Political Preferences

11/2015

Editors:
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Katowice 2015

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Review

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PARTY SWITCHING AS A MEDIA PHENOMENON IN THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Abstract:

The article presents changes that take place in mass media during and after the party switching. The main reason why politicians are changing „their colors" - is that they want to become the celebrities. This work is an attempt of research about possible motivation of those figures. It is also important to consider if exist characteristic features that are assigned to identified political types?

Key words:
party switching, mediatization, types of politicians, political transfer, Poland

Introduction

The change of party affiliation as a phenomenon in Polish parliamentarism has existed for a long time[1] [Tunkis 2014]. However party switching has never had notoriety like this before. The main change, which is based on increase of mass media's interest in public life, caused the recognizable politicians (who had many times changed their party affiliation) to become celebrities. The phenomenon of mediatization and professionalization of political subjects' activities resulted in an increase in social demand for pseudo-events,

1   See tables.

Figure 1. Number of switches and MPs who switched in Poland, 1991-2011.
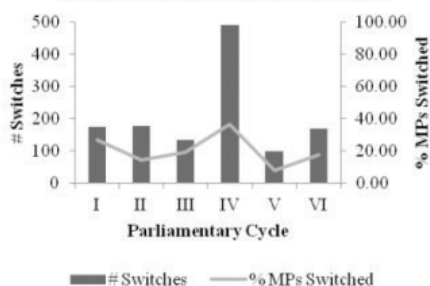
Table 1. Party switching in Poland, 1991-2011.

Parliamentary cycle	# Switches	MPs switched[1]		Group-based switches[2]	
		#	%	#	%
I Kadencja (1991-1993)	174	124	26.78	130	74.71
II Kadencja (1993-1997)	178	68	14.26	142	79.78
III Kadencja (1997-2001)	134	93	19.29	100	74.63
IV Kadencja (2001-2005)	490	178	36.40	406	82.86
V Kadencja (2005-2007)	99	37	7.74	75	75.76
VI Kadencja (2007-2011)	170	91	17.50	133	78.24

1. The Sejm has 460 deputies at any given time; the total number of deputies in a given cycle may be greater due to the termination and re-assignment of mandates.
2. Refers to the proportion of group switches to the total number of switches.

created mainly by "swindlers" party members, dealing with media. It happens that politicians move to the factions which had become the object of their criticism in the past; therefore these politicians put themselves in an awkward position and have to present the appropriate arguments for public opinion to justify their behavior.

The purpose of this analysis is to indicate the processes that encourage changing party affiliation, indicating types of politicians with some specific media features, which, in a way, predestine them to party switching in the future. It also seems necessary to indicate main motivations and conditions of the most famous party switching in Poland.

Party switching and "changing the colors"

Party switching meant as changing of party affiliation in a parliamentary - cabinet system (characteristic for the electoral system in Poland) can be considered in two ways. After elections, when political forces find out about an actual voters' support, reflected in the parliamentary seats, one question is interesting for party leaders: "Who is able to govern in this parliamentary term?". In Polish reality of multi-member constituencies in the preferential and proportional formula system, as well as a dominant role of the prime minister, formation of government requires a coalition of political parties, whereas the same majority in parliament usually means a slight advantage of a few or several votes. The smaller the stability of a particular coalition, the greater motivation of political parties (understood as organizations, which purpose is gaining power), as well as the Member of Parliament himself - who didn't belong to its ranks before (MP of opposition) - to conclude "a political deal". The negotiation process between the representative of a party and MP, consisting of a mutual benefits' exchange begins. While the party's point of view, submitting a promise or a substantial proposal seems to be understandable, the attitude of a member of parliament, who wants to change the political affiliation to gain personal profits, seems doubly morally reprehensible. Firstly, accepting the proposal places involved person in an awkward situation in relation to his or her electorate, which has just chosen the candidate for the office from a different political party than the one, to which the elected person has just passed to ensure its stable majority. Secondly, it is hard for such politicians to prove in media, that they were guided by the best interests of the country at the cost of their previous political views. For the need of this analysis, let's call that behavior "a political change of colors". Therefore, we need to distinguish it from a similar, but different phenomenon, which is the subject of this study: party switching. This phenomenon will be characterized by searching party affiliation other than

that, which for a longer period was subject to the participation of the candidate in favor of another formation - before the elections to the chamber of parliament. Therefore, it is vital for the candidate to create a new chance of receiving a seat or obtaining the promise of a start from a high place on the electoral list, in exchange for attracting the candidate's followers to this group. From a moral point of view such practice seems less burdensome for the candidate, for whom, in case of receiving the mandate, it will be much easier to justify him or herself in front of public opinion, than in the case of "changing the colors".

Mediatization of politics

A correct understanding of the political phenomenon of party switching and its conditions require to look at the environment in which it takes place. Mediatization[2] means domination of the area of image over the area of program. The key objective of politicians using methods characteristic for political marketing and PR is skillful creation of a "pseudo-events" or political events, which are seemingly important, but mainly attractive for media. As a result, politicians aim to effectively manage media and their agenda for the day, in order to "get" their message "through" to precisely selected groups of audience. The phenomenon additionally reinforces the progressive, but differently interpreted process of Americanization of election campaigns. Defining as diffusion of models dominating in the United States consists of their gradual adoption and modification on European soil. There are several key elements of the Americanization of party switching:
- personalization of campaigns;
- planning the campaign;
- an increase of negativity and direct campaigns;
- an increase of the resources allocated to the television campaign.

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2   According to Marek Mazur and Agnieszka Turska-Kawa [2009: 72-74] mediatisation of campaign is revealed in two areas. Firstly, mass media as an important measure of the election mobilizing. Secondly, it refers to the practice of media relations, which purpose is to strategically manage the information coming from the candidates, media monitoring, impact on the media agenda by creating pseudo-events, as well as to obtain the needed interpretation of the events and political information (media spinning).

Political parties – change of the organization model

There should be no reason to wonder that party switching appears in the situation, in which the main political parties in Poland currently are. From their point of view, a spectacular transition, even one of existing political enemy (party switching from PiS to the PO and vice versa) to "their own" camp can only bring political advantage. However, this mechanism does not seem to work entirely in such a simple way. An opposite theory should rather be proposed – "buying" the enemy camp is more harmful to the party, from which the politician came, than brings popularity to party, which he moved into.

At this point it is worth to draw attention to several issues. Firstly, there is a strong belief of party leaders, that a well-publicized party switching, apart from the politician, will somehow automatically intercept the politician's supporters, who voted for him. Party leaders suspect that the people will still support him, even under a different party banner. Secondly, transfer policy conducted during an election campaign heavily imposes the reformulation of the target electorate and ideology of party. As Marek Sempach notes, image creation of Polish political parties consists of selective choosing of political marketing tools, which takes on the partisan character [Sempach 2013: 73]. During the postmodernization [Norris 2000: 137-138] campaigns, in which the dominant message is often based on communicating through the media, that thin line, which had been there between the image and identity of a political party as an organization – has been blurring. As I pointed out elsewhere [Kołodziej 2015] the image is described by different approaches: conceptual ("dimensional")[3], general characteristics[4], components[5] or types[6]. In turn, the identity of an organization, besides the image, consists of

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3 Most frequently cited work in the area of political psychology and political science is: Dan Nimmo and Robert Savage. The authors draw attention to the dimensions of political image: cognitive, emotional and conative [Nimmo, Savage 1976].

4 A comprehensive definition of the image (economic and psychological) indicates: the assimilation to the brand product - constitutes compromise between a current reality and imagined future, it should promote the product and inspire the confidence of consumers [Cichosz 2005].

5 Polish political science literature indicates that the most important component in shaping the image is the core which is matched based on the current political and social demand, while less essential peripheral features create a real image of politician [Cwalina, Falkowski 2005: 214]. However the issue is most widely discussed by psychologists, from the perspective of the image components; they indicate physical attractiveness, ability to arouse sympathy, competence, strenuous effort, virtue [Leary 2000: 107-129]. As well as: geopolitical implantation, establishing the value of a particular social group, education and profession, racial, religious affiliations, financial status and charisma as the ability of an above-average influence on environment [Pietraś 1998: 420-424].

6 Political and personal features are assigned to types of political images. The main strategies of action are pointed out. The main types are: expert, father, lover, hero, an ordinary man, eccentric idol, clown, cool cat [Jeziński 2004].

other components, which stay in the shadows: the philosophy of the organization, its way of communicating with the environment or visual identification. It is also noted that parties rooted in the system, which have been dominating the political scene for a few years (block parties), their only variable is the image alone which is formed depending on the environment [Ilciów 2013]. The spectacular party switching as it seems "lay" on the border of a political party identity and its image - contributing significantly to blur the border or at least move it towards the American model of "parties stripped off of their ideology". It is certainly a manifestation of the campaign's Americanization which is directed towards a political show and concentrate attention of media and their audience. It is worth mentioning that such proceeding will constitute, in a sense, a side effect of the political parties' inability to differentiate themselves from the competition on the market. It is easier to create the image of a party that is open to various communities, that is ready to welcome even enemies and thus to discredit the opposition (in principle that "even they changed their mind") rather than create new ideas, political agendas or philosophy of its existence. Features, which were assigned to the American[7], quite well describe the direction of change and target functioning of Polish block parties:

- focusing on a wider range of voters,
- continuous conducting of the election campaign and involving the maximum number of volunteers in the activities of staffs,
- intensified enforcing imaging activities at the expense of program "labelling",
- resignation from ideological postulates of organization.

The modern political organizations in Poland, which in each election enjoy the growing popularity of the voters, while reducing the distance between them, are forced to a detailed research of the electoral market[8]. In this perspective the party switching of people from outside of their own group, in the opinion of decision makers, should encourage and attract the electorate with specific socio - ideological and demographic conditions. The process of "party switching" fits into the general trend of drifting away from a policy in the traditional sense, towards the era of post-policy[9].

7   A catch-all type party model was described by Otto Kirchheimer in the 1960s of the 20th century.
8   They so-called STP (1. Segmentation 2. Targeting 3. Positioning) is to enable as follows: 1. Understanding of the political market, the buyers' needs, preferences and electoral behavior. 2. Define the target critical areas for particular electorate. 3. Affect the minds of voters and create a „competitive advantage" that will enable distinguishing in a decisive manner from competitors and create added value of subject on political market, [Kolczyński 2005: 241-255; Cichosz 2009: 105-122].
9   The gap between traditional and contemporary policy is presented best by a dispute between Eryk Mistewicz and Michał Karnowski; M.K.: (...) *From the constitution to the entire*

The famous party switching

In my work, I will delineate the most important party switching in Polish policy in recent years considering the different criteria. However, regardless of the selection of politicians for analysis is important to identify the role, which they played before and after party switching. On this basis a personality characteristics that predispose specific politicians to participate in party switching in the future could be determined.

Table 1. Types of politicians and media features, which predispose to party switching after 2015

| Type of politician | The basic features | | An example | Position in the primary party (before party switching) | Position in the new party (after party switching) |
	The most desired characteristics	The rapporteur potential media politicians leading roles in their parties that have the desired characteristics			
The leader of the party	Ambition Reliability Determination Intelligence Confidence Visionariness	PO: Grzegorz Schetyna, Hanna Gronkiewicz Waltz PiS: Beata Szydło, Mariusz Kamiński	Zyta Gilowska	2001-2005 Platforma Obywatelska (Vice President of the party)	2006-2007 Deputy Prime and Minister of Finance in the government of PiS 2008 – chosen from voting lists of PiS 2010-2013 has a sit in RPP

history of our civilization in the democratic world there is responsibility of politicians for the direction, in which the country is going. This is a real responsibility that we cannot change or deny. Nothing abolishes this responsibility. Better propagandas have tried ... „ E.M.: (...)The research shows the Polish want to dream, achieve targets and social consciousness (…) *From the world of politicians Poles want a good story, a good tale for each day, good narration and peace*"[Mistewicz, Karnowski 2010].

A close associate of the leader	Forced to fight for position Leaders of factions Decision-makers in the regions	PO: Cezary Grabarczyk, Tomasz Siemoniak, Rafał Grupiński PiS: Antoni Macierewicz, Joachim Brudziński, Mariusz Błaszczak SLD: Włodzimierz Czarzasty, Joanna Senyszyn, Dariusz Joński PSL: Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz, Marek Sawicki, Jarosław Kalinowski	Radosław Sikorski	2005-2007 Minister of National Defence	2007- 2010 Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vice President of PO 2011-2014 Minister of Foreign Affairs 2014-2015 Marshal of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland
A former close associate of the leader	Removed from the decision-making process in the management, eg. a declining political significance, a disgrace	PiS: Adam Hofman PO: Paweł Zalewski, Mirosław Drzewiecki SLD: Ryszard Kalisz, Wojciech Olejniczak PSL: Waldemar Pawlak, Eugeniusz Kłopotek	Grzegorz Napieralski	2008-2011 Chairman of SLD 2011-2015 marginalization	2015 access to political camp of PO
Showman	Media character Creates political events, complex political image	PiS: Jacek Kurski, Tomasz Kaczmarek PO: Stefan Niesiołowski, Adam Szejnfeld SLD: Włodzimierz Czarzasty, Jerzy Wenderlich	Bartosz Artukowaicz	2002-2011 left-wing politician (SLD, LiD, SdPL, UP)	2011-2015 meme-ber of PO Twice as Minister of Health (in government of D. Tusk and E. Kopacz)
Spin doctor	Specialist in political campaigns Creates images, election spots events	PiS: Marcin Mastalerek, Adam Bielan PO: Michał Kamiński, Paweł Graś SLD: Tomasz Kalita	Michał Kamiński	2001-2010 PiS (main spin doctor with A. Bielan, campaign 2005)	2015 Member of PO, Secretary of state in the government

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The traitor (according to the mother-parties)	Long time members of mother-parties Trusted activists criticizing the opposition Bitterness towards mother-parties, personal policy, program	PiS: Michał Kamiński, Radosław Sikorski, Ludwik Dorn, Paweł Poncyliusz, Zbigniew Ziobro, Jan Tomaszewski, Elżbieta Jakubiak, Joanna Kluzik-Rostowska, Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz PO: Jan Rokita, Nelly Rokita, Zyta Gilowska, Jarosław Gowin, Janusz Palikot SLD: Grzegorz Napieralski, Ryszrad Kalisz, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, Marek Borowski, Tomasz Nałęcz	Bogdan Borusewicz	Before 2005 associated with PiS	After 2005 associated with PO Marshal of the Senate
A self-proclaimed leader (new initiative)	Moving away from the mother-parties (disenchantment with programmatic and image policy) The will to find his or her own political party Belief in their own abilities (features of leaders)	PiS: Zbigniew Ziobro, Jarosław Gowin, Joanna Kluzik-Rostkowska, Paweł Kowal PO: Janusz Palikot SLD: Marek Borowski, Andrzej Celiński	Janusz Palikot	2005-2010 member of PO	2010-2015 Member of Palikot Movement (received 10% in the elections to the Sejm in 2011)

In the analysis, if we took into consideration only the politicians listed in category „example", it would seem that every party switching means improving the personal situation of a candidate. It would be obvious that it is too simplistic and does not have a basis in empirical research.

It can only be a suggestive hint that in the case of the most famous party switching in the last years in Poland there was a dependence: the more recognized the politician is, the more success he would have after the change of political affiliation. That was certainly the case of: Zyta Gilowska, Radosław Sikorski, Bogdan Borusewicz, Bartosz Arłukowicz and Janusz Palikot. It is more difficult to assess the political fortunes of Grzegorz Napieralski or Michał Kamiński, who, accordingly, were „a former close associate of the leader" and „a spin doctor". They then have switched from SLD and PiS to PO. The politicians mentioned as the media ones and acting politically important roles in their parties have theoretically an excellent chance that their transfers will be announced as a significant event in public life after going into other political groups. However, this does not undermine the fact that we cannot tell for certain, whether such a party switching is automatically a recipe for political success. Receiving prominent positions in public life is an opportunity, not a guarantee that specific media characters really have skills and competencies, which will ensure effective and correct fulfillment of their obligations. From the point of view of political parties that attract personalities on the political scene the situation looks in a way, as if simply bringing them was a success in the sphere of discrediting the current competitor[10]; or at least the promise of attracting candidates' voters[11]. A frequent, effective and hardly dangerous mechanism was that proposed by Donald Tusk, when he was a prime minister. In order to avoid taking political responsibility by himself for others' possibly unsuccessful party switching, which the public opinion would not accept, he had been involving particular characters into the government to expose them through the later period to an extend, so they wouldn't disappear from the mainstream media – thus guaranteeing him popularity and consequently the chance of re-election.

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10 As for the party switching of the most antagonistic parties: the PiS to the PO and vice versa Usually, when leaders of these parties comment such party switching in the media, they define involved person as a traitor. Then the party switching is only an element of negative politics.

11 The number of votes, that were cast in previous elections on particular politicians can encourage to adopt them in their own ranks, for example Grzegorz Napieralski in 2011 received nearly 24,000 votes, Bartosz Arłukowicz after party switching to the government of D. Tusk, in the next election about 80,000 votes more than when they started with SLD lists. On the other hand, Michal Kaminski despite the fact that he renounced his membership with PiS in 2010 and only a few years later he started from the list of PO to the Europarliament - has not received a mandate. However, he was admitted to the government of Donald Tusk as undersecretary of state.

As far as domestic political scene is concerned also a few missed party switching occurred[12]. The most frequent reason was constant arguing with the party leader or public criticism of the political party's management. Politicians, who have formed their own political groups believing that they were able to attract voters strongly attached to them and not to signboard of the party, had to also swallow the bitterness of electoral defeats. The history of party switching shows that one shouldn't close the way back to the mother-party, if one does not pursue "total criticism" in relation to this party. For example, the departure of Jarosław Gowin from PO, forming the new party Polska Razem and transfer to PiS under the united right-wing teaches that moderation in politics in spite of criticism of its participants opens the way for further political alliances. Moreover, a similar attitude can lead to an increased market position of the political group, from which one originates. The same was the case with Z. Ziobro, who eventually returned to the party of J. Kaczyński. If the politicians have a weaker image and pass to other party before election, the defeat will consist of not receiving the mandate, which in fact would close their political career. On one hand, it means no future in the new party (if he didn't attract voters, he isn't valuable for us), on the other hand he couldn't return to the party from which he came and he is considered a "traitor".

Political conditions are variable. Depending on whether they are accommodative to individual politicians - parties at different moments of their activities should be ready to risk their adoption. They can get new voices, a kind of 'added value', justifying the transfer by the opening of the program and worldview. There is not much risk. In the worst scenario, the deputy will not be elected and will be quickly forgotten by the public. Politicians themselves "put at risk" much more – they could gain, as the most famous party switching shows, a lot - from re-election to position in government. But there is also a lot to lose: overall brand reputation and their image's consistency. Those are risking the most, which previously had been practicing "total criticism"; they face society as members of the team, which they had despised in the past.

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12 For example: Jan Tomaszewski, Paweł Zalewski, Marek Migalski, Paweł Poncyliusz, Paweł Kowal, Paweł Piskorski, Robert Kwiatkowski.

Tabele 2. The comparison of statements of prominent politicians before and after party switching.

Politician	Before party switching	After party switching
Grzegorz Napieralski (SLD → PO)	„People will fight you off (...) they slowly have enough of empty promises and political cross-dressing in different clothes than those which they normally assume „,, „PO is a party without an idea".	„I strongly believe, that what is happening here in this hall in Warsaw, is also a beginning of something new, something wider, open (...) even if we are different , we should be different beautifully".
Ludwik Dorn (PiS → PO)	„Prime Minister Donald Tusk behaved like a capricious brat"	„Since I was only a transplanted twin (to the Kaczyński brothers) this link has been cut off long time ago."
Michał Kamiński (PiS → PO)	„Those 'handheld' PO politicians may yet make only those hand-held coups, that they take a plane from the president, so that he cannot fly"	"(...) I, as a Polish patriot, will vote for the PO"
Jarosław Gowin (PO → PiS)	„The one who will vote for J. Kaczyński is wasting the vote"	„There is no politician on the right side of political scene, who would be able to merge such a broad spectrum of views, as Jaroslaw Kaczynski"
Joanna Kluzik Rostkowska (PiS → PO)	„This is a weak and lazy government"	„I love this company!"

A perfect example of a politician, who chooses "the way in one direction" is Janusz Palikot. He showed the path of political "showman ", that is based on criticism of PiS and all those, who were sympathetic to Kaczynski brothers in any way. Thus he gained popularity, that allowed him to break away from PO. He created his own party, taking on the role of " self-proclaimed leader " using leftist moral slogans and the weakness of the main left-wing party (SLD), reached 10 % in the elections to the Parliament. In the elections of 2015, probably forced by the "united left" and the weakness of his own structures (leaving Ruch Palikota by his "close associates") he will not receive a comparable result like in 2011 election. His success and failure at the same time will consist of too frequent changes in his political image. It is easy to gain popularity as a "showman", more difficult it is to turn it into the trust for "political leader". This politician himself appeared before the need for further changes. This time, due to the earlier need for criticism of all, he faced the problem - how to change once again without prejudice to his political image's consistency?

The answer to the main question about the politician's' motivation to strengthen another party by his own person still remains open. Firstly, it is difficult to analyze and put forward a hypothesis without studying source materials. In this case, it will certainly be politicians themselves, whom, on one hand - does not make sense to study under „laboratory"; and on the other hand, probably a ew of them would agree to such tests. It is also worth noting that much information is provided to the researcher by public sources: press releases, long interviews with politicians etc. They themselves, especially during election campaigns, are particularly carefully interviewed by journalists, who try to understand their motivations. One can submit a canon of political motivation to transfer. In each of the presented cases, the decision to take this important step was certainly not spontaneous, but rather the result of some processes taking place in political parties known as „mothers ". Each „sensational „transfer says much not only about politicians, but also about their current company. Additionally, described causes can occur separately, or even one by one in different stages, with varying degree of seriousness. If the "media politicians" in their clubs exhibit preserved evidence of the possession of these motivations, there is a high risk that party switching will in the future also be part of their story.

The most common political motivations of transfer:
- The will of reelection (re-gaining the mandate, for example as a result of dwindling support for the „mother" party in polls);
- Being pushed away from decision-making process in the party (mandate is not in danger, but there is a feeling of lack of influence, reduction of political significance – due to psychological conditions);
- Political ambitions (the will to improve their situation; political position; influence; money; the faith in their own skills and competencies - often ends up with the attempt to create their own political movement);
- Conflicts with the leadership of the party (example reasons: criticism of the political way of management in the media, public statement in opposition to the official line and program of the party, political struggles in the regions like, for instance, fighting with local leaders about how to create a local or national election lists);
- The change of political views (understanding the legislative process from the inside; the politicians of „one law" with strong philosophical beliefs, who want to keep their characterological coherence).

Summary

Scientific research on the determinants of party switching is still modest. Although, there are a few studies in newspapers and foreign magazines, but they often presented scientist intuition, rarely on reliable field research. If any politician revealed the actual motivations and circumstances that determined the change of colors by him during election campaigns, it would mean that he had uncovered the political „backroom", thus exposing his political ego. On the other hand, relying exclusively on media communications and even the statements of the interested parties themselves would not choose the criterion of the veracity of submitted opinion. It should be set up a priori that arguments justifying or explaining the political choices are always dictated by politicians' desire to improve their political situation. Certainly a growing number of social media, used by the politicians, analysts, journalists – ensures quick access and will help to discover what party switching we have to deal with and what were the reasons and circumstances, which accompanied it. Some researchers have suggested that possibly there is a strong relationship between the type of political leadership in the party, the organization and discipline of the party and political organization management methods, and the tendency for political change of colors and the transfer [Heller, Marshon 2009]. However, even forgetting about the fact that the party switching in Poland over the past several years has become the subject of media interest, it remains a indisputable conclusion that they are performed by outstanding politicians that have a definite political image, usually famed for its clarity. Only in terms of further assumptions it should be considered, to what extent the politicians deciding to bring the transfers were guided by brand awareness and just expressivity of the new candidates, and to what extent their professionalism and experience. The questions asked are an impulse for further research in this area.

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