



## Use of Social Media as a Tool for Political Communication in the Field of Politics

### Siyasal İletişim Aracı Olarak Sosyal Medyanın Siyaset Alanında Kullanımı

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#### Abstract

The gradual development of technology at first introduced us to the internet and then social media networks. Social networks have shown that while they were used for socializing and entertainment purposes, as they first appeared, it can be used in different subjects, especially in politics anymore. When compared to traditional mass media, it is obvious that social media has positive and negative aspects. The most positive aspect that can be said here is that it can gather large masses in a short time. Benefitting from the advantages of the Internet, social media provides people with unlimited freedom. Of course, such a limitless freedom can sometimes be limited by censorship. As individuals have various applications in social media networks, their self-confidence starts to rise to a high level. Because this area provides an environment to prove themselves.

The use of social media by many people including politicians can no longer lead to the elimination of traditional media. Politicians demanding to reach young audiences and ensure their confidence makes both sides to become closer to using social media. The use of internet and social media in every branch of politics is attractive in terms of the opportunities it offers and increases its attractiveness day by day. It can be said that to reach hundreds or even thousands of people by means of a single message to make propaganda, for politicians it is a unique place where time and space is not limited. The same condition is true for the other group, which itself has the right to speak on social networks, to make comments, and to get ideas about the politicians as voters who will vote for them, increases the use of social media.

**Keywords:** Social media, Politics, Political participation, Politicians, Election campaigns

#### Özet

*Teknolojinin günden güne gelişmesi bizi önce internetle tanıştırmış daha sonra da sosyal medya ağlarını karşımıza çıkartmıştır. Sosyal ağlar, ilk çıktıkları zaman çoğu kez sosyalleşmek ve eğlence amaçlı kullanılırken artık siyaset başta olmak üzere daha farklı konularda kullanılabileceğini göstermiştir. Geleneksel kitle iletişim araçlarıyla kıyaslandığında sosyal medyanın olumlu ve olumsuz yönleri olduğu kesindir. Burada söylenebilecek en olumlu yönü ise kısa süre içinde geniş kitleleri etrafına toplayabilmesidir. Sosyal medya internetin faydalarından yararlanarak, insanlara sınırsız bir özgürlük alanı sağlamaktadır. Tabi ki bu sınırsız özgürlük denilen olgu bazı zamanlarda sansürlerle sınırlandırılmaktadır. Sosyal medya ağlarında bireylerin vakit geçireceği çeşitli uygulamalar olduğu için bireylerin özgüvenleri de yüksek bir seviyeye çıkmaya başlamaktadır. Çünkü bu alan onlara kendilerini ispatlayacak bir ortam sunmaktadır.*

*Siyasetçiler de dahil sosyal medyanın birçok kişi tarafından kullanılması artık geleneksel medya anlayışından uzaklaşılmasına neden olabilmektedir. Siyasetçilerin genç kitlelere ulaşmak ve onların güvenini sağlamak istemesi her iki tarafı da sosyal medya kullanmaya daha çok yaklaştırmaktadır. Siyasetin her dalında internet ve sosyal medyanın kullanılması sunduğu imkanlar açısından cazibeli gelmekte ve her geçen gün cazibesini artırmaktadır. Zaman ve mekânın sınırlı olmadığı tek bir mesajla yüzlerce hatta binlerce kişiye ulaşılması siyasetçilerin propaganda yapmak için uğradığı eşsiz bir mekân olduğu söylenebilir. Aynı durum karşıdaki kitle içinde geçerlidir, kendisinin de sosyal ağlarda konuşma hakkı bulması, yorum yapması seçmenin oy vereceği siyasetçi hakkında fikirler edinmesi sosyal medya kullanımını artırmaktadır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sosyal medya, Siyaset, Siyasi katılım, Siyasiler, Seçim çalışmaları

#### Conceptual Framework

Today, internet and social media are widely used in all areas. Social media, which is the focus of attention of young people, has started to attract every age group as it has expanded its fields. In addition to the socialization of people; it contains many personal and social needs such as entertainment, information and communication. Its being easily accessible and appealing to a wide audience makes social media attractive in the political sphere.

Providing political participations and carrying out political campaigns are not only applicable for the public, statesmen can also easily carry out their works through social media. The election activities of the parties, election campaigns,

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announcements and all kinds of actions for the public are presented from social media accounts. Censorship efforts, such as the blocking of Internet access by governments, may be inconclusive due to the rapid dissemination of information by social networks on some political issues.

It is not possible to think of politics and daily events independently. The fact that people choose the political party that is close to their own ideology and reach this ideology to the large communities through social networks leads to mention the large masses of people instead of individuals anymore. Especially politicians who want to influence the young can increase their votes by making their own propaganda with a good tactic. However, the lack of this seems to be an indicator of the unconscious use of social media.

Social media can be defined as a network where users share their own generated content. Social media, which is actively used by many people and institutions, draws attention with its easy accessibility and free atmosphere. Social media whose main function is to inform addressing to many people at the same time can also be used for various purposes. In addition, social media, which is a new concept, has brought along many controversia as well as its advantages.

The concept of social media developed within the context of new generation web technologies brings together individuals from different places in a virtual atmosphere. This revolution, which started with internet technology, is now competing with traditional media. Internet began to enter our lives in the 1960s. Although its trial years coincided with the 1960s, the internet began to be used in the military field in the 1970s and 1980s. ARPANET is the military network of the US Department of Defense for military purposes. In the 90s, the internet became a network that was then used in commercial area worldwide (Kırık, 2014: 274). In Turkey, the internet was initially used to transfer information. In 1995, there were structural transformations in our country as well as in the whole world. With the increasing demand, internet, web pages, e-mail and other services started to be used for all kinds of promotion and marketing purposes in line with the requests and needs of the users (cited by Gülnar and Balcı, 2011: 67).

By the 2000s, the internet has reached a status that is cheap and accessible to everyone and this rapid change makes using social networks possible as well. Social networks in which everyone speaks the same language bring together different individuals (in terms of thought, opinion, education, language, race, gender etc.) from all sides, thus eliminating differences, stereotypes are created. Social media is more than getting information; it has many functions such as entertainment, education, travelling, discussion, sharing personal experiences, opinions and suggestions, etc.. While there are different opinions and thoughts about the definition of social media, it is impossible to make a clear definition of social media. The most common reason for this is the continuous expansion of social media coverage and the improvement of its qualifications (Kırık, 2014: 275).

Social media with its technologically dominant structure is the whole of internet technology and digital systems. Navigating social media has become a habit and need, and the social networks which have attracted great attention especially by young and children continue to attract every age group. In addition, mobile communication technologies play a major role in the development and diffusion of social media (Kırık, 2014: 276).

*Social media is user-based:* In some social networks, the users create their own content entirely, and they can express their unique comments by controlling the shared content. In other words, social media is both a receiver and a transmitter. An important point is that social networks have become an alternative to media.

*Social media is community oriented:* Social networks can create online communities by bringing together people who think differently. The community pages that people open over any subject and area enable individuals to get information through social networks.

*Social media allows the establishment of social relations:* Social media platforms bring together people from different languages, religions and ethnicities, allowing social relationships to change.

*Social media has an emotional aspect:* When individuals are happy, sad, distressed and so on, they often engage in social networks by utilizing a variety of services and applications.

There have been serious expansions and developments in social media types since the first day it appeared. A wide variety of social media platforms gradually show itself in every field. Divided into specific types, social networks also vary according to their use. One of the reasons for the widespread use of the Internet has started with the emergence of social networks. Sites such as Wikipedia, Myspace, Facebook, Friendster, Flickr, Twitter, Friendfeed and YouTube have come to the fore as places show what users do and what they think when they use them at the time, and instantly show where they are when they take photos and videos they share (Büyükşener, 2009: 21). In addition, social networks include social networking sites such as Facebook, photo sharing sites, video sharing sites, sites designed for the business sector, blogs, wikis and so on (Cited by Karakoç and Gülsünler, 2012: 46-47).

The emergence of new media in the direction of technological developments has led to new usage areas. For example, new media such as social networking or music files on the Internet lead to significant changes in people's use of social media (Cited by Gülnar and Balcı, 2011: 82). With these developments, social media causes great changes not only in people's traditional media habits but also in their lives. Büyükşener (2009: 20) classifies social networks according to their category and objectives.

Category	Friendship and Environment Acquisition	Social Business Networks	Matchmaking Networks	Graduation Networks	Brand Social Networks
Objective	Focusing on Social Environment	Career and Business Improvement	Soulmate, Marriage	Graduates and Schoolmates	Brand Enthusiasts, Brand Ambassadors

On the other hand, Kılıç (2015: 50-54) classifies types of social media as Blogs (Weblogs), Wikis, Podcasts, Forums, Video Sharing Sites, Photo Sharing Sites, Social Bookmarking Sites and Micro-blogs. According to Dawley, the general content of social networks are Social sites: MySpace, Facebook, Twitter; Photo Sharing Sites: Flickr; PhotoBucket; Video Sharing: YouTube; Professional Networking Sites: LinkedIn, Ning; Blogs: Blogger.com, Wordpress; Wikis: Wetpaint, PBWiki. Content tagging: MERLOT, SLoog; Virtual Word: SL, Active Worlds, There, Whyville, Club Penguin and HiPiHi (Cited by Vural and Bat, 2010: 3356).

As can be seen, social media networks are gaining diversity every day. However, social networks vary according to the areas used and age criteria. There are many reasons for using social media such as having fun, learning, socializing and getting news. Young masses mostly use it for entertainment purposes, but the middle-aged ones use it for reaching news. Social media networks, which are also used in the political field, have started to attract every fraction.

### Social Media and Its Relationship with Politics

Internet technology began to be used for political campaigns in the mid-1990s. In general, as in every technology, internet technology was also limited in political campaigns. The inadequacy of technological infrastructure and the low number of subscribers were the most important reasons for the limited use. However, there are no such limitations and problems nowadays. The Internet has taken its place among the important communication tools in terms of political campaign activities (Devran, 2004: 29).

Since the 90s when the Internet began to be popular, the relationship between Internet and politics has always been a sub-title in the analysis conducted. Lutz and others (2014) who studies the relationship between internet and democracy in a systematic way generally speak of the existence of three approaches: optimists, pessimist and realist. The writers in the optimistic category suggest that the Internet encourages political participation of much of population and strengthens democracy, and this approach is nourished by the studies of Rheingold (1994) and Turkle (1997). Some of the pessimistic thinkers, who have criticized the Internet in many ways, believe that the Internet has replaced the time devoted to political participation (Putnam, 2000) and some, on the other hand, argue that the internet participation cannot be equal because of the digital gap (Norris, 2001) and it even deepens all kinds of inequalities. According to realistic researchers like Bimber (2001), the Internet is shaped by users and the one who is not a participant outside will be not online, either. Since the 2000s, with the spread of social media, debates on the Internet-democracy relationship are mainly addressed in the context of social networks-political participation (Lutz and others, 2014; Doğu and others, 2014).

In his book *Networks of Outrage and Hope*, in which his recent work takes place, Castells notes that social movements usually begin with social networks established on the Internet, and a new space arising from the hybridization of cyberspace and urban space implies the birth of 'the space of autonomy'. Castells (2013: 192) argues that the organizing activities in cyberspace are performed as a transformative power by being integrated into the struggle in the urban space and it is possible with autonomy through free communication networks. Castells (2013: 199) by means of the concept of autonomy, argues that "the Internet provides a platform for organizational communication by transforming the culture of freedom into the practice of autonomy." It is important to remember that individuals should be aware of these platforms and many other sociological factors come into play behind their ability to use in their struggling practices.

Social media is used extensively in politics as well as in every field. The websites opened on behalf of parties are the areas where politicians offer their propaganda within the framework of limited freedoms. The websites opened on behalf of parties sometimes carry out their activities in the aim of a support by determining their target audience. Nowadays, individuals are actively using social platforms such as Facebook and Twitter as tools of new communication technologies as well as traditional media. Social media is an important communication tool between the electorate and the politician supported by the electorate (Altunbaş, 2014: 55).

Devran, who emphasizes the positive aspects of the development of the Internet and the opportunities it offers in terms of politics, states that the political parties are trying to strengthen their communication with the electorate by opening pages for themselves and the various opportunities of the internet in political campaigns. As can be seen, the phenomenon, which gained momentum with the spread of internet, changed the form of election campaigns considerably. Social media was actively used in politics for the first time by Barack Obama, who in 2008 was a candidate for presidency in the US presidential elections. In addition to receiving 52% of public support, Obama also achieved the success that no Democratic Party presidential candidate has achieved in the last 30 years. The role of social media behind this success is quite high. Obama acted in a very conscious manner that young people use social media more than they use traditional media. Obama, whose victory was called "a new media victory" more than his own victory, used social media rather than traditional media (Altunbaş, 2014: 56). It is clear that the politicians who know how to use their social networks consciously and effectively is successful. However, it must not be disregarded that the politicians who failed do not know how to use social media effectively.

As a result of the developments in new communication technologies, the newly emerged social network either to increase the capacity to produce information or to store and transmit it reveals new styles not only in economy and politics but also in culture. In this context, not only technology but technology-based information itself changes (Dündar, 2013: 224). In this

context, the change in information has naturally spread to the field of politics. It is clear that there are some differences between politics made in traditional media and politics made in social media.

New communication technologies, which benefit from the experience and traditional habits of both politics and the media, have a structure that requires new approaches. One of these approaches is that the power of control in the media has evolved from small and organized one to the power of people (Kurtbaş, 2017: 311). While changing political participation provides an environment where people can present their ideas more, it is a matter of discussion whether everyone has the right to convey their ideas equally. It will only be useful to use social networks in other words new media effectively and consciously.

### **Social Media and Politics in the Context of Spiral of Silence Theory**

The Spiral of Silence theory is a not a phenomenon that excludes not only a group of people who know each other but also it is one that threatens to exclude individuals who are out of the common decision of society. Individuals are mostly unconscious and have a fear of exclusion by birth. In fear of this exclusion, individuals constantly observe people and events around them. Because they have to learn which ideas and behaviours are approved and condemned. When they feel confident that their ideas are the same as the majority of society, they reveal their thoughts with badges, car stickers, clothing, and other symbols that can be seen by all. They prefer to be silent when they think they are minority, and thus they create an impression of weakness in society (Neumann, 1998: 234).

According to the theory, the media issues reflect the dominant idea in society. In order to oppose the dominant vision and to say their own ideas, the individuals as minority are not able to find enough power and opportunity in themselves. Many individuals who do not participate in the views presented in the media are thus forced to refrain from expressing their views and submit to everything presented by the media. Since those who have the courage to declare their ideas are excluded by the society, the other silent party will remain silent for fear of being excluded and will not disrupt their confidence (Yaylagül, 2014: 81-82). Its application and experimenting is a little bit complicated because it relies on the four main assumptions and a fifth assumption that results from them. These assumptions are:

- Society threatens to exclude individuals who are outside the basic and general view.
- Individuals find themselves in constant fear of exclusion.
- Individuals continuously observe and evaluate dominant communities due to fear of exclusion.
- The impressions from these observations affect the behaviour of the individual in society, especially his expressing or hiding opinions (saying ideas or staying in silence). The fifth assumption combines these four assumptions, and makes inferences about the formation, conservation and change of the public (Neumann, 1998: 234).

There are political reasons behind many of the social movements in society. The opinions and ideas of people living in society are different from each other. For this reason, disagreements can be seen and groupings may occur. That the anti-government group or individuals' being organized by means of social media and become a great community raises the question whether social media end the spiral of silence anymore.

In social media platforms where there is an out-of-control or an incomplete control, individuals can share all ideas and thoughts without being impeded by censorship and can reach people without time and space limitations. In this case, social networks are not only places where ideas are spread but also places where social events begin to be organized (Karakoç and Taydaş, 2015: 120). The case of Gezi Park and the Arab Spring can now be seen as examples of this kind of organization. The first starting point of the events in Gezi Park is not a political objective but an act of environmentalists. However, this event, which affects society like many events, have a political basis although it seems not so.

Mass media and social networks have a great impact on individuals. The tools that people benefit from take control of people because of the effect they brought. Gramsci's the concept of "hegemony" explains it. This concept can be expressed as the one who have the dominant opinion make the opposite opinion applied without using any force and pressure. This concept which is closely related to spiral of silence, and individuals are condemned to silence even if they unintentionally contradict their own idea with the imposition of the dominant ideas. Social media will ensure that only individuals are grouped in such a situation, and it does not seem possible to break the spiral of silence. In 1957, Tunisian President Bourguiba sought to establish an authoritarian regime for the victory. He did not want to live with religion but regarded religion as an unrest phenomenon. Bourguiba, who started working in the 60s, closed Zituna, a well-known theology university, and expelled the teachers to an offensive environment. In addition, in front of the television cameras in the month of Ramadan drank to the health of the people (Bostancı, 2011). The dominant opinion that oppressed the innocent people against the Islamic religion crushed its own ideas and the people. This event, which humiliated the people, caused people to become silent. Bostancı (2011) evaluated whether the spiral of silence was broken in the event known as the Arab Spring which occurred in Egypt, the Middle East country. According to Bostancı, the event started by the people and then grew rapidly through social networks and so a single person soon became a crowded community. That administration banned the Internet and that it tried to control social media not only did not work but also took attention to the event. However, this uprising, which started as a popular civil movement, does not have a political sphere beyond orientation, leadership and opposition. Besides that, Bostancı (2011) said that social media is limited in certain subjects and cannot have a political language. It is a fact that silence of spiral has broken down. It is known that during the events occurred in Gezi Park in Turkey, similar things were experienced. Attempts to control social media or access barriers for the internet will remain vain for these issues.

## Social Networks and Political Communication

Today political parties and politicians have to produce political symbols, ethical values, norms, ideological arguments, proposals for solutions to social problems, political goals and policies, and they have to transform them into a message and convey them to the community. Political communication is the way to perform this. The political communication through tools and activities that political parties organized and carried out such as media messages, lobbying, conferences, congresses, seminars, symposiums, meetings, rally, exhibition, concert, opening, commemoration, celebration, visits, wedding, engagement, anniversary, trip, e-mail, telephone, fax, report, brochures, banners, boards, banners, flags, pennants, badges or promotional items, books, magazines, corporate newspapers, brochures, photographs, CDs or videos is mostly reduced to election periods, but they really cover every moment (Erdoğan, 1997: 190).

Fundamentally, political communication which can be defined as the inclusion of political elements into the communication process and the implementation of all communication techniques, methods and tools around political elements, is one of the umbrellas under the communication field. While Steven Chaffee makes a similar definition as “the role of communication in the political process” (Cited by Tokgöz, 2008: 109), Perloff defines it as “the process of negotiation on messages relating to the conduct of public policy and the process of the change of the leader, the press and the citizen of any country” (1998: 8). According to another definition, on the other hand, political communication is “the public discourse is about the ways and practising methods of sharing public recourses, the public authorities in the legislative, executive and judicial systems” (Oktay, 2002:22).

The political communication process is parallel to the communication process in terms of its general elements. Just as all elements (transmitter, receiver, channel, message, feedback) needs to work strongly in order to mention an effective communication in the communication phenomenon and process, it is necessary to use these features effectively for political communication which is an interdisciplinary type of communication umbrella (Dalkıran, 1995:42). Particularly in developed countries, the political communication, which has become an indispensable tool of political life, influencing the perception of electorates in the first stage, assist them to form a view on issues such as how they can participate in the governance process, to choose the right one, works on increasing good relations between the elected and the electorate.

In the present sense, political communication activities developed during the Presidential elections in the United States in the 1950s. The most important point in this development is undoubtedly the mass media. However, according to Oktay ((2002:25), “another element that has a share in the development of political communication as well as the development of mass media is the opposition action groups. These elements defined as non-governmental organizations or pressure groups form the strong pillars with the economic and political support they give to the political party or candidate.” However, there is still a need for the media in order to show and explain the support of such groups to politicians. In the US presidential election, in which political communication techniques professionally used for the first time in this field, a different strategy was implemented in almost every campaign period. The first television advertising in the competition of Eisenhower-Stevenson, the first live broadcast discussion program in the Kennedy-Nixon competition, the first negative political advertising in the competition of Carter-Reagen, the first big budget advertising campaign in the Bush-Dukakis competition, the first Internet use in the Clinton-Dole competition, the first social media application in the Barack Obama-John McCain competition were used within the political communication campaign (Doğan, 2002: 16).

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the new regime, on his own tried to perform the first political communication works in Turkey, right after the foundation of the Republic. Instead of working on a party, candidate or election, the center of the political communication activities of the period was formed by educating the people by making propaganda of the ideology of revolution. However, due to both the low literacy rate and the limited use of radio, the political communication strategy was more directly based on 'direct expression' (Çakan, 2004:302).

During one-party rule in Turkey in 1927, 1931, 1935, 1939, even though parliamentary elections were held, as the results of these elections were definite before the election it will not be possible to say anything important in the name of political communication activities between parties or candidates. The use of political communication studies in the competition between parties or candidates took place in the 1950 general elections, 27 years after the establishment of the new regime, and the Republican People's Party, the founder of the regime and the Democratic Party, which was founded by the members of the Republican People's Party joined the elections. The two parties' demanding to lead the administration also brought the obligation to explain their public promises, and in this sense, political communication was used for the first time in a political competition between parties. With the introduction of radio, newspaper, posters, television and internet into the political communication process, a serious competition between the parties experienced in this arena in Turkey and political parties made serious investments in this area. However, from the 2010s onwards, the social media phenomenon, which has ravaged the whole world, left all the communication tools to date behind and made political parties need to focus their attention on this area. Because every voter can communicate with the whole world through an application that they will download to their mobile phones without the need of any previous mass media (Çambay, 2015). It was nonsense for political parties to avoid or ignore this development, so this happened. Political parties kept up with the communication technologies albeit slowly and started to need expert teams in this field. At present, almost every political party has a social media department, and even if that is not possible, at least a social media expert has been employed under the department of publicity or public relations or propaganda.

In democratic administrations, the people must choose the legislations and principles of management and the rulers who will govern the state with those legislations and principles. Political parties must also be in constant political interaction with the public. This is a compulsory action to maintain their sovereignty and to be able to achieve their goals. It is necessary for achieving unity in society in the process of communication and for the battle between the parties to keep up with power struggles. Election is an inevitable element of democracy (Karaçor, 2009: 123-124). Informing the public to make elections

and contacting with the people construct the basis of political communication. In the form of communication in which social networks are widely used today politicians must use a nice language.

Elections have a very important meaning in democratic societies. Political participation is essential for regular and steady elections. In order to increase political participation, political communication studies should be followed with utmost care. The most common media in political communication is mass media. Political communication environments which were previously dominated by traditional media today has largely left its place to the new media, namely social media networks (Karaçor, 2009: 124). Although the traditional media and the new media have almost the same function, there are also some differences. In the new media, electors can express their feelings and thoughts and make their decisions in a free environment. Conventional media puts electors in a passive position. Because of the commercial nature of the media, especially television channels to reach more audiences, to achieve more ratings and advertising revenue have entered a competitive competition.

Because of this fact, simple texts which reach out to the masses and attract attention and which they consume easily are highly preferred. Most of these texts are magazine content, intensely visual, entertainment purposeful and popular texts. Changes in the general structure in the years after 2000 forced the politician to appear in the media. serving a political party that holds power and administration There are media outlets that serve a political party that holds power and administration and emit its views. By broadcasting in accordance with the ideology of that party and the views and opinions on which the political group they support are based, they graft to the public that they should think as the political group thinks (Yağmur, 2015: 26). A system which tells people what to think and that robots them is installed. In that sense, social networks emerge as places where an individual has the right to say his own opinion a little more. In the Early 21st century, computer, internet and wireless digital communication, as well as increasing social participation which attempts to take them under control, emerge as a major problem. On the other hand, very high costs are required in order to effort to control new communication technologies. Examples of conflicts that use new technologies as weapons for social mind and social space and called as a new generation war are quite numerous. For example, in the bomb attack in Madrid in March 2004, terrorists used a cell phone in order to activate the bomb, but above all cell phones, the internet and digital technologies have the ability to serve more democratic purposes. Following this attack, new technology once used for sending support messages and e-mails to all socialists in Spain or to the public party in the current administration (Cited by Karaçor, 2009: 128).

Internet as the main means of communication of the globalization process has an impact on the interaction of social movements and the mobilization of social opposition at the local, national and even global level. Thanks to the Internet, a sense of unity develops among its users. It is carried out that its users have a certain common consciousness about a certain political consciousness and the goals to be reached and that they demonstrate a direct opposition power against the dominant order (Cited by Karaçor, 2009: 128).

### **Social Media Networks and Social Network Usage of Politicians**

Today, the society driven by social media can be ahead of the political institution. Mass media such as social media platforms provide information to individuals, reach them in a short time and spread the available information. Thus individuals who can quickly access the information they need, who have become conscious, have started to search and question more and they are in a continuous development (Yağmur, 2015: 22). The researcher will question the accuracy or inaccuracy of the information he/she receives and will try to use the social media consciously.

There are more than 30 million active Facebook accounts in our country. People spend an average of 2 hours and 50 minutes per day on social media accounts. Though the most widely used social media network in Turkey is Facebook, it is respectively followed by Twitter, Instagram, Google+, and LinkedIn. In the study of Tayfun Canlı, a digital media expert, the number of followers of some politicians in our country seems to be: Recep Tayyip Erdogan 12 million 982 thousand, Kemal Kilicdaroglu 6 million 240 thousand, State Garden 4 million 780 thousand, Muharrem Ince 3 million 920 thousand, Meral Akşener 2 million 560 thousand, Selahattin Demirtas 1 million 620 thousand, Basic Karamollaoğlu 208 thousand, Eastern Perinçek 201 thousand. It is a fact that social media made the greatest impact on the June 24, 2018 presidential elections. Social media offering a unique opportunity to reach young people in particular has been used actively in Turkish politics. Considering the decrease in television watching ratio we can clearly say that the power of social media has increased (Bayer, 2018).

After the voting age has been reduced to 18, young people's interest in politics becomes higher. Besides that, the impact of social media tools on elections has also begun to increase. 96% of young internet users aged 15-29 also use social media. The fact that 1 million 650 thousand 171 people, who were the voters would vote for the first time in that election, further increases the importance of the issue. When the number of individuals using internet and social media worldwide examined, it is seen that 2.5 billion people use the Internet. 1.8 billion of those users have also accounts on social media networks. While 60% of the population in Turkey that makes about 48 million people connect to the Internet, the number of active social media users reaches up to 48 million. 95% of electronic device users in Turkey is the owner of mobile phone and 75% use smart phones. Laptop and PC users also reach up to 51%. 86% of young people are connected to social media at least once a day and 72% every day. Moreover, 89% follow the shares of people and institutions on their social media list. 88% making comments on the shares of their friends actively use social media networks (Bayer: 2018). When the researches are examined, the idea emerges that the technology age has taken over individuals. While there is no harm in people's using social media, it is more important to use social media consciously and usefully. Social networks used in politics and young population's being more intertwined with technology and social media accelerate the participation of young people in politics and their ideas will also be considered.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan emphasizes that social media should be used effectively instead of old style political propaganda activities in the local elections to be held on March 31, 2019. He thinks that old methods cause image and noise pollution in cities and that politics should take their share in the digitalizing world (Yeni Şafak, 2018). Erdoğan states that old propaganda methods were a show of power in the periods when mass communication facilities were not developed and that they now find it primitive in the age of technology. In addition, Erdoğan expresses that the number of followers in his Twitter account has reached 13.5 million and he says that they are at the top of the world, and he adds that people should benefit from social media (www.haberler.com).

Social networks as a means of communication, which has the task of managing and directing the political sphere has now been transformed into a tool of orientation in political processes. The biggest reason for this is to prevent the use of social media only by an elite stratum using political propaganda and to show that any individual using any social media tool can act as political actor (Yağmur, 2015: 23).

The changes that are taking place today with the development of the Internet are also seen in the political field, especially in the economic sphere. While the number of websites with political content are growing steadily and regularly, it is not possible to predict the effects of internet on political systems in advance. It is a really controversial issue needs to be discussed whether the internet community, defined as a network worldwide, will truly lead to a more liberal environment on the road to a participatory democracy or as in Orwell's novel *1984*, will turn into an audit society led by a computer that sees and hears everything called 'Big Brother' (Ersöz, 2005: 122). Social media is a phenomenon that has emerged with the development of the internet. These networks that support political participation gradually offer a little more innovations and facilities to people.

Political participation can be defined as the decision-making process for individuals' own interests by directing the requests, demands, reactions and actions of them to the nearest political force and the election of political leaders locally and nationally. While they consider political participation as influencing political decisions by society, besides that, in terms of political forces and bureaucracy, they consider it as a decisive will for the solution of national problems in a consensus. In addition, by establishing its objective unity of ideologies and ideas, different political participation also has another meaning for declaring its authority (Cited by, Yağmur, 2015: 25).

Political participation consists of voting for political institutions in connection with them, donating to a political group or campaign, working for a political group or campaign, attending to political meetings, giving signature, participating in demonstrations, making political statements and etc. It is also that individuals enabled with technology, resources, organizations and skills design and manage their own social systems and that communities produce ideas together and continue to work for a better future. Online political participation includes online activities to influence government action with participation in public affairs (Cited by Şener, Emre ve Akyıldız, 2015: 76-77). It is clear from the standpoint of politics that organizational studies are more successful than individual studies. Political work requires unity and solidarity and besides that a good political work reinforces political participation.

## Conclusion

Political transactions as technology gradually develops finds itself in new quests. As the development of the television increases the interest in television, as time progresses, Internet and self-developed environments on the internet are becoming political squares. It is a fact that the changing and developing mass media has brought some problems as it facilitates our lives. It is noteworthy that the use of social networks are used in so called as social movements or social actions that may be accepted as a revolt in the struggles of people mostly with power. Social media, which has an organizing aspect, can also bring together many people from the same idea. These platforms, which are based on instant messages, are now used in politics in a clear and active way.

We have mentioned that rapid dissemination of shared content on social media networks without time and space limitations and the instantaneous response of social media has increased the use of social media. Therefore, it would be appropriate to say that the traditional media is the masses of the elderly and those who use the social media are the young masses. Reducing the age of being elected in order to ensure the early participation of young people in politics will lead the young population to conduct research on politics. In this case, it is inevitable that politicians affect young people through social media. However, the main problem here is to use social media well in order to conduct a successful propaganda process.

Intense use of social media by politicians also stimulated competition among parties and ultimately, they entered the race for a better service. Social media has been the main station of politicians in order to influence the voters' ideas, change their attitudes, and make the voter dependent on a decision. Social media is of great importance especially for young people to talk about politics through social media and to feel more free in this environment.

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## Genişletilmiş Özet

Günümüzde internet ve sosyal medya her alanda yaygın bir biçimde kullanılmaktadır. Özellikle gençlerin ilgi odağı olan sosyal medya, hâkim olduğu alanları genişlettikçe her yaş grubunu kendine çekmeye başlamıştır. İnsanların sosyalleşmelerinin yanında; eğlence, bilgilenme, haberleşme vb. gibi birçok kişisel ve toplumsal ihtiyacı da içinde barındırmaktadır. Sosyal medyanın kolay ulaşılabilir ve geniş kitlelere seslenebilir oluşu onu siyasi alanda da kullanımını cazibeli kılmaktadır. Siyasal katılımın ve de siyasal kampanyaların sosyal medya üzerinden yürütülmesi elbette sadece halk için geçerli olamamakla birlikte, devlet adamları da sosyal medya üzerinden işlerini kolaylıkla yürütebilmektedir. Partilerin seçim çalışmaları, seçim kampanyaları, duyurular ve halk için yapılan her türlü icraat sosyal medya hesaplarından sunulmaktadır. İktidarların internet erişimi vb. gibi engelleme girişimleri gibi sansür çalışmaları, bazı siyasi konularda sosyal ağların bilgiyi hızlı yayması nedeniyle sonuçsuz kalabilmektedir. Siyasetle gündelik olayların birbirinden bağımsız düşünülmesi pek mümkün olmamaktadır. Kişilerin kendi fikir ve düşüncelerine yakın olan siyasi partiyi seçmesi bunu sosyal ağlar üzerinden topluluklar kurup geniş kitlelere ulaştırılması artık tek bir birey yerine büyük bir kitleden söz edilmesine yol açmaktadır. Özellikle genç kitleyi etkilemek isteyen siyasiler iyi bir taktikle kendi propagandasını yaparak oylarını artırabilmektedir. İnternet teknolojisi siyasal kampanya çalışmalarına özellikle 1990'lı yılların ortalarında girmiştir. Genel olarak her teknolojiye olduğu gibi internet teknolojisi de siyasal kampanyalar da sınırlı olarak işlev görmüştür. Teknolojik alt yapının yetersizliği ve abone sayısının azlığı sınırlı kullanımın en önemli nedenlerindedir. Ancak günümüzde böyle bir sınırlılık ve sorunların olması söz konusu değildir. İnternet siyasal kampanya çalışmaları açısından önemli iletişim araçları arasında yerini almıştır. Sosyal medya her alanda etkinliğini sürdürdüğü gibi siyaset alanında yoğun bir şekilde kullanılmaktadır. Partiler adına açılan sayfalar, siyasetçilerin propagandalarını sınırlı özgürlükler çerçevesinde sunduğu alanlar olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Kimi zamanda partiler adına açılan sayfalar normal bir kullanıcı tarafından kendine hedef kitle belirleyip destek amaçlı faaliyetlerini yürütmektedir. Günümüzde bireyler, geleneksel medyanın yanı sıra Facebook, Twitter gibi yeni iletişim teknolojilerinin araçları olan sosyal platformları da aktif olarak kullanmaktadırlar. Seçmen ve bu seçmenin desteklediği siyasetçi arasında, aracısız iletişim imkânı sunan sosyal medya önemli bir iletişim aracı konumuna gelmektedir. İnternetin ve sunduğu olanakların gelişmesinin siyaset açısından olumlu yönlerini vurgulanmaktadır. Siyasal partilerin; kendilerine sayfalar açarak seçmenlerle iletişimlerini kuvvetlendirmeye çalıştıklarını ayrıca siyasal kampanyalarda internetin çeşitli olanaklarından aktif olarak yararlandıkları bilinmektedir. Görüldüğü gibi internetin yaygınlaşmasıyla hız kazanan olgu seçim kampanyalarının da biçimini de oldukça değiştirmiştir. Sosyal medya siyasette etkin olarak ilk defa 2008 yılı ABD Başkanlık seçimlerinde başkan adayı olarak kendini gösteren Barack Obama tarafından kullanılmıştır. Obama, halkın % 52'sinin desteğini almakla beraber ayrıca son 30 yıl içinde hiçbir Demokrat Partili başkan adayının elde edemediği başarıyı da yakalamıştır. Bu başarının ardında sosyal medyanın rolü oldukça fazladır. Obama; gençlerin geleneksel kitle iletişim araçları yerine sosyal medyayı kullandıklarının fazlasıyla bilincinde olarak hareket etmiştir. Geleneksel medyadan ziyade sosyal medyayı kullanarak Obama'nın zaferi, "yeni medya zaferi" olarak adlandırılmıştır. Sosyal ağların bilinçli ve etkili kullanmayı bilen politikacıların başarı elde ettiği açıktır. Ancak başarısız olan siyasetçilerin sosyal medyayı etkili kullanmayı bilmediği ise göz ardı edilmemesi gereken noktadır. Sosyal ağlar, siyasilerin gücü elinde tutabilmesi ve kalıcı bir iktidara sahip olabilmelerine zemin oluşturan bir yapıya sahiptir. İktidarı ve yönetimi elinde tutan bir siyasi partiye hizmet eden, onun görüşlerini yayan medya organları bulunmaktadır. Destekledikleri siyasi grubun temel aldıkları görüş ve düşüncelere, o partinin ideolojisine uygun yönde yayınlar yaparak, kamuoyuna öyle düşünmesi gerektiği fikrini aşılarlar. Böylece insanlara neyin nasıl düşünülmesi gerektiğini söyleyen ve onları robotlaştıran bir sistem kurulmaktadır. Sosyal ağlar, bu durum da biraz daha bireyinde kendi fikrini söyleme hakkına sahip olduğu mecralar olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Günümüzde, sosyal medyanın yönlendirdiği toplum, siyaset kurumunun önüne geçebilmektedir. Sosyal medya platformları gibi kitle iletişim araçları bireylere bilgi sağlama, kısa sürede ulaşma ve ulaşılan bilgiyi yayma imkânı sunmaktadır. Bu sayede, kendisinin ihtiyaç duyduğu bilgiye hızla ulaşabilen, bilinçlenen bireyler, daha fazla araştırmaya, sorgulamaya başlamış, sürekli bir gelişim içine girmiş bulunmaktadır. Araştıran birey aldığı bilgilerin doğruluğunu ya da yanlışlığını kendinde sorgulayacak ve sosyal medyayı bilinçli olarak doğru bir şekilde kullanmaya çalışacaktır. Ülkemizde 30 milyonun üzerinde aktif olarak kullanılan Facebook hesabı bulunmaktadır. İnsanlar zamanlarının günde ortalama olarak 2 saat 50 dakikasını sosyal medya hesaplarında geçirmektedir. Türkiye'de en çok kullanılan sosyal medya ağı Facebook olmakla birlikte onu sırasıyla Twitter, Instagram, Google+ ve LinkedIn mecrası takip etmektedir. Ülkemizdeki bazı siyasetçilerin takipçi sayıları şöyle görünmektedir: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan 12 milyon 982 bin, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu 6 milyon 240 bin, Devlet Bahçeli 4 milyon 780 bin, Muharrem İnce 3 milyon 920 bin, Meral Akşener 2 milyon 560 bin, Selahattin Demirtaş 1 milyon 620 bin, Temel Karamollaoğlu 208 bin, Doğu Perinçek 201 bin. 24 Haziran'da yapılan Cumhurbaşkanlığı seçimlerine en büyük etkiyi sosyal medyanın yaptığı bir gerçektir. Özellikle genç kitleye ulaşmada eşsiz bir imkân sunan sosyal medya Türk siyasetinde de aktif olarak kullanılmaya başlanmıştır. Televizyonun izlenme oranlarında ki düşüşü göz önüne alırsak sosyal medyanın gücünün arttığını net bir şekilde söyleyebiliriz. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, 31 Mart 2019 tarihinde yapılacak olan yerel seçimlerde eski tarz siyasi propaganda faaliyetleri yerine sosyal medyanın etkin bir şekilde kullanılması gerektiğini vurgulamaktadır. Eski yöntemlerin, şehirlerde görüntü ve gürültü kirliliğine neden olduğunu, dijitalleşen dünyada siyasetinde bundan payını alması gerektiği düşünülmektedir. Erdoğan, kitle iletişim imkânlarının gelişmediği dönemlerde eski propaganda yöntemlerini siyasette bir güç gösterisi olduğunu, teknoloji çağında bunu artık ilkel bulduklarını belirtmektedir. Ayrıca Erdoğan, kendisine ait olan Twitter hesabında takipçi sayısının 13,5 milyona ulaştığını ve dünya da ilk sıralarda yer aldıklarını söyleyerek sosyal medyanın faydalarından yararlanılması gerektiğini ifade etmektedir. Siyasal alanı yönetmek ve yönlendirmek görevini üstlenmiş bir iletişim aracı olan sosyal ağlar, siyasal süreçlerde artık, bir yönlendirme aracına dönüştürülmüştür. Bunun en büyük nedeni; sosyal medyanın siyasal propaganda amacıyla kullanılarak siyasetin sadece elit bir tabaka tarafından yapılmasını engellemek ve herhangi bir sosyal medya aracını kullanan her bireyin siyasal aktör olarak görev yapabileceğini göstermek içindir.