. The average response in these polls is about 1000 citizens - a representative sample of public preferences and interests.

Insert Figure 1 here

- Democratic participation of people. The web page www.democracy.pasok.gr gives the ability to citizens to publicize their opinions on the website and to discuss issues with other citizens (see Figure 2). Also gives them the opportunity to more direct political communication and decision-making with less scope for political censorship or secrecy (Bryan et al 1998). The Step of dialogue is developed in thematic units on issues of ideology, organization and political stand (e.g. economy, education, and constitution of state. For example, during the congress period (a month before it and during the congress) on www.democracy.pasok.gr, PASOK provided around 1000 texts –position of the officials and the debate groups- and 2000 messages from officials and citizens in the relative thematic units.

Insert Figure 2 here

- Direct communication. PASOK through a communication page at www.pasok.gr gives citizens the possibility to communicate without mediators, directly with the sectors of policy and the officers to convey their opinions or to ask questions. Also PASOK encourages this democratic communication as the new technology office receives the emails, concentrates the information and responds to all of them quickly. In the pre-congress period it received around 250-300 email monthly and gave fast response to their questions. The PASOK site has three interactive areas: voting, step of dialogue and communication pages. It focused on citizens being able to communicate with politicians, mostly at local level, where it can have the most impact. On the page “Step of dialogue” articles can be read and at the end of each article is a specific feedback dialogue box that enables the reader to feedback their comments to the party.

3.3 Party to citizen's communication.

As Internet penetration increases, the online population will begin to look more and more like the offline population, with one particularly important distinction. According to a survey of Institute for Politics Democracy and the Internet, Internet users tend to be more interested in news and politics than people in general and thus are particularly attractive audience for political parties (I.P.D.I 2004). In this section the paper identifies the potential party benefits from its online political communication with the citizens. PASOK, like many other political parties in Europe and American, use new techniques such as e-mail, newsletters, vote match programs, video, polls and discussion forums to motivate the Online Political Citizens. At the same time it perceives its audience as “Influentials” and develops strategies to extend its online information through these “influentials” to the broader public.

From the pre- congress period, during congress and after we can distinguish seven basic characteristics of the Internet, which gave added value to the Communication changes of PASOK with citizens (Gibson and Ward 1999, Budge 1996, Schwartz 1996, Gilder 2000, Norris 2000, 2003, a2004, Jackson 2003, Kostikopoulou 2002).

- Web Sites. PASOK reformed its web site www.pasok.gr and targeted it to journalists and to its public generally including information and features that appealed to this audience. The new site also provides the new PASOK's message for “More Participative Democracy”. In parallel, combining the new technology with a good strategic plan, the party created a new web site at www.democracy.pasok.gr that target to Online Political Citizens. The graphics, pictures, texts, forms, interactive features and audiovisual files on the site are all in line with the same message for “More Participation Democracy”.
- Building an e-mail database. For PASOK one of most important actions is to build relations with its citizens, and the way to achieve this objective is to build an e-mail database. The party created an easy form to sign-up on its web pages and anyone interested in receiving information about the party can simply enter their name and e-mail address to be included in the party's list. Actually, PASOK develops

its lists by sending e-mails to existing members and by encouraging people to forward the information on to others, as well as by e-voting and surveys that ask citizens their opinions on local issues.

- Online membership. Internet constitutes a useful tool for online memberships and friendships where the subscriptions can be paid by credit card. The party introduced a quick and cheap alternative way to raise new members, friends and money: an easy form, visible from the home page, for those who want to become members or friends.
- Online advertising PASOK created an online media plan and bought space on the popular web sites and created a link in order to reach new viewers. Banner ads with the message “Participation for More Democracy” and photos were placed on media, sports and other popular pages in order to guide the viewer directly towards these pages. Also, to enhance the traffic to the web site, the online advertising was combined with advertisements in other media such as newspapers, magazines and radio.
- Online Events. A large number of events, actions, discussions, festivals and speeches at different geographic locations and on different themes were promoted and provided live on the web page bringing people together and giving more people the opportunity to participate from a distance via their desktop computer.
- Personalized database. As we have already mentioned through www.democracy.pasok.gr PASOK can gather useful information from citizen’s registered on its page and from their participation in various campaigns. It can thus create databases that can identify groups by the personalized information, such as: Age, geographic location, attributes, gender and their interest in subjects of politics.
- Volunteer’s network. As many researchers report, internet can support parties in the creation of voters’ networks that during the pre-election campaign would help them to win the elections (Lusoli and Ward 2004, Norris 2001-2002). PASOK in order to do this, created a network of Internet volunteers to support its e-structures at the local organizations pages and to support the extension of the Internet in the local communities by developing public points of access to the Internet, for example in municipal

libraries, school laboratories, Internet Café, etc. As we already presented above, the network of Internet volunteers during the congress period involved around 1200 members, 500 of which were very active. During the congress they began to create a daily newsletter named “kalimera”, which continues to be featured after the congress, monthly.

All the above arguments tend to demonstrate that PASOK’s web pages are becoming an increasingly important source of news, and “a space of organized civil society and structured group pluralism” as Margolis and Resnick characterized the evolution of politics online (Margolis and Resnick 2000).

4. Conclusion

The development of information technology and the Internet, the increase of online citizens, the changes in party membership and the activism lead to changes to the political landscape and internal structure of a party.

Based on our study, in line with the conclusions that emanate from similar studies conducted in Greece (Demertzis - Diamantaki - Gazi - Sartzetakis 2003) but also in other countries, it appears that the Internet will very likely encourage the use of political marketing and communication strategies that are similar to those used outside the Internet. The Internet politician marketing appears to repeat the conventional techniques while simultaneously develops its own possibilities for direct and mass communication, through email, e-newsletters, interactive polls, chat rooms, forum etc. Furthermore the more the citizens familiarize themselves with the Internet the more political parties should participate in this technological revolution and incorporate the technologies in their operations and objectives.

Our approach to this paper was by studying PASOK’S online marketing; we can answer whether or not the web can become an effective marketing tool to support a “citizen-orientation” for a party and to enhance citizens’ participation.

The changes that took place in the internal socialist party organisation can be seen in two areas. First, New Technology and the Internet helps the party to organise its structure, to support innovate services to its members and to communicate efficiency with the general public. The creation of a fast and secure network can minimize the party's costs, connect the local organizations with the central organization and connect members more directly with the party. Members within Greece or abroad will increasingly join nationally online and access more easily information and Media briefing from national sources. The intranet may facilitate a widening of the party database and especially a further deepening of participatory activities amongst party activists. PASOK can now theoretically mobilise their activists by SMS to be made aware of and to participate in meetings and events. At the same time PASOK at its web sites use many new techniques that have been adopted online today, such as e-mail newsletters, online events, online membership, personalised access to information, polls and discussion forums. From all these actions the party has collected useful information about its visitors and friends.

On the other hand, the Online Political Citizens show a high demand for political information, especially during periods of important political events, in that they visited PASOK websites for specific information, participated in discussion groups, read election news and read and posted comments on web logs or by email. They used cheap, easy and immediate communication, they found political information, found each other, and perhaps they found their own political voice. The members and Internet volunteers can pay online for their membership by their credit card; This New Technology makes it easier to organize local events and can log on to their local version of the main www.democracy.pasok.gr and explore and discuss their issues and to communicate freely with each other without intervention or editing by official party representatives (Webmaster).

We believe that at this moment it is still early to conclude on how the web can become an effective marketing tool to support a “citizen-orientation” electronic democracy. The network for citizen participation is currently running on an experimental basis and covers a very small area and we are not

fully able to gather all relevant information. It is however clear to us that on line marketing can help parties to re-establish their public respect and that the access to the political sites encourages citizens to become more involved in politics in particular the younger generations.

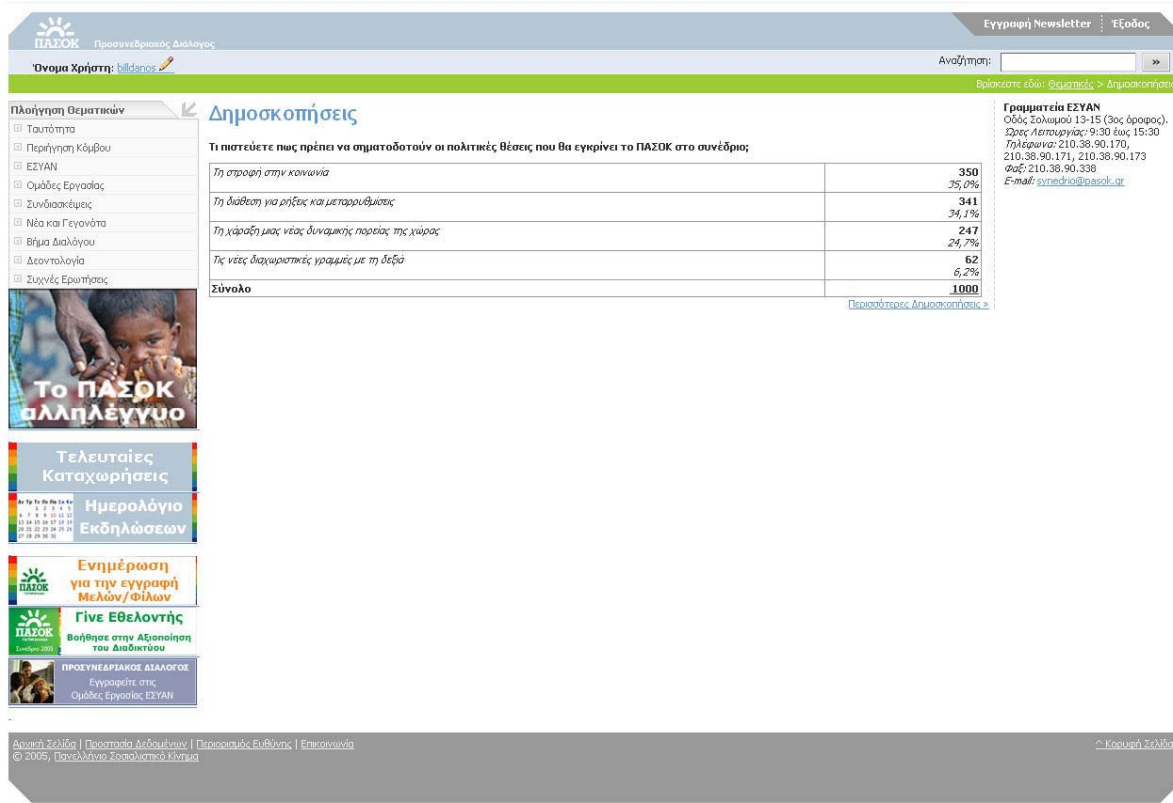
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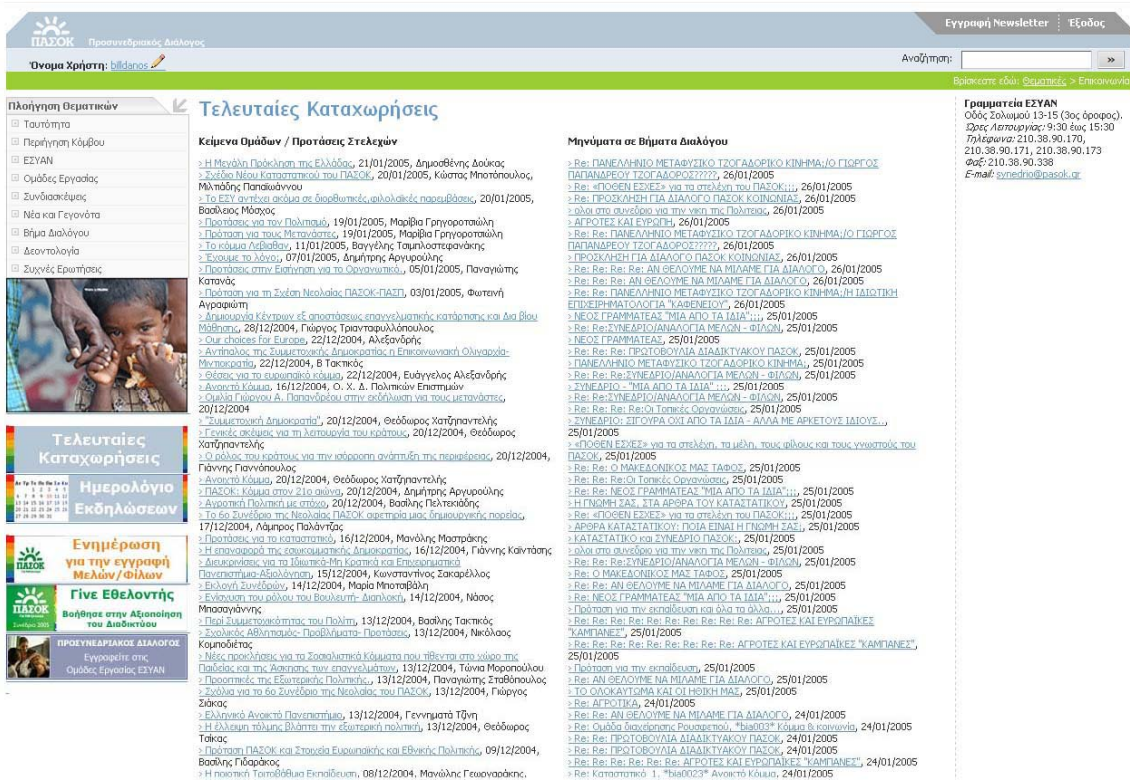
Figures

Figure 1 Poll and voting page where citizens can shape their ideas and their political preferences.



Source: www.democracy.pasok.gr

Figure 2. The web page that gives the opportunity to citizens to publicize their opinions on the website.



Source: www.democracy.pasok.gr