

## Analyzing the Participation of Young People in Politics: An Exploratory Study Applied on Motivation in Croatia

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**Abstract :** The application of marketing to the domain of politics has become relevant in recent times. With this article the authors wanted to explore the issue of the current political engagement among young people in Croatia. The question is what makes young people (age 18-30) politically active in young democracies such as that of the Republic of Croatia. Therefore, the objective of this study was to discover the real or hidden motivations behind the decision to actively participate in politics among young members of the two largest political parties in the country – the Croatian Democratic Union and the Social Democratic Party of Croatia. The study expected to find that the motivation for political engagement of young people is often connected with a possible achievement of individual goals and egoistic needs such as: self-acceptance, social success, financial success, prestige, reputation, status, recognition from the others etc. It was also expected that, due to the poor economic and social situation in the country, young people feel an increasing disconnection from politics. Additionally, the authors expected to find that there is a huge potential to engage young people in the political life of the country through a proper and more interactive use of marketing communication campaigns and social media platforms, with an emphasis on highly ethical motives of political activity and their benefits to society. All respondents included in the quantitative survey (sample size [N=100]) are active in one of the two largest political parties in Croatia. The sampling and distribution of the survey occurred in the field in September 2016. The results of the survey demonstrate that in Croatia, the way young people feel about politics and act accordingly, are in fact similar to what the theory describes. The research findings reveal that young people are politically active; however, the challenge is to find a way to motivate even more young people in Croatia to actively participate in the political and democratic processes in the country and to encourage them to see additional benefits out of this practice, not only related to their individual motives, but related more to the well-being of Croatia as a country and of every member of society. The research also discovered a huge potential for political marketing communication possibilities, especially related to interactive social media. It is possible that the social media channels have a stronger influence on the decision-making process among young people when compared to groups of reference. The level of interest in politics among young Croatians varies; some of them are almost indifferent, whilst others express a serious interest in different ways to actively contribute to the political life of the country, defining a participation in the political life of their country almost as their moral obligation. However, additional observations and further research need to be conducted to get a clearer and more precise picture about the interest in politics among young people in Croatia and their social potential.

**Keywords :** Croatia, marketing communication, motivation, politics, young people

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