



T.C.

ANKARA YILDIRIM BEYAZIT UNIVERSITY

THE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

**POLITICS – NEW MEDIA RELATIONSHIP**

**2015-2018 GENERAL ELECTIONS**

PhD THESIS

**ÖMER FATİH SAYAN**

THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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**SUPERVISOR**

ANKARA, 2023

## ONAY SAYFASI

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## ABSTRACT

The thesis makes an assessment of the current state of the new media-politics relationship by focusing on the leaders' use of social media on Twitter during the election campaigns prior to the 2015-2018 general elections. It is also intended to draw a general framework by addressing the impact of new media on politics from a historical perspective. The aim of this thesis is to show whether there is a simultaneous development and adaptation in political communication efforts with the innovations in communication technologies by reviewing the social media usage of leaders during the election period as data. In this context, the main contribution of this research to the literature is to reveal how and to what extent the innovations provided by the new media are used by politicians and to make various determinations about how these innovations are received by voters.

Prior to the 2015 and 2018 general elections, secondary data and descriptive analysis methods, which are quantitative research methods, were used in order to examine these data with a holistic perspective, taking into account the historical process.

In this framework, the study consists of Introduction, New Communication Technologies and New Media, Political Communication, The Impact of New Media in Türkiye and Conclusion chapters. New media and new communication technologies are discussed in their historical process, and political communication and propaganda activities and techniques that have developed in parallel with this are briefly evaluated in Türkiye. The differences between traditional media and new media are emphasized. The general characteristics, advantages and disadvantages of social media are presented, and the use of Twitter - as the most widespread and effective social media platform - by political leaders, especially during the 2015-2018 General Elections, is focused on. Based on the data obtained, graphs and tables were prepared and a general evaluation was made.

**Key words:** New Media, Social Media, Twitter, Web 2.0, Industry 4.0, Political Communication, Information Technologies.

## ÖZET

Bu tezin konusu, 2015-2018 genel seçimler öncesinde, seçim kampanyaları sırasında liderlerin Twitter üzerinden gerçekleştirdikleri sosyal medya kullanımlarına odaklanarak yeni medya siyaset ilişkisinin mevcut durumuna dair bir değerlendirme yapmaktır. Yeni medyanın siyasete olan etkisini tarihsel perspektiften ele almak suretiyle genel bir çerçeveye de çizilmek istenmiştir.

Bu tezin amacı, seçim döneminde liderlerin sosyal medya kullanımlarını veri olarak kullanarak, iletişim teknolojilerindeki yeniliklerle siyasi iletişim çalışmalarında eşzamanlı bir gelişme ve adaptasyon olup olmadığını göstermektir. Bu bağlamda bu araştırmanın en temel önemi, yeni medyanın sağladığı yeniliklerin siyasetçiler tarafından nasıl ve ne ölçüde kullanıldığını ortaya koymak ve bu yeniliklerin seçmenler nezdinde nasıl karşılık bulduğuyla ilgili çeşitli saptamalarda bulunmaktır.

2015 ve 2018 genel seçimler öncesinde, liderlerin Twitter kullanımlarına ilişkin verilere ulaştıktan sonra bu verilerin bu yöntemle tarihsel süreç de göz önüne alınarak bütüncül bir bakışla incelenmesi amacıyla nicel araştırma yöntemlerinden ikincil veri ve betimsel analiz yöntemleri kullanılmıştır.

Bu kapsamda çalışma Giriş, Yeni İletişim Teknolojileri ve Yeni Medya, Siyasal İletişim, Türkiye’de Yeni Medyanın Etkisi ve Sonuç bölümlerinden oluşmaktadır. Yeni medya ve yeni iletişim teknolojileri tarihsel süreci içinde ele alınmış, bununla paralel olarak gelişen siyasal iletişim ve propaganda faaliyetleri ve teknikleri Türkiye özelinde kısaca değerlendirilmiştir. Geleneksel medya ile yeni medya arasındaki farklar üzerinde durulmuştur. Sosyal medyanın genel özellikleri, avantajları ve dezavantajları ortaya konularak, özellikle 2015-2018 Genel Seçimlerinde siyasi liderlerin –en yaygın ve etkili sosyal medya platformu olarak– Twitter kullanımlarına odaklanılmıştır. Buradaki verilere dayanarak grafik ve tablolar hazırlanmış ve genel bir değerlendirme yapılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Yeni Medya, Sosyal Medya, Twitter, Web 2.0, Endüstri 4.0, Siyasal İletişim, Bilgi Teknolojileri.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

|          |                                                   |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 3D       | :Three Dimension                                  |
| AK PARTY | :Justice and Development Party                    |
| ARGE     | :Research and Developement                        |
| ARPANET  | :Advanced Research Projects Authority Net         |
| BBDO     | :Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn                |
| CERN     | :European Laboratory for Particle Physics         |
| CHP      | :Republican People's Party                        |
| DARPA    | :The Defense Advanced Research Project Agency     |
| DNA      | :Deoxyribonucleic Acid                            |
| DP       | :Democrat Party                                   |
| HDP      | :Peoples' Democratic Party                        |
| IT       | :Information Technologies                         |
| İİBF     | :Faculty of Economics And Administrative Sciences |
| MHP      | :Nationalist Movement Party                       |
| NSF      | :US National Science Foundation                   |
| TCP/IP   | :Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protokol  |
| TRT      | :Turkish Radio and Television Corporation         |
| TÜİK     | :Turkish Statistical Institute                    |
| URL      | :Uniform Resource Loader                          |
| US       | :United States                                    |
| USA      | :United States of America                         |
| www      | :World Wide Web                                   |
| YSK      | :The Supreme Election Council                     |

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Man is a social being, and one of the basic needs of humans is communication. It is possible for an individual to express oneself, connect with their environment, recognize their culture, and transfer their culture to future generations and other societies. There is an ongoing effort in society to communicate in the most effective and efficient ways, leading to the enrichment of language and literature. Communication tools should be robust, and the content should be strong.

In the past, communities took pride in the linguistic richness and national symbols of their states. Communication has also been a subject of competition between various communities. Access to faster, more efficient, and convenient communication routes has been crucial, especially in economic and military contexts. Technological advancements in this direction have brought significant advantages to society.

In ancient times, devices like catapults were developed for warfare, and these mechanisms and weapons were suitable for the methods and strategies of that era. Similarly, in contemporary times, the same can be said for advanced missile systems. The security and deterrence policies of nations are closely tied to the development of such technologies. This also applies to communication systems.

According to many historians, one of the factors that made the Persian Empire the first true world empire in history was its strong network of communication and intelligence across its borders. Messages conveyed through smoke signals from fires burned on distant hills could rapidly reach the other end of the country and even the capital, facilitating swift communication of impending armies, uprisings, famines, and more. Various smoke signals were used to convey different messages, transferred from one hill to another.

Human needs have remained consistent throughout history. As we will see later, the internet, which has transformed not only communication processes but also our way of life, originated from military efforts rather than pure scientific curiosity and endeavor.

In this context, our transition from fixed communication in time and space to communication between time and space defines the first two communications revolutions that occurred in the prehistoric times of humanity: sending smoke, drums, and fire signals to distant distances and sending messengers to create bridges between different places. The

time dimension of communication was exceeded by drawing in caves with the signs inherited from the later generations.

The invention of writing was a pivotal step in the process of communication, enabling people to transcend both space and the limitations of oral tradition. Every thought seeks an expression, and thoughts are categorized alongside experiences. Our perception of the world and the systems of interpretation we construct to make sense of our surroundings provide a framework for data processing.

In the fifteenth century, a true revolution unfolded in Europe with Gutenberg's introduction of the printing press. Although the concept of printing with movable parts was first used by the Chinese, Gutenberg's press marked a significant turning point. According to McLuhan, the printing press brought about noteworthy economic, political, religious, and social transformations. These changes also extended to the spiritual realm, altering the very fabric of people's inner lives. Besides, McLuhan, predicting nearly forty years ago that technological developments would radically change the ways of communication and interaction, attributed meanings to the media beyond his time, made it the focal point <sup>1</sup> and put forward a perspective that not only the content but also the media itself would transform and change the whole way of life with his famous "media is the message" declaration.<sup>2</sup>

However, the real revolution happened in the second half of the nineteenth century. With electronic inventions and the discovery of the possibilities of long-distance communication through airborne signals, a revolution based on the telegraph, telephone, and other inventions such as this took place. What was new here was the development of communication tools for directly transferring voice/speech, text/data, and images over different channels and long distances. After these inventions, the invention of radio and television resulted from these successive technical developments.

In the same way, these extraordinary innovations in communication continued to develop in this economic, social and political atmosphere. Due to the two world wars and the intense competition between developed countries, this competition had been further increasing in a technical sense. In the aftermath of the war, this spirit of competition became

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<sup>1</sup> **McLuhan, Marshall**, (1968). War and Peace in the Global Village, Bantam: NY, Gingko Press, p. 53

<sup>2</sup> **Yanık, Akan** (2016) 'Yeni Medya Nedir Ne Değildir', Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi, Vol: 9 Issue: 45, p. 901.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/308721951\\_YENI\\_MEDYA\\_NEDIR\\_NE\\_DEGILDIR\\_WHAT\\_IS\\_NEW\\_MEDIA\\_OR\\_NOT](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/308721951_YENI_MEDYA_NEDIR_NE_DEGILDIR_WHAT_IS_NEW_MEDIA_OR_NOT) Accessed. 01.02.2023.

evident across nearly all domains. In the post-war era, the emergence of expansive mainframe computers and satellite systems, functioning as instruments or data processors driven by various algorithms, brought about a distinct transformation in the landscape of technological rivalry.

Later, with the complete emergence of information technologies in the 1970s, the new technological paradigm revealed a new and inevitable dimension of perception and way of living the world, embodied as a manifestation of a new production, communication, management and way of life in interaction with the global economy and world geopolitics, starting from American society.

Technological advancements in the realm of communication and information technologies, coupled with innovations facilitated by fiber optics and other technologies, have inaugurated a new era in this domain.

At the point where we can confidently state that technology, or its absence, plays a pivotal role in determining societies' ability to undergo transformation, coupled with the persistent way in which societies have chosen to pass on their technological potential through a process marked by conflicts, the uniqueness of historical evolution and social change has reached an unprecedented level in history.

Information and knowledge are critical in all forms of development, as the production process is consistently founded upon a level of knowledge and the manipulation of information. Nevertheless, what is peculiar to the form of Information development is that the act of Information Retrieval is the main source of productivity itself. Processing information focuses on the development of information technology as a source of productivity; the development of information technology takes place in the loop between the information at the source of the technology and its usage.

At the point where countries have achieved an unparalleled level of control and influence over historical evolution and social transformation, having maximized their technological potential and showcased their capacity to undergo profound metamorphosis through intense competition among themselves, these conflicts and wars, against which they must remain vigilant at any given moment, have also propelled their command and influence over historical evolution and social transformation to an unprecedented zenith in history.

Technological revolutions have focused on the process as well as the emergence of new products. On the other hand, contrary to other revolutions, the core of the transformation we experience in today's revolution coincides with information processing and communication technologies. Technological revolutions have focused on the process and the emergence of new products. On the other hand, contrary to other revolutions, the core of the transformation we experience in today's revolution coincides with information processing and communication technologies.

The driving force in the development of industrial society has been the distribution and production of energy. These developments in a spectrum ranging from the steam engine to electricity, fossil fuels, and even nuclear energy have been the driving force behind the progress of societies. The same is true for information technologies today.

Information technologies based on electronics have a unique memory capacity and database. Hypertexts offer a serious infrastructure and flexibility in issues such as feedback, mutual interaction, and text rearrangement; thus, it completely changes the direction of communication. Online communication, combined with the flexibility of text, makes it possible to have asynchronous space/time programming that can be everywhere simultaneously.

Information communication technologies transform the world, societies, and people by covering a vast and increasingly expanding area from essential electronic circuit components to entire circuits (microchips), lasers, fiber optic cables, and components, a wide variety of electromechanical components, audio and image sensors, and transmitters.

New information technologies are tools to be applied and a process that requires continuous innovation. In this process, as a person identifies with the tool he has made with technology, he also changes as technology changes. Therefore, computers, communication systems, genetic decoding, and genetic programming develop the human mind and simultaneously become an extension of it. It has become possible to see all the concrete expressions and images of our thought and ways of life in all areas of life, in all material and intellectual cultural products in service areas such as transportation and communication systems, health, and education.

This increasing convergence, intertwining, and decoupling between humans and machines gradually eliminates the decoupling between humans and machines. Transhumanism, where topics such as posthumanism are discussed, radically changes all our

ways of thinking about being born, living, learning, working, producing, consuming, war, and death.

Especially in the last twenty years of the twentieth century, information technologies, as well as other fields, significant technological breakthroughs took place with the contribution of these technologies in many other fields, namely energy resources, medical applications, and almost every field of industrial production. Moreover, the current technological transformation process has expanded by creating a common plane between technological fields thanks to the standard digital language in which information is produced, accumulated, found, processed, and transmitted decently. Now we live in a digitalized world.

Digital communication is carried out through platforms where it is carried out with fiber optics and several new techniques instead of an analog system that allows information to be sent and received over a frequency determined by changing the electromagnetic current. This technology allows data creation, storage, processing, and transmission in arithmetic binary order. The most significant difference between digital data and analog data is that analog data exists on a continuous scale. In contrast, digital data exists on a non-continuous scale limited to numbers. Since the digital data is obtained by sequencing the numbers one after the other, a format change operation can be performed. This change of form manifests itself in many areas.

At the heart of this breakthrough in information communication technologies are computers and computer-based technologies. These technological efforts yielded their first products during the second world war. The first appearance and development of the computer began with the commercialization of the electronic computer in the 1940s. They continued with the spread of network-based communication with personal computers in the mid-1980s and 1990s.

The emergence and development of the Internet is a great revolution transforming human history. The Internet is a result of the cooperation of military strategic initiatives and science, a combination of private technological entrepreneurs and innovative efforts that almost challenge culture.

ARPANET, created in 1969 to be used for military purposes, is the first ancestor of the Internet. In the mid-1970s, TCP/IP protocols were created to regulate the use of the

network in order to extend the network into the field of communication.<sup>3</sup> In the 1980s, the US National Science Foundation (NSF) expanded the use of this strategically important technology to include.<sup>4</sup> As a result of the desire to stand out in high-technological competition and the fierce competition of the two superpowers of the era in the field of high technology, the Internet was an innovation that emerged with the implementation of several projects, the effects of which later had profound political, cultural and social consequences.

As digital technology evolved, it enabled the packaging of diverse forms of communication, including voice, images, and data. This development paved the way for the creation of a network capable of transmitting connections without the need for centralized control centers. The universality of the digital language, coupled with the algorithms and communication system logic, laid the groundwork for a globally connected, horizontal mode of communication. This technological framework enabled a paradigm shift in how communication occurred on a global scale.

Thus, information flow that has exceeded the boundaries of time and space, information banks, databases, direct broadcast satellites, fiber optic cables, point-to-point wireless communication protocols that can provide high-speed data transmission, and many other technological ways are shared thanks to a wide variety of interfaces and tools that allow them to be placed under the control of a person by method, and the communication process is becoming an increasingly significant instrument.

Viewing the change holistically, technological progress has facilitated the integration of telecommunications, information, and communication technologies through a shared technical infrastructure. This interconnectedness has woven the world together with intricate networks, where people have become interconnected through these networks and gradually even objects are joining this interconnected web.

The development of information and communication technologies has led to the emergence of new communication environments characterized by diverse structures and content. The evolution is driven by factors such as commodification, digitalization,

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<sup>3</sup> **Sert, Nuray** “Yeni Medyada Aktivist Hareketler”, Yeni Medya Araştırmaları, Sayımer, İdil (Ed.) (2014), Konya, Literatürk, p.299.

<sup>4</sup> **Başlar, G.** (2013) ‘Yeni Medyanın Gelişimi ve Dijitalleşen Kapitalizm’, Akademik Bilişim XV. Akademik Bilişim Konferansı Bildirileri, Antalya, Akdeniz Üniversitesi, p. 823-831.

convergence, commercialization, and network structuring. These elements collectively shape the landscape of these novel communication environments.

On the other hand, information technologies are intertwined with information due to their structure, and the new economic organization using these common bases forces the national, regional and global economies to integrate while the mass communication infrastructure has accelerated this process; the process has gained a global dimension with the diversification of distribution channels and international regulations.<sup>5</sup>

Castells mention that the information society, which is almost evolving along with new communication technologies, has emerged as a result of the historical overlap of three independent processes.<sup>6</sup>The first of these processes is the information technology revolution, which developed in the 1970s; the second is the restructuring process of capitalism that lasted throughout the 1980s; and the last is the cultural-social movements that emerged in the 1960s and continue today with these developments gaining a global dimension, the world is moving in a very different direction.

With the new communication technologies, the way of life has changed, making it easier and more complicated than before the twenty-first century. Especially in the early 1990s, the communication sector entered an unprecedented period of technological innovation in the history of civilization. One of the most important factors underlying the initiation of a major transformation process in the communication sector is the technological leap phenomenon experienced since the beginning of the 1970s, which has become evident by the significant transformations in the structure of telecommunication technologies tools of computers.

Digitalization and technical advantages have had a number of effects on the use of Information Technologies. These effects are continuous innovation, growth, low cost, constantly expanding service areas, and the internet that converges at some point on everything. The most important factor in the emergence of the new economic concept is the quality improvement in information technology products that revolutionize these developments. With faster, better and cheaper content, the new concept of economics refers to the speed of technology change and product development.

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<sup>5</sup> **Törenli, Nurcan** (2005) *Yeni Medya, Yeni İletişim Ortamı*, Ankara, Bilim ve Sanat Yayınları, p. 93-95.

<sup>6</sup> **Castells, Manuel** (2006) *Manuel Castells’le Söyleşiler* (Transl: Kılıç, Ebru), İstanbul, Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları.

Companies in all sectors of the economy, including the services sector, have to renew themselves to respond to complex consumer and job demands and remain high in global competition. Digital technologies deliver all kinds of voice, text, image, and information to the recipients faster, cheaper and safer, eliminating the time and space limits for the transmission of information, creating a highly competitive environment.<sup>7</sup>

This technological development, which has emerged in preparing the ground by the motto of information societies, also brings different expansions in creating its economy. Accordingly, if traditional mass media are a result of the logic of the mass production industry, the new means of communication also coincide with the economic and cultural structure of postindustrial society based on individual values. In this respect, its economy will not be based on energy, as in the industrial revolution, but on information technologies.

With respect to the future of information technologies, two different views emerge, one optimistic and one pessimistic. While it has been pointed out that developments in information technologies will bring about a social change greater than the Industrial Revolution, it has been noted that it will be primarily a change that begins in the economy, the material production system, and evolves from parliamentary democracy to participatory democracy with intense technological advances brought about by economic competition. On the other view, it has been suggested that a transformation will take place that will change not only business life but also the nature of work, even the family structure and all the habits of humanity. According to this, the new civilization will come with new rules of behavior and will lead us away from standardization, synchronization, centralism, and the concentration of energy, money and power in one center, and will lead to a completely different social structure.

According to Castells, as societies lose their dominance over networks, the social determinism of networks will increase, and the language, discourse, and power of networks will be able to get ahead of the language and discourse of power.<sup>8</sup> For these reasons, the information society is considered as shaping society through communication.

Additionally, most of the technological tools have the purpose of improving people's physical abilities, transportation and communication skills, in which context communication

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<sup>7</sup> **Negroponte, Nicholas** (1996) *Being Digital*, London, Vintage, p. 10.

<sup>8</sup> **Castells, Manuel** (2009) *Communication Power*, New York, Oxford University Press. p. 99-100.

technology is associated with the rare conceptual abilities of thought, consciousness, and humans.

New communication environments have led to increased individualization of societies with new means of mass communication. From this point of view, civil society gradually had small communication masses, and these masses preferred not to participate in the general society and not to deal with what was happening around them in the social sense; rather, they preferred to communicate in close phases with their friends. Therefore, the relationships were built on the level of the immediate forms of life and began to live on the micro level<sup>9</sup>

These developments, called the new media, are harboring freer communication. In this process, where public discussion areas are moved to the virtual world, organized movements are formed in networks called social media, and social trends are shaped from entertainment to political activities in a wide perspective.

The communication media that emerge with the new media, and that are thought to provide more free means of communication than to facilitate our lives, are linked in their functioning to the expansion and continuity of the global market at some point. Although they allow publishing organizations to be established with smaller budgets and simpler technical structures than in the past, and allow for an interactive mass communication process, control of the new media is still in the hands of organizations that control the development and control of the infrastructure.

After World War II, traditional media tools were used for communication until the 1960s. When the 1960s came and the effects of the war started to be erased, more innovative communication tools were introduced. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the media began to shape as the computer began to descend into everyday life. Until the 1980s, media communication tools, written communication tools were predominant, but in the early 1990s, especially with the establishment of private televisions and the rapid changes that cell phones and the Internet have brought into daily life, competition has reached a dizzying speed along with the widespread technological race in this field. Societies have become voluntary consumers of every new product heard in the realm of information technologies.

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<sup>9</sup>Koskinen, Ilpo (2006) Mobile Multimedia in Society: Uses and Social Consequences.  
<http://www.uiah.fi/~ikoskine/> Accessed. 21.04.2023.

Many things are subject of change in terms of lifestyles and the way politics is conducted. All forms of communication between people are transforming, and new forms are emerging. With the development of new mediacommunication among people on Earth has increased.

New media technologies, usually restricted to the Internet, are becoming part of ordinary life in terms of form and content, and are expanding to include traditional mass media as well. With new media, communication is characterized as "information flow" instead of product or commodity valuation, and the nature of communication is realized in a global, (possibly) democratic structure.<sup>10</sup> It allows people to set up websites, create blogs, and express themselves through photos on their accounts. The emergence of New Media Technologies has been made possible by a combination of historical developments in computer and media technologies that have been advancing in two distinct ways. Safko and Brake define social media as Web-based applications that are conversational, created with multimedia (words, pictures, videos and audio elements) and can be easily published and created.<sup>11</sup>

With the internet, social life began to be experienced in the digital environment. Providing rapid communication, eliminating geographical disparities, and allowing feedback, especially in terms of institutions to provide more time and profits, the internet has increased the applications in this media. In this respect, the internet has become a necessary communication medium for individuals and institutions in terms of the possibilities it provides.

One of the most important reasons for the widespread use of the internet among individuals and institutions is the rapid increase in interest in social media practices after the 2000s, as well as broadband and mobile internet services. Social media usage, which has become a habit for today's virtual media users, responds to the social demands and expectations of a wide audience from every culture and every segment, initiating an interaction process. The development of new communication environments and the excessive interest of different audiences in information and communication technologies increase the power of social media and give a new dimension to the concept of socialization.

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<sup>10</sup> **Timisi, Nilüfer** (2003) *Yeni İletişim Teknolojileri ve Demokrasi*, Ankara, Dost Yayınevi, p. 12-13.

<sup>11</sup> **Safko, Lon/Brake, David. K.** (2009) *The Social Media Bible: Tactics, Tools and Strategies for Business Success*, New Jersey, John Wiley & Sons, p. 6.

## **The Subject of Thesis**

The aim of this thesis is to assess the current state of the new media-political relationship by focusing on the social media usage of the leaders via Twitter during the election campaigns before the 2015-2018 general elections. While information and communication technologies are changing rapidly, drawing a general framework by considering the impact of the new media on politics from a historical perspective is necessary.

The characteristics of new media are listed as follows: introducing the political party and its leaders, along with their rhetoric; informing the voter audience about party events through a regular flow of information; organizing voters' opinions on certain issues; gathering financial support for the party within the limits permitted by political decrees; and providing support and monitoring for the activities of the political party and/or its leader in offline environments.

A holistic approach is demonstrated by providing a comprehensive overview of both communication technologies and political communication and behavioral issues. In the historical process, following a general examination of the media-politics relationship, the impact of communication between politicians and voters on political behaviors are discussed. The emphasis is on the ways in which new media, particularly Twitter, is utilized during election periods when the overall trajectory of political life is determined.

In the public sphere, the interactions of people connected by social networks in these new media channels, the way they communicate, and the consequences of these are among the most important research topics of social sciences and one political science. While the effect of the new media on politics, the way politicians use it, the political tendencies of the mass, and its role in the decision-making processes come to the fore as the main research topics, the aim of this research is to investigate the impact of the new media on politics by analyzing the effects of political behavior, attitudes and reactions to politics depending on the developing technologies by revealing the numerical data of the electoral studies carried out on Twitter as the most common social media platform, with the help of messages produced, the content, the shares and the interaction especially during the election periods.

With the Internet, social life began to be experienced in the digital environment, and the Internet, providing fast communication, eliminating geographical differences, allowing feedback, being more efficient and profitable, especially for institutions, increased the

applications in this medium. People are both producers and consumers in these virtual networks. Such virtual networks have become a communication environment for the whole world with the opportunities provided by information and communication technologies and at this point. Life almost flows in these networks.

Social media, which has now become an indispensable habit, responds to the social demands and expectations of a wide audience from every culture and every segment and initiates an interaction process. The fact that people from all segments of society closely follow both this technology and the content produced with this technology, and even their own transformation into content producers, increases the power of the new media extraordinarily and gives a completely different direction and meaning to people's socialization practices.

Social media is one of the most ideal communication environments with its interactive structure that can be updated continuously, is open to multiple uses, and allows sharing. People can freely express all kinds of thoughts about daily life on social media, write, discuss these thoughts, and produce new ideas. At the same time, they can share various photos and videos in addition to their personal information, as well as some urgent needs and announcements are conveyed there. People can also search for a job, they can even do shopping, they can experience the real world in a virtual environment without getting bored.<sup>12</sup> Considering that large segments of the society have access to electronic networks and most of them spend most of their time on social networks; the Internet, and social media, political actors and political parties have not been indifferent to this to achieve their political goals and objectives.

Given their ability to direct, influence, and control the masses, it is of paramount importance to examine how political parties and leaders, who shape the future of society and play a decisive role in its destiny, utilize these communication channels. Through the use of new media in politics, which has now become an integral part of social, economic, and cultural life, parties and political figures gain the direct and immediate opportunity to reach wide segments of people who spend a significant portion of their time on these platforms.

New media practices hold immense theoretical and practical significance for political leaders and parties, particularly during election periods, in terms of projecting the future impact of

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<sup>12</sup> Solmaz, Başak./Tekin, Gökhan/ Herzem, Züleyha/Demir, Muhammed (2013) 'İnternet ve Sosyal Medya Kullanımı Üzerine Bir Uygulama', Selçuk Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Akademik Dergisi, Vol:7, Issue: 4, p. 23-32.

this novel experience on the transformation of political life, the evolution of political struggle in terms of representation, political participation and competition. As social media expertise continues to wield substantial influence across nearly every sector; political parties, in particular, pays utmost significance on employing social media experts within their staff or appointing individuals with a background in communication technologies. Parties evaluate their social media efforts in a manner akin to opinion polls and strive to gauge the sentiments of voters through these platforms.

Since political participation is about the attitude and behavior of individuals toward the political system, new communication technologies are an important medium for political parties that want to steer public opinion in a certain direction by informing voters, controlling the flow of information, and influencing voters' behavior and attitudes. It is assumed that the new media, which improve individuals' political knowledge, increase political participation and the types of political participation. Thanks to their characteristics of providing fast, cheap and unlimited access to political information, the new media perform various functions for parties, political candidates and citizens in political life, and enable the development and enrichment of information and thoughts in the public space.

The foundation of political parties and their leaders' presence in the new media is primarily based on the endeavor to expand their voter base. The role of social media in facilitating this expansion, and its ability to establish discourse superiority in the public sphere, has recently been recognized as a manipulative tool that influences politics and voter behavior on a global scale.

In this context, the growing prevalence of fake news circulated on social media, which aims to manipulate information flow about election outcomes to achieve desired results, and the increasing dominance of social media by various actors, particularly states, influencing election results and discussions, have made it imperative for states to implement measures in this domain. In this regard, traditional political norms are evolving in the digitalized world, and the realm of politics is encountering its share of risks. Social media is increasingly gaining importance as one of the fundamental tools of political engagement. Strategies for shaping public opinion and exerting influence on election outcomes are predominantly discussed through social media, particularly during election periods.

With the revolution in information and communication technologies, especially with the spread of social media, the method of political communication is also changing. Political

communication, which has been developing via Twitter since 2006, has a unique place in terms of influencing political decisions by the public opinion, which has been developing within horizontal communication networks due to its influence on action and participation processes.

The emergence of new media, particularly social media, is viewed as an avenue to disseminate equality and freedom across large segments of society. However, these platforms are also highly susceptible to manipulation and misuse due to the vast pool of data they collect and the algorithms they employ. Concurrently, new media contribute to the formation of fresh political entities, the establishment of political communities, and the emergence of new points of contention. They facilitate communication, resource-sharing, and networking, thereby playing a pivotal role in the development of political activism.

Through the medium of new media, various discourses find an environment conducive to growth and propagation. This dynamic landscape is reshaping how political communication unfolds, creating opportunities for broader public engagement, the formation of diverse political identities, and the cultivation of new arenas for political debate and conflict.

Propaganda, of which main purpose was to bring about the desired actions or changes of thought in the target audience, was carried out by different methods depending on the scope, purpose, source, content and nature, equipment and location of the target audience. These methods, especially in the period when traditional media elements are used, are becoming more prominent, in contrast to the period when campaigns are conducted mainly through television, newspapers and radio stations using opinion polling, personal vote gathering techniques, mass media, party meetings, rallies, leaflets and banners.

The flow of information and knowledge from political parties and leaders to voters is mainly focused on new media technologies based on the facts revealed by this data.

This is because all kinds of messages that reach voters through these platforms reach their destination in a very short time and can be liked, interpreted and shared by individuals. This is one of the most important advantages that the new communication technologies offer to political communication as opposed to traditional mass media. Political parties can send free, fast and mass messages to their voters or target groups in the Internet database they have created, get financial support, build an army of campaign workers and receive feedback on their campaign work.

Therefore, the subject of this study, how politicians use information and communication technologies in their political communication studies based on the exchanges and interactions between people, was determined as a general analysis of the current state of the media-political relationship, and a general approach was demonstrated from a historical perspective.

### **The Purpose and the Importance of Thesis**

According to political scientists, in the context of governing an independent country, an ideal administration involves government policies and major political events are influenced by the members of society. This entails a continuous relationship and interaction between those in power and those who are governed. In a democracy, a form of governance that derives power from the people and where sovereignty originates from the people, elections and public opinion hold significant importance.

Media serves as a bridge between those in authority and the general population, facilitating communication between rulers and the ruled. However, the structure and role of media are evolving alongside the changing and advancing technologies. This transformation is particularly evident during election periods, as these periods are the most prevalent and effective times for planning and conducting political communication campaigns.

During elections, political parties strive to convince and attract large masses of voters to their side. They undertake extensive analyses and research to comprehend voter tendencies, develop strategic approaches, and formulate plans accordingly. These efforts aim to maximize their appeal and secure votes, making elections a crucial phase for political communication studies and initiatives.

The history of election campaigns goes back to direct democracies in Ancient Greek states. Representative democracies have replaced direct democracy over time, and election campaigns have become increasingly professional. Campaigns in which the target audience is the public are conducted throughout the country or in certain regions of the country. There are three main purposes of an election campaign, such as informing, persuading, and creating public opinion.

The first genuinely democratic general elections in Türkiye took place in 1950, and it marked the initiation of large-scale election campaigns. Radio, newspapers, and posters were the primary communication tools used during this period. An unprecedented campaign

was carried out in the country, resulting in a transfer of power. This campaign, conducted under the slogan "Enough! The Word Belongs to the People!" underscored the potency of election efforts and propaganda, along with its impact on politics during the initial stages of democratic elections.

In the 1960s, the parties entered into a tight political competition and struggled to explain their rhetoric and ideologies to the large masses. At that time, mostly face-to-face, one-to-one, and rally-like activities were carried out. By the end of the 1970s, election campaigns began to be managed by professional staff, and parties worked with expert staff and advertising agencies.

In the election campaigns that started with the 1983 elections, the weight of professional experts gradually increased with the 1987 elections; especially in the general elections held in 1991. For the first time, all political parties conducted their electoral activities in collaboration with professionals.

During the 1990s, election campaigns transformed into demonstrations, showcasing that they lacked nothing compared to their Western counterparts in terms of extravagant rallies, advertising campaigns, eloquent speeches, and leadership oratory techniques, as well as employing photography and utilizing body language. Throughout these electoral periods, public opinion polls and surveys were also utilized, and campaigns were attempted to be executed based on rational data

With the advent of the 2000s, new technologies came to the forefront, and political parties and leaders adapted to these advancements. They incorporated visual and digital elements into their election campaigns, aligning with the changing landscape of communication and media.

While the utilization of new media for political propaganda began to take root in Türkiye during the 2007 General Elections, platforms like Facebook were not particularly impactful at that time. Similarly, other social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram had yet to emerge. Instead, forums, blogs and YouTube gained prominence as alternative channels for political communication during this period.

In the 2007 general elections, traditional media methods, advertising campaigns, and rallies continued to dominate the strategies employed by political parties. However, the landscape began to shift in the run-up to the 2011 General Elections. During this time,

political parties and leaders started to leverage the opportunities presented by new media and communication technologies more effectively.

Starting around 2009-2010, the use of Twitter gained widespread popularity in Türkiye. As interactions and engagement on Twitter increased; political parties, leaders, and politicians opened Twitter accounts and amassed thousands of followers. They actively embraced Twitter, especially during election seasons when general elections were approaching. This marked a significant turning point in how new media platforms were integrated into political communication strategies in Türkiye.

This research focuses on the effects of new media on politics, particularly on political decision-making orientations and preference formation. In this context, it examines the utilization of new communication technologies, especially during election periods, through the historical lens of political communication. The study delves into the impact and role of cultural, social, and economic changes resulting from the transformation of society by new media, distinct from traditional media, within the political sphere, particularly during the phases of political decision-making, such as election periods. New media continues to reshape social and political interactions, political processes, and communication dynamics.

As technological advancements offer fresh opportunities and rapidly reshape existing norms, political communication processes and propaganda techniques adapt accordingly. While political parties and leaders employ social media to enhance communication and interaction with voters, they can also employ manipulation and perception operations, including the creation of fake content, false news, insults, and polarization.

In this study, the election studies conducted by the leaders in the general elections via Twitter as a social media platform were focused on. With this, it is aimed to examine whether there is any differentiation in the campaign strategies of the leaders while evolving from traditional media to social media. In the same way, based on how voters reacted to these shares of political leaders, it was aimed to provide a general framework based on data on the impact of new media on politics.

The main aim of this thesis is to ascertain whether there is a concurrent evolution and adaptation in political communication strategies alongside advancements in communication technologies. The study employs leaders' social media usage during election periods as data to investigate this phenomenon. Political campaigns have transformed significantly due to the distinct characteristics of new media compared to traditional media. In this context, the

most fundamental importance of this research is to reveal how and to what extent the innovations provided by the new media are used by politicians and to make various determinations about how these innovations are responded to by the voters. The fact that new media environments have a dynamic structure that is developing daily, and this research is related to political life and elections that have determined abovementioned structure, constitute another importance of the study.

## Method

In this dissertation, the quantitative research method, one of the social research methods, was used. The quantitative research method is a type of research that presents facts and events in an observable, measurable, and numerically expressible way by objectifying them. In the quantitative research method, numerical results are obtained from a sample representing the universe related to the subject being investigated. These results, which occur factually, are expressed and interpreted numerically. Its place and importance in research methods also stem from this. Determining the connections based on the available data, and creating a sufficient sample to generalize, provides the opportunity to make more reliable assessments about the big picture. It has been deemed appropriate to use this method based on data belonging to a wide audience to test a broad and specific hypothesis in terms of its purpose and goal. This method has been preferred in be able to evaluate the causal relationships between the relevant facts and events in an objective way as correct.<sup>13</sup>

Before the 2015 and 2018 general elections, secondary data and descriptive analysis methods from quantitative research methods were used to examine these data with a holistic view by taking into account the historical process with this method after reaching the data related to the Twitter usage of the leaders. Considering the data obtained and the goals to be achieved with it, it is quite convenient to make an objective, valid and general analysis.

Secondary data analysis can be performed by using all or some of the data banks obtained from previously prepared archive information and survey results in different combinations.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Akarsu, Beyhan/Akarsu, Bayram (2019) Bilimsel Araştırma Tasarımı – Nicel, Nitel ve Karma Araştırma Yaklaşımları, Cinius Yayınları, İstanbul, p. 27

<sup>14</sup> Böke, Kaan (Ed.) (2011), Sosyal Bilimlerde Araştırma Yöntemleri, Alfa Yayınları, İstanbul, p. 309.

It is important to analyze the obtained data in a valid and accurate way, to reflect the reality of the findings that will emerge as a result of the analysis, and to make plans by these facts based on the data obtained from Twitter before the 2015 and 2018 general elections, a large sample model was taken by the subject of this thesis and a data set was obtained in which a valid assessment was made on the new media political relationship.

With its use in the literature, secondary data analysis can be seen as a reanalysis of existing quantitative data sets and the process of searching for answers to a different research question. The research method carried out on all kinds of data that can be accessed from a certain source can also be called the research method based on secondary data analysis. Secondary data analysis has become one of the indispensable methods to collect this information obtained from an advanced database at a fairly low cost, especially to generalize the results, to see the consistency of policy analyses and theories.<sup>15</sup>

If, as in this study, it is desired to examine data belonging to a wide audience or a topic related to political processes in a historical process, the use of secondary data is inevitable. Information technologies and the Internet now provide the ideal database for many researches. Since this study focused on new media in terms of its subject and examined the impact of social media on politics based on the interactions that took place via Twitter, naturally, the data from the specified time period on Twitter were used.

As stated by Böke, “when the advantages such as being able to access data very quickly, being very cheap, allowing the sampling amount to be large are evaluated, secondary data analysis” has been preferred as a highly effective technique.<sup>16</sup>

Descriptive analysis technique was used as another method of analysis. According to Yıldırım and Şimşek,<sup>17</sup> descriptive analysis is an analysis approach that includes the steps of processing qualitative data, defining the results, and interpreting the obtained results depending on a given framework. In order to conduct such a study in an area where a previously defined conceptual framework has not been fully elaborated and it is not possible to draw scientific conclusions, a general assessment was made based on the available data. A framework was established and some sort of categorization was made to determine certain

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<sup>15</sup> Böke, p. 310.

<sup>16</sup> Böke, p. 313.

<sup>17</sup> Yıldırım, Ali/ Şimşek, Hasan (2011) Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri, Ankara, Seçkin Yayınları. p. 10-11.

characteristics of the available data, and a general assessment was made based on descriptions and interpretations.

Technological developments bring with them new political structures and ways of doing politics. This, of course, also affects the phenomenon and practices of political communication. Developments in information and communication technologies and the spread of the internet have transformed the media phenomenon, thus, social media, and the social media phenomenon have transformed the understanding of political communication. The main purpose of the studies carried out in social science research is to reach objective, valid, and reliable information about social phenomena and events. In particular, studies based on concrete data are guiding for making correct evaluations. For this purpose, this study focuses on the election campaigns of political leaders in the General Elections held on June 7, 2015, and June 24, 2018, in Türkiye, using quantitative research techniques, and the communicative processes there.

In the 2008 U.S. presidential campaign, Barack Obama broke new ground in the history of political campaigns by making very active use of social media and winning the election. Afterwards, it became apparent how important social media is in social events. The fact that Twitter, which was launched in 2006, reached a very large audience in a short period of time is also a good example of the rapid development of technology and how people use it both in their daily lives and in the political arena, as in this study, and especially during election periods.

For instance, examining the June 2015 election period in Türkiye reveals that there were 37,7 million active Internet users and 40 million active social media accounts. During the same timeframe, the number of Twitter users stood at 5.6 million, accounting for 14% of social media users. In the June 2018 elections, the number of internet users increased to 54.33 million, with 51 million active social media accounts. In 2018, the count of Twitter users further rose to 8,8 million, constituting 17% of social media users.

Analyzing the online activities of internet users unveils that 8 out of 10 individuals engage with social media. Simultaneously, 7 out of 10 people use the internet to access news. However, in terms of political participation, only 1 out of every 5 people engages with political topics on the internet by reading or sharing political content. These statistics highlight the significant role of social media and the internet in influencing political discourse and engagement, especially in the context of elections. The prevalence of online

activities, coupled with the growth in social media usage, underscores the pivotal impact of digital platforms on political communication and participation.

In this study, in which the comparative analysis of the 7 June 2015 and 24 June 2018 elections was made, the Twitter usage methods and accounts of the political leaders in the three-month periods before the elections were examined in both elections. First of all, the Twitter accounts of political party leaders who entered the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye in the 2015 June elections are examined as a means of political communication. Similarly, Twitter accounts of the political party leaders who entered the Parliament in the 2018 June elections were examined comparatively. Finally, the approved personal accounts of each leader (with a blue badge) and how they used the Twitter platform as a political communication tool were analyzed separately.

The General Elections held in Türkiye on 7 June 2015, and 24 June 2018 are very important and current incidents in Turkish political life. With this election, the leaders and cadres who will rule Türkiye have been determined. In this respect, the selection of the staff who will guide these policies in the rapidly developing communication age seems to have turned these technologies into a race effectively at the same time.

In this respect, the study differs from case studies which directly focus on explaining a situation in detail. In this context, it provides an experience in which the arguments about the relationship between general elections, social media, and democracy can be examined. Therefore, the main problem of this study is not the presidential election or the competition of the candidates in the election process. This process has an important place in the political arena in Türkiye because it is a current political process and is open to political discussions. The originality of the presidential election as a political process, its inclusiveness in terms of political debates, the fact that the political processes in Türkiye arouse intense interest both at the national and international level, and the election have a wide influence on political, and social and economic actors in terms of its results.

The originality of the general elections as a political process, its inclusiveness in terms of political debates, the fact that the political processes in Türkiye arouse intense interest both at the national and international level; and the election have a wide influence on political, social and economic actors in terms of its results. Twitter is also used intensively in political processes and political-social events due to its status and event-centeredness and

the potential for the sharing to spread rapidly. It is possible to reach many opinions, comments, explanations, and information shared on Twitter about the presidential election.

The focus of this study is not the content of the messages disseminated in the political communication process, but the flow of communication and the sources of information, the dissemination of messages in social networks and the interaction between the actors effective in this process. In line with the objective of the study, an attempt was made to provide a descriptive analysis of the current situation in the relationship between the new media and politics based on data.

The data analyzed in this study consists of short messages shared on Twitter and called tweets, and profile information of users. Tweets are used as research data in different studies examining the Twitter communication process. In this study, the research population is the political communication contents of the political leaders produced on Twitter in the three months before the elections while going to the general elections of 7 June 2015 and 24 June 2018. These content and messages were evaluated by secondary data analysis using the quantitative research method.

This study conducted an examination of messages and content shared from the official personal Twitter accounts of political leaders during significant parliamentary elections. Specifically, the study focused on the 7 June 2015 parliamentary elections and the June 24, 2018, parliamentary elections in Türkiye. The following political leaders' Twitter accounts were analyzed: Ahmet Davutoğlu, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, Devlet Bahçeli, and Selahattin Demirtaş for the 2015 elections; and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, Devlet Bahçeli, Pervin Buldan, and Meral Akşener.

During the data collection process, tweets sent between 7 March 2015 and 6 June 2015 regarding the 7 June General Elections were collected. Again, regarding the 24 June General Elections, messages and contents sent via Twitter between 21 April 2018 and 23 June 2018 were collected. In other words, the number of followers, the number of messages they shared, and the number of interactions they received on the Twitter accounts of political leaders for a period of (90) days from the beginning of the election process were evaluated. The thematic distribution of the visuals in the content of Social Media accounts includes rallies, candidate or party promotion, expressing opinions, calls, polemic-criticism, promises, information, wishes-memorial-thank you, interpersonal dialogue, etc. A general analysis of the data under the headings was made. Again, data on interactions, URL usages,

Retweet/likes/comments, quotes, and Hashtags used in these Twitter accounts regarding these messages and contents are presented and a general descriptive analysis is given. This analysis also includes the social media messages that attract the most attention and interaction, as well as the number of followers and increase rates of the candidates.

The purpose of this study is not to conduct a comprehensive election analysis via social media. A general political analysis cannot be made based on social media data alone either. The thesis deals with the impact of the new media on politics during election periods in a limited framework.

The thesis consists of three parts. In the first part of the study, critical processes in the history of communication were discussed, a general historical framework was drawn, and the developments in new communication technologies, which gradually touched every aspect of life, were outlined. The transition from the industrial society to the information society, the concept of industrial revolution 4.0, globalization and, the latest state of technologies are discussed. The emergence of information technologies and the internet and the formation of new media, as well as the introduction of social media into human life, have been evaluated within its historical perspective.

In the second part, by discussing the issue of political behavior, how to carry out activities focusing on how politicians generally use communication tools and how political communication works, especially during political elections; The attitudes and behaviors exhibited against this propaganda campaign were examined. In other words, the historical development of the understanding of transformation, professionalization, and scientificization in political communication in general, especially in political election processes, is discussed. With the emergence of new media in the world and in Türkiye, political participation and its effects on political decision-making and decision-making processes are discussed with case studies.

In the third part, the effect of the new media on political participation, political behavior, and especially political elections is focused on the general elections held in Türkiye. In this context, firstly, the historical election processes in Türkiye in the context of media-politics relations are briefly discussed in terms of political communication and propaganda studies. Then, based on the General Elections of June 7, 2015, and June 24, 2018, which were chosen as the research universe, using the data collected on the use of social media in these elections and the quantitative research method with graphics, the

messages, and contents used during the election process were handled numerically and a descriptive analysis was tried to be made.

This thesis outlines the historical-theoretical development and framework of the new media-politics relationship and to reveal its current appearance, especially during the election period and a general evaluation of all these findings and analyses was made at the end of this study.



## CHAPTER I: NEW COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES AND NEW MEDIA

### 1.1 From Industry and Information Society to Network Society

As with every technological innovation, information and communication technologies have a double-sided nature. In addition to taking daily life under control, it also provides important opportunities for alternative communication channels for businesses. It is always possible to think twice about these networks that connect people as well as their good and bad impacts on people.

Information and communication technologies carry the potential to bring people and societies into freer and better civilization in economic, political and cultural sense, and they also have the potential to bring people into slavery and into a non-civilized lifestyle. Considering economic and social organization forms of industrial society, political structure and technological products, it has led to developments where we saw some results in the century. In an era where nearly everything and everyone is interconnected through networks today, the evolving landscape of technology, organizational structures, and communication processes brings about transformations that span economic and social arrangements to cultural and political behaviors.

Many definitions are used in the modern era to describe societies that have undergone such changes and transformations under the influence of information and communication technologies. The most important and most widely used definition in understanding contemporary societies, the network community has been explained by Manuel Castells, and has been extensively theorized by Jan van Dijk.

The network society is the idea that the earth, in which the boundaries in terms of time and space are removed, is connected to the networks and that the networks are at the center of this change. According to Castells, the network society is a social and economic reshaping of the world within the framework of a series of networks created around the world by information and communication technologies<sup>18</sup>. It is a situation in which society is changing through the transition from hierarchies to networks in the organization of processes in all areas of society and in its basic structures. Castells' theory of network society consists of two basic assumptions. These are holism and multiculturalism.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Castells, Manuel (2004) *The Network Society: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*, Edward Elgar Pub, p. 28.

<sup>19</sup> Castells, Manuel (2006) *The Theory of the Network Society*, Cambridge Polity, p. 99.

According to the idea of network society, networks are one of the oldest forms of human life. However, with the World Wide Web (www) and the internet today, they have become more and more active. The ability of networks to offer fast and flexible opportunities to store, distribute, and transmit information has resulted in greater importance in today's world of network community thinking.

In the network society, unlike the industrial economy as raw materials, the information economy is not oriented to concrete products, but to information. The processing of information is now indexed to technological developments and the new economy, which has changed since the end of the century, has a structure based on informatics, global and network organization. The informal economy owes to the productivity and competitiveness of all the units of the economy to the production, processing and implementation capacity of information-based information. The opportunities provide by networks with digital technologies enable not only individuals to interact with information, but they also enable meta-cognition of previously mentioned networks.

According to Van Dijk's definition, a network society is defined as a type of modern society in which an infrastructure consisting of social and media networks determines the style of organization at all levels of society – individual, group/organizational and social. These networks increasingly link each unit or part of this society (individuals, groups and organizations). In western societies, individuals connected by networks become the basic unit of network society. According to van Dijk, with a positivist understanding, the intensity of information in the information society after the industrial society that was built is based on: science, rationality and thoughtfulness; an economy in which all values and sectors including agricultural and industrial sectors, are increasingly defined by information production; a labor market that requires knowledge and advanced education, most or all of its functions are based on information processing tasks; a culture dominated by media and information products with their own signs, symbols and meanings.<sup>20</sup>

In simple systems in nature and society, the link between elements defines a stable and hierarchical organization. For example, the bond between atomic elements or elements, molecules and chemical substances is stable and has a specific order. Change means turning into another kind of unit. As matter becomes more complex, particularly transitioning into life, the elements necessitate a more intricate organization. During this process of

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<sup>20</sup> **Dijk, Jan van** (2018). *Ağ Toplumu*, (Transl: Sakin, Özlem), İstanbul, Kafka, p. 55-56.

organization in life, energy is exchanged with the surroundings, and adaptation occurs to ensure survival. Networks represent a more intricate organization of matter and life systems.

According to van Dijk, who develops a multi-layered network theory, networks emerge across all levels, spanning from the simplest to the most complex systems of matter and life. These include the DNA sequences within cells, neuron networks within the human body, social networks emerging through communicative actions, technological networks evolving from these social networks to meet societal needs, and ultimately computer networks. In nature, and even more so in the universe, every component of existence is interconnected through imperceptible ties, and this holds true to a significant extent. Similar to the clustering of the tiniest elements in nature, individuals composing a society are also united within a global network, facilitated by information and communication technologies.<sup>21</sup>

Ecosystems that were once local human creations have now become global in scope. The transition from atomic, cellular, and molecular bonding to electronic, digital, and computer networks, culminating in a layer where individuals are interconnected, allows us to comprehend economic, political, and cultural dimensions within this realm. This comprehension is key to accurately interpreting these bonds and organizations within the vastest network.

Information society theorists say that information societies are 'polycentric' as opposed to the centralized nature of industrial societies. According to Masuda and Bell,<sup>22</sup> this polycentric feature of the information society has two consequences in the social and political sphere. Firstly, the unlimited feature of information technologies dissolves traditional structures and values and centralizes individual pleasure and experience. Secondly, this 'polycentrism' or 'decentralization' encompasses the nation-state and all its social/political contexts from inside and outside.

According to Dordick and Wang, the global market economy has become possible thanks to modern information and communication technologies. Accordingly, information is of central importance, the logic of the business is global, the information sector is institutionalized, the awareness of environmental protection is high (ecological economic

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<sup>21</sup> **Dijk, Jan van** (2006) *The Network Society*, London, Sage Publication, p. 200.

<sup>22</sup> **Meder, Mehmet** (2001) 'Bilgi Toplumu ve Toplumsal Değişim', Pamukkale Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi, Vol:9, Issue: 73, p. 9-72.

model, sustainable development, etc. is on the agenda), voluntary organizations are active (civil society), the individual is of central importance (in all corporate activities), there is intense computerization, and the society is an organized (civil) society.<sup>23</sup>

In the case of a social organization, it is important to understand the role of social capital in the development of society.

In agricultural society, human beings were the engine of maintaining a farming economy that was highly dependent on geographical and climatic conditions. The technical possibilities of this person within the boundaries of a communal perception world are almost negligible compared to today. Scholastic knowledge in agricultural societies, a dogmatic philosophical world, had a social dimension in terms of practical wisdom. Along with industrial transformation, man has undergone a transformation to the understanding that nature is a huge reservoir of energy that is waiting to be transformed into a virgin. Industrial society is a society in which intensive division of Labor and standard production is organized.

The determination that industrial society is dependent on “energy” and basically natural energy, and his emphasis on the fact that it is dependent on “physical manpower” for pre-industrial societies, leads us to a three-fold society scheme as a result of which post-industrial society is basically based on knowledge. This scheme corresponds to the three social formations rising on the agricultural, industrial and information axes.

- 1) Social life is limited to the potentials of the creation of the physical power of man in agricultural society. Industrial Society, Division of Labor and the common energy of the machine created the market society. But now the production/transformation axis of social life has shifted to “knowledge”. Bell says that the post-industrial information society has five dimensions: first, “it relates to the economy in which there is a change from production to service.” The second dimension; “...occurs within the workspace. It is a change in favor of the superiority of the technical and professional class of the kind of work observed in this field.” The third dimension is that “post-industrial society is the central role of theoretical knowledge in providing the necessary innovations for society and in making political decisions”.

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<sup>23</sup> **Dordick, Herbert S., Georgette Wang** (1993) *The Information Society – A Retropective View*, Newberry Park, California, Sage Publications. p. 116.

The fourth dimension is “for the future in terms of control of technology and technological values”. The final dimension includes “decision making and the creation of a new intellectual technology.” Bell's classification is based on the industrial society and the foundation of the information society at different foundations.<sup>24</sup>

Castells<sup>25</sup> states that the main sources of production in industrial society are hidden in the ability to use energy distributed from the center in production and circulation. In a network or information society, production develops and organizes through information networks, information connections, information systems. He says that production has now been reorganized based on knowledge, and it is no longer possible to return from this logic. Social organizations also act from this informational logic.<sup>26</sup> Although information also has an important place in industrial and agricultural society, unlike others, the axis of society has been information in the information society. This is the situation in the agricultural society, the physical energy of man is the most significant factor. However, the industrial society, it is a standardized market economy based on the division of labor and rationalization. Information and information technologies are at the heart of almost everything now.

Information in the information society has become a corporate identity. On the table, which compares the fundamental differences between the information society and industrial society, one of the theorists of the Information Society claims that both social formations rise on different understandings in terms of technological, socio-economic and value measures. It is the standardized division of labor that makes production possible in industrial society.

The industrial society's dependence on natural resources, tool and hardware-based technology is developing towards digital information systems, network technologies and software in the information society. With the nation-centered structure of the industrial society, the global framework and content of the information society are becoming more prominent.

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<sup>24</sup> **Bell, Daniel**, (1999) *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*, Basic Books. p. 533

<sup>25</sup> **Castells, Manuel**. (1998), ‘The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture’, Vol. I-II-III, Oxford, Wiley Blackwell, p. 17.

<sup>26</sup> **Castells**, (2006) p. 102.

Habermas <sup>27</sup> says that the problem of transferring technical knowledge to practical consciousness does not change only in terms of its dimensions. According to him, the accumulation of technical knowledge is no longer limited to pragmatically acquired technologies of classical crafts. It is no longer the needs that are at the forefront, but the design of the future. Scientific knowledge was evaluated as instrumental for technological innovation and development.

After the 1970s, information and space technologies and the intense breakthrough in military technologies soon showed their effects on all levels of social life. Computers, television, communication tools, high speed transportation, internet, satellites, etc. the entire technical infrastructure of society has besieged.

With the introduction of the Internet into the field of communication, the extent of the media's interaction and influence on public opinion has increased even more. Not even a century after the innovations in the field of press and/or media, mass media such as newspapers, magazines, television and radio have started to be called traditional media. This so-called information age is no longer the era of those who work hard, but of those who are highly visible in the digital environment and who actively use social networks.<sup>28</sup>

The information age has an overarching understanding that connects different and infinite networks of information and makes it accessible everywhere. In this sense, Information traffic is the basis of production. The speed of information reduces costs and increases market power. This endless competition environment shows that the information society is composed of infinite synergistic compounds. One of the most concrete examples of this situation is that all corporate enterprises are now set up around the logic.

They claim that information technologies and modern communication technologies constitute the backbone of the global gathering and structuring of companies and make the dream of the sovereignty of capitalism on a global scale into reality.

In this sense, Information Technologies impose the obligation to apply to information in all areas of social life and to be informed and also to use this information. Its technologies

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<sup>27</sup> **Habermas, Jürgen** (1993) *İdeoloji Olarak Teknik ve Bilim*, (Transl: Tüzel, Mustafa) İstanbul, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, p.71.

<sup>28</sup> **Saruhan, Oğuzhan** (2018) *Sosyal Medya Canavarı Olmak İster misin?* İstanbul, MediaCat Kitapları, p.9.

ultimately regulated it with a content and logic that necessitates the ability to use it. Information technologies are an indispensable tool of society and social life.

These knowledge bases show that the new elite of society is also determined. The fact that technological content has the power to influence all social processes shows that hierarchical order in the information society is shaped on the axis of those who hold the information and the information. We have three elements for the continuity of the information society in this sense: high quality national education; advanced scientific fields and activities; production and transformation of advanced technology.

Information technologies, in this sense, impose the obligation to apply and be informed about information in all areas of social life, as well as to be able to use this information. As a result, information technologies have organized it with a content and logic that makes the knowledge and ability to use it mandatory. Information technologies are now an indispensable tool of society and social life. This has led individuals to confront the new reality caused by information technologies in society at every level and environment where they connect with social life. The Internet and new media elements contribute to the development of civil society and the reshaping of the existing public sphere by enabling fast and easy access to information and interactive communication with other individuals on online platforms.<sup>29</sup>

In the new society, every individual and institution have a social capital as much as the knowledge it produces. Occupations and the division of labor are infinitely diversified. Technology, with its boundless nature, forms the basis of the global economy, politics and anagement.

## **2.1. Industry 4.0**

The concept of "Industry 4.0" originated in Germany in 2011 and has gained global attention due to the economic and social benefits it offers. This concept, extensively discussed, was first introduced at the Hannover Fair in the USA in 2006 but gained stronger traction in Germany in 2011. It signifies the emergence of a new paradigm in production. Kagermann's article from 2011 serves as a foundational text for the concept of the fourth industrial revolution, commonly referred to as Industry 4.0. In his work, Kagermann highlights that

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<sup>29</sup> **Atilla, Hilal/Bodur, Ün** (2018) 'Ulusal ve Ulusötesi Toplumsal Hareketler ve Yeni Bilgi ve İletişim Teknolojileri', Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi, Vol: 9, Issue: 3, p.787-809.

this new industrial revolution goes beyond mere automation; it encompasses intelligent observation and decision-making processes as well.<sup>30</sup>

The First Industrial Revolution or the beginning of industry 1.0 is considered to have started with the development of a new type of Steam Machine in 1712. Later, this machine was developed and applied to the industry. With the use of the developed Steam Machine in the last part of the 1700's, the integration of the production process into an integrated order to complement the various stages has changed the production styles and the production relations to be irreversible.<sup>31</sup> Textile industry started this change, especially chemical industry and spread rapidly to other industrial branches. With the expansion of the railway network, the distance between people became shorter, and the first major leap took place with these groundbreaking developments in transportation and communication services. Therefore, this first phase is defined as the mechanization of production and the transportation of the obtained products through railway networks to consumer centers.

The Second Industrial Revolution, often referred to as Industry 2.0, was brought about by the utilization of electricity within production systems and the control of electrical power along assembly lines. This system's practical implementation gained prominence through the production lines established within Ford Motor factories. The application of this system in automobile production by Ford Motor factories resulted in the expansion of production scales, subsequently leading to cost and price reductions. This transformation necessitated the revision of prevailing techniques and business management models in factories. During this era, economic efficiency experienced an unprecedented boost in terms of production. Then, another influential factor emerged—the expansion of road networks—which drastically shortened distances. A significant transition took place in energy sources, shifting from water vapor and coal to oil. Consequently, mechanization of production, mass production, and the manufacturing of goods took place not only through railways but also by road networks, facilitating the transportation of goods to consumption centers<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> **Kagermann, Henning/Lukas, Wolf/ Wahlster, Wolfgang** (2011) 'Industrie 4.0 –Mit dem internet der dinge auf dem weg zur 4. industriellen revolution', 13, VDI Nachrichten, Berlin.  
[https://www-live.dfki.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/DFKI/Medien/News\\_Media/Presse/Presse-Highlights/vdinach2011a13-ind4.0-Internet-Dinge.pdf](https://www-live.dfki.de/fileadmin/user_upload/DFKI/Medien/News_Media/Presse/Presse-Highlights/vdinach2011a13-ind4.0-Internet-Dinge.pdf) Accessed. 12.04.2023.

<sup>31</sup> **Özsoylu, Ahmet Fazıl** (2017)' Endüstri 4.0', Çukurova Üniversitesi İİBF Dergisi, Vol: 21, Issue: 1. p.41-64.

<sup>32</sup> **Gönçer Demiral, Dilek** (2021) 'Endüstri 4.0'ın Lojistik Boyutu: Lojistik 4.0', IBAD Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, Issue: 9, p.234.

In the Third Industrial Revolution or Industry 3.0, the information obtained from sensors when entering the 1970s gained another dimension in human knowledge and objects plane when it is developed with microprocessor-based programmable logic circuits and algorithms that transfer the information to the work elements within the framework of a program. Automation of production systems was possible by applying the computers developed in this way to production systems. This development greatly reduced human contribution to production and minimized the error. Thus, developments in communication and transportation led to much more serious developments in time and space. Trade and industry have become global. In short, while the industry was shown as the minimization of human labor and automation of production in 3.0 production, political and social structures entered into a much faster transformation.<sup>33</sup>

In the modern era, marked by the onset of the industrial revolution, two notable features emerge: 1) The intervals between the revolutions have shortened. Around 12 thousand years elapsed between the agricultural revolution and the First Industrial Revolution. There are about 80 years between Industry 1.0 and Industry 2.0. This period extends to 70 years between the Second and Third Industrial Revolution. 2) The dependence on human labor is diminishing. Machines and automation are predominantly utilized. Each Industrial Revolution has progressively reduced the necessity for human labor in manufacturing compared to the preceding production system.

Industry 4.0 is characterized by highly individualized and interconnected production processes. That is to say, Industry 4.0 embodies a collective integration of technologies and concepts related to the value chain organizations. It is grounded in Cyber-Physical Systems, the Internet of Things, and the Internet of Services. This framework significantly contributes to the concept of smart factories. Industry 4.0 generally comprises the following three structures: The Internet of Things, the Internet of Services, and Cyber-Physical Systems.

Within the domain of Industry 4.0 and modular smart plants, the objective is to monitor physical processes through cyber-physical systems, create a virtual replica of the physical world, and make decentralized decisions. The Internet of Things and Cyber-Physical Systems will be capable of real-time communication with each other and

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<sup>33</sup> **Yıldırım, Yıldırım** (2109) 'Endüstri 4.0'a Kapsamlı Bir Bakış: 2011'den Bugüne', Bilgi Dünyası, Vol: 20, Issue: 2, p.217-249.

individuals, fostering cooperation. With the Internet of Services, both internal and cross-organizational services will be provided and assessed by participants in the value chain.

Industry 4.0 is based on 6 principles:

- 1) Interoperability: with the ability of cyber-physical systems (e.g. business part carriers, assembly stations and products include people and smart factories communicating with each other through the Internet of objects and services.
- 2) Virtualization: this structure is a virtual copy of smart factories. The system consists of connecting sensor data with virtual plant and simulation models.
- 3) Autonomous management: the ability of Cyber-Physical Systems to make their own decisions within smart factories.
- 4) Real-Time capability: the ability to collect and analyze data. This structure makes the understanding faster.
- 5) Service orientation: services are provided via the internet via cyber-physical systems, people and smart factory services.
- 6) Modularity: provides a flexible adaptation system to intelligent factories for changing requirements of individual modules.<sup>34</sup>

The advantages of Industry 4.0 are as follows: easy to follow and fault diagnosis; self-awareness of systems and components; sustainable system environment-friendly and resource-saving behavior; higher productivity; increased production flexibility; reduced cost; development of new service and business models.

Kagermann<sup>35</sup> introduced the fundamental concepts of Industry 4.0. These ideas were subsequently framed within a theoretical framework with the release of the "manifesto" by the German National Academy of Science and Engineering (Acatech) in 2013. The final

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<sup>34</sup> **Dahlgren**, (2000) 'Mass Media & Society' Television and the Public Sphere: Citizenship, Democracy and the Media

<sup>35</sup> **Kagermann, Hennings/ Lukas/ Wahlster** (2011) 'Industrie 4.0: Mit dem Internet der Dinge auf dem Weg zur 4. industriellen Revolution', VDI, Nachrichten.  
[https://www-live.dfki.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/DFKI/Medien/News\\_Media/Presse/Presse-Highlights/vdinach2011a13-ind4.0-Internet-Dinge.pdf](https://www-live.dfki.de/fileadmin/user_upload/DFKI/Medien/News_Media/Presse/Presse-Highlights/vdinach2011a13-ind4.0-Internet-Dinge.pdf)

report of Acatech's Industry 4.0 forum outlines the distinctive innovations associated with this new era:

1. Global integration of storage systems, resources, and machines.
2. Development of smart products with unique location information.
3. Emergence of new business models, including services facilitated by Big Data.
4. Establishment of new social workplace infrastructures for employees.
5. Personalized and sensitive business structures.
6. Enhanced work-life balance.
7. Customized responses to individual consumer preferences.
8. Development of intelligent software for real-time engineering and immediate problem-solving.

According to Kagermann, these innovations will lead to the following advancements in our lives:

1. Ability to store and mine vast amounts of big data, potentially becoming a significant field of study.
2. Proliferation of wearable technologies.
3. Ubiquitous presence of robots in various domains.
4. Incorporation of powerful supercomputers with extensive data handling capabilities into daily usage.
5. Integration of artificial intelligence into decision-making processes.
6. Utilization of 3D technologies and augmented reality, particularly in consumer goods production and healthcare systems.

At this stage in information and communication technologies, wireless sensors and advanced control systems become key elements of the new industry, such as high value-added products and industrial components, can only be achieved with advanced computer-controlled machines. For this reason, Industry 4.0 also creates a secondary market in areas

such as automation equipment, robots, special-purpose machines, which have the potential to expand on the equipment it needs.

## **2.2.Globalization and New Communication Technologies**

Globalization means an increasing number of economic, social, cultural and political connections, relations and exchanges throughout the world and a greater integration of countries with each other. Globalization takes place with the acceleration of communication and technological developments, the liberalization of international trade, the free movement of capital, as well as the free movement of information, commodities, all kinds of humanitarian products. The important element in the definition of globalisation is that decisions taken at the local level, the ability of the policies pursued to go beyond borders, to reach and influence other nations is that it has the power to influence.<sup>36</sup>

Briefly, globalization ensues integration of national economies with the world economy. In other words, it can be defined as the integration of the world into a single market. The pre-stage of globalization is regional integrations that expresses the common market formation of neighboring countries within a region and the common search for solutions to economic problems. Despite the differences in definitions related to the globalization process that marked the second half of the twentieth century, there is a new idea of economic globalization at the center of the understanding of globalization. But on the basis of globalization, it is possible to define the expansion of international trade, the increase in labor and capital movements, and especially the rapprochement of countries economically, politically, socially and culturally as a result of rapid changes in technology and the increase in connections.

Globalization means an increasing number of economic, social, cultural and political connections, relations and exchanges throughout the world and a greater integration of countries with each other.<sup>37</sup> Globalization takes place with the acceleration of communication and technological developments, the liberalization of international trade, the free movement of capital, as well as the free movement of information, commodities, all kinds of humanitarian products. Globalization is the integration of national economies with the world economy; in other words, it can be defined as the integration of the world into a

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<sup>36</sup> **Kıvılcım, Fulya** (2013) 'Küreselleşme Kavramı ve Küreselleşme Sürecinin Gelişmekte Olan Ülke Türkiye Açısından Değerlendirilmesi', Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Dergisi, Vol:5, Issue: 1.p.219-230.

<sup>37</sup> **Kıvılcım**, p.221.

single market. The pre-stage of globalization is regional integrations that express the common market formation of neighboring countries within a region and the common search for solutions to economic problems.

Despite the differences in definitions related to the globalization process that marked the second half of the twentieth century, there is a new idea of economic globalization at the center of the understanding of globalization. However, on the basis of globalization, it is possible to define the expansion of international trade as a result of rapid changes in technology, the increase in labor and capital movements, and especially the economic, political, social and cultural convergence of countries. Globalization has a serious impact on economic, political and socio-cultural aspects. The economic area covers production, distribution and consumption of products and services.<sup>38</sup>

The socio-cultural area includes the production of symbols representing events, influences, meanings, beliefs and values. However, while globalization is primarily a phenomenon related to economic processes as a result of its close relations with all areas of social life and interaction with each other, productivity and effectiveness in almost every field, from economic activities to military, education, transportation, health services, especially with developments in information and Communication Technologies, has become dependent on developments in this field.

The mass media and the traditional media, played a leading role in the transportation of goods, services and all kinds of information produced in all these areas. These tools can be used to expand their influence as well as the goods and services produced by national and international companies, and they play an important role in the adoption of new value patterns by societies, changing habits and acquiring new habits.

What McLuhan points out as a global village metaphor can be expressed as “processes that operate on a global scale and integrate societies and institutions into new time-space components, making the world more interconnected in reality and experience.” This concept was created by McLuhan in the 1960s to explain the rapid spread of the use of mass media by society and transform the world into a global village.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>**Taylan, Hasan Hüseyin/Arklan, Ümit** (2008) ‘Medya Ve Kültür: Kültürün Medya Aracılığıyla Küreselleşmesi’, Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, Vol: X, Issue: 1, p.85-97.

<sup>39</sup> **McLuhan, Marshall** (1968) War and Peace in the Global Village, Bantam: NY: Gingko Press.

According to McLuhan<sup>40</sup>, verbal tradition is re-formed along with electronic media. Especially in the internet age and the development of social networks, anything can happen in many places at the same time. For example, any sentence written on social networking sites about a topic is like crawling around the world by retweeting. In our age when people wear the same brand clothes and consume the same brand drinks, this concept developed by McLuhan finds a new soul with the internet and web flow. The world is becoming a great village where people learn everything at the same time. E-mails, website links and interactive blogs replaced the traditional sources of mass media in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although information is created without face-to-face communication over the internet, a common content is created.

McLuhan believes that the world will be like a small community especially with the spread of electronic communications. For example, people from many different parts of the world watch the same news and events through television programs. In this way, with the development of communication tools, everyone in the world will be aware of the events and societies are increasingly alike. In his view, Understanding, perceiving and naming have not ceased to be the result of the human mental process. However, man has emerged from his own body and became an extension of this electronic world with the development of electronic systems and hence technology<sup>41</sup>. Computer, television, internet with tools such as normal perception cannot obtain stimuli with technology has started to obtain. It can be said that new communication technologies such as virtual and simulation, can lead to a radical change in the way we perceive the world, the way we approach events and the way we live. In specific, Television has revolutionized the world and has been used extensively in election campaigns since the 1960s. The first time it was used was in 1952 when Eisenhower, one of the US presidential candidates, made a propaganda speech on television. The Republican candidate, General Eisenhower, commissioned the "BBDO and Young & Rubicam" agency for his election campaign and became the first person in political history to cooperate with an advertising agency. The agency prepared 45 thirty-second spots under the title "Eisenhower answers America" and aired them on television. The topics to be covered in

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<sup>40</sup> **Varol, Çelik Merve/ Varol, Erdem** (2019), 'Kavram ve Kuramlarıyla Marshall McLuhan'a Bakış: Günümüzün Egemen Medya Araçları Ekseninde Bir Değerlendirme', *International Journal of Cultural and Social Studies (IntJCSS)*, Vol:5, Issue: 1. p.137-158.

<sup>41</sup> **Kırlı, Serkan/ Tanrıöver, Oylum** (2015)' Global Köy ve Kültürel Emperyalizm: Küreselleşme Bağlamında Enformasyon Topluma Bakış', *E-Journal of Intermedia*, Vol:2, Issue:1, p.133-142.

these spots were determined by a public opinion survey conducted in advance and the issues identified in the survey were prioritized.<sup>42</sup>

In this respect, globalization can be defined as a “World process”<sup>43</sup>, in other words, both the shrinking of the world and the strengthening of world consciousness as a whole. Giddens defines globalization as “the concentration of social relations around the world that connect distant settlements to each other, where local formations are shaped by events miles away, or in the opposite way.”<sup>44</sup> The intensification of social relations is a result of the expansion of the time-space divide from high modernity, and thus, the “relations of people and societies on a global scale” becomes reality<sup>45</sup> for the first time in human history.

Describing globalization as a “Time-Space Jam”<sup>46</sup>, David Harvey stresses that as a result of this jam, there are many radical changes in our way of looking at the world. Harvey refers to the term “jamming” as “increasing speed of life “and “erosion of Spatial Barriers”. When it took place, it was reduced by 70 times from the 1500 to the 1960s.

In addition to David Harvey's definition of “time and Space Jam,” Morley and Robins described this “jam” as the immediate creation of a world without depth. When the developments in the field of communication are evaluated, it is a world in which the limits on earth are removed, where the spaces of meaning are lost, and where everything is just flowing, there is a space of shuttiness<sup>47</sup>.

Globalization is not a new phenomenon, but a redefined concept when perceived as the gradual expansion of social relations on a global scale. Judging by the sociological reasons for the emergence of this definition in the 1980s, it is evident that the developments facilitating the perception of the post-1945 world as a unified entity from economic, political, and cultural standpoints are rapidly increasing. In other words, a significant intensification in the globalization process is observed. Today's prevailing globalism is the product of a 5-6 century accumulation process. Globalization hasn't emerged from yesterday to today; rather, it is the outcome of five or six centuries of accumulation. The intellectual

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<sup>42</sup> **Taşcıoğlu, Raci** (2009) “Siyasetin Teknikleşmesi Bağlamında Türkiye’de Siyasal Reklamcılık”: Özkan, Abdullah (Editör) (2009) Siyasetin İletişimi, İstanbul, Tasam Yayınları, p.274.

<sup>43</sup> **Hall, Stuart** (1997) ‘The Local and The Global: Globalization and Ethnicity’ University of Minnesota Press, <http://depthome.brooklyn.cuny.edu/aod/Text/Hall.pdf>. Accessed: 28.06.2023.

<sup>44</sup> **Giddens, Anthony** (1991) The Consequences of Modernity, Cambridge, Polity Press. p.64.

<sup>45</sup> **Giddens, Anthony** (1997) Modernity and Self-identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age, California, Stanford University Press, p.43.

<sup>46</sup> **Morley, David, Kavin, Robins** (1997) Kimlik Mekanları-Küresel Medya, Elektronik Ortamlar ve Kültürel Sınırlar, (Transl: Zeybekoğlu, Emrehan), İstanbul, Ayrıntı Yayınları, p.153

<sup>47</sup> **Morley**, p.160.

transformation at the outset of this process, starting in the fifteenth century, led to changes in ancient perceptions, shifts in worldviews, and evolving perspectives on humanity. Technical advancements contributed to the disappearance of geographical constraints. Of utmost importance is the establishment of the capitalist world economy in the sixteenth century and the subsequent integration of the world as a whole.<sup>48</sup>

According to Wallerstein, from the sixteenth century a peculiar system, which we can call the capitalist world economy or the modern world system, appeared in Europe and spread to all regions of the world from the second half of the nineteenth century. He also made his own social division of labor and way of life accepted by all other societies.<sup>49</sup>

In the realization of the global economy, there is no doubt that the desire of capitalists to constantly increase their profits is a fundamental driving factor. This trend has been realized internationally since the early times of capitalism<sup>50</sup>. In parallel with trade, the technical possibilities, especially in the military, transport and communication fields, are brought about by the states in great effort. Economic and commercial dimension, social, political, cultural dimensions by intertwining with the circulation of products, goods and services is a world-wide state.

The emergence of mass production and consumption in the twentieth century; the rapid and safe transportation of capital, labor and goods, and the world market are highly unified as a result of international agreements; this situation has created great opportunities for companies whose wealth goals are profit. Companies are no longer content with looking for suitable regions within the borders of nation states to make their investments, they are considering the whole world as an investment and market place. In order to attract capital to their territory, which has reached a supranational position, nation-states have had to make concessions to their sovereignty in some respects. Some countries have lost the autonomy they once had in this way.<sup>51</sup>

Globalization with information and communication technologies has made national governments more dependent on other governments and global trends. While the basic political struggle controls and reduces all kinds of risks, including financing crises, growing

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<sup>48</sup> **Wallerstein, Immanuel** (1993) *The Capitalist World Economy*, Cambridge University Press, p.47-48.

<sup>49</sup> **Wallerstein**, p.4.

<sup>50</sup> **Giddens**, (1997) p. 45.

<sup>51</sup> **Hobsbawm, Eric J.** (1996) *Kısa 20. Yüzyıl: 1914 - 1991 Aşırıliklar Çağı*. İstanbul, Sarmal Yayınları, p.489-490.

nationalism and micro-level separatism movements, on the one hand, policies aimed at determining how to benefit the most from globalization stand out on the other hand.

The development of the communication network with the Internet and satellite technologies has increased the mutual interaction between people more decently than ever before. The increase in mutual interaction also prepares the ground for the emergence of new formations, new behavioral patterns and, accordingly, new policies on a global scale with the disappearance of physical borders.

### **2.3.Information Technologies Network and Internet**

As a result of the demands and expectations created by international competition, Mass Media which started to develop since the 1950's, have been advancing very rapidly and the world is surrounded by a network on a global scale today. The technologies developed in a self-contained manner have turned into a speed race as well as a motivation guided by the feeling of power and superiority in addition to the needs. Faster transportation, faster communication, stronger weapons. It is always a race to achieve more. All of these are for building the foundations of a strong society. In order to become such a society, it is necessary to bring out the generations who will use these technologies and use them effectively.

As Van Dijk says,<sup>52</sup> human has revealed many technical networks throughout history. Indeed, the evolution of networks has been significant, especially in the context of communication and information dissemination. During the nineteenth century, these networks transformed from mere connections between individuals to what can be termed as media networks. According to van Dijk,<sup>53</sup> this transformation involved the incorporation of symbols and information to facilitate communication between senders and receivers.

This multi-layered network structure strongly supports the rapidly evolving use of mass media, telecommunications, and computer networks in the modern era. However, today's situation is very different from the past. For the first time in history, we have the Internet, a means of communication that connects these layers simultaneously<sup>54</sup>. The reason for the development of satellite broadcasting is that with the use of computers and the Internet, communication took on a new dimension after satellite broadcasting, especially in

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<sup>52</sup> Dijk, v.(2018) p.57.

<sup>53</sup> Dijk, v. (2018) p.58.

<sup>54</sup> Dijk, (2018) p.58.

the 1960s, which is an important period for people. Over time, an uneven structure emerged between countries and societies in terms of production and effective use of these technologies. Despite the diversity of communication technologies, the integration and globalization of these technologies has become the most important feature.

When the history of the internet is examined, it is possible to see the internet technologies as a natural result of the industrial age and the modern era. Long before the emergence of digital communication, the use of steam power, Telegraph, industrial trade and wars accelerated the pace of the world. The change brought by the digital age is that the centralized world order based on control and hierarchy created by the industrial revolution has eliminated the central points and brought a structure where there are a large number of points lying along the networks and networks. Political and cultural life is being restructured according to this network structure.

Manuel Castells, pointed out that about the development of information and communication technologies in the global sense of such a transformation the network community is created. According to Castells, it is a new social organization that is mobilized by its technologies, formed in IT networks and spread all over the globe. This structure is shaped by the interaction between people through culture; production, consumption and power relations have also affected.<sup>55</sup>

The structure of the network society has also influenced social relations and interpersonal relations with new communication structures. In this context, the development of new communication technologies and the concept of the internet in the field of media, social media is like the reflection of the network society in the field of the internet. The social dimension of the new media is the social media pages and profiles that are created by the users and by the content that is created by the users to circulate through the network. In addition to the industrial structures that lead to the emergence of the internet from a political standpoint, the industrial structures of the internet are also required to be evaluated. In this context, the convergence of the distribution, media and IT industries of communication with the manufacturers in the infrastructure, service and content layers of the internet has been advocated. In addition to strengthening the impact of international companies in the economy, the development and spread of the internet has changed the world at an economic,

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<sup>55</sup> **Castells, Manuel** (1996) *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture: The Rise of the Network Society*, Oxford, Blackwell (Çeviren: Ebru Kılıç) (2013) *Enformasyon Çağı: Ekonomi, Toplum ve Kültür - Ağ Toplumunun Yükselişi* İstanbul, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, p. 499.

political and social level. This is not only political dimensions, but also cultural and spiritual dimensions can be seen in almost every area.

### **2.3.1. Internet and Development**

At the beginning, each new technological tool may have unpredictable consequences and areas of use. When we consider the period when computers first appeared and the stages they have gone through until today, there have been developments far beyond estimates from the first computer occupying a room to the present day. Computers used to be a way to provide access to a lot of information and data easily and quickly, now a digital revolution is taking place beyond what was envisaged with the Internet of things, wearable technologies and artificial intelligence. To put it in the simplest terms, a computer network is defined as an infrastructure that allows two or more computers to communicate. According to the Federal Networking Council, the Internet is described as follows: It is connected to each other by a global address system. It uses a common form of the transfer protocol. It allows both social and private communication.<sup>56</sup>

In a social structure, the Internet expresses a new situation in which a constant change and transformation takes place with its feature that transcends time and space and through certain channels. In this way, the Internet is a network system that allows computers to transfer data through public global address systems for various purposes. Thus, the Internet is literally a multimedia in terms of its deceleration, as it is a free platform that combines television, radio, newspaper, entertainment, video, letter and many communication platforms that constitute traditional media and offers countless benefits to people with this integrated structure.

The Internet is a giant library where information and data are as close as the click of a button, an interactive platform where people can freely express their thoughts on different topics, share their opinions, and offer the opportunity for pluralistic, sharing and interaction. The Internet is a platform where both social and private communication takes place. The Internet, with its extremely complex structure, deconstructs the time-space boundary between people, first connecting people and now connecting objects. This groundbreaking network system, not only for communication history but also for general human history, was

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<sup>56</sup> **Başaran, Funda** “Bir Teknolojik Yenilik Olarak İnternetin Tarihi”, Ankara Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi, p.19.  
<https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/2595881> Accessed: 11.04.2023.

first used by the Defense Advanced Research Project Agency (DARPA), which is the research and development branch of the United States Department of Defense.

Although computers were originally conceived as calculators, they have evolved over time towards unpredictable uses. The first functional electronic digital computers were used for military purposes during the Cold War. Later, the technologies developed in Silicon Valley and the areas of computer use became widespread in all kinds of services.<sup>57</sup>

In the mid-1950s, three quarters of the several hundred computer hardware in the United States were used by government departments and universities, but in a very short period of time, this number expanded significantly. In particular, parallel to the developments in the field of economics, while the developments in the field of computer on the one hand, the internet which enables the computers to communicate has also been developed. At the time of the development of network technology, the United States had a tendency to liberalize the telecommunications environment on the one hand, while efforts to overcome the Cold War and seek solutions to the problems that may be encountered prevailed.

In the twentieth century, in order to restrict the activity of foreigners in telecommunications networks, the developing network industry has evolved towards a broader telecommunications network system to meet libertarian expectations. In the United States, all stakeholders in the economic field have reorganized their business structure around networks. In addition, he saw the information technology industry, which has been expanding both by the impact of bureaucracy liberalization, as an opportunity to refresh the political power of the United States in the global economy. Thus, the opening of Information Technologies has expanded towards reconstructing the global information infrastructure. At the point of globalization, this represents a new dimension of the US cultural and political hegemony as the center of the internet and all networks, connections. However, although internet technology emerged in the field of liberalization and at the center of the communication system, free market forces did not influence its formation. The emergence of the internet idea was realized for purely military purposes.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Castells, (1998) p.77.

<sup>58</sup> Castells, (1998) p.42

## **2.4. Internet and New Communication Process**

Today, when it comes to communication tools, new communication technologies and especially the internet and digital communication are almost the only tools considered. The fact that the internet gathers the features of all communication tools under one roof, and that it has a multimedia feature puts it in a separate place within all communication technologies. The internet has made a great contribution to becoming a medium accessible to all segments of society by combining the functions of communication tools such as TV, radio, telephone, photo etc. in a cheaper, easier, and faster way. This ease of use has virtually eliminated time and space barriers, and has enabled the adoption of new communication technologies and the opportunities offered by these technologies to a wider audience.<sup>59</sup> As a result of these innovations introduced to interpersonal communication, the internet has become a mass communication tool on a global scale that connects nearly four billion people today. Thanks to the anonymous character of the internet, which is not single-centered, it has paved the way for people to easily come together regardless of time and space, regardless of whether they have the same opinion or not, and create virtual communities. It also ensured that people belonging to different cultures, communities and people who were never supposed to get together had the opportunity to get to know each other. In addition, it is becoming more possible to experience transitions from virtual relationships to real relationships and for people to express all kinds of thoughts more freely. People's urge to search for better and faster has increased expectations and searches from the internet and has enabled life to progress on a completely different footing with new searches and new solutions not only in social life, but also in almost every area of life, especially in economics. Therefore, the internet is a completely new experience in terms of communication between individuals and for large audiences. It has caused the formation of a new communication environment.

The internet also offers opportunities for individuals beyond communication. In addition to being a communication tool, the creation of a new communication environment empowers individuals to free themselves from the physical limitations of everyday life and provides them with an alternative habitat.<sup>60</sup> Even if it is a virtual environment, this is now a brand-new social environment. Now users can watch current events from the press, arrange their appointments, conduct their interviews, shop, pay for banks, educational activities,

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<sup>59</sup> **Graham, Gordon** (2003) *The Internet: a philosophical inquiry*, London, Routledge, p.36.

<sup>60</sup> **Pieprzyk, Joseph/Ghodosi, Hossein/ Dawson, Ed** (Eds.) (2007) *Information Security and Privacy: 12th Australasian Conference, Townsville, Proceedings*, p.12.

follow their official, bureaucratic affairs etc. All of these activities can be carried out over the internet.

More importantly, individuals have begun to spend most of their daily lives here; while many personal, private, public and commercial transactions are being carried out through mobile phones and the internet, these networks are regarded as a natural extension of people's existence. As a result, while face-to-face communication lost its dominant position in daily life significantly, interpersonal relations established in the internet have increased its importance day by day. Now, while individuals are continuing their daily lives on the one hand, they spend more time on social media like Facebook, Twitter, etc. They almost exist on these platforms. Individuals internalize the virtual environment in social life and these platforms become life itself. The dynamic relationship between the physical environment and the virtual environment sometimes puts the secondary relationships established in the internet environment ahead of the social relationships in everyday life.

However, this does not mean that the internet is an alternative to social life or a substitute venue. It would be more accurate to say that people are using this new technology as a tool to expand their social sphere or to increase their participation in social life. Therefore, it is also possible to consider the internet as a non-physical, anonymous social field where users cannot see each other but are connected to social life through a tool.<sup>61</sup>

The fact that the internet creates a fast and global communication and information environment has made it an open space where ideas and beliefs can be expressed freely. This has allowed individuals to discuss issues, beliefs and thoughts that they had not previously had the opportunity to express. These public spaces,<sup>62</sup> where differences such as age, race and gender can be freely discussed without considering each issue and problem, have begun to shift to the virtual spaces created by the internet. This transition from public space to virtual space, even though it is a separate discussion of whether states and intelligence agencies have influence or not, has created a debate environment independent of not only the state authority but also of all traditional repressive elements. Forums, blogs and social media platforms have become virtual public spaces where people of all thoughts can freely

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<sup>61</sup> **Castells, Manuel** (2001) *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society*, Oxford University Press, p.118.

<sup>62</sup> **Habermas, Jürgen** (2006) 'Communication in Media Society: Does Democracy Still Enjoy an Epistemic Dimension? The Impact of Normative Theory on Empirical Research', *Communication Theory*, Vol:4 Issue: 16, p.411-426.

express their thoughts and beliefs. The proliferation and differentiation of virtual discussion environments, has facilitated the flow of information and opinions, has also weakened the sense of space and social belonging.

The media affects society not only with its content but also with its characteristics.<sup>63</sup> For example, the new media does not have a great informational capacity, but at the same time, it has changed the ways of communication and the ways of organization of societies with its interactive feature. In this context, people from all over the world have begun to come together in a virtual environment at low cost and physical closeness for social organization has lost its importance. Thus, the internet, a new socialization tool, has strengthened the individual's ties to the global community and to the world.

The internet is now at the heart of humanity. Since the technical characteristics of the internet are especially the main carrier in the field of technology, and in the future it will be in the center of research and development activities in determining the lives of people and societies, as every development in both technical and social aspects of the network have a direct impact on the fate of humanity. In addition to this technological success of the internet, the following features are highlighted when investigating the factors that are behind such a widespread worldwide:

- Easy accessibility: Individuals and organizations can gain access to the internet by calculating resources, taking a low-cost modem and a commercial internet service provider account.
- Ease of use: the development of the human-computer interaction, and the number of computers in many developing countries around the world result in the fact that internet technology becomes more accessible and easier to use by more people.
- Global connectivity: The internet is globally connected. In order for communication to occur between two parties from anywhere in the world, the internet address information of the other user is required.
- Instant access: Access to internet services is also an important factor, access opportunities are instantaneous and very fast. An e-mail sent reaches its destination within seconds.

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<sup>63</sup> **McLuhan, Marshall/ Powers, Bruce, R.** (2001) *Global Köy: 21. Yüzyılda Yeryüzü Yaşamında ve Medyada Meydana Gelecek Dönüşümler* (Transl: Düzgören, Öcal, Bahar), İstanbul, Scala. p.55-60.

With its commercial opportunities and enormous contribution to the economy, the internet has moved to the center of the business world and is transformed into a commercial environment.

In terms of organization, the internet offers new and attractive features that allow interaction through multimedia, unlike traditional mass media such as radio-television or newspapers. Thanks to its scale and independence from distance, technology knowledge and technological profits used to reach millions of users are realized with greater cost and effort than those used to reach one person. In addition, the cost of reaching one of the same cities at the other end of the world is generally considered the same. Less barriers to entry and equal opportunities, ease of access, and equality of opportunity in the business world are a result of a democratic and free environment. Large organizations that work with small teams or individuals to communicate better with niche market customers of their sector have more advantages than those who invest financial resources through web pages. In the same way, politicians prefer the internet as a means of communication primarily because it is a medium that is effectively used in the context of political organization and political reactions. In addition, the internet can create a resource for communication strategies, provide opportunities for free media and institutional changes without having to be integrated, and act as a human-based communication function, creating a flexible space for new paradigms and concepts. The internet has been mentioned before as a global communication medium. This global communication medium attracts people from all walks of life with its wide use and has a large usage area. Participation in this environment, which is part of people from different parts of the country and does not recognize continental borders, is increasing with each passing day.

Sharing over the internet is not just about information, documents and data that can be shared in electronic format. People today share their feelings, thoughts and interests in a very intensive way through the internet. So much so that individuals sitting at a computer spend hours writing, playing games, and playing virtual togetherness without seeing any human face, interacting directly with gestures and gestures. Humans have not neglected to produce symbols and emoticons to meet the gestures and mimics needed, to substitute direct communication with face to face either. These symbols, emoticons, are used so often that abbreviations in the language have become so widespread that they can be spoken in a symbolic internet language, but also in the language of erosion.

According to some critics, the internet is dragging society and large masses of people with problems, including people who have weakened their social relations, who have closed themselves off, who have lived on a computer and who have neglected their environment. However, some define the internet as a new dimension of socialization.<sup>64</sup> According to them, internet users can easily establish relationships that they would never be able to achieve in their normal lives through interactive tools, and they can make friends from around the world in an environment where there are no national borders. Although the research conducted by Papacharissi and Rubin also covers general Internet use, the usage and satisfaction factors obtained at the end of the research are interpersonal benefit, time passing, convenience/convenience and entertainment.<sup>65</sup>

Paul Virilio and Alain Finkielkraut, consider the internet a threat to the welfare and happiness of people. Virilio claims that the internet destroys geographical boundaries but isolates people. Virilio found that people communicate a lot, but they are talking less and less, and while talking about internet addiction, he uses concepts such as “information bomb”, “electronic opium”.<sup>66</sup>

With the development of the internet, communication performed in a digital environment is generally defined as virtual communication. In short, there are various principles of using computers and electronic networks in communication:

- The interactive creation process: Users can easily create and share content online.
- Getting answers in a short time with ease and freedom in communication: Users can quickly get answers to their questions from other users or experts.
- The birth of universal communication through the combination of small local networks: The internet allows people from all over the world to communicate with each other.
- The possibility of presenting text-audio-video elements together in this communication: The internet allows users to share a variety of media types, such as text, audio, and video.

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<sup>64</sup> **Manovich, Lev** (2003) *The Language of New Media*, MIT Press, p.147.

<sup>65</sup> **Papacharissi, Zizi/ Rubin, Alan, M.** (2000) ‘Predictors of Internet Use’, *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, Vol:44, Issue: 2, p.175-196.

<sup>66</sup> **Virilio, Paul** (2000) *The Information Bomb*, London, Versopp, p.131-145

- Rapprochement between societies and individuals with universal communication and the formation of common interests: The internet can help to bring people from different cultures and backgrounds together.

An interactive communication process has been born with the internet. In traditional media, there is a delay in feedback and it is not possible to receive response from the audience. However, in the internet environment, there is the possibility of receiving instant responses from the reader. This is because the internet user is reading the response to the article on the computer screen and can transmit any material (paper, pencil, envelope, telephone, etc.) instantly by clicking on the relevant place on the web page without any need. This is an easy and simple way to get answers from the masses, and it has created an interactive communication process that allows internet users to express their views, experiences, and opinions.

In universal communication on the internet, text-voice and image are used in the same environment, making communication more effective than other traditional media. This brings together the advantages of the internet, newspapers, radio and television in the same environment and provides a strong information presentation. Within the framework of the virtual communication of the internet, the virtual culture environment has also been born through the rapprochement between individuals and societies and the creation of common interests. In a virtual culture formed by such communication in a virtual community, Internet users get closer to those living in different living conditions and cultures and enter into a cultural exchange.

With its interactive feature, the internet offers the possibility of instant development, while users can show their reactions immediately. The internet, which is independent of time and space by its nature, with its fast communication and two-way interaction features, has the ability to support groups, enabling its members to maintain the interaction of the groups by displaying an effective organizational form without having to meet in person at all times.

The main functions of the internet in terms of its contribution to mass communication can be stated as communication and information acquisition, making life easier, instant sharing, culture creation or culture and public opinion creation. In addition, the internet offers a variety of opportunities for many individuals and groups to be able to perform themselves and to be able to hear their voices. The main beneficiaries of the opportunities offered by the internet are the actors and activists of social movements, non-

governmental organizations, commercial companies, and professional marketers. The internet also allows individuals to increase their social capital by increasing contact with friends and relatives who live near or far away, or by enabling them to meet new people with different cultures. In this way, it is possible to evaluate the internet as a democratic and libertarian way to be informed by a growing world citizenship, inform others, and establish new social and political relations.<sup>67</sup>

Shirky stated that many of the obstacles to group action have been eliminated through the internet and that there are new ways to do something together. This is important in terms of creating new social movements or facilitating and increasing the effectiveness of existing social movements<sup>68</sup>. Non-profit non-governmental organizations can have millions of supporters by creating their sites to promote themselves on the internet and organize campaigns globally. Over time, the internet has become the media that allows many famous brands to present themselves with various applications and promote themselves. In addition, individuals can get direct information about products and brands and have the opportunity to shape their shopping in this way. Individuals also have the opportunity to find a job or start their own business on the internet or social networking sites. Individuals on the internet can exhibit what they do as hobbies and if they like it, they can sell their contents. In addition, an individual's visibility is increased by sharing or liking their pages by himself or their friends and advertising is done.

Various ideas are communicated and discussed in virtual networks that have become a part of everyday life, and people now seem to build their own personalities on these platforms. At the same time, people find the opportunity to express themselves and convey their thoughts to others by creating virtual communities that are connected to everyday life or not in this virtual reality.

It is suggested that a new kind of community has been born, which brings individuals together online around common values and interests. Virtual communities are self-defined interactive, electronic communication networks are organized for common values, interests, or goals, although communication itself is usually a goal.<sup>69</sup> Although virtual communities

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<sup>67</sup> **Kellner, Douglas** (2004) *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics Between the Modern and the Postmodern*, London, Routledge, p.52.

<sup>68</sup> **Shirky, Clay** (2010) *Herkes Örgüt – İnternet Gruplarının Gücü*, (Trans.: Şiraz, Pınar) İstanbul, Optimist Yayınları, p.24.

<sup>69</sup> **Castells**, (2008) p. 476.

on the internet have been able to break away from physical boundaries and local connections, each community has limited links to its own choice. One of the most important factors that make the internet user happy is that the participants have the opportunity to connect with individuals and groups that they choose according to their wishes and to socialize.

However, there is also an increasing introversion and closure of individuals here; loneliness is one of the important consequences. While traditional media is effective in the formation and reformation of identity, the internet can also cause an individual to create a virtual identity that is different from the identity in everyday life.

The internet has to individualize the user on the one hand and on the other hand to socialize the virtual space in a new and different way. In a sense, this form of socialization is “sedentary socialization”, in other words, the user re-establishes or develops social relationships in the virtual space through social networks that he knows, recognizes and finds reliable from real life.<sup>70</sup> This situation, which occurs independently of time and space, threatens the common understanding of the environment and affects the relationships of individuals with their immediate surroundings and families.

Another aspect of the use of the internet and especially social media is that people who are not visible, especially in the public sphere, who are not given a place, voluntarily allow the public space to occupy the private space by narrowing the boundaries of the private living space in an effort to be known, recognized or respected. Exposing oneself is turning into a conscious and desired form of behavior. People are now voluntarily exhibiting and exposing themselves on social networking sites.

Niedzviecki argued that a kind of “reitization culture” emerged through social sharing sites emerging from the development of new communication technologies, and that, ultimately, each individual is part of the reitization culture. According to him, this culture is spreading rapidly, because everyone wants to spy on and follow people more, starting with their relatives with an increasing desire. With the internet providing new opportunities to open up lives to the public, to the common world of everyone, people have gained the opportunity to spy on each other, to peep, to follow. Lives are archived in front of everyone's eyes as never before. The photos and videos published are open to the public, it is not known

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<sup>70</sup> **Binark, Mutlu** (2007) Eleştirel Medya Okuryazarlığı, İstanbul, Kalkedon Yayınları, p.23.

by whom they were seen or followed, and frankly, no one cares about it. This is no longer a life spent in a narrow circle, with really close people who are together decently.<sup>71</sup>

As a result, with new communication technologies and social media, the area of privacy has been removed from being private, made public, emptied; special situations are becoming public.

It is suggested that social media strengthens the social character of online environments by encouraging interaction, which is primarily based on interpersonal relationships and adapted norms of daily interaction. When it is viewed in this way, when social networks become the main medium of communication between people and relationship-building environments, these internet sites have become a natural environment, especially for new generations.<sup>72</sup>

Another important point is that social media offers a more neutral and interactive environment, especially in political communication, compared to traditional media that offer one-way communication. Considering the entire sociological background in the political communication process of the new media in the new era, considering the convenience, effectiveness, efficiency and low cost it provides, it is understandable that it is the main communication medium, especially in terms of the thoughts, beliefs and political and social preferences of the new, younger generations.

## **2.5.New Media and Its Features**

New media is a virtual media environment that has emerged with computer, internet and mobile technologies with the development of technology, in which users interact interactively regardless of time and space. In other words, the concept of new media is used for environments based on computers and networks. In addition to this very broad meaning, digital-based, interactive new media is also used to express the means by which multimedia, computer and communication technologies are used as interactive and versatile forms of representation.

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<sup>71</sup> **Niedzviecki, Hal** (2010) *Dikizleme Günlüğü - Kendimizi ve Komşularımızı Gözetlemeyi Niçin Bu Kadar Sevdik?* (Trans.: Gökçe Gündüç), İstanbul, Ayrıntı Yayınları, p.10-25.

<sup>72</sup> **Papacharissi, Zizi** (edt.) (2009) *Journalism and citizenship-new agendas in communication*, New York, Routledge.p.29-44.

Van Dijk says that the new media is “a combination of transmission links and artificial memories that can be mounted on different devices where content such as text, data, images and/or audio are loaded”. Thompson has also covered new media from the point of view of mass media. According to him, new media is “communication tools that have increased capabilities through information processing technology, have become easier to use, or contain the potential for possible extensibility.”<sup>73</sup>

The new media seems to be building an extremely open-ended future not only with its technology, but also with the potential it provides. New media tools have emerged in different forms and formats, combining writing, sound, image, in short, all the tools that traditional communication tools have, and have created a new medium.

The communication processes between people are undergoing a significant change. With its jarring effect, new media is transforming many aspects of the communication process, including the source of communication, the message transmitted by the source, the encoding of that message, the transmission of the message, and the means by which the transmitted message is transmitted. With the widespread use of new media tools and especially social media, there is a growing interest in the changes that are taking place in areas such as virtual communities, virtual shopping, virtual participation, and representation.

What is referred to as “new” is not actually the message, but the environment. Throughout history, there has been communication in the form of interpersonal and mass communication. From the writings on the most primitive cave walls to the communication networks of today, the main goal has always been to convey a message. In this context, the concept of “new media” has emerged because of the use of “new” media and media in the transfer of information. The dominant perception of New Media tools is based on their characteristics, such as the fact that they can be used by anyone, anywhere, and that people can share what they want more freely and without limits. In this context, it has been repeated very often that the acceptance of new media on a global scale and the rapid spread of new media is due to these positive features.<sup>74</sup>

The main distinguishing features of new media from the traditional media (newspaper, radio, television, cinema) are that it is interactive and multimedia. Since they are based on the digital encoding system, it is possible to transfer a large amount of

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<sup>73</sup> **Thompson, John** (1995) *Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media*, Polity Press., p.132.

<sup>74</sup> **Boyd, Danah/ Ellison, Nicole B.** (2007) ‘Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship’, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, Vol:13, No:1, p.11.

information simultaneously and to allow the user to instantly recycle it. Therefore, multimedia has replaced one-way flow of information. Interactivity has enabled the communication process of the new media to have reciprocity or multi-layered communication in the communication space.

Another transformative effect of interactivity on the communication process is the fact that communication is related to the degree of co-existence in time. This feature of new media affects the user's role and participation in the communication process in a variety of ways, compared to traditional media. The multimedia feature of the new media is the collection of indicators, symbols, types of communication and different types of data in one tool<sup>75</sup>.

With the multimedia feature, different dimensions of communication such as data transmission, mass communication, and different data types such as images, audio, text and numeric data are meant to be found together. The high storage capacity of the new media, as well as the high data storage capacity, supports the user's selectivity. Considering both features together, it is possible to see that time and space are reshaped in the communication process with new media usage practices compared to traditional media.<sup>76</sup>

According to these principles, new media is defined in light of digital representation, modularity, variability, automation and code cycle.<sup>77</sup> Manovich sees the new media as the Classic Medium, first of all translated into digital format. All that is solid melts into air,<sup>78</sup> digitalization is not just a technical language or a pile of code. The principle of digital representation makes media programmable and makes the new media the subject of algorithmic manipulation. In other words, thanks to digital representation, new media environments can subject all kinds of content to operation, make a new one without any loss, make a copy and distribute it. The construction of new media on a common digital language makes it possible to access all data formats with a single media and ensures that the new media is a medium in which it collects all other mass media.

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<sup>75</sup> **Dijk, van Jan** (2005) p.146.

<sup>76</sup> **Binark**, (2007) p.22.

<sup>77</sup> **Manovich**, (2001) p.20.

<sup>78</sup> **Berman, Marshall** (2014) *Katı Olan Her Şey Buharlaşıyor* (Trans.:Ümit Altuğ), İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları.p.22-24.

### 2.5.1. New Media

Digital processing allows the message to be “shredded, processed, and linked”, making it possible for the new communication environment to be surrounded by networks, multimedia, and interactivity features. Digital communication differs from mass communication in three phases: production, content and consumption; and digitization has led to significant changes in these three phases<sup>79</sup>. During the production phase, digitization has led to the development of an innovative production logic, such as open source. In the content stage, a transformation has been experienced with the basic features of interaction, multimedia, and connectivity (hypertext). In the consumption stage, a differentiation has emerged based on the interaction. In addition to interactivity, connectivity, and multimedia features, the other two features of the new communication environment are gridlization and asynchronous<sup>80</sup>.

To address these features individually, digital means that everything is translated into digital codes (0,1) and presented to users. With the support of digital computers and the Internet, a large amount of storage is made available to users through an interface, increasing the speed of data transfer. Traditional media have rapidly transformed into digital media. Interactive communication is now possible. Opinions and thoughts are expressed on these platforms, and all kinds of virtual personalities are created, real or not. Many different types of data can decently coexist in the digital environment.

As mentioned earlier, everyone is a producer and also a consumer. Hypertext is the communication of a text, image, video or other text in the interface through links. This feature allows you to easily move from one file to another and navigate through the data. The spread is nourished by this hypertext property. It enables the rapid distribution of text, visual, video, and audio in the interface and re-access them at different times. Thus, the virtual environment describes the nature of the communication between the user and the interface and gives the user the feeling of being there.

In the virtual world, there is 'consensual production' rather than consent production. After the 'virtual culture' formed on the basis of individuals opening their privacy to the

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<sup>79</sup> **Scolari, Carlos A.** (2009) ‘Transmedia storytelling: Implicit consumers, narrative worlds, and branding in contemporary media production’, *International Journal of Communication* Issue: 3, p.586-606.

<sup>80</sup> **Geray, Haluk/ Başaran, Funda** (2009) *İletişim Ağlarının Ekonomisi*, Ankara, Siyasal Kitabevi, p.12-13.

public with their own consent, it is seen that identities and personalities are eroded, assets are mere indicators, organic integrity is lost and turned into synthetic, virtual components.<sup>81</sup>

Due to the interactive feature of new media, the user has the opportunity to communicate with the source and give feedback, as well as allowing the user to have control over the message sent by the source.<sup>82</sup> Multimedia and connectivity, which are two other features of the new media, are the features that describe the technological structure of these technologies that are suitable for transferring and processing all kinds of digital content. Multimedia refers to the ability of many different elements such as text, sound, images, photos, graphics, shapes and all kinds of content to combine on new media at the same time<sup>83</sup>.

The two other features of the new media are the ability to interrogate and synchronize, which explains the changes in the transmission and consumption of the message during the communication process. Accordingly, the message is “transmitted to each user individually” and can be exchanged with each individual between the users. If someone wants the user to be asynchronous at the time to be able to get the message to be sent; the sending and receiving a message from being necessity in synchronicity releases.

With these opportunities provided by the new media and the new opportunities created by all these features, users are in an active position. They are not passive, they play an active role in the formation of the agenda with the contents they produce, and they find a medium in which to express. They have been involved in the process as an active resource, and they are not a passive target in communication. Considering the access to a wide audience, this is an important step. The new media, which makes everyone visible and accessible, has a unique importance in the history of humanity because it makes everyone an actor of the process. The most effective factors in the formation of this difference are multimedia and interactivity of the new media.

In the new media environment, individuals have come to the point where they can easily produce content by taking advantage of the new media features. This content is called “User Generated Content” or “User Created Content”<sup>84</sup>. This opportunity for individuals to

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<sup>81</sup> Çakmakcı, Osman (2018) Radikal Kitaplar, İstanbul, Vakıf Bank Kültür Yayınları, p.53.

<sup>82</sup> Geray, Haluk/Başaran, (2003) p.15.

<sup>83</sup> Dahlgren, Peter (1995) Television and the Public Sphere: Citizenship, Democracy and the Media, SAGE Publications, p.64.

<sup>84</sup> Binark, Mutlu/Löker Koray (2011) STÖ'ler İçin Bilişim Rehberi, Ankara, STGM. p.10.

produce, disseminate information as users on new media platforms, access and reuse different information sources allows the user to reveal their different potentials. User generated content production also enables individuals to further develop their knowledge, skills and abilities related to Information-Communication Technologies. User-derived content production transforms the consumer into prosumer, in the words of Dan Laughey.<sup>85</sup>

With the influence of the new media, which penetrates sociologically, politically, economically, culturally in almost every area of life, it is in an indispensable position. As with many other human inventions, there are positive aspects, as well as negative ones. In this new environment, where time and space constraints and/or conceptualization differ, professional business practices have changed, electronic commerce and e-learning have developed on these platforms, and in particular social media has provided a new field and popular tools for social media communication with the recently defined form. Similarly, the new media includes opportunities such as accelerating organization and strengthening communication in terms of social movements and opposition. Besides all these, the new media cannot be evaluated as one-dimensional like every social phenomenon. It is also necessary to take into account the negative features that develop depending on the usage practices and purposes. The move to a digital surveillance and control society is perhaps the biggest threat to humanity. On these platforms, political, religious, racist views can also turn into discourses that are intended to be harmful to society.

Today, the new media technologies, which are said to have closed the major distances and brought the distance closer, have actually increased the distances and are criticized in the form of negative and also caused cultural degeneration. Jünger talks about the fact that the event itself becomes more insignificant than the event's transmission, and today it can be said that the event itself has almost lost its authenticity, and that the boundaries between the event and the event's transmission have become blurry. According to Jünger, the break of experience from temporal and spatial parameters causes us to become an eye facing the world<sup>86</sup>.

Within a social structure based on consumption, mass media have an active role in creating new needs; individuals establish their identity through images disseminated through

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<sup>85</sup> **Laughey, Dan** (2010) Media Studies: Theories and Approaches, Kamera Books, p.66-67.

<sup>86</sup> **Cadava, Eduardo** (2008) Işık Sözcükleri - Tarihin Fotografisi Üzerine Tezler, (Trans.: Kılıç, Aziz Ufuk), İstanbul, Metis Yayınları, p.24.

the media, consumer objects and the values produced by them. Thus, there is an identity construction in accordance with the spirit of this virtual period.

With the downfall of time so far, every depth is threatened to disappear; everything is happening on the surface, everything has become an image. Postman argues that we are a community that has reached the point of death and that the basic problem with television is that everything is offered under the ‘entertainment’ discourse.<sup>87</sup>

In summary, these changes have given rise to a societal arrangement where the system enforces a more individualistic way of life. Paradoxically, the influence of power has not waned; instead, it has been reinforced despite the flexible system of production and consumption. The promised freedom offered by the system might be illusory. Even though the progressive perception of time appears to be disintegrating, it can be contended from a negative standpoint that the present has been elevated to an absolute status by exploiting the past. Consequently, everything has transformed into an image due to this absolutization of the present, alongside all its positive attributes.

## **2.6.Web 2.0 and Social Media**

It is seen that information and communication technologies are implemented in stages. With the increasing opportunities provided by the Internet, the activities of users that were previously limited to reading and shopping have gradually changed in scale. Web 2.0 is a new generation platform that supports the exchange of information and ideas between users, where users can also develop content and collaborate with each other<sup>88</sup>. Since the late 1990s, there has been a growing trend towards emergence of the Web 2.0 era and in the subsequent years of the web. The most important issue here is the increasing importance of interaction and the web is being structured as a transmission medium. Another development is that the web is becoming compatible with different communication tools.<sup>89</sup> In 2004, Tim O’Reilly, founder of O’Reilly media, named the Web 2.0 a web network that enables fast and unlimited sharing of information based on activity and communication. Web 2.0

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<sup>87</sup> **Postman, Neil** (2004) *Televizyon Öldüren Eğlence*, (Transl.: Osman Akinhay), İstanbul, Ayrıntı Yayınları, p.21. **Murugesan, San** (2007) ‘Understanding Web 2.0’, IT Professional, Vol: 9, Issue:4, p. 34-41.

<sup>88</sup> **George, Carlisle. E. ve Scerri, Jackie** (2007) ‘Web 2.0 and User-Generated Content: Legal Challenges In The New Frontier’, Journal of Information, Law and Technology, Issue:2.  
[http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1290715](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1290715), Accessed. 11.02.2022.

<sup>89</sup> **DiNucci, Darcy** (1999) ‘Fragmented Future’, Print Magazine, Vol: 53 Issue: 4, p.38, 221–222.  
[http://darcy.com/fragmented\\_future.pdf](http://darcy.com/fragmented_future.pdf)

technology is the foundation of social media, enabling users to easily upload, engage and share online content with other users.

Web 1.0, developed by Tim Berners-Lee in March 1989 by CERN (European Laboratory for Particle Physics), has the main purpose of Web sites, only to provide information to the user. In other words, the web designer prepares and publishes the site; users can access this site and read the information only <http://seset.ceit.metu.edu.tr> (see). Web, summarized as "WWW", focusing on a "read-only" Web interface, allowing searching for and reading information, with the vast majority of users acting only as consumers of content; one-way, with links to relevant information.<sup>90</sup> Web 2.0 defines the system that internet users create jointly and by sharing. Web 2.0 applications provide a progressive software service as more people use it, include individual users, allow one's own data and services to be redeployed by others, and are constantly updated. In this sense, Web 2.0 is a more advanced structure compared to Web 1.0 in many respects.

Individual use has become increasingly easier. In a dynamic and interactive structure, individual preferences and mutual interactions have come to the fore. The possibilities offered by the Internet have become to cover the entire field of life. While previously the Internet showed a stationary structure as in traditional media, in the new era, it is possible to interfere with content and practical applications, sharing and interactions are possible for all amateur users. In the new era, it is not just a passive situation such as reading, but it has the characteristics of a platform where participation takes place. While web 1.0 is the world's largest library, web 2.0 is considered the world's largest public shared space. It is evolving from a simpler system to a more complex system. Development continues with the new opportunities provided by information and communication technologies, along with active participation and interaction.

The emerging internet landscape known as Web 2.0 serves as a platform where individuals can openly share their emotions, ideas, experiences, and memories on a daily basis. In addition to textual sharing, users can also visually express themselves through videos and images distributed across social networks.

The term web 2.0 was first used in 2004. The term refers to the creation of content and applications by all users in a participatory manner and with cooperation. The term, which

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<sup>90</sup> **Akar, Efil**, "Sosyal Medya Platformları, Sosyal Medya Platformları İle Pazarlama": Sosyal Medya (Ed: Özata, Zeynep, F.) (2013), Eskişehir, Anadolu Üniversitesi Açıköğretim Yayınları, p.52-78; 80-105.

refers to various publicly available media content produced by users, has started to become widespread since 2005.<sup>91</sup>

The main features of this new era can be described as follows: Web 2.0 provides a free flow of data and all people can connect to each other through networks. Visual applications can reach the most advanced level. Content and ideas can be shared freely. Communication has become instantaneous, accessible and easy. With intelligent applications, everything has started to happen inter-based. From a one-way flow of information, there is a situation in which users produce and share their own content. In this new process, new discussion and interaction opportunities have emerged through personal social media tools such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter.

In this way, the social effects and uses of networks are gaining a different dimension. The participation of users depends on how open the page is for use, for what purposes and how the content is evaluated in this dimension. In this way, in terms of resources, companies develop themselves further with different algorithms by using this information. The fact that these technologies offer technological possibilities in terms of enabling the user's intervention is another dimension of the job.

In this new process, many new features have come to the forefront of societies and have presented a transformative quality to the flow of life. Many people around the world have access to the Internet, and virtuality is now a reality. The goal here is to ensure that the software and products produced reach the widest possible audience. People are not just passive buyers of these technologies, but also producers. The more people use them, the more the valueable these products become. When users around the world act together, they can have the potential to create a great power of influence. As the Internet becomes more accessible to everyone, it is becoming more widespread. This environment, where many resources come together, has multimedia features. The software produced offers a flexible structure and relies on its users to find ways to use it, rather than its designers. These networks offer video, images and live visual environments with more entertainment content. Real life is exhibited to experiences in a virtual environment.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> **Kaplan, Andreas M./ Haenlein, Michael** (2010) 'Users of the World, Unite! The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media'. Business Horizons, Issue: 53, p. 59-68.

<sup>92</sup> **Rigby, Ben** (2008) Mobilizing Generation 2.0: A practical guide to using Web 2.0: technologies to recruit, organize and engage youth, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass. p.249-258

Applications that previously had encyclopedia features and had limited features have been replaced by versatile, participatory and sharing applications. With its new structure that paves the way for social media with these features, it has become a platform where people meet in these virtual environments. User generated content, on the other hand, gained popularity in 2005 and is used to describe various forms of media content that are publicly accessible and produced by the end user. In order for a content to be considered “user-generated content”, three basic criteria must be met. First, the content must be published on a publicly accessible website or social networking site that can be accessed by a select group of people. Second, it must include a certain amount of creative effort. Third, it must be produced in the daily flow of life outside of professional routines and practices. These three features include the forms of expression that manifest themselves on many communication platforms, including video sharing sites on the internet, news-based applications, social networking sites, blogs and other media.<sup>93</sup>

Web 2.0 and user generated content concepts together with social media created by user generated content can be created and exchanged on the Web 2.0 the platform, which is developed as a group of internet-based applications. This definition includes applications like Wikipedia, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. Web 2.0 has the content and social media concepts that the user generates, based on the fact that the developments are defined as the internet revolution in terms of communication processes that do not have the opportunity to express themselves in the traditional media.

Together with the opportunities provided by the Web 2.0 technological infrastructure, social media has become a platform where users can share content they have created. It is important to note that the change in the content and service delivery on the internet has led to emergence of a new communication environment based on more open and sharing which users are more active. This also shows how companies are economically incorporating features such as participation and sharing, which are already part of the internet, into their commercial cycle by analyzing their relationship with business models and revenue methods. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate this situation by taking into account the expansion of social networks based on the internet, increasing user participation

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<sup>93</sup> Kaplan, Andreas M./Haenlein, p. 59-68.

and the expectations established around it, and the merging of commercial companies with revenue methods and business models.<sup>94</sup>

It has been stated that there are four basic components of Web 2.0-based technologies: technology, economics, users and philosophy. In general, the relationship between Web 2.0 and democracy, there is a break from the approach that the Internet has the potential to create a more democratic communication process, and more limited expectations are expressed. Thanks to the Internet, it is becoming a little more distant to having a more democratic, egalitarian and very vocal approach. This is because the data generated as a result of interactions is open to manipulation by Internet companies, which is motivated by economic interests.

In a form related to the technology component, the economics component refers to a revenue method that significantly connects the data generated as a result of interaction with users, and this merger can be observed most concretely in Internet advertising. Accordingly, the content and services that involve users offered by Internet companies enable advertisers to access more detailed data, offer targeted advertising, and combine marketing communication with consumer behavior on the Internet. This is another economic dimension that affects social media.

Fuchs explained Web 2.0 and user-generated content through the change of capital accumulation strategy related to the Internet based on the user-oriented change of business models of companies in the field of information and communication technologies.<sup>95</sup>

In the 1990s, Internet content was understood as an area that would bring income, and the business model of most Internet sites was based on content presentation. This business model has started to change since the 2000s; internet companies have started to turn to an internet accumulation strategy based on ‘communication and cooperation’ instead of an accumulation strategy based on ‘information and content’. With such a transformation, the economic importance of this new process has become increasingly well understood. Thus, Web 2.0-based technologies are used as a “marketing tool”. Fuchs exemplified this situation through internet advertising, which exemplifies the relationship of changes such as

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<sup>94</sup> **Geray, Haluk/Özdemir, Funda Başaran** (2011) Reproducing dependency: How hegemonic discourses shape ICT policies in the periphery. In *Handbook of Research on Information Communication Technology Policy: Trends, Issues and Advancements*, IGI Global. p. 599-615.

<sup>95</sup> **Fuchs, Christian** (2009) ‘Information and communication technologies and society: A contribution to the critique of the political economy of the Internet,’ *European journal of communication* Vol. 24, Issue:1 p. 69-87.

participation in social media and sharing with social network strategy in the new process.<sup>96</sup> Such an accumulation strategy suggests that the process of commodification of the audience in traditional media continues as the commodification of its users in Web 2.0. On the Internet, the user is not only the one who consumes the content, but also produces the content, and by sharing this content in a network environment, he is an active participant in the content production and presentation process. According to Fuchs, another commodification seen in Web 2.0 is the commodification of social relationships that users establish with other users on platforms such as social networks, sharing sites.

According to the author, user activities, especially on platforms like social networks and sharing sites, encompass various actions such as generating original content, contributing through comments, sharing existing content, and tagging content. These activities are interconnected with other content, applications, services, personal information, preferences, and individuals' social circles. The value of content on such platforms becomes evident through this contextualization, constituting the economic dimension of this process. The commodification of communication within social networks, the escalating user participation that follows, and the relationship between user-generated content and internet income strategies are also manifested in this stage.

When viewed within the context of political processes, it becomes apparent that individuals and societies are influenced by information exchanged on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, as well as by expressed thoughts, comments, organized surveys, and more. It seems that multimedia-sharing services like YouTube, Wikis, and personal blogs, through videos and information they provide, can also impact these processes. Consequently, some politicians are incorporating political strategies in these environments, capitalizing on the considerable interest individuals and societies exhibit in these communication channels. This is particularly relevant for shaping political preferences and elections, given the interwoven nature of all segments of society on these platforms, where economic competition is also prominent. In essence, platforms that are highly susceptible to manipulation for significant economic gains can similarly be guided by the same rationale in political processes.

The technologies that define the Web 2.0 process continue to progress and are gradually moving to another phase, where a third is approaching. Social media is being

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<sup>96</sup> Fuchs, p.75.

accepted as the real environment of people in a short time and its influence is gradually increasing. In this new process, the first goal of social networks was to bring people together and bring them together on these platforms. This was to encourage people to chat and interact with each other. Web 2.0 shows more of the technical infrastructure and technological dimension of this communication that takes place on social networks. As an application, Web 2.0 gives way to the concept of social media.

### **2.6.1. Social Media and Its Features**

Social media is an application area that allows users to share information, different opinions and experiences with others on various social network-based Internet sites quickly placing this world almost at the center of life. As a communication platform, social media has different characteristics from traditional media. The most important difference is that it is interactive and participatory. Anyone can create, interact with and contribute to social media content.<sup>97</sup>

Social media can be defined as Internet-based applications founded on Web 2.0 technologies and philosophy, facilitating the creation and sharing of content by consumers. It serves as a highly interactive environment for social interaction, enabling dialogue, idea sharing, and information dissemination.<sup>98</sup> In this realm, both producers and consumers of content are users, engaging in constant communication. Social media platforms encompass various elements, including identity, chat, sharing, and location.

The emergence of social media is fundamentally rooted in the evolution of communication technologies and philosophy. The advent of social media and Web 2.0 has ushered in a new era for all segments of society, transitioning from traditional to contemporary media. This transformation has had a significant impact, particularly on traditional media. Despite initial challenges in adaptation, the media has largely assimilated the developments in communication technologies.

An integral characteristic of this new era is the swift dissemination of news and information, facilitated by social media platforms. This rapid information flow is a defining attribute of this contemporary landscape. Importantly, this new era is characterized by its

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<sup>97</sup> **Weinberg, Tamar** (2009) *The New Community Rules: Marketing on the Social Web*, 1st edition, Sebastopol, O'Reilly Media.p.10.

<sup>98</sup> **Gedik, Yasemin** (2020), 'Pazarlamada Yeni Bir Çerçeve: Sosyal Medya ve Web 2.0', *Uluslararası Yönetim Akademisi Dergisi*, Vol: 3, Issue: 1, p. 252-269.

extensive reach and its capacity to bring about rapid changes and transformations across various domains.

Each social media platform has almost the same features. These features are:

User accounts: If a website allows internet users to create their own accounts, it also allows social interaction.

Profile pages: The profile pages in the social media represent the individual. These pages contain information about the individual and the individual's posts.

Friends, followers, groups, hashtags: These are used for people to interact with other social media users, for people who think about the same topic to get together under a heading and become members of a group.

Communication: This is used for social media users to connect with other users and share information.

Personalization: Social media platforms allow users to make their own settings. People can customize, edit their profiles, manage friends or followers, like, comment or share posts.

Web 2.0 technologies help traditional media monologues transform into dialogues in social media. Social media has opened a new space for users to express themselves freely, and people have come together on a platform where they can share their thoughts and opinions freely.

There are four main factors that have contributed to the prevalence of social media technologies:

1 - Technological factors: The expansion of broadband connections increased hard disk capacity and processing speed, and reduced costs have all contributed to the rise of social media. The emergence of technologies that enable the creation and sharing of content. As well as software that can be used to create, edit, and merge content have also played a role. The cost of consumer technologies that can be used to produce sound, photos or images has decreased, and their quality has increased. This had led to the rise of professional and amateur content pages.

2 - Social factors: The emergence of a young population who are more comfortable with information and communication technologies (digital natives), who are willing to express themselves online and who are less reluctant to share their personal information

online has also contributed to the rise of social media. People's desire to express and create themselves, as well as their willingness to interact more have also played a role. The increase in communities and collaborative projects is another factor. These social factors are becoming increasingly influential among older users.

3 - Economic factors: The creation, arrangement and hosting of content (hosting) tools to have become more affordable and easier to use. The financing of capital required for the establishment of such sites has also been facilitated (through risk capital or other investment tools). The cost of broadband internet connections has decreased. Commercial organizations (mobile operators, telecommunications providers, traditional media publishers, search engines) are becoming more interested in providing content created by users/consumers and the “long tail” economy is on the rise. New business models that enable content to be converted into money are also emerging.

4 - Legal factors: The emergence of more flexible licensing and copyright applications (such as Creative Commons Language) has also contributed to the rise of social media. The emergence of End-User License Agreements that provide assurance to users/consumers to protect their content is another factor.

Initially, the Internet has created an environment of social participation with the influence of social media breaking the influence of traditional media, which has dominant and uniform characteristics.<sup>99</sup>

Social media creates its own public space and enlarges it every day. The internet, which emerges as a result of people's desire to produce, use and share information is the power and potential of social media. The Internet, where information and everyday things are in an almost endless flow, has become intertwined with social life and has become a phenomenon that allows the dynamics of life and the values of society to be reformed again. “A new communication system, which speaks a universal, digital language, integrates the words, sounds and images of our culture into a global context, and makes them suitable for the likes of individuals and their personalities. While describing how the process has shaped life, interactive computer networks have grown exponentially by creating new forms of communication and channels, shaping life, as well as by shaping and folding life.<sup>100</sup> As one of the main functions of the Internet, it connects computers together, accelerates the

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<sup>99</sup> **Dahlgren, Peter**, (2009) Media and political engagement, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.p.20.

<sup>100</sup> **Castells, Manuel** (2001) The Internet Galaxy, Oxford University Press, p.61.

exchange of information; at the same time, with the further development of communication technologies, people are also connecting to each other.

Through social networks, individuals can redefine their profile in all areas by redefining their profile in which they can create socio-economic, status and cultural values that they cannot achieve or cannot live in their real life social lives. In this case, which is far from linearity in creating virtual identity, they can relate and meet all their material and spiritual needs with other profiles. Social networking provides users with the opportunity to establish their positions that they want to be in real life, but that they can't be. In other words, users can establish a virtual life on social networking networks.

Social media has become an important part of human life on a global scale in a very short time. Among these social networks, Facebook became the most influential sharing site that stood out globally in this context. Its biggest feature is that it is literally a multimedia platform. First of all, Facebook included real people. Except for a very small audience, all Facebook profiles belonged to real people. The site, which was established to find old school friends, has turned into a big sharing site over time. With its instantaneous and interactive nature, it has become a fun platform with a strong visual appearance and a pleasant time spent with photos and videos. It was as if the time spent in a virtual environment was more real.

Facebook was a space where people could share the internet content they liked, and in this respect, it gained global popularity as a platform offering pioneering brand new services. Now it has become important to be on Facebook for the presence of people and companies in the virtual world. With Facebook, a platform has emerged that reveals the distinctive features of social media in a real sense.

The other important platform of social media established after Facebook was Twitter. There were other social media platforms before Twitter, but they were not effective. The reason for this was that Facebook and Twitter had provided the necessary environment for all the sharing and communication that could be done through the internet base.

When Twitter came into being, it was planned and produced according to the fact that users did not even need an internet connection. It is enough for the user to send a short message in order to send a message on Twitter. Another feature of this platform is that it is simple enough to be quickly opened and read on any mobile device. Twitter addresses people's mobile habits. Twitter meant sending a text message over the Internet. It is possible

to write what you want to say in 280 characters and send your message to everyone. The only difference from SMS is that this message can be read by anyone. This idea, which initially seemed simple and not very effective, has completely changed the course of social media. People, institutions, communities turned to these platforms and quickly became part of the networks.

The mobility of Twitter allowed it to create its own era. Twitter was not a platform where you could tell your friends and family what you did outside when you got home, like Facebook in its early days. In microblogs such as Twitter, textual data can be created, enabling direct interpersonal communication and social connections. Social media tools, unlike traditional media, see the individual as the center. These channels make political communication possible for this reason.<sup>101</sup>

On the contrary, it became the most effective way to share your thoughts, opinions, and experiences in real time. Since the messages were short, they were also limited in terms of how long they could stay in the public eye. Twitter was the most effective way to make an event that was happening in real life exist in the virtual world at the same time, and it largely owes its success to this. The immediacy and mobility of Twitter have actually given it a power that was perhaps unpredictable at the beginning. While Twitter created a simultaneous connection between real life and the virtual world, it also opened up an important space for individuals to share their thoughts, likes, and preferences directly with their political activities. Unlike previous social media tools, Twitter allows politicians and citizens in societies to interact easily, and when there is a political action anywhere, it can be quickly notified to a wide audience.

In this context, social media provides a free environment for individuals, but also gives them an interactive and participatory identity.<sup>102</sup> It allows participation not only for the purpose of daily news, information or communication, but also in political, ideological, economic and cultural fields. This structure created by new media has an effective and fast-spreading structure. The practices of having information with these new networks have also changed. The flow of news and information has taken on a dynamic structure, unlike the traditional understanding. Users are moving in their own space while expressing their

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<sup>101</sup> **Hanson, G. Haridakis/G. H. Cunningham/A. W. Sharma/ R., Ponder, J. D.** (2010) The 2008 Presidential Society, Kent State University Published.p.44.

<sup>102</sup> **Uluç, Güliz/Yarcı, Ayşegül** (2017) ‘Sosyal Medya Kültürü’, Dumlupınar Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, Issue: 52, p.88-102.

thoughts or opinions. All control over the contents belongs to them. In this respect, the new media network has given people the opportunity to become both a producer and a consumer.

A number of prominent features of new media show themselves more during election periods. For example, new communication technologies provide convenience in terms of participation in politics. These technologies offer important opportunities for participation in politics on platforms where election surveys, debates and polemics are conducted. Compared to traditional media, it has become easier to access news sources anytime and anywhere through new media. In addition, new media offers a wide range of information about political and civic life, which makes an important contribution to informing voters.

New media offers user-centered experiences by its structure. It offers the interaction and interactive features that politics needs most to users and, of course, politicians.

Social networks also provide the opportunity to establish their positions where they are building a new identity and perhaps where they want to but cannot be in real life. These platforms are a place where people build a virtual life together. Techno-political understanding, which replaced traditional politics with technology, eliminated the boundaries of the nation-state system and social network groups began to form after the techno revolution. Virtual communities are seen as groups that emerge on the network when a sufficient number of people conduct a public discussion of sufficient length, with sufficient human feelings, to shape personal relationship networks in cyberspace.

Social media, which provides political active participation, has changed the dimensions of democracy by resisting traditional values and has differentiated the perception of politics in society. Given the strong link between political tutelage and civil organization, the importance of social media in terms of politics emerges. Social media has placed politics a more flexible, more transparent pattern; and the traditional rigid structure of politics has been broken. The impact of social media and the impact of the traditional media before the emergence of the Erk was wide and strong; this area was divided by the social media and therefore the question of which the media wanted to transfer to society was started.

Social media, which has taken its place in everyday life, is shaped in many fields, from social relations to economy, to entertainment and education, and forms different functions according to the changing needs of people. In parallel with these developments, it has become impossible to say that individuals, societies and governments are independent of the effects of social media in today's world.

Considering the possibilities offered by all the available content of social media, it is possible to list its important features as follows: In fact, it carries a chronological order of thoughts and current ones, like a diary. Podcast videos and audio offer the possibility to use in different formats. Social networks that encourage collaboration tend to expand in almost every area. Social networks are able to bring together people with common ideas and opinions. Blogs and wikis encourage people to produce, share and talk. The flow of news and information in the new media is realized through the popularity of certain information and topics. Following the agenda in this way has been more preferred by people. Social networks cover general information for production, sales and marketing. It provides very important data to understand the consumer's ideas. Social networks offer important tips about competitors, customers and expected innovations and can be a guide. Following the discussions here is of indispensable importance for departments that produce strategic thoughts. Blogs allow thoughts that may not be expressed in any media to be shared in a free environment and to be listened to and followed around the world. It also allows you to know the thought process. Video and audio connections bring the distant closer: they offer a way to establish intimacy with information. Podcasts connect people who are trying out the skills of new tools. Tagging, sharing and all other activities are a platform where feelings and thoughts are shared on social networks, which means that information is transferred around faster.<sup>103</sup>

Users meet with other people who have the same opinion as them through social media, communities and come together in a virtual environment. This situation shows a direct connection with the emergence of new ideas, services, business models and the spread and development of new technologies within social media.

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<sup>103</sup> Dahlgren, (1995) p.62.

## 2. CHAPTER II: POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

### 3.1. Political Communication

Political communication is the term referring to the articulation of a political viewpoint or power focus, encompassing activities undertaken by groups to foster trust and garner support from the public and a broad audience within the political system. These activities involve persuasive communication tactics, consistently executed through avenues such as advertising, propaganda, and public relations, while forging shared symbols in pursuit of attaining authority.

Political communication, whether unilateral or reciprocal, primarily seeks the right to influence, persuade, and manage the target audience, akin to assuming sovereignty, governance, and attaining power. To this end, groups employ an array of strategies and practices. In addition, Political communication is a field of conflict between discourses about politics and discourses that aim to control the political interpretation of the situation<sup>104</sup>.

Political communication refers to the public statements and information made by political party executives or those who govern the state and the perception of these by the society.<sup>105</sup>

Politics, being a domain that governs the interplay between leadership and citizens, embodies the endeavor to oversee the populace within a community and simultaneously rally the widest array of individuals to its cause.

The formal recognition of politics as a discipline straddling the realms of science and communication materialized in the 1950s. Yet, the exploration of political communication can be deemed a relatively recent endeavor. It delves into the interactions of political communities, encompassing ways of thinking, belief systems, influences, resistance tendencies, all aimed at harnessing public opinion. A connection exists between political science and communication methodologies. While politics was traditionally linked with individual behaviors, it concurrently found synergy with structural functional theory, aiding in lending significance and lucidity to the societal process. In addition to examining political

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<sup>104</sup> **Walton, Dominique** (1991) 'Siyasal İletişim: Bir Model Yaratmak', Birikim Dergisi, Issue:30, p.27-42.

<sup>105</sup> **Gönenç, E. Özgür** (2007) 'İletişimin Tarihsel Süreci', İstanbul Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Hakemli Dergisi, Issue: 28, p.87-102.

communication from the perspectives of politics and communication, an exploration from a cultural viewpoint is also warranted.<sup>106</sup>

Technological opportunities hold special significance within the realm of political communication. The primary objective is to effortlessly reach the intended audience, while persuading them effectively. In the progression of societies, it's pivotal to establish the interconnection among culture, power, and technology, and how technology operates while attaining power and emerging as a power focal point. According to Innis, an authority in this field, the manner in which communication tools convey messages holds social repercussions, beyond the content of the message itself. The temporal and spatial method of message transmission affects its interaction with these tools. The utilization of information as a locus of power or the dissemination of information to broad sectors is intimately intertwined with the structure of communication technologies. Innis contends that while information serves as a means to attain power, the origins of this power are closely entwined with the communication environments facilitating information transmission. Consequently, the power centers permeating these communication environments and exercising control can yield substantial advantages.<sup>107</sup>

The use of information as a means of obtaining power or the dissemination of information to wide segments is closely related to the structure of communication technologies and the ways in which it is used. How information is transported and who controls it. In fact, political communication may seem to be a way to penetrate this bill among forces that are close to each other.

The importance of the communication environment is related to the ability to access it. Despite the apparent ease of access to communication tools, this doesn't necessarily translate into equity. While everyone may access information, does this truly empower us to construct a democratic and just society? If we're to discuss democratic principles and an egalitarian society, the attainment of such ideals hinges upon a communication environment wherein language isn't manipulated. Nevertheless, new communication technologies exhibit divergent structural attributes from traditional media, yielding both negative facets and potential.

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<sup>106</sup> **Tokgöz, Oya** (2008) Siyasal iletişimi anlamak, İstanbul, İmge Kitabevi, p.34-39.

<sup>107</sup> **Innis, Harold A.** (1999) The Bias of Communication Toronto:University of Toronto Press, p.31.

It is difficult to give a general definition of political communication. There are different approaches, understandings and opinions on this issue. According to one approach, political communication is the work of some specialized organizations created to spread the ideology, information and opinions of political parties. Political communication is the role that communication plays in the political process. To reveal the suitability of a candidate to his potential voters, ensuring that the candidate is recognized by the highest number of voters, making a difference with opponents and the opposition, obtaining the number of votes necessary to win a campaign with a minimum of tools, are all techniques used. For example, according to Doris Graber, “political language” is the rhetorical side of political communication that includes non-linguistic signs, body language, political actions, boycotts, protests.

Political communication holds significant relevance today as an arena of contention for the narratives of legitimate actors including political parties, politicians, pressure groups, non-governmental organizations, journalists, and opinion research firms expressing their views on public matters<sup>108</sup>. Conversely, from a more dystopian perspective, political communication can be defined as the transmission of messages and information from highly knowledgeable, powerful individuals to disempowered and vulnerable counterparts. Pierre Bourdieu similarly conveys that communication experts, scientists, and researchers, who are foundational figures in political communication, often relinquish critique to align with power, assuming the role of minor intellectuals, thereby contributing to the transformation of political life into a purported game.

Three central elements constitute political communication: political organizations or actors, mass media, and the target audience. The source of political communication originates from political organizations or actors initiating the discourse. The recipients encompass the populace that should be influenced by the political message—the public and individuals associated with the state through citizenship. Mass media, encompassing various forms of media, acts as the conduit for transmitting the message from source to recipient

When people talk about politics and politics is an activity that concerns the whole society, it becomes an activity that is performed by a small number of actors instead of the public. Political speech is the spirit of democracy. There is free speech at the heart of a strong

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<sup>108</sup> **Taşmurat Taner**, (2019) ‘Siyasal İletişim Süreci ve Siyasal Mesaj Stratejileri’, *Uluslararası Toplum ve Kültür Çalışmaları Dergisi*, Issue: 2, p.64-79.

democracy. By means of political speech, citizens exchange ideas, create new political meanings, form social and personal identities, combine public speech with their individual lives.<sup>109</sup>

Aristotle's Rhetoric underscores the simultaneous construction of political discourse and forms of political action. Aristotle emphasizes the aspect of political discourse that unveils disparities of opinion between the young and old, the wealthy and impoverished. Consequently, he underscores bridging the generation gap and emphasizing the importance of cohesive action in the prevailing political equilibrium. Additionally, he expounds on the requisites of negotiation to ensure comprehension of actions and ideas within any community, ensuring transparent intentions. Political matters can only be effectively negotiated within such a society.<sup>110</sup>

Political communication has passed through three important stages after the Second World War. Firstly, with the widespread use of communication technologies, the first twenty years after the Second World War have been called the “golden age of parties” and parties have come to the fore in this process. Secondly, in the 1960s, there was a period when national television with limited channels dominated political communication and voters' party loyalty was loosened. Thirdly, recently a new period is taking place, which is expressed as a period when media tools are multiplying and media can be accessed from anywhere at any time. Political news, information and opinions have reached a wider audience with new communication technologies in addition to traditional media tools.

McNair simplifies political communication as follows: First, it encompasses all types of communication undertaken by politicians and other political figures to achieve specific goals. Second, it entails communication directed towards politicians and other political figures by non-political actors such as voters and journalists. Third, it involves communication comprising news, commentary, and other political media forms that encompass politicians, political figures, and their activities.<sup>111</sup>

Political communication is a process that facilitates the dissemination of a political message, encompassing diverse information related to politics among political actors, voters,

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<sup>109</sup> **Barber, Benjamin** (1994) *Theory and Practice: Democracy and the Philosophers*, First Edition, Berkeley, University of California Press, p.32.

<sup>110</sup> **Aristotle/Tredennick, Hugh** (2004) *The Nicomachean Ethics*, (Transl: Thomson, James Alexander K.) London, Penguin Classics, p.252-254.

<sup>111</sup> **McNair, Brian** (1999) *An Introduction to Political Communication*, Second Edition, London and New York, p.168.

and other organizations. Being highly influential in this process, the technology itself, can become a quasi-political communication actor in an environment at which the tool itself constitutes the message. While traditional media such as television, newspapers, and the Internet remain effective means of political communication, the new era prominently features social media, offering versatile and instantaneous communication opportunities. Political communication stands as the most impactful factor in shaping societal opinions, desires, demands, and reactions. This arena allows for immediate feedback, enabling strategy adjustments based on real-time insights. While political communication traditionally unfolded as one-way broadcasting through traditional media, the advent of new communication technologies has endowed it with a two-way structure, effectively utilizing this feedback.

Political communication is a process that involves communication among political actors, voters, and other organizations, encompassing a wide array of information related to politics. Within this process, highly impactful tools can assume roles akin to political communication actors. While traditional media has historically been the primary means of political communication, the internet and social media have emerged as formidable alternatives. Political communication stands as the most potent force in shaping societal consent, desires, opinions, and reactions. While traditional media established political communication as a one-way mass communication channel, new communication technologies have enabled a more interactive and central structure.

The concept of political communication can show significant variations based on the methods and techniques employed, being greatly influenced by technological, cultural, economic, and other factors. Many facets of political discourse by political actors today manifest variations in both content and tools utilized. The message's content may differ depending on the communication tools employed. For instance, messages that consider societal dynamics, address current issues, and utilize new communication technologies may carry more weight. Notable developments have arisen in communication platforms' technologies and content. Technological advancements have reshaped communication channels used by political actors and broader segments, giving rise to a new communication process. These changes have also influenced the message content transmitted through these means.<sup>112</sup> The realm of political communication has expanded to include both classical

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<sup>112</sup> **Aziz, Aysel** (2013) *Siyasal İletişim*, Ankara, Nobel Yayınları, p. 3-4.

methods and new communication techniques. While the efficacy of traditional media in political communication is evident, its significance has further grown with the advent of new media. While prominent media conglomerates effectively employ traditional media in political communication, the new media has ushered in a different trajectory.

Social media has become an important tool of political communication: the internet has enabled political actors to focus on the target groups of young people who have not attracted much attention before in political communication. Media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, which Obama has used extensively in presidential elections, attracted the attention of other political actors. Based on Web 2.0 based communication technologies, this virtual communication style has brought new dimensions to classical political communication methods and techniques. Political actors who are open to technology have started to use these new methods and techniques rapidly.

With the emergence of new media, social networks have departed from the traditional media model, placing the individual at the center. They facilitate rapid and interactive communication, connect people with similar thoughts or interests, and foster a sense of shared identity and collective consciousness. Social media is believed to bring benefits like enhanced self-confidence and increased user participation. However, it has also been observed that both past and present instances, particularly in political contexts, have led to landscapes of severe polarization and harsh judgments, even resulting in mutual insults.<sup>113</sup>

Politics now tends to be a fun, lively, glittering, even extravagant show nowadays. As Guy Debord put it, we are living in a society dominated by spectacle. This spectacle, once dominated by television, cinema, and video, has now expanded further with the multimedia capabilities of virtual environments.<sup>114</sup> The Internet, alongside other media, continues to wield significant influence and manipulation in this virtual arena. Here, political strategies are crafted with the aid of new communication technologies. The culture of images, intertwined with advertisements and content on these platforms, envelops us and shapes our political perceptions. Political parties are also

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<sup>113</sup> **Dahlgren, Peter** (2005) 'The Internet, Public Spheres, and Political Communication: Dispersion and Deliberation' *Political Communication*, Vol: 22, Issue: 2, p.147-162.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600590933160> Accessed. 28.05.2023.

<sup>114</sup> **Ajvazi, Irfan, Guy Debord**, *The Society of the Spectacle*, p.1-12.  
<https://philarchive.org/archive/AJVGDT> Accessed. 28.05.2023.

formulating projects and election strategies in response to this changing landscape.<sup>115</sup>

In order to succeed in political competition, it is necessary to establish a more democratic, participatory, listening, understanding and interactive structure in the way politicians conduct politics. Therefore, the most important issue in the success of political actors is the communication problem. A political party's primary duty is to communicate with its members and the wider public. Success in politics is closely tied to the creation of a structured, effective, participatory, and healthy political communication process and the adept utilization of these platforms. New media is noted for expanding the public sphere, increasing participation and diversifying representation by providing a platform for a variety of viewpoints. As a communication medium, the internet and new communication technologies facilitate the emergence and dissemination of myriad ideas.

### **3.2. Political Communication Process and Social Media**

The widespread adoption of social media began with the transition to Web 2.0, marking a certain level of development in internet-based communication technologies. With the introduction of new communication technologies, a shift from one-way information dissemination and news flow in traditional media to bi-directional, symmetric, and simultaneous information sharing took place. As the interest in social media has increased, the number of contacts, interactions and shares that take place in a virtual environment has increased. Thanks to these platforms, channels of self-liberation and dialogue have been opened. Thus, social media has emerged as a new field in which people express themselves, as well as a form and process of communication.

It can be argued that political communication is born from the combination of the concepts of 'politics', which is defined as the reconciliation of different segments of society and power and power centers on a common ground, and 'communication', which is explained as the process of creating common symbols and reaching a dialectical agreement on them<sup>116</sup>. As an overarching (umbrella) concept, it includes user-developed (interaction-oriented) Web 2.0-based Internet environments and tools such as blogs, social networks, virtual worlds, bookmarking sites, video and photo sharing sites<sup>117</sup>. According to another

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<sup>115</sup> Tokgöz, P.40.

<sup>116</sup> Oktay, Mahmut (2002) Politikada Halkla İlişkiler, Derin Yayınları, İstanbul, p.7.

<sup>117</sup> Waters, John, K./Lester, John (2010) The Everything Guide To Social Medi, USA, Adamsmedia. p.252.

definition, social media is the name given to all kinds of platforms where users determine and share the data they share themselves.<sup>118</sup>

According to the definition of the American Political Science Association, political communication "encompasses the creation, shaping, dissemination, processing, and influence of information within the political system, both internal and external, for governments, other institutions, groups, or individuals."<sup>119</sup>

The transformation of the political communication process and the pervasive use of social media for political communication purposes signify the emergence of a new political communication paradigm. The advent of new communication technologies based on Web 2.0 has not only altered interpersonal communication processes and forms but has also brought about substantial changes and transformations in political participation. The user base of social media platforms is continually expanding. Platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter possess the potential to significantly reshape not only interpersonal interactions and communication patterns but also political communication on a significant scale.

Communication processes involving political actors and voters have become increasingly widespread through the utilization of social media platforms and new communication technologies. Rather than relying solely on tools like email and chat that were prevalent before Web 2.0, platforms like Facebook and Twitter have gained prominence. Concepts such as sharing, commenting, liking, tweeting, and retweeting have become integral parts of daily life. Politicians leverage social media to swiftly reach the electorate by sharing their thoughts on the agenda. Traditional media-based communication by politicians is gradually being replaced by those who engage with the younger generation, primarily through social media platforms. Debates, discussions, opposing viewpoints, and criticisms unfold on social media, enabling individuals to freely express their opinions.

Communication processes between political actors and voters have significantly expanded through the utilization of social media platforms in conjunction with emerging communication technologies. Instead of the previous Internet activities like email and chats, which were prevalent prior to Web 2.0, social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have taken the forefront. Concepts like sharing, commenting, liking, tweeting, and

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<sup>118</sup> **Klieber, Paul** (2009) Document Classification Through Data Mining Social Media Networks, Florida, Stetson University, p.8.

<sup>119</sup> **Arsan, Esra/ Can, Mahmut, H.** 'Siyasal İletişimin Cenk Alanı, Seçimler: AKP'nin 2007 Seçim Kampanyasının Analizi': Özkan, Abdullah (Ed.) (2009), Siyasetin İletişimi İstanbul, Tasam Yayınları, p.86.

retweeting have seamlessly integrated into daily life. Politicians now opt for social media as a means to swiftly convey their agenda to the electorate, replacing traditional communication channels such as email and chat.

Moreover, politicians who once relied on conventional media to engage with the public are now being succeeded by those who prioritize communication via social media, especially when targeting younger demographics. Debates, discussions, conflicting viewpoints, and criticisms converge on social media platforms, providing individuals with an accessible outlet to freely express their thoughts and opinions.

The way of establishing relationships with communication technologies together is experiencing a very important change process during this period. While traditional media channels such as television, newspapers and radio have a central importance for political communication, platforms such as social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter are coming to the fore as the favorite platforms of political communication in the new era.

Political actors and voters have enhanced their communication capabilities by embracing Web 2.0 and social media. Traditional tools like websites, email, and chat have given way to the popularity of concepts such as sharing, commenting, liking, tweeting, and retweeting. Politicians opt for social media platforms to promptly engage with the electorate and voice their perspectives on current issues. Increasingly, politicians who connect with citizens are being replaced by those who actively use social media to communicate with the public. Debates, disagreements, contrary viewpoints, and even agreements find a more extensive platform in social media. Young voters, in particular, have become a significant presence in this digital sphere.

Communication tools also undergo a very serious process of change during this period. While traditional media for political communication, television, newspaper and radio, is of strategic importance, social media for political communication 2.0, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc. environments are highlighted.<sup>120</sup>

As new media gains prominence as a communication medium, the landscape of politics is profoundly influenced. While traditional mass media primarily focuses on mass communication, the rise of new media brings about a shift towards person-to-person and

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<sup>120</sup> Dahlgren, Peter (2005) p. 147-162.

intergroup communication, alongside mass communication. In contrast to traditional media, where propaganda, one-way communication, and a top-down approach prevail, the new era embraces two-way communication, dialogue, and a more egalitarian language. Political communication, once aimed predominantly at the masses, now places a greater emphasis on messages directed towards specific groups and individuals, especially through social media.

Traditional media offers limited possibilities for feedback, whereas the new media era enables easy feedback and highly effective interactions due to its instant and cost-effective nature. While propaganda, political campaigns, and promotional expenses are substantial in traditional media-based political communication, the new era offers more cost-effective propaganda opportunities. Political rallies, which traditionally had geographical limitations and required gathering voters in a physical location at significant costs, are now being replaced by virtual rallies. Virtual rallies are accessible to a wider audience, eliminating venue constraints and significantly reducing costs. In developed industrial and information societies, it is seen that candidates and leaders delegate their image to professional consultants during election periods, and with this professionalization, candidates have started to be designed as a packaged product to be presented to the public.<sup>121</sup>

Political campaigns, professionalized with new media technologies, have developed policies in the triangle of political communication media, language and audience, and have developed new ways of reaching the target audience in parallel with the changing/changing time, space and order, and have revealed the nature of political communication based on ‘persuasion’.<sup>122</sup>

Here, an important concept emerges as ‘personalization’. The process of political communication, once centered around leaders and parties, has shifted towards a candidate-oriented approach with the advent of social media. Independent candidates, in particular, can now seize opportunities previously unavailable in traditional media. Political actors, followed closely on social media, can gain appreciation and support even from audiences with differing party affiliations, and vice versa.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> **Karlı, İrfan/ Değirmencioğlu, Gürsoy** (2011) ‘Siyasal İletişim Açısından Siyasal Partilerin İnternet Mecrasından Yararlanma Biçimleri ve Karşılaştırmalı Bir Analiz’. *Marmara İletişim Dergisi*. Issue: 18: p.141-161.

<sup>122</sup> **Yılmaz, R. Ayhan** (2009) “İkna Edici İletişim”: İletişim Bilgisi (Ed.Zıllıoğlu, Merih/ Yüksel, A.Haluk) (2009) Eskişehir, Anadolu Üniversitesi Açıköğretim Yayınları, p. 183-197.

<sup>123</sup> **Aziz, Aysel** (2011) *Sosyal Bilimlerde Araştırma Yöntemleri ve Teknikleri*, Ankara: Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık, p.49-56.

An important concept also appears here as ‘personalization’. Not only users, but politicians can reach their voters by creating their own private pages and profiles. The leader-oriented and party-oriented political communication process is making an important transformation together with social media. Local politicians can also use these platforms, for example, where they can get recognition. In this way, he can easily find opportunities on social media that he cannot find in traditional media. Politicians who are followed on social media participate more effectively on social media in order to convince voters who do not have a positive opinion about the party. Thanks to the feedback, they also evaluate the extent to which the messages are effective by looking at the reactions to these shares.

New media not only compels politicians to be more transparent and consistent but also allows them to evaluate how each of their actions and words is perceived by the electorate before elections. Additionally, these platforms offer interactive communication, streamlining traditional campaign efforts, making them more cost-effective and efficient. While developing new campaign and propaganda methods alongside social media, it also offers a fresh perspective on traditional techniques, revealing new possibilities. This paradigm shift is truly enlightening. The primary reason politicians utilize social media effectively is that traditional methods of campaigning and propaganda are no longer deemed sufficient by the electorate. As interpersonal communication processes undergo significant changes, politicians are expected to adapt with appropriate strategies and methods.

When it comes to disseminating messages to the masses, platforms capable of doing so effectively continue to remain a focus for individuals and organizations striving to reach their target audience at the right time and in the right manner. Voters, who are the primary target audience for political parties, are among the foremost recipients of media content and messages. Naci Bostancı elucidates the relationship between media and politics by stating, "Perhaps the most influential segment of the mass media are the ruling elites who are at the core of modern political structures. Elites, who largely maintain their connection with the public through mass media, are far more influenced by the virtual realm of media than 'citizens,'" <sup>124</sup>and their decisions bear deep imprints of the ideas put forth here. Recent Turkish politics exemplify that even if the publications of 'some media' are rebuffed or

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<sup>124</sup> **Bostancı, Mustafa** (2014) ‘Siyasal İletişim 2.0.’ Erciyes İletişim Dergisi, Vol.:3, Issue: 3, p. 84-96. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/66354> Accessed: 11.07.2023.

disregarded, they still wield authority and impact the rulers. Instances of anger, virtual agenda discussions, and attempts to elicit responses serve as illustrations of this.<sup>125</sup>

Social media is also effective on the images of political actors reflected in the media. According to Stephen Coleman,<sup>126</sup> the future of the original leadership in the new media age seems to be extremely distorted. Although leaders are able to cope with this challenge, there are other problems. Because of the new technologies and changing media news culture, it is difficult to reach authenticity in public. The media's understanding of political journalism extends to the private lives of political actors, and both journalists and citizens use technology to see the other side of politics. New Communication Technologies (instant images and videos distributed via Facebook, Youtube or Twitter) reveal inconsistencies between the politician's public image and his private life.

According to Naci Bostancı,<sup>127</sup> “reading the media scan summaries first in the morning of high-level executives, private sector decision-makers in all ministries, in government departments, is an indisputable indicator of the virtual world”.<sup>128</sup> From here, high-level managers and decision-makers are more likely to follow the agenda in social media, starting the day, late in the night, to appoint their consultants for this job, and to be aware of what is going on is an important communication channel of social media.

Social media has an undeniable power in the political arena. The politician can address a wider audience and measure his reaction with social media in a short time. Social media is therefore becoming a political tool. Individuals can express their views easily through social media and establish political dialogue. Many popular political actors use social media effectively. Political actors are using these tools with the idea of reaching more people in line with the fact that the electorate exists on the social media. It is important to hold rallies in squares and give speeches to large crowds, but it is more effective to bring people together on social media rather than gathering people in a physical environment. While such a meeting becomes more possible on social media, politicians also provide the opportunity to be in contact with broad segments at any time.

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<sup>125</sup> **Bostancı, M. Naci** (1998) *Siyaset, Medya ve Ötesi*, Ankara, Vadi Yayınları, p.162-163.

<sup>126</sup> **Coleman, Stephen/Blumler, Jay. G.** (2009) *The Internet and Democratic Citizenship*, Cambridge University Press, p.118.

<sup>127</sup> **Bostancı, M. Naci** (1998), p.163.

<sup>128</sup> **Çakır, Hamza/Tufan, Seda** (2016) ‘Siyasal İletişim Sürecinde Sosyal Medya: Türkiye’de Siyasi Liderlerin Instagram Kullanım Pratikleri Üzerine Bir İnceleme’, *Erciyes Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, Vol: XLI, issue: p.7-28.

Despite its facilitation of direct communication and the elimination of intermediaries and filters, social media's interactive nature precludes the dominance or monopolization of any particular group. The cost-effectiveness, rapidity of action, and potential to access extensive audiences further enhance its allure. Consequently, social media empowers individuals worldwide to freely produce and consume content, making it an influential guiding tool across various domains. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the content, political equilibrium, ideas, and rhetoric on social media can rapidly shift. In this regard, social media plays a more significant role in political communication than merely acting as a 'cause' or 'facilitator.' Its impact transcends these roles, fundamentally shaping the dynamics of political discourse.

Especially for nation-states implementing social media strategies, reaching the target audience is a significant concern. The primary rationale behind this is that every individual contributing content to social media holds an equal standing. As a result, a new realm of social interaction emerged, encompassing comments from other 'independent' individuals regarding the shared content of social media users, gradually transforming this environment into virtual communities. This stands as one of the most debated facets of social media. Individuals inadvertently exposed their private lives on social media, normalizing and accepting the "exposure of private life" as a commonplace and acceptable form of communication, thereby generating a sense of "impersonal personalities".<sup>129</sup>

With the advent of new communication technologies, society has entered a new phase of communication wherein individuals on virtual platforms play pivotal political roles. Within this era, characterized by mass psychology, the profound influence of social media across various aspects of life is unequivocally evident. This circumstance might even give rise to the reconfiguration, if not the establishment, of a new civil society whose standards are defined by communication Technologies.<sup>130</sup>

As the boundaries between individual and collective action, public and private space grow increasingly indistinct, the nature of access has fundamentally reshaped communication processes and the dimensions of information and communication

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<sup>129</sup> **Chatfield, Akemi Takeoka/ Reddick, Christopher G./ Inan, Dedi Iskandar/ Brajawidagda, Uuf** (2014) 'E-government, social media, and risk perception communication at the edge of disaster: findings from the Mt. Sinabung eruption in Indonesia' In Proceedings of the 15th Annual International Conference on Digital Government Research (dg.o '14). Association for Computing Machinery, p.153-162. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2612733.2612752>

<sup>130</sup> **Köchler, Hans/ Demir, Metin** (2013) 'Yeni Sosyal Medya ve 21. Yüzyılda İletişim: Diyalog Mümkün mü?', *Divan: Disiplinlerarası Çalışmalar Dergisi*, Issue: 35, p. 223-241.

technologies. These technologies not only serve as catalysts for social trends but also wield considerable influence over the forces that facilitate the formation of groups—whether in virtual or real-life settings—as well as over the mechanisms of expression and action, ultimately impacting their political sway.

As much as the innovations that social media brings to human life, it's equally important to consider the underlying instrumental nature of information technologies. While social media introduces an unparalleled technical capacity and opportunities for organization, caution should be exercised regarding these technologies that are touted to bring liberation in social and political realms. The scope of applications for new communication technologies goes beyond entertainment and platforms for endless conversations and discussions. They could also influence the structure of various social movements expressing democratic demands or the formation of potentially harmful organizations that disrupt societal peace. The accurate management and utilization of the potentials presented by new communication technologies will undoubtedly shape their future as well.

### **3.3.Political Behavior**

Political behavior refers to all the behaviors exhibited by individuals in the face of social events. The voter behavior is an important type of action that takes place in political behavior. In the context of citizenship rights and the selection of governing officials in elections, voting behaviour affects both individuals and the general public.

There are some factors that are effective in shaping this behavior: political parties, personal characteristics, characteristics of political candidates, country agenda, communication and propaganda activities, and characteristics of leaders.<sup>131</sup> According to rational electoral behavior, the ideologies, policies, services, future promises, the extent to which the parties and candidates have or have not fulfilled their promises in the past and their past performances are the factors that affect voters' preferences.<sup>132</sup> According to this perspective, voters vote after making evaluations based on reasoning and there may be a shift from one party to another. Contrary to partisan identity, voting behavior is shaped by external factors (services provided by the party, solution proposals for problems, personal

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<sup>131</sup>**Kalender, Ahmet** (2005) Siyasal İletişim, Konya, Çizgi Kitabevi

<sup>132</sup> **Odabaşı, Yavuz.** (2009). 'Siyasal Pazarlama Uygulamalarına Yön Veren Dönüşüm ve Açılımlar': Özkan, Abdullah (Ed.) Siyasetin İletişimi, İstanbul, Tasam Yayınları, p. 293-308.

characteristics of leaders, etc.). In addition, political culture is a vital factor in shaping voter behaviour. Political culture represents the attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and values of the society's members towards politics, and it is also influential in shaping political behaviour. The prevailing political culture impacts political decision-making. The media plays a significant role in encouraging individuals to participate in political activities and in the decision-making process. The party that an individual votes for expresses what kind of an individual that individual is or is not, and this formation gives the individual a partisan identity. In one of the studies testing this theory, it was found that 96% of citizens in the UK identified with one of the three parties of that period and 44% experienced this identification quite strongly.<sup>133</sup>

The media is a bridge between political actors and the public. Political actors who want to convey their political messages try to reach their potential voters through the media and influence the process through public opinion surveys while managing this process. In this sense, the media is an indispensable element of a democratic society. The media particularly affects the political choice and voting behavior of the individual during the election period and has an impact on political participation. It is known that research, political advertising and propaganda published in the media affected the voting behavior and participation.

Political behavior can be defined as behaviors that arise as a result of certain attitudes and orientations of people based on certain problems or motivations produced by the political system. According to another definition, these are behaviors that occur when people or a certain group take action as a result of their reactions to social events. Behaviors such as obeying the laws, paying taxes, political protest rallies, riots, political participation, voting, participation in election campaigns can be cited as examples of political behaviors.<sup>134</sup> When people act with a political motive, they take two things into account. Firstly, it is to exhibit an action, and secondly, it is to determine the direction in accordance with this decision that he has made.

Some individuals might show little interest in politics, while others might be highly active in political engagement. These attitudes and behaviors can vary based on personal characteristics and the nature of the political activities they engage in. When political

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<sup>133</sup> **Barış, Gülfidan** (2009) “Partizan Seçmenler, Kararsız Seçmenler ve Gezen Oylar”: Siyasetin İletişimi (Ed: Özkan, Abdullah) (2009) İstanbul, Tasam Yayınları, p.69-84.

<sup>134</sup> **Çam, Esat** (2005) Siyaset Bilimine Giriş, İstanbul, Der Yayınları, p.18.

behavior is considered, personal characteristics play a significant role. Factors such as age, gender, socio-economic status, education, profession, income, psychological state, and geographical location can influence these tendencies. The interplay of these factors in shaping political behavior is not only important for researchers but also for politicians<sup>135</sup>

Modern studies on the factors influencing individuals' political behavior primarily revolve around three fundamental approaches: the psychological approach, the sociological approach, and the rational (economic) preference approach.

According to the rational choice approach, which argues that voters vote for the party they consider most suitable for achieving their own goals in elections; If the party they voted for fails to meet their goals, they might switch their vote in the subsequent election. In contrast, the sociological approach suggests that voting preferences are influenced by individuals' genealogical identities, reflecting their sense of belonging. This approach indicates that the relationship between voters' party preferences and their voting choices is closely linked to their social identity. On the other hand, the psychological approach emphasizes that voters can have an emotional attachment to a political party based on their past experiences, which influences their preferences and leads them to vote according to this attachment.

Voter behavior, on the other hand, refers to the actions individuals undertake to select representatives who will govern them through elections held within the country. It encompasses the actions taken by members of a community to elect their leaders, which in turn directly or indirectly shape the course of politics and the formulation of public policies. Voter behavior holds immense significance as a determinant of the political system, impacting both the broader society and an individual's personal life. In essence, individuals fulfill the dual role of guiding both social and political life as well as steering their own lives.<sup>136</sup>

Political parties competing to have a voice in the future of societies want to reach the highest vote share and attract the largest number of people to their side. In order to achieve this goal, political parties must know the expectations, wishes and needs of voters and produce policies aimed at these expectations, wishes and needs. A political party that wants to achieve the goals it has set acts with a voter focus and produces its strategies accordingly.

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<sup>135</sup> Çam, p.20.

<sup>136</sup> Çaha, Ömer (2008) Türkiye'de Seçmen Davranışı ve Siyasal Partiler, Ankara, Orion Kitabevi. p.163.

Without parties, public opinion is fluid and ambiguous<sup>137</sup>. For this reason, voter behavior is a phenomenon that political parties and candidates focus on with importance.

Political parties and political actors, when formulating their policies, take into considerable consideration the main factors that impact voter behavior. It is essential to identify the desires and needs of voters while also possessing a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence behavior in order to achieve political objectives.

Upon winning elections and assuming the responsibilities of governance, political parties maintain an ongoing connection and interaction with their voters and the broader audience to realize their goals. The bond established through the political communication process holds immense significance for both parties and political actors, constituting a prerequisite for their own future and an ideal social order. The transparency of political processes and the flow of information have enhanced the functionality of political participation. Informed voters who are politically aware tend to exhibit greater interest in political affairs and participate more actively.

The utilization of mass media in election campaigns is increasingly aligned with technological advancements. Factors such as innovative visual strategies, the competition to capture diverse media attention, and the aspiration of campaigns to convey their message to the as much as widest audience possible are approaches politicians often employ, particularly during election period. Throughout election cycles, political actors gain visibility through traditional media, among other platforms, and exploit the opportunities provided by new media to a wide extent.

Political parties and actors need experts who can create understandable messages and provide an environment in which they can communicate these messages in order to make their campaigns effective. Policies are put forward to guide voter behavior in line with the goals they want and set. Volunteers as well as experts take part in these campaigns. During the election periods when the political futures of societies are determined, all the actors that have a role in shaping political behavior bring their activities to the top. They do their best to direct and influence voter behavior in line with their own policies.

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<sup>137</sup> **Unat, Abadan, Nermin** (1956) *Halk Efkârı Mefhumu ve Tesir Sahaları*, 1. Baskı. Ankara, Yeni Matbaa, p.54.

### 3.3.1. Political Participation

Political participation refers to the transformed state of political behavior into action. Political participation shows the situation, position, attitude and actions of people in front of the political system. Not participating in political processes is also a choice and a preference. In general, political participation is considered as participation in political decision-making processes. It refers to participation in the formation of decisions from local governments to country government, from local issues to issues related to the state, in the selection of people with authority and responsibility.

In democratic societies, individuals realize political participation by both participating in political issues and influencing political mechanisms. The concept of political participation can be defined as voting in elections in a narrow sense, and in a broad sense, political participation is possible by not only voting, but also actively participating in all bureaucracy and political decision-making processes.

The other hand, parliament is the most important area that plays an active role in the democratization of the political structure and society, in the adoption of pluralism qualities, and in the establishment of widespread representation in an appropriate manner. "Parliament is undoubtedly the most important institution that will establish and operate pluralist, participatory, constitutional and representative democracy in a country with all its features and beauties."<sup>138</sup> Although social rights and freedoms are perceived to depend on the strength of the economy, Europe's emphasis until the middle of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries was on democracy as well as the modern state; instead of discrimination in the social order, practices in accordance with the general desires and demands of the majority are realized and even decisions are taken.<sup>139</sup>

Therefore, since political participation is the attitude and behavior of individuals in the face of the political system, this participation may be limited to simple curiosity, but also includes actions that are performed intensively. The intensity of participation may vary from society to society, from individual to individual. While some people devote themselves to politics and devote their lives to it, others are either indifferent or completely indifferent to political issues.

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<sup>138</sup> Öztekin, Ali (2007) Siyaset Bilimine Giriş, Ankara, Siyasal Kitabevi, p.67.

<sup>139</sup> Touraine, Alain (2004) Demokrasi Nedir? İstanbul, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, p.115.

According to Robert Dahl, there are four dimensions of political participation. These are having an interest in political issues, observing political events, possessing information about events and problems, and actively taking part in political events by paying attention to political developments. In other words, it can be summarized as caring, showing interest and curiosity, having knowledge, and taking action.<sup>140</sup>

The forms of political participation may vary from society to society depending on their political culture. It is evident that the most significant distinction between the modern state and traditional state structures is that people engage in politics and exert influence through their political decisions and behaviors.

This distinction is also notable between agricultural societies and industrial societies. In industrial societies where democratic principles are established, individual participation in decisions affecting their lives and futures is directly linked to the social and economic framework of these societies. Both the political regime and political culture play pivotal roles in facilitating this participation. While political participation flourishes in democratic societies, it is limited in totalitarian regimes. Numerous factors contribute to political participation, which can be categorized as age, gender, urbanization, occupation, income, family structure, social status, settlement patterns, psychological elements, political interest, and the impact of mass media.

Evaluating political participation entails organizing it in a hierarchical order based on people's interests and orientations toward politics. While some individuals are content with passive observation from the sidelines, others proactively assume authority and responsibility, actively engaging in political decision-making processes at the highest level. These activities aimed at political engagement represent the highest form of political participation.

For political actors aiming to inform the electorate and create public opinion in a certain direction, new communication technologies are an important medium in which politicians and their teams can manage the flow of information and communicate with each other/instantaneously. Programs carried out on the media can be effective in the political behavior of individuals.

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<sup>140</sup> **Kıraç, Ziya Kıvanç** ( 2020) ‘Social Media and Political Participation’, *Quantrade Journal of Complex Systems in Social Sciences*, Vol:2, Issue:1, p.37-45. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/1167088> Accessed. 30.06.2023.

### 3.3.2. Political Participation and Social Media

With the rapid increase in shares and interactions in addition to the number of users, social networks are turning into platforms where millions of people are online and are in a very strong position to spread messages, create awareness, produce entertainment, and provide information.<sup>141</sup> Social media is now taking a very important place in social and political events. Obama's use of social networks in the election campaign is among important incidents that show the place and significance of social media just as it was also the case during the Arab Spring and Gezi events. Although the behavior patterns of each society and people are different, the approaches to technological innovations are usually the same. Different societies, cultures, different historical, social and political contexts bring with them different patterns of political behavior and, therefore, differences in the use of new media.

It can be argued that there are some changes in political behavior and participation as social media becomes widespread. It has been observed that during the period when traditional media was active, young people performed less political participation compared to adults. It may be suggested that the new generation is more willing and politically active with the help of the Internet. It can also be stated that the spread of new communication technologies provides a high participation rate, there is a relationship between the real-life political participation rate and online political participation, and that political behavior patterns in the virtual environment reflect political participation patterns as a reflection of reality.

The Research focused on political participation demonstrates that communication on social networks is among the foremost facets of political engagement via new media. The extensive utilization of communication technologies and the frequency of individuals' political discussions correlate with the effective and widespread use of social media. Discussions conducted on these platforms play a role in setting the agenda. This study proposes a linear relationship between participation, sharing on social networks, interactions, and political engagement, suggesting that such activities increase participation or at the very least, spark interest. Additionally, individuals' online conversations and

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<sup>141</sup> **Weinberg, Tamar** (2009) *The New Community Rules: Marketing on the Social Web*, 1st edition, Sebastopol, O'Reilly Media.p.150.

discussions about political matters further exert a positive influence on political participation through social media.

A study conducted on the relationship between social networks and political participation indicates that there is no effective solution through social media to quickly increase the low interest and political participation in individuals who are not interested in politics. However, it is observed that interactions on these platforms, particularly among young people, can lead to an increase in their political interest. Besides, there is no doubt that social networks are an effective way to express people's reactions and criticisms. Kim and Kim investigated the impact of new and traditional media on political participation in their study on Korean youth and stated that young people use new and traditional media a lot in terms of political participation, but new media plays a very effective role in political participation. In addition, it has been found that Internet use has a direct impact on political behavior, political interest, and participation.<sup>142</sup>

Utz (2009) investigated the impact of social networks on the election campaign in the 2006 Dutch General Elections. He conducted his study on Hyves, a social network in the Netherlands. In the study, the attention of Hyves users to election campaigns was measured. The experiment showed that responding to comments caused a positive opinion on voters<sup>143</sup>.

It is seen that the intensive use of social media increases participation in politics and voluntary organizations, and the polemics on this issue receive great attention. It is natural that there are various differences in political participation of people from all segments of society through social networks according to their age, status, income status, education. Research in this area will also be very valuable. It is obvious that the sharing and interactions on these platforms provide transparency and encourage young people more, especially in terms of political participation.

It has been seen that the most important variable for political participation is to have sufficient equipment for political information; and people need self-confidence and political knowledge to participate politically through social media and engage in political discussions.

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<sup>142</sup> **Kim, Kyun Soo/ Kim, Yong-Chan** (2007) 'New and Old Media Uses and Political Engagement among Korean Adolescents' *Asian Journal of Communication* Vol.: 17, Issue: 4, p. 342-361. DOI:10.1080/01292980701636977

<sup>143</sup> **Utz, Sonja** (2009) 'The (Potential) Benefits of Campaigning via Social Network Sites', *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, Vol. 14, Issue: 2, p. 221-243. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2009.01438.x> Accessed. 11.01.2023.

It is also that social media is increasingly the most common and important tool for political participation. There are also studies that do not find a relationship between political participation and the Internet and social networks. Quintelier and Vissers have taken gender, socio-economic and ethnic identity as control variables in their research. They analyzed the relations between political behaviors and attitudes and political interest, knowledge level and political competence. As a result of this analysis, they did not find a significant relationship between time spent on the Internet and political participation. Nevertheless, when examining the association between various social media activities and participation, they found a correlation between engaging in blog discussions, following the news, and sharing political content, and the political participation of young individuals. While these activities may not necessarily establish a direct political orientation, they hold the potential to raise awareness.<sup>144</sup>

The opinions and convictions acquired through social media can indeed have a notable impact on people's thoughts and beliefs. Social media possesses the potential to influence and even alter the direction of political beliefs, even for individuals who have grown up in a specific environment and culture. While the prevailing perspective suggests that ideas acquired on social media are unlikely to drastically change core beliefs or their intensity, this notion is subject to debate. Communication on social networks, whether continuous or intermittent, contributes to political participation, and engagement on these platforms can elevate interest in political matters.

Studies investigating the interplay between political participation and communication technologies, including election studies, interactions with political parties, leaders, and candidates, as well as interpersonal communication facilitated by these technologies, have yielded significant findings. For instance, Rice and colleagues<sup>145</sup> conducted research on university students, revealing that engaging with political candidates on social networks or participating in these platforms with political content enhances the organization and participation of university youth. Additionally, individuals who are

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<sup>144</sup> **Quintelier, Ellen/ Vissers, Sara** (2008) 'The Effect of Internet Use on Political Participation: An Analysis of Survey Results for 16-Year-Olds in Belgium', *Social Science Computer Review* Vol:26, Issue: 4, 411-427 DOI:10.1177/0894439307312631

<sup>145</sup> **Eser, Hamza Bahadır/ Güler, Ömer** (2015) 'The Impact of the Internet and Social Networks on Political Participation-The Case of SDU', *Mehmet Akif Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, Vol: 7, Issue: 12, p.196-219. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/181864> Accessed: 11.04.2023.

members of political parties or who follow news with political content on social media tend to exhibit higher levels of political participation.

The potential for substantial political engagement through social media has prompted political parties and leaders to focus on this realm, particularly during election periods. While some have effectively harnessed these platforms, others have struggled to do so. It is evident that politicians must employ social media more effectively to encourage enhanced voter participation, especially during election campaigns. Consequently, an increasing number of startups and applications are emerging to cater to this need. It is acknowledged that election campaigns conducted via social media, whether directly or indirectly, exert a considerable influence on candidates' vote tallies. Moreover, new media significantly shape the sensitivities and electoral preferences of voters. Election campaigns refer to the methods and techniques used by political parties and politicians in political campaigns to win elections in line with the relevant legal regulations in order to legislate in parliaments or in elections held in certain regions of the country.<sup>146</sup>

One of the most discussed issues is that social media, which is an effective tool for political communication and organization, shows that the lack of clear disclosure of identities, that is, anonymity, are platforms open to some manipulations. Whether the political support that appears on social media has a counterpart in daily life is also an important issue in terms of political participation and social media relations.

Communication with politicians, interaction with leaders' posts is a very common situation on social media. It is suggested that people who follow politicians on social media, interact and share current politics with their surroundings are more active in discussions in daily life, and the messages these people spread by communicating with politicians can have an impact on voter behavior. This effect is also in the form of communicating directly on social media or indirectly spreading messages to other people.

The primary motive behind political parties and leaders embracing social media is their endeavor to expand their voter base. The most effective avenue for achieving this goal is through social media platforms, where a vast user base is present online. Social media is progressively gaining importance within the political communication strategies and planning of political parties and their leaders.

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<sup>146</sup> **Aktaş, Hasret.** (2005) Bir Siyasal İletişim Aracı Olarak İnternet: Partilerin Seçim Kampanyalarında İnternetin Yeri, Konya, Tablet Yayınevi, p.42.

Political parties and leaders are now trying to use social media effectively due to these opportunities provided by web 2.0 platforms. To encapsulate this phenomenon, Dahlgren introduces the concept of "citizenship technologies." He posits that governments reinforce or weaken citizens and civic culture through "citizen technologies" like education and media. Dahlgren further identifies four dimensions of civic culture, which are pivotal for empirical research exploring media influence in the modern era. These dimensions encompass essential knowledge and competencies, such as communication skills necessary for democratic citizenship, as well as adherence to democratic values and principles, related practices and routines, and the integration of these aspects into everyday life. These dimensions are interdependent, according to Dahlgren. The impact of new media environments on citizen culture can be assessed through the usage patterns of social media by political parties and leaders.

### **3.4.Elections and Political Organizations**

The ability of the individual to obtain information instantly, easily and cheaply, in parallel with the new communication technologies and especially the dizzying developments in information technology, has caused extraordinary changes in his status in his social position, especially in the democratic process, and has made him inactive and active and participatory. The individual is in an effort to present the advantage of being active in this historical process with a response to the election campaigns that he is willing to evaluate in the process of participation in contemporary political governance in terms of political communication.<sup>147</sup>

The fact that such rapid developments in information and communication technologies activate and strengthen the individual has been realized by political institutions and authorities in a short time, and the fact that the voter is no longer the other person in the political participation processes, but at least in the status of a stakeholder has been accepted. Political organizations and candidates have realized that they have to accept the voter as a stakeholder both during the political election campaign processes and outside the election period, and establish and maintain strategic relationships for political purposes, and develop

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<sup>147</sup> **Dahlgren, Peter** (2016) 'Web-based political participation: Engagement, Emotion, Expression, Efficacy', *Revista Media & Jornalismo - Cidadania e Democracia Era Digital*, p. 21-38.  
[http://fabricadesites.fcsh.unl.pt/polocicdigital/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2017/03/2015\\_5\\_web-based-political-participation.pdf](http://fabricadesites.fcsh.unl.pt/polocicdigital/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2017/03/2015_5_web-based-political-participation.pdf) Accessed. 21.04.2023.

this relationship in a way that benefits both sides. In the same way, political organizations, political parties, leaders and party members are also aware of the professional management of their corporate and personal identity, image and reputation in order to increase the impact they want to provide on the electorate and to initiate and maintain this as a process.<sup>148</sup>

Political organizations and candidates must realize their relations with the electorate by means of certain techniques and means of communication within the framework of a specific plan. In this context, the techniques of propaganda, political advertising, public opinion research and political PR activities, as well as the tools and methods of political marketing are used as a very recent definition.

The primary goal of these activities is to convey the political message to the voters with the aim of persuading them. This involves building a connection, subsequently nurturing that connection to reinforce it. Throughout this process, various techniques, methods, and tools are employed to effectively persuade the voters, ultimately securing their support and endorsement.

Political advertising, one of the essential components of political parties, can be described as the creation of impactful messages by professional advertisers in visual, auditory, and written formats for media dissemination during election periods, with the intention of bolstering the parties' voting percentages.<sup>149</sup> Another viewpoint defines political advertising as the comprehensive use of various methods to highlight a candidate's suitability to prospective voters. This includes strategies to ensure the candidate's visibility among a wide range of voters and individuals within the audience.

The objectives are to differentiate the candidate from competitors and opponents, and to secure the necessary number of votes for a successful campaign, employing a minimal set of tools. From another viewpoint, political advertising is regarded as a controlled manifestation of political communication. In this approach, political messages crafted by a political party or candidate are disseminated through purchasing media space and time. The aim is to influence voters' political beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors. Moreover, political advertising is perceived as an endeavor to shape an electorate's perception in a manner that would contribute to the candidate's triumph. Generally, political advertising can be

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<sup>148</sup> **Bostancı, Mustafa** (2014), p. 84-96.

<sup>149</sup> **İlter, Metin Serhat** (2020) 'Siyasi Kampanya Çalışmalarında, Siyasal Reklamcılığın Siyasi Parti Adayları ve Seçmenler Üzerindeki Etkileri', Yalova Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, Vol: 10, Issue: 20, p.79-96.

conceptualized as a political communication process centered around the formulation and dissemination of messages and content generated by a candidate or party. These messages are designed to shape voter attitudes and behaviors in favor of the candidate or party through media visibility.

The mechanics of political advertising parallel the techniques employed in marketing and commercial advertising, aiming to instill a sense of necessity for a product and motivate individuals to make a purchase. Similarly, political advertising seeks to highlight the salient distinctions of a political party from its rivals. This differentiation often hinges on the personal and charismatic traits of party leaders, especially when the programs of parties closely resemble each other. Propaganda is built upon these distinctions and endeavors to effect an alteration in people's attitudes<sup>150</sup>.

Within the realm of political communication, parties and leaders undertake specific roles in the electoral process. These functions encompass:

1. **Informational Function:** This involves the dissemination of information about political parties and individuals, highlighting their attributes, distinctions, strengths, and other qualities.
2. **Persuasion Function:** This function is aimed at convincing voters why a particular political party or candidate should be the preferred choice. It seeks to sway voters' opinions in favor of the party or candidate.
3. **Reminder Function:** To ensure that the party or candidate remains fresh in the memory of voters, this function serves as a reminder, maintaining a heightened level of awareness among the electorate.
4. **Supporting Function:** Serving to rally support for candidates and the party as a whole, this function encourages both the organization and the voters. It articulates why it would be the appropriate course of action for voters to favor the specific political party.

These functions collectively contribute to the comprehensive process of political communication during elections.

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<sup>150</sup> **Eroğlu Yalin Bahar** (2006), 'Siyasal İletişimin Reklam Boyutuna İlişkin Kuramsal Bir İnceleme', İletişim Fakültesi Dergisi, Issue: 25, p.169-180. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/212250> Accessed. 05.04.2023.

A study focusing on American political election coverage between 1912 and 2000 highlights key aspects of the political communication process. Throughout political campaigns, candidates' competence and effectiveness are consistently emphasized, portraying them as successful and capable individuals. This emphasis is closely intertwined with the concept of a struggle. The idea of struggle is intrinsically linked to candidates' competence and effectiveness. The debates are the only time when tens of millions of potential voters simultaneously focus on the candidates, see them side by side, listen to them answer similar questions, and watch their body language as they respond to each other's answers.<sup>151</sup>

Political advertisements often feature a distinct "slogan." Consequently, political advertising tends to focus less on presenting comprehensive details about candidates' plans or the rationale behind their policy preferences. Instead, these ads typically integrate candidates' characteristics with their knowledge of political issues. The foundation of political advertising lies in candidates' speeches. Even as storytelling formats gained prominence, a significant portion of ads continued to rely on candidates' lecture-style messages. Political communication endeavors have always been crafted and conveyed for the general public.<sup>152</sup>

One of the most important application areas of the political communication management process is the political public relations process. Political public relations provide for the acquisition of a modern public relations understanding to the advertising and marketing-oriented political communication understanding of political parties and candidates. While the role of political public relations often goes unnoticed within the context of political communication, which predominantly includes the promotion and marketing of political parties and candidates, its significance has evolved into a process that is now closely intertwined with advertising and marketing practices. Presently, political public relations has emerged as an essential component within a party's program and election strategy, firmly establishing itself as an integral facet of the broader realm of political communication.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> **Cwalina, Wojciech, Falkowski, Andrzej and Newman, Bruce, I.** (2011) *Political Marketing: Theoretical and Strategic Foundations*, United States of America, M. E. Sharpe Incp. p.47-54.

<sup>152</sup> **Bekiroğlu, Onur/ Balcı, Şükrü** (2014) 'Kültürlerarası İletişim Duyarlılığının İzlerini Aramak: İletişim Fakültesi Öğrencileri Örneğinde Bir Araştırma', *Selçuk Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Vol: 1 Issue: 35, p.429-459.

<sup>153</sup> **Akay, Rafet Aykut** (2011) 'Güncel Türk Siyasi Yaşamında Siyasal İletişim Danışmanı Kavramı', (Doktora), İstanbul Marmara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü. p. 36-37.

Within the realm of international relations or within the democratic context of a society, political parties, candidates, and their various stakeholders engage in the political process with the aim of achieving their political objectives through the formulation and implementation of strategic approaches. The objective of this course is to acquaint students with fundamental concepts and techniques employed in political science, including but not limited to propaganda, political advertising, face-to-face interviews, shaping and guiding public opinion, managing social perceptions, utilizing political communication methods, and establishing political discipline through marketing strategies. All of these applications have a limitation in their ability to control, intervene, and manage certain aspects. This limitation is effectively addressed by political public relations. In the realm of political affairs, the goal should encompass leveraging the knowledge and expertise of public relations to the advantage of candidates and organizations within the political arena, forging a new discipline rooted in the principles of the political realm.<sup>154</sup> Political parties and leaders, particularly with the advent of new media, can directly connect with individuals by implementing these practices on social media platforms.

McNair<sup>155</sup> approaches political public relations as “designing the party's media and information management tactics to minimize negative publicity”. The functions of political public relations within the framework of political communication are primarily rooted in effective media relations. However, beneath these functions that may seem centered solely on media lies the intricate task of engaging with broader constituencies.<sup>156</sup> The media serves as a potent conduit for political parties and leaders to connect with larger constituencies, facilitating the dissemination of their ideologies. Public relations offers a more precise and streamlined avenue to persuade voters by professionally presenting the ideologies of political institutions and candidates through well-executed media relations. The inclusion of social media in this context has introduced a novel dimension to these endeavors.

One of the most significant concerns for political parties revolves around public opinion surveys. In a broad sense, public opinion denotes the general consensus or prevailing viewpoint on a specific issue pertinent to the public at a given time. Conversely, public opinion surveys can be defined as systematic, scientific, and impartial processes aimed at

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<sup>154</sup> **Burson, Katherine A.** (2007) Consumer-Product Skill Matching: The Effects of Difficulty on Relative Self-Assessment and Choice, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 34, Issue: 1, p. 104-110.

<sup>155</sup> **McNair**, p.139, p. 144-145.

<sup>156</sup> **Zoran Tomić- Ivana Grbavac** (2016), ‘Political Public Relations – Media and Information Management’, p.97. <https://hrcak.srce.hr/file/251947> Accessed.14.06.2023.

gathering information from a sample, which is then used to make inferences about a subgroup or a larger population.<sup>157</sup> It is widely recognized that parties conduct these surveys on a regular basis, especially during election periods, and employ the findings to inform their strategic decisions.

The inception of political public opinion surveys in elections can be attributed to George Gallup, who first conducted such a survey before the 1936 US presidential elections. Through a survey involving 2,000 voters, he accurately predicted Roosevelt's decisive victory, which was subsequently confirmed by the election outcome.<sup>158</sup>

Opinion polls play a crucial role in aiding decision-makers by reducing the uncertainty inherent in the information presented, thus minimizing the associated decision-making risks. The advantages of utilizing public opinion polling in political marketing endeavors can be succinctly outlined as follows.<sup>159</sup>

**Identification of Marketing Problems:** Opinion polls uncover the existence of marketing challenges and the underlying factors contributing to them.

1. **Risk Mitigation in Decision-Making:** By offering insights from public opinion, polling mitigates the risk associated with decision-making, enhancing the practicality of those decisions.
2. **Understanding Electorate Needs and Desires:** Opinion polling enables political parties to comprehend the demands and desires of the electorate, facilitating the creation of political offerings that align with public sentiment.
3. **Alignment of Political Ideas and Candidates:** The aim is to harmonize novel political concepts with the voting masses and current candidates, ultimately increasing the overall vote share.
4. **Enhanced Election Campaign Effectiveness:** Greater effectiveness in election campaign efforts helps pinpoint shortcomings and formulate corresponding strategies.

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<sup>157</sup> **Kalender, Ahmet** (2000) *Siyasal İletişim Seçmenler ve İkna Stratejileri*, Konya, Çizgi Kitabevi, p.42.

<sup>158</sup> **Göksu, Oğuz**, (2018) 'Kamuoyu Araştırmalarında Tutarlılık Sorunsalı: 2010-2018 Dönemi Kamuoyu Araştırmaları Üzerine Bir İnceleme', *Türkiye İletişim Araştırmaları Dergisi*, p.30-54. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/turcom/issue/39784/469863> Accessed: 10.02.2023.

<sup>159</sup> **Çiftlikçi, Ahmet**; (1996), 'Siyaset Pazarlaması ve Siyasi Partilerin Malatya 'daki Uygulamaları', (Yüksek Lisans Tezi), Malatya, İnönü Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, p.206.

5. Data on Voter Preferences and Political Products: Opinion polls provide valuable data on voter preferences and expectations concerning political products, guiding technical research.
6. Cost-Efficient Marketing: By evaluating the efficacy of implemented marketing methods and selecting the most suitable ones, opinion polling contributes to cost savings in marketing endeavors.

In the realm of politics, candidates and parties necessitate consultants who possess the capability to craft comprehensible messages for the purpose of broadcasting their campaigns and creating an environment where these messages can be effectively conveyed. Campaign consultants might provide their services professionally for compensation, or they might volunteer their expertise to support the political causes they believe in. These consultants offer their assistance in two primary manners. They can offer continuous support throughout the entirety of the campaign process, from its initiation to its conclusion. Alternatively, specific aid may be sought solely for certain segments of the campaign. Consultants excel at forecasting uncertainties leading up to elections and gauging future reactions through strategic foresight. Based on these assessments, they serve the best interests of their candidates.<sup>160</sup>

Accordingly, candidates and parties in politics need consultants who can create understandable messages to announce their campaigns and provide an environment where they can convey these messages. Campaign consultants may charge for this work to work professionally, or they may voluntarily provide this service to support the political movement they believe in. Services can be obtained from these consultants in two ways. Benefit can be provided throughout the entire process from the beginning to the end of the campaign, or specific support may be requested only for some parts of the campaigns. The consultants predict the uncertainties before the election in the most accurate way and measure the future reactions by having foresight. As a result of these measurements, they serve their candidates.

In politics, communication is perceived as a reciprocal exchange of messages, achieved by finding common ground through persuasion, cooperation, and reconciliation.

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<sup>160</sup> Ünal, Nejla-Mazman, Ibrahim (2020) 'Partilerin Televizyon ve Sosyal Medya Üzerinden Seçmeni Etkileme Stratejiler', Dicle Üniversitesi, İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi, Vol: 10, Issue: 19, p.58-78.

This form of communication plays a vital role in participatory democratic governance, acting as a crucial link between voters and politicians. As time has passed, the scope of political communication has broadened. Initially, it mainly centered around the government's efforts to influence the public. However, with the emergence of new communication methods, the focus has shifted.

Particularly during election periods, all political parties and candidates have adopted these innovative communication techniques to rally supporters and weaken opponents, with the aim of securing votes. Consequently, the evolving utilization of these methods has extended to include the examination of voters' attitudes and behaviors. In contemporary times, political communication encompasses all aspects of media interaction, ranging from opinion surveys and election campaigns to advertisements and all forms of interactions driven by responses.

Political communication activities involve its effective development, processing and distribution for those in power, those in the opposition, all other groups and even individuals. Those who make political organizations for elections, are directing their goals to the voter who will vote for the first time in order to establish this connection with the voter especially today<sup>161</sup>. In order to achieve this goal, parties and leaders want to manage their political communication processes effectively. The leaders know that if the people who will vote for the first time are won, this bond will be established and the potential for a permanent vote for the future will be created, because the party has convinced that voter and made him take part on its side. Therefore, parties have to conduct public opinion surveys constantly to find out the trends of the electorate. If the voters prefer candidates with whatever qualifications, a propaganda activity is being carried out for this purpose. The political communication activities carried out by the political parties and their leaders follow a general strategy related to the election periods. Strategies related to political communication processes will be able to be realized by the effective implementation of the previously mentioned elements.

The primary rationale for employing social media as a tool for political engagement or propaganda lies predominantly in the capacity of users to voice their experiences and thoughts openly. These platforms enable individuals to express themselves freely. Moreover, the focus has been on the potential for individuals to connect, engage, and share within

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<sup>161</sup> **Demir, İnanç, Mine** (2018) 'Siyasal İletişim: Kavramsal Bir Derleme', Near East University, International Journal of Art Culture, Communication, Vol: 1, Issue: 1, p.79-104. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/572930>

spheres of shared values and interests, facilitating genuine information exchange to facilitate informed decision-making<sup>162</sup>.

In this manner, social media serves a dual role. On one hand, it sustains ongoing discussions by contributing comments to ongoing events, while on the other hand, it amplifies interest in ideological principles. However, it's essential to acknowledge that people might encounter altered facts or distorted versions of current topics due to the information shared.

As a result, social media's impact in the political realm involves both empowering individuals to share their authentic experiences and ideas, and the challenge of navigating a landscape where facts can be reconstructed or misrepresented.

The significance of young voters' active engagement on social media should also be emphasized. The electoral success of political parties and leaders is closely linked to their endeavors in this realm. The involvement of young individuals in political propaganda and communication processes, coupled with the role of social media, has significantly shaped the trajectory of these activities. The technological proficiency of young people underscores the importance of their ideas and practices within political communication. Consequently, during election periods, young people's perspectives garner increased attention, leading political parties to opt for young managers in social media campaigns.

The impact of election campaigns on social media on voter behavior is a distinct subject for discussion, warranting substantial research. The acknowledged influence of campaigns on voters highlights the direct relationship between political propaganda and these concepts. While it remains challenging to precisely quantify the extent to which election campaigns alter voter opinions, it is an indisputable fact that an impact exists. The level of adept utilization of political communication processes within these campaigns stands as a determinant of achieving desired outcomes. The skillful and effective utilization of election campaigns and propaganda furnishes a competitive edge against political rivals.

Simultaneously, while underscoring the importance of fostering distinctions and heightening awareness in political communication processes, it is emphasized that these efforts are closely tied to proactively identifying prerequisites and fulfilling current expectations. Accurately gauging the political atmosphere and aligning positions with voter

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<sup>162</sup> **Köseoğlu Yakup- AL Hamza** (2013) 'Bir Siyasal Propaganda Aracı Olarak Sosyal Medya', Akademik İncelemeler Dergisi, Vol:8, Issue: 3, p.103-125.

preferences is crucial. Amid addressing current circumstances, a comprehensive analysis of public opinion aligned with objectives is imperative. With advancing technology, parties and candidates can discern the weaknesses and strengths of their opponents, and subsequently formulate election strategies accordingly. Moreover, it's pivotal to segment the voting audience based on varying criteria and devise suitable policies. Leveraging new media to identify voter needs and segmenting them accordingly contributes significantly to establishing a connection between political parties and voters. As a result, social media becomes an influential tool for achieving electoral success in politics.

### **3.5.New Media and Political Organizations**

With the placement of new communication technologies at the center of life in the twenty-first century, the connection with social media is becoming stronger. Thanks to the new media, the increase in interaction and the expansion of communication networks, along with easy, cheap and fast access to all kinds of information is one of the factors that lead individuals to social media platforms. As a result, new communication technologies directly affect political life, as they are effective in every field.<sup>163</sup>

It has become a necessity for political parties and actors to benefit from all kinds of communication strategies suitable for the conditions of the time in order to convey their messages to the voters, especially during election periods and political activities. In the process of transferring political messages to the voters, traditional mass media and new communication technologies are used to inform the voters and to get the expected or targeted feedback from the voters. However, for political parties, participation in traditional media is often challenging due to economic reasons such as high costs. Involvement with traditional media is even more complex and challenging for political parties due to ideological reasons. This complexity arises from the intricate and coordinated relationship between dominant ideologies and traditional media outlets that are capital-dependent. Today, with the advancement, affordability, and widespread adoption of technology, political parties have gained significant opportunities to conduct their activities through new media platforms. The degree to which parties capitalize on this opportunity varies.

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<sup>163</sup> **Kırık, Ali Murat** (2017) 'Yeni Medya Aracılığıyla Değişen İletişim Süreci: Sosyal Paylaşım Ağlarında Gençlerin Konumu', Gümüşhane Üniversitesi, İletişim Fakültesi Dergisi, Vol: 5, Issue: 1, p.230-261.

According to the researches on the Facebook, Twitter and Instagram usage rates of individuals, both the use of the internet and new communication technologies by individuals in our country and the use of social media platforms are quite high. However, these usage rates tend to rise as economic purchasing power increases and technology becomes more affordable and accessible. In such a context, the dissemination of information and political messages from parties and leaders to the electorate leans more heavily on new media technologies, as indicated by the data. This is because messages conveyed through these platforms reach their intended audience swiftly and can be liked, commented on, and shared by individuals. This stands as one of the most significant advantages that new communication technologies offer to political communication, in contrast to traditional mass media.

Social networks, especially Facebook and Twitter, play an important role in the political communication processes of political parties with the features they have. While the large mass parties consolidate their power in the communication processes with these platforms, these platforms can provide a wider opportunity for political parties that have less voting potential and are described as less powerful. In particular, they have become the most effective and widespread tools for gathering support and delivering their messages to a wider audience. With its widespread use, these new communication technologies have brought freedom and the possibility of interaction in the sharing of information or ideas anywhere in the world, regardless of space and time. For this reason, it seems difficult to think of a successful communication management and political communication activity separately from the use of social media.

According to Steinberg,<sup>164</sup> political participation through social media involves several different activities. These activities are characterized more as online information gathering rather than traditional participation or active relationship. They include: becoming a member of online sites to stay updated on political communication processes or elections; donating money online to individuals running for public office; seeking assistance; obtaining more information about candidates' stances on political issues; watching prepared online videos about political parties and candidates; watching user-generated online videos related to an election or campaign; participating as an online member in campaign-related volunteer

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<sup>164</sup> **Ortay, Hande** “Medyanın Siyaset Üzerindeki Tesiri”: İşman, Aytekin/Özgür, Aydın Ziya/Öztunç, Mustafa (Eds.) (2022), İletişim Çalışmaları, Eğitim Yayınevi, p.186.

activities, such as helping with voter registration or driving people to election offices and encouraging them.<sup>165</sup>

Thanks to the new communication technologies, political parties can communicate their messages over the internet through their web sites, publish their videos on video sharing sites like YouTube, meet with their voters through platforms like Facebook and Twitter in virtual environment, talk and discuss and advertise cheap ads on many other online platforms like Google. Moreover, political parties can send free, fast and mass messages to their voters or Target groups, provide financial support, generate campaign volunteers, and receive feedback on campaign activities.

The development of social media and the transition to Web 2.0 implementation have brought new opportunities to the field of political communication. The American elections of 2008 are shown as the best example of election campaigns conducted on social media. The significance of social media campaigns in political election processes lies in the involvement of all participants in the process, and the messages and content produced by politicians and parties can reach those who engage with these platforms in various ways.

The primary reasons for using Web 2.0, which enables political parties to share and disseminate interactive and user-generated content, include the following, considering the features of new media: introducing themselves and their party's discourses and leaders, informing the electorate about party activities through a consistent information flow, engaging in organizing efforts by collecting voter opinions on specific issues, garnering support and financial aid for the party and its leader offline, within the bounds of political regulations.<sup>166</sup>

It is possible to summarize the reasons why political parties and candidates use the internet during election periods and the advantages it offers as follows: Improvements in website design and functional features provide parties with the opportunity to conduct public opinion research on the web. This enables access to estimated information about potential supporters and the voting audience. Websites, with their multimedia features, provide users access to content that cannot be obtained elsewhere. Web content can be easily updated,

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<sup>165</sup> **Geçer, Ekmel, Media** (2018) 'Politics and Democracy: A Critical Perspective', Erciyesi İletişim Dergisi, Vol:5, Issue 4, p.479-492. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/erciyesiletisim/article/421475> Accessed: 12.06.2023.

<sup>166</sup> **Bayraktutan, Günseli/ Binark, Mutlu/ Çomu, Tuğrul/ Aydemir, Aşlı, Temir** (2012) 'Sosyal Medyada 2011 Genel Seçimleri: Nicel - Nitel Arayüzey İncelemesi', Selçuk İletişim Dergisi, Vol: 7, Issue: 3, p.5-29.

making it a preferred source for accessing up-to-date and rich information. This facilitates user feedback, which in turn contributes to the creation of a user and supporter database. This approach ensures targeted outreach to special interest groups and utilizes its interactive features to understand voter needs and strategize accordingly.

Firstly, the candidates used the internet at an unexpected level and benefited from the new developments of the electronic communication environment in the USA in 2004.<sup>167</sup> From email messages to blogs, candidates saw the internet as a controlled, non-linear environment to connect with citizens in a more personalized manner. Leveraging the features of the internet, including multimedia and interactive components, candidates encouraged two-way communication with voters. This shift from traditional to new media was novel for everyone. These platforms gained popularity among potential candidates due to their personalization feature and controlled content distribution, subsequently becoming the primary political tools for candidates.

Through new communication technologies and social media, political communication has taken on a different dimension. For instance, Twitter is extensively employed in political campaigns for information sharing, communication, increased interaction, organization, coordination, mobilization, and financial resource procurement. However, Twitter's most fundamental role in political communication is capturing voters' attention and interest to secure their votes. Candidates use Twitter to share information about themselves, the election process, their political agendas, rivals, activities, and various other topics. They strive to influence voters' political preferences by garnering their attention. Twitter's functions in election campaigns encompass political marketing, mobilization, dialogue, conflict, political advertisement emphasizing candidates' traits, opposition, criticism, candidate support, jests directed at candidates, and explanation of vote preferences.

Although social networking sites also emerged in 2006 as a tool for participation in the political sphere, social media showed itself for the first time as an effective platform in the 2008 elections. Facebook, in particular, emerged as a dominant cultural and political platform during these elections. It transformed politics into an interactive experience and

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<sup>167</sup> **Bilgin, Mehmet Fevzi** (2005) 'ABD 2004 Başkanlık Seçimi ve Hristiyan Sağın Yükselişi', Bilgi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, Issue:1, p.63-81. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/bilgisosyal/issue/29119/311516>  
Accessed:23.05.2023.

drew attention from major political parties, candidates, and the global community, boasting over a hundred million users.

Facebook has also made several changes to the 2008 elections. For example, candidates for the political party were given pages instead of profiles. These pages, similar to personal profiles, allow candidates and supporters to present a variety of campaign materials, for example, announcements, page links, YouTube links, notes, photo albums and event information.

The effectiveness of social media, which has clearly emerged in election campaigns, has also brought new applications in line with the needs. Another change that Facebook has made in this direction has been to add a subcategory in the form of “politicians” under the fan pages. In this way, politicians are clustered next to celebrities, public figures, sports teams, products and non-profit institutions. In addition, the “politicians page” has been opened for use by candidates all over the world, provided that an official party representative creates the page.<sup>168</sup>

Political parties and leaders have started to use social media frequently in order to spread political messages and reach a wide audience. Social media profiles have started to be created by many politicians all over the world and messages and content have been produced in a professional manner.

When social media is widely used by large sections of society, it is unthinkable that politicians should not use social media effectively as well. The use of social media as a means of political participation has an important potential for a democratic, egalitarian and fair society. It provides various advantages to politicians who use it efficiently in terms of its various applications in the political arena. Social media is an extremely important tool, especially for young people to participate in political life and make them see that they have a say in this life. Politicians who use traditional media effectively now prefer social media when they turn to young people as their target audience.

Social media also empowers young individuals to test and articulate their political views. The interactive nature of sharing, coupled with immediate responses, encourages users to become more active participants. It's evident that there is potential to steer them

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<sup>168</sup> **Williams, Christine B./Gulati, Girish**(2009) ‘Social Networks in Political Campaigns: Facebook and Congressional Elections 2006, 2008’ APSA 2009 Toronto Meeting Paper, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1451451> Accessed. 12.04.2023.

toward more productive political engagement, especially as youth engagement increases. The growing political activities in which individuals participate on social media platforms contribute to an overall rise in political involvement.<sup>169</sup>

As a result, the fact that the new media accelerates political organization, increases communication, facilitates instantaneous and convenient reaction to events, has also led to its intense preference by both political organizations and target audiences and individuals.

### 3.5.1. The Power of New Media

The power of social media in social movements is no longer denied. Whenever a movement emerges, attention immediately shifts to social media. There exists a close connection between virtual networks and real-life networks. While movements typically initiate as social networks formed on the internet, they materialize into full-fledged movements by occupying urban spaces, whether through sustained occupations of public squares or persistent street demonstrations. These movements occur on both local and global scales.<sup>170</sup> With the recognition of the potency of these new communication technologies, also referred to as digital or new media, changes have transpired in the methods of organizing masses advocating for social justice and enhanced democracy.

With technological advancements and changes, which were once considered distant possibilities have now transformed into achievable realities. Castells<sup>171</sup> asserts that many individuals have become cognizant of this phenomenon through social media, and public spaces on these platforms have begun to serve as areas of appeal. He establishes a direct link between the technical accessibility of political information and the awakening of collective consciousness, along with the escalation of political protests.

According to the research conducted by the AK Party Youth Branches Foreign Relations Directorate on "The Impact of Social Media on Political Elections," as social media usage proliferates, its employment as a propaganda tool in political elections has become inevitable, providing a cost-effective and straightforward avenue to reach the public.

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<sup>169</sup> **Bimber, Bruce**, (2012). Digital media and citizenship. SAGE Publications Ltd, p.16-18.  
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446201015>

<sup>170</sup> **Castells**, (1996) p.450-452.

<sup>171</sup> **Öztürk, Emre, Olgun/ Cem Koray** (2020) Sosyal Medya ve Dolayimli Gündelik Yaşam: Goffman ve Castells Ekseninde Sosyal Medya Kullanımının Gençler Üzerindeki Etkisi (Adıyaman Üniversitesi Örneği), p.144-145.  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340818951\\_Sosyal\\_Medya\\_ve\\_Dolayimli\\_Gundelik\\_Yasam\\_Goffman\\_ve\\_Castells\\_Ekseninde\\_Sosyal\\_Medya\\_Kullaniminin\\_Gencler\\_Uzerindeki\\_Etkisi\\_Adiyaman\\_Universitesi\\_Ornegi/link/5e9f4b92a6fdcc20bb35f17e/download](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340818951_Sosyal_Medya_ve_Dolayimli_Gundelik_Yasam_Goffman_ve_Castells_Ekseninde_Sosyal_Medya_Kullaniminin_Gencler_Uzerindeki_Etkisi_Adiyaman_Universitesi_Ornegi/link/5e9f4b92a6fdcc20bb35f17e/download) Accessed:15.06.2023.

Experts assert that social media played a significant role in influencing votes for Obama during the 2008 American elections. This impact is believed to have been even more pronounced in the 2012 US elections due to the further surge in social network usage.<sup>172</sup>

Statistical data indicates that numerous records were shattered on social media during the American elections. Approximately 32 million election-related messages were posted on Twitter on election day. Obama's tweet captioned "Four more years" was shared around one million times and stands as the most widely circulated message to date.

The importance of social media is shown by many case studies that have emerged in recent history, not only the elections in the United States. One of the most notable and successful instances of social media utilization is observed in the social movements within the Middle East, famously known as the Arab Spring. In the research conducted prior to and during the popular movements referred to as the Arab Spring, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube were effectively employed as tools for mobilizing the masses and broadcasting the movement to the global audience, particularly by demonstrators.<sup>173</sup>

Additionally, these social media platforms assumed an active role as propaganda tools, providing legitimacy to these movements. Moreover, as a classic media criticism, the criticism that the media legitimizes power and serves hegemony has significantly disappeared with the use of social media in these movements.

The most remarkable aspect of these social movements, called the Arab Spring, has been that the power of sharing, sharing videos and photos, interactions and similar social media tools has now been noticed by everyone. Very few organized activists have been able to mobilize such large crowds with these methods that they could not be mobilized with classical tools, and they have been able to start an opposition movement with very important consequences. Large groups organized on social media have started a social movement that covers a fairly wide geography with the domino effect.

The "Occupy Wall Street" movement, which originated in the United States and spread to many parts of the world, and the "Indignados" movement that initiated in Spain

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<sup>172</sup> **Ak Parti Genel Merkez**, Gençlik Kolları Dış İlişkiler Başkanlığı, "Sosyal Medyanın Siyasi Seçimlere Etkisi" Araştırma Raporu, p.3.

<sup>173</sup> **Kırık, Ali Murat**, Arap Baharı Bağlamı'nda Sosyal Medya-Birey Etkileşimi ve Toplumsal Dönüşüm, *21. Yüzyılda Eğitim ve Toplum*, Vol: 1 Issue: 3, (2012). p. 87-98.  
<https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/egitimvetoplum/issue/5130/69848> Accessed: 18.07.2023.

and mobilized masses across various European countries, were orchestrated through social media and showcased global impacts within a brief timeframe.<sup>174</sup>

The "Occupy Wall Street" movement, originating in the USA and swiftly gathering supporters globally, constitutes a highly significant example that underscores the role of social media both in its inception and in its effective progression. The organization of such a substantial number of individuals who had no prior connections and the orchestration of the entire movement via social media, from start to finish, emphasize the crucial role of social media as a tool for political propaganda.

Although this movement, which began in Manhattan, was the manifestation of the rage against the domination of capital and economic inequality throughout the world, another factor behind the movement was the lack of political representation and the lack of faith and political weakness.

In addition to the aforementioned politically motivated social media activities for social movements, the utilization of social media for direct elections has become increasingly commonplace. A notable and vivid instance of this occurred during the 2013 elections in Italy. The Five Star Movement, initiated by Beppe Grillo, primarily a comedian, gained rapid traction through social media, propelling Grillo to become a candidate in the elections. Interestingly, Grillo, who had no political background or identity, surpassed expectations in the elections. A similar achievement was demonstrated by Zelensky in Ukraine, who, as a comedian, entered elections and secured a substantial portion of the vote, ultimately becoming the president.

Protest demonstrations against the 2009 Iranian presidential election, called the "Green Revolution", started on 13 June 2009. The protests began when it was alleged that fraud was behind the controversial election victory of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The Iranian regime, which wanted to control the protesters, censored newspapers and blocked access to internet and satellite broadcasts. Despite the regime's attempts to silence the demonstrators, social media platforms were extensively used by the protesters to alert one another about potential dangers and convey essential information. The protests earned

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<sup>174</sup> **Shirky, Clay** (2011) 'The political power of social media: Technology, the public sphere, and political change', Foreign Affairs, <https://faculty.cc.gatech.edu/~beki/cs4001/Shirky.pdf> Accessed. 11.04.2023.

the moniker of the "Twitter Revolution" due to the protesters' heavy reliance on social media for communication<sup>175</sup>.

The initial instance of using social media in politics is exemplified by the journey of Howard Dean, a Democratic Party candidate in the 2004 American presidential election. Dean established the first campaign website, which was primarily focused on fundraising and recruiting volunteers. During this campaign, his remarkable ability to collect \$41 million in small donations, largely from online supporters, was considered a noteworthy achievement.

In the same year, with the emergence of Facebook, Democrat John Kerry effectively employed the platform during the 2004 presidential election. Mark Zuckerberg even played an active role in this campaign.

However, it was Barack Obama who truly stood out as the first leader to adeptly leverage social media for organizing supporters, advertising, and engaging with individuals. This accomplishment has cemented its place in history. As a result, social media has now become a central aspect during election periods worldwide.

Political communication activities carried out on social media, if he is not the right candidate or an unsuccessful leader, the campaign will not win him an election. However, it helps political parties and leaders in matters such as persuading, organizing and mobilizing the electorate. Trump's popularity in the social media and the use of social media in the 2016 US presidential election have made a great contribution to his winning the election.

One of the most prominent instances that exemplifies the effective use of social media in the history of the world is Obama's 2008 election campaign. Obama has shown that he has determined the right policy by building this election campaign on young people. The target audience has been chosen correctly and the most suitable platform has been chosen correctly. The new generation of young people communicate via social networks instead of traditional media.

Using this power of social media and organizing this campaign accordingly, Obama achieved the first and greatest social media success in the world. For this, he brought the most suitable person to head this project. That person was Chris Hughes, who co-founded

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<sup>175</sup> **Telli, Azime** (2012) 'Mısır Devrimi'nde Sosyal Medyanın Rolü', *Bilge Strateji*, Vol: 4, Issue: 7, p.65-91.

Facebook with Mark Zuckerberg. Before Hughes took office, barackobama.com was live, but it was not used effectively either. While Obama was giving a speech, this site could not stand the intensity and collapsed. Obama, who managed to attract the attention of the youth through this social network, involved the youth in the election process in an interactive way. Young voters felt a sense of participation in politics.

While American politics might not have traditionally captivated first-time voters, this strategic approach enabled these young individuals to voluntarily engage in active politics. They transformed from passive listeners to politicians' speeches to active participants within this process. Obama and his team directed the youth's focus toward social media and harnessed its potential effectively.

Obama initially connected with young people through email, mobile campaigns, and SMS. During this process, as certain individuals emerged, they were encouraged to contribute by writing blogs on relevant topics. Alongside the social networks they established, such as Facebook, Twitter, Friendfeed, and others, were also effectively employed. It was almost as if an army of Obama volunteers had been assembled, expanding the network and garnering support through newly formed groups. This campaign received substantial support not only in the virtual realm but also in the physical world. Communication primarily targeted universities and cities with universities, effectively mobilizing young people through these platforms.<sup>176</sup>

"Viral Marketing" was effectively harnessed within the campaign as well. A video series named "Super Obama Girl" was created, and the fifth episode of this series alone garnered 15 million views on YouTube. While the campaign team didn't produce the series, they handled the video distribution. The campaign also didn't overlook the Advergaming aspect. An Xbox game called "Race to the White House" was developed, attracting young individuals to the campaign alongside similar web-based games.

Simultaneously, the campaign website featured a "Donate" button that enabled young people to financially support the campaign, leading to the collection of the largest donation in history. This campaign also managed to assemble the largest and most active volunteer force globally. Rather than merely feeling like they were part of the campaign, the youth perceived volunteering for the campaign as a privilege. They were even willing to dip into

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<sup>176</sup> Çalışkan, Mustafa/Mencik, Yunus (2015) 'Değişen Dünyanın Yeni Yüzü: Sosyal Medya', Akademik Bakış Dergisi, Issue: 50, p.254-277.

their pockets to financially support Obama. Obama and his team recognized that the most effective way to engage and mobilize young people was through self-organization facilitated by new media. They pursued strategies that hadn't been previously employed, yielding significant success.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> **Başusta, Hasan**, ‘Obama'nın Sosyal Medya Kampanyasının Sonuçları’  
<<https://webrazzi.com/2009/11/13/obamanin-sosyal-medya-kampanyasinin-sonuclari/>> Accessed:  
03.06.2023.

## 4. CHAPTER III THE IMPACT OF NEW MEDIA IN TÜRKİYE

### 4.1. Politics-Media Relations in Türkiye

According to political scientists, government policies and significant political events are influenced by members of society. In essence, an ongoing relationship and interaction persist between those in power and those being governed. The concept of public opinion holds immense significance in a democracy, where authority stems from the people and power is vested in them. Public opinion emerges from this reciprocal relationship and interaction.

The press serves as a primary instrument in this interplay. The creation of public opinion entails concerned individuals or groups initially gathering information about an issue and subsequently deliberating on it. When faced with a contentious topic, involved parties must engage with other groups to communicate their ideas and viewpoints, with the aim of establishing their dominant perspectives as shared public opinion. Communication is central to these dynamics. The mass media, acknowledged as one of the most influential factors in shaping public opinion, facilitates the dissemination of information in this communication process.

Throughout the 20th century, communication studies concentrated on understanding public opinion. These studies which were especially intensive in the United States in the 1930s, aimed to investigate the impact of mass media on society. And also, these studies, which evaluate the impact of mass media on public opinion from a sociological perspective, continued after 1950 on a ground where statistical data intensified.<sup>178</sup>

Contemporary research on public opinion focuses on the media's power in shaping public sentiment, as well as the public's opinions about governments or minority groups.

In the early 20th century, communication studies primarily revolved around the media's influence on molding public opinion. Renowned American humorist Will Rogers famously remarked, "All I know is just what I read in the newspaper."<sup>179</sup> This highlights how

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<sup>178</sup> **Morva, Oya** (2013) *Chicago Okulu Pragmatik Sosyal Teoride İletişimin Keşfi*, Doruk Yayıncılık, İstanbul, p.154.

<sup>179</sup> **Ataizi, Murat**, (2012) *Medyanın Gündem Belirleme Süreci: Sever, Serdar (Ed.), Spor ve Medya İlişkisi*, p.3.

our perception of the world is largely mediated through the media, implying that our understanding of politics often filters through these channels. Since a significant portion of our knowledge is acquired indirectly, it suggests that much of our political awareness is obtained from media sources.<sup>180</sup>

By the 1970s, a theory emerged that redefined the relationship between media, public opinion, and politics. This theory is referred to as "Agenda Setting," drawing inspiration from Cohen's approach. According to this theory, the media shapes the public agenda, which subsequently influences the political agenda. While the media is initially deemed the source of influence in this theory, ongoing research explores how the media itself is impacted by public opinion and politics. Given the media's influential prowess, politics endeavors to establish mechanisms for media control. The media serves as a tool that empowers the public and citizens to scrutinize the state and authority. Simultaneously, for the government and the state, it can be perceived as a means to guide and influence the public and citizens.

Political communication constitutes a two-way exchange. Among the participants in political marketing are entities like politicians, voters, trade unions, and non-governmental organizations. These elements vary according to the specific political system in place. The most extensive and effective planning of political communication often takes place during election periods. Political parties, in their pursuit of collecting votes, strive to capture the attention of large masses and conduct analyses and research to comprehend the sentiments of voters. In this process, voter groups also have the opportunity to become acquainted with candidates and their platforms.

Political marketing fosters an increase in political participation, potentially enhancing a society's democratic framework. Unconventional or unaccepted groups find the platform to introduce and explain themselves. Additionally, akin to commercial marketing, political parties and leaders find an avenue for self-evaluation, an integral step in deciphering societal dynamics. These functions are most pronounced during political election campaigns.

The history of election campaigns traces back to ancient Greek states' direct democracies. Over time, direct democracy has given way to representative democracies, leading to increasingly professionalized election campaigns. Campaigns targeting the public

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<sup>180</sup> **Dağtaş, Banu** (2013) *Medya ve Reklam*. Ankara, Anadolu Üniversitesi Yayınları, p.8-10.

are carried out across the entire country or specific regions. Election campaigns possess three core objectives: to inform, persuade, and mobilize the public. Leaders and parties participating in election campaigns seek to acquaint the electorate with their candidates and communicate their agendas through diverse communication techniques, predominantly relying on mass media. Campaign planning is a strategic process, which has gained public attention and influenced a significant portion of the population with Türkiye's transition to a multi-party system. It has become a pivotal factor in the policy-making process.<sup>181</sup>

The 1950 elections are often cited as Türkiye's first true election campaign. Media outlets such as radio, newspapers, and posters were utilized. A groundbreaking campaign unfolded in the country, ultimately resulting in a change of power. Since then, election campaigns in the country have consistently been marked by vibrant and contentious periods.

Following the 1961 Constitution, parties engaged in intense political competition, striving to convey their ideologies and rhetoric to the masses. The professionalization of election campaigns in the late 1970s is notable as parties began collaborating with advertising agencies.

The 1980s witnessed the permission for parties to publish paid advertisements in newspapers, incorporating this medium into their election endeavors.

The 1990s saw election campaigns transform into demonstrations, echoing Guy Debord's sentiments. Rallies featured concerts, and leaders enlisted political communication experts from both domestic and foreign domains to manage their campaigns.

In the 2000s, Turkish political parties and leaders swiftly adapted to the evolving media landscape, complementing traditional media with technological advances and utilizing visual and digital materials to bolster their election campaigns.

Serious and comprehensive election campaigns in Türkiye began with the 1950 elections. During this period, mass communication tools were primarily represented by Ankara and Istanbul radios, broadcasting within limited areas. These broadcasts encompassed news related to the elections and candidates' speeches.

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<sup>181</sup> **Duman, Doğan/ Sun İpekşen, Serçin** (2013) 'Türkiye'de Genel Seçim Kampanyaları (1950-2002)', *Journal of Turkish Studies*, Vol.: 8 Issue: 7, p.117-135. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7827/TurkishStudies.5047> Accessed. 08.03.2023.

Of particular note during this election cycle was the Democratic Party's (DP) innovative strategy of direct engagement with the public through rallies and press coverage. This novel approach proved remarkably effective in garnering public support, introducing a previously unfamiliar method. The combination of skillful press utilization and impactful rallies established a model that conservative parties later adopted.

Furthermore, the DP garnered substantial support from opposition media outlets and skillfully capitalized on public sentiments arising from reactions against the government during World War II. The DP's subsequent electoral entry was marked by the use of posters bearing the slogan "Enough, the word belongs to the nation." One poster featuring this slogan, accompanied by a determined hand gesture resembling a stop sign, remains an enduring and successful election image.<sup>182</sup>

Although not of extended duration, Türkiye boasts a political tradition that traces back to the Second Constitutional Era, founded on democratic principles. The country experienced one-party rule from 1923 to 1945 due to both theoretical and practical reasons. The transition to a multi-party system in Türkiye in 1950 marked a pivotal turning point in Turkish politics on numerous fronts. During this period, power-opposition dynamics influenced future political relations and laid the groundwork for political culture formation. The democratic process faced interruptions in 1960, 1971, and 1980 due to military interventions.

The 1980s and 1990s saw a gradual increase in social and economic challenges in Türkiye. The bureaucratic establishment exhibited resistance against elected governments, particularly when it came to safeguarding the existing political order. Bureaucratic entities did not shy away from intervening in governance. Türkiye acknowledged significant civil initiatives, leading to military and civil bureaucracy engaging in coups, viewing themselves as the traditional defenders of the state. The "postmodern" coup of February 28, 1997, served as a clear manifestation of this situation. Following these developments and a profound economic crisis, people's reactions and the quest for a new, transparent politics propelled the Justice and Development Party (AK Party), established in 2001, to achieve a sole victory in the 2002 elections.

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<sup>182</sup> **Özküçük, Adem** (2012) *Türk Basınında 1950-1957 Dönemi Seçim Propagandaları*, (Yayımlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi) Sakarya Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, p.252.

In a multi-party political landscape, political parties operate with a strategic and well-organized approach, particularly during election periods, with the aim of gaining power. They diligently leverage mass media, keeping a close watch on advancements in communication technologies. Constructing messages in line with their visions and missions, political parties strive to effectively reach the masses by utilizing various communication tools. The alignment of their institutional identities with election period endeavors is also a crucial consideration. Parties seek to convey their representative ideologies and the voices of the people they stand for through advertising. These political advertisements produced during election periods serve as cultural texts that encapsulate the era.

A review of election campaigns post-1950 reveals that political propaganda efforts, which initially began with posters, placed significant emphasis on election messaging and imagery, primarily due to the press and newspapers being the most influential channels. The advent of television led to diversification in content and usage forms for political propaganda. Traditional media wielded considerable power in political communication activities until the ascent of new communication technologies. Political parties vied for control over traditional media, resulting in a domain of power struggle.

As the transition from traditional media to the New Media unfolds, the political landscape in Türkiye and, in particular, the strategies for propaganda and election campaigns, are anticipated to undergo shifts in their effects and potential transformations within the country.

#### **4.1.1. Effects of Media and Politics in Türkiye**

When it comes to political communication activities and campaigns, the period after 1980 stands as a distinctive phase. Political parties have undertaken their election efforts with a more professional approach, seeking success in their campaigns through the support of skilled personnel. With the establishment of legal frameworks for election activities after 1980, parties aimed to achieve campaign success by enlisting the expertise of professionals. One of the driving factors behind parties seeking the assistance of communication specialists is the impact of social transformation's reflections on the political arena post-1980<sup>183</sup>.

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<sup>183</sup> **Küçük, Ayşe** (2019) 'Türkiye'de Sosyal ve Siyasal Değişim: 1980 ve Sonrası', Econharran Harran Üniversitesi İİBF Dergisi, Vol:3, Issue:4, p.40-45.  
<https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/econharran/issue/49062/559441> Accessed.01.03.20223.

Communication experts who consider voters as customers have actually determined strategies accordingly. As a result of this understanding, the parties began to need technical knowledge and planning in order to reach the voters. In the political field, since all parties are similar to each other in terms of political ideologies and programs, political communication activities are shaped around the leader. Campaigns are organized accordingly. To emphasize the differences, the leaders are presented almost like popular figures.

The prohibition of political parties and leaders, the ramifications of the 1982 Constitution, and the loosened affiliations with parties have resulted in a context where voters' decisions are influenced by everyday living circumstances and psychological factors during each election cycle. These attributes have become prominent features of Turkish political life after 1980.<sup>184</sup>

Significant transformations in the social and political realms after 1980 took on new dimensions with the development of mass media in the early 1990s. Under the influence of this evolving dimension, political parties embraced previously untried communication techniques. An approach in which the organization and personnel revolve around ideology and political programs shifted to a communication and political paradigm focused on advertising and campaign activities. Image studies grounded in new technology and persuasion strategies took center stage

The initiation of private radio and television broadcasting in the 1990s propelled the transformation process that had commenced in the 1980s to a new stage within election campaigns. In the election campaigns that originated with the 1983 elections, the influence of professional experts gradually grew and became more pronounced by the 1987 elections.

Particularly during the general elections of 1991, all political parties engaged in election activities working with professionals, even establishing agreements with foreign advertising agencies for the first time. Arguably, the 1991 election campaign epitomized the culmination of the process set in motion by the 1987 general elections and 1989 local elections. Political leaders, in resonance with the spirit of popular culture, employed various shows, large and bustling rallies, concerts, and public campaigns, turning elections into nearly theatrical spectacles.

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<sup>184</sup> **Bölükbaşı, Mustafa** (2019) 'Siyasal Propaganda: 2007 ve 2011 Seçimlerinin Analizi', (Doktora), İstanbul, Yıldız Teknik Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, p.169.

Since the 1990s, the media, which has further consolidated its power in the social and political sphere, has ceased to be an organization that monitors elections on behalf of people, provides news flow and provides information, and it has started acting literally like a fourth force, trying to convince and manipulate people. In this case, instead of providing information and news flow at the point where the traditional media arrived, there has also been a direct intervention in politics.

Alongside these advancements, political parties have persisted in their institutional activities. Parties that shape their political discourse around rational principles and strategies have established public opinion research units within their organizational structures. As part of this approach, academic experts responsible for assessing and analyzing voter attitudes, behaviors, values, and beliefs have been integrated into the parties. The growing significance of rational data for parties has led to the institutionalization of this data within producing and presenting bodies, elevating experts equipped with technical knowledge to pivotal positions within the political arena.<sup>185</sup>

Türkiye has undergone a great change and transformation in the 1980s. Following the increase in the weight of the media in election campaigns with private radio and television broadcasting, the traditional media has experienced a peak period. Political parties and leaders who are trying to reach a wide audience through press media organs and televisions have applied appropriate communication techniques in their election activities. They have tried to realize the basic elements of political communication such as visibility, information, creating an environment, creating an agenda, influencing and persuading to the extent possible of existing communication technologies.

With the increasing development of mass media and the increasing use of the Internet, especially in parallel with the development of information and communication technologies, a new era has begun in Türkiye. In the 2002 elections, when the new media was just being formed, professional communication specialists literally carried out election activities.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> **Gökçe, Ali Fuat** (2013) ‘Siyasi Partilerde Parti İçi Demokrasi ve Disiplin Algısı: Türkiye’, Akademik Araştırmalar ve Çalışmalar Dergisi, Vol:5, Issue:9, p. 65-79.

<sup>186</sup> **Köklü, Pelin Havva /Çağlar, Nedret**, (2017) ‘Yeni Medyanın Siyasal İletişim Aracı Olarak Kullanımı: Siyasal Partilerin Resmi Web Sitelerine Yönelik Bir Araştırma’, Gümüşhane Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Elektronik Dergisi, Vol:5, Issue: 1, p.148-173. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/e-gifder/issue/28776/277833> Accessed. 21.06.2023.

Political parties have begun to need the support of expert knowledge in order to meet the needs of changing social life and to receive the support of voters during election periods. Due to the extraordinary conditions of the post-80 period, political parties, especially the ones that received expert support from outside in the planning of election campaigns, have started to establish units such as “ARGE, Political Affairs Presidency, Science, Management, Culture Platform” for the planning of party strategies over time.

Most recently, the transformation of the youth branches of political parties into a “Political Academy” and here “communication, media, international relations, etc.” the provision of courses is one of the most important steps of the project of educating experts within the parties themselves. Although it became obvious during the election campaigns, specialized knowledge, whether employed from within the party or from outside, has begun to become an effective force in the formation of the policies of political parties.

In the 1950 Elections, a single slogan almost single-handedly made the campaign and the political communication process successful. The Democratic Party achieved its ascent to power largely due to its classic slogan. This slogan adeptly addressed and resonated with the prevailing political climate, the country's socioeconomic conditions, and the overall sentiments of the electorate. The poster featuring this memorable slogan significantly contributed to disseminating this theme and left a lasting impression on the 1950 Elections. This achievement marked a significant milestone in Türkiye's electoral history, successfully conveying a powerful political message to a broad audience.

During the era dominated by traditional media, television emerged as perhaps the most influential mass medium. Following the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation's (TRT) introduction of television trial broadcasts in Ankara in 1968, television rapidly gained traction across Türkiye after 1970.

As a new communication channel following radio and newspapers, television's impact on political competition has been more pronounced than other mediums. Television's influence on election campaigns and political communication in our country, much like in other nations, can be described as profound. This influence was underscored with the advent of private television broadcasting. Television transformed into a platform where political leaders expounded on party programs, reached a vast audience, and engaged in discussions and debates. This phenomenon has stood as one of the pivotal factors determining the outcome of elections in Türkiye, mirroring its significance in numerous other countries.

Previously, in the 1970s, newspapers began to turn to opinion surveys, especially before elections, to reveal the changing voter profile of Türkiye and to make the data public. This has also been a sign that political parties will resort to similar research. With this dimension, public opinion surveys have become an important news material during election periods. In the light of the information obtained as a result of these researches, healthier campaign strategies have been developed and put into practice. Television and radio have also been a field of application for parties and leaders.

The utilization of political advertising within election campaigns initially found prominence in the print media in Türkiye (1977). However, its introduction to television commenced with the 1987 elections. Political parties participating in elections were granted the opportunity to employ display ads and convey propaganda during half of their allocated speaking time on TRT. The practice of parties broadcasting political advertisements on radio and television for a fee emerged following the establishment of private radio and television broadcasting. This development marked the fusion of political elements with popular culture and consumer culture, ushering in a new era. The processes of political communication and campaigns seem to be treated akin to advertising and marketing strategies.

With the advent of commercialized television broadcasting, all the elements of one-way communication have been meticulously implemented. Politicians engaged in a race to utilize this tool effectively to solidify their images in the minds of voters. Thus, with the developments in mass media and political advertising, propaganda, ‘American-style’ campaigns have attracted a lot of attention, and the leaders were often presented akin to popstars.

During the 1994 general elections, despite the pressing issues spanning education, health, economy, and foreign and domestic politics, concrete proposals addressing the electorate's solution expectations were insufficiently articulated. Party leaders primarily approached the election with their images, often crafted by political communication experts, while the party's organization, platform, and policies took a backseat. In this election, political communication efforts undertaken by political parties and candidates operated without a conscious recognition of the advantages of political communication for a party, resulting in a lack of success despite considerable time and resources invested.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> **Karahan Uslu, Zeynep** (1996) Siyasal İletişim ve 24 Aralık 1995 Genel Seçimleri, Yeni Türkiye, Issue: 11, p.790-802.

According to the research conducted between 1991 and 1999, 34% of political advertisements are issue-oriented advertisements and 18% are advertisements targeting social groups. Therefore, parties adopt a strategy targeting social groups such as workers, retirees, youth and women.<sup>188</sup>

Particularly due to the incomplete establishment of a democratic culture and consciousness, media outlets often compel the public to adopt a specific standpoint—leaning towards manipulation rather than information—and strive to shape public opinion directly.

With the access of the media to this power, the capital groups that hold and control it are in the service of the dominant ideology for the continuation of hegemony, and in this way, they wanted to direct politics in accordance with their wishes. These influential circles formulate broadcasting policies to further their interests, employing the power of one-way communication to disseminate their fabricated messages to the audience. In the realm of political and cultural struggles, while the potency and sway may fluctuate, the lower socioeconomic classes, along with those marginalized, employ media as a tool to amplify their voices and bring their grievances to the public domain.<sup>189</sup>

Nonetheless, this endeavor has remained considerably constrained. On one hand, the media stands as a lucrative business venture, generating significant profits for capital; on the other hand, it functions as a conduit for these business elites to establish and perpetuate their ideological hegemony. In this regard, the media has become deeply intertwined with politics during this period.

Viewing media and public relations as tools of "mass manipulation" reflects that those who hold power within a market-based society driven by private property are no longer relying on overt coercion, but rather on manipulation. This shift enables class hegemony to be achieved and legitimized through ideological activities rather than physical force. As a result, society voluntarily generates consent through media channels and succumbs to the ideology propagated by the state-capital nexus.

In a democratic framework, the media plays a role in fostering an equitable foundation. By disseminating information and granting access to news, it facilitates the

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<sup>188</sup> **Uztuğ, Ferruh** (2009) *Siyasal İletişimde Hikâye ya da Strateji: Efsaneler, Gerçekler*: Özkan, Abdullah (Ed.) (2009), *Siyasetin İletişimi*, İstanbul, Tasam Yayınları. p.169-183.

<sup>189</sup> **Ergül, Yankı** (2020) 'Dijital Medya Stratejisi Olarak Nüfuz Pazarlaması: Y Kuşağı Bireyler Üzerine Bir İnceleme', *Kocaeli Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Araştırma Dergisi*, Issue: 16, p.161-183. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/1262133> Accessed: 11.04.2023.

availability of relevant political information and assessments for all citizens. Within a society, political communication inherently assumes significance particularly in the context of elections, provided that the aforementioned condition is met.

The mere existence of free elections and elite competition does not suffice to meet democratic criteria. When the public and political communication framework fails to fulfill its essential functions as required, it deprives existing institutions of the political communication culture necessary for realizing democratic aspirations in practice. As the media portrays the political process in its multifaceted dimensions, citizens can gather the essential information concerning policies that pertain to them through mass media.

Habermas argued that the public sphere has transformed into a realm either for demonstration or manipulation.<sup>190</sup> Similarly, Baudrillard, with a focus on the visual aspect of political communication, contends that in an era where politics itself has become a spectacle, it is dominated by mechanisms of spectacle.<sup>191</sup> The legitimacy of claims to sovereignty also hinges on implanting suitable motives within individuals to ensure the system's functionality. Consequently, the "public opinion" that initially emerged from rational-critical discourse against feudalism and centralized states in the late 17th century was replaced by a version in the 20th century welfare state, where certain individuals, groups, and institutions propagate their views onto others without engaging in meaningful discussions.

#### 4.2.Elections in Türkiye and Social Media

It could be accurately stated that social media was initially utilized in election campaigns in Türkiye during the 2007 General Elections. However, according to some perspectives, social media was first effectively employed for political propaganda purposes in Tu Türkiye during the 2011 General Elections. Although the current use of social media is more sophisticated, efforts were made in the past to maximize communication technology's existing possibilities.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> **Tayfun, Torun** (2020) 'Jürgen Habermas'ın Kamusal Alan Kavrayışı: Rasyonel Politik İrade Oluşumu', Vol:19, Issue: 1, p.220-238. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/kaygi/issue/52880/619184> Accessed: 28.05.2023.

<sup>191</sup> **Karakoyun, İpek** (2019) 'Baudrillard'ın İletişim Kuramı Bağlamında Dijital Savaş Haberciliği Uygulamalarının İncelenmesi', (Yayımlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi), İstanbul Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, p.56.

<sup>192</sup> **Tosyali, Hikmet/Sütcü, Cem Sefa** (2019) 'Türkiye'de Sosyal Medya Üzerinden Siyasal Propaganda Yapmak: 2018 Cumhurbaşkanı Seçimi', Marmara Üniversitesi Öneri Dergisi, Vol: 14, Issue: 51. p.61-89.

In 2007, the impact of Facebook was limited, and platforms such as Twitter and Instagram had not yet emerged. Blogs and YouTube held more significant roles. Throughout the 2007 elections, political parties aimed to leverage the web 1.0 environment effectively. They achieved this by announcing party events, leader rallies, releasing press statements, and offering regular updates. The AK Party, in particular, seamlessly integrated the online environment into their political communication strategy. They displayed direct party advertisements on websites to inform and influence voter perspectives. Additionally, similar ads were distributed through text messages on mobile phones.

In addition to party advertisements on websites and text messages, political election blogs were systematically and actively used for the first time in Türkiye during the 2007 elections, albeit in limited numbers. Some candidates in the 2007 parliamentary elections even had their own election blogs, which proved to be a significant asset to their campaign efforts. During this time, political parties recognized the power of the young population.

Ahead of the 2002 elections, the new voter population born after 1980 was noteworthy for its inclination towards communication technologies. Nonetheless, the widespread use of the Internet by political parties wasn't evident until the 2002 general elections. Subsequent elections saw greater attention to political communication processes in the new media, fueled by the rapid development of communication technologies and the younger generation's adeptness with them.

In the 2002 general elections, where Web 1.0 applications were valid, political ads were included in terms of both informing and influencing voters on Internet news pages, which were not used very effectively in previous elections, as a new communication technology. For example, the Young Party has appeared with political ads both on Turkish news pages and on foreign web pages such as Yahoo.

The importance of the new media in the 2002 general elections does not seem to have been well understood. The Internet environment was seen as an extension of the traditional media and the election activities were carried out accordingly. Especially in the 2007 general elections, political parties and leaders seem to have increased the use of the Internet both by creating their own web pages and through virtual advertising. Before the 2007 general elections in Türkiye, political parties, as well as groups with opposing views, preferred the

virtual environment in order to make their voices heard to a wide audience and to meet with those with the same opinion. During this period, many Internet sites were opened and actively used in election activities.

During this process, the blogs of the candidates participating in the elections were constantly updated by their supporters, and all the content about the candidates participating in other platforms was collected here. In addition, the candidates' daily and weekly programs were announced and information was provided to their supporters.

The Internet has increasingly become a prominent mass communication tool for political parties. They have examined how political parties, particularly the AK Party and CHP, utilize web 1.0 platforms. It's noted that the AK Party places significance on using new media environments for political communication practices. In terms of outward communication, the party's stance and leader's presence are conveyed through these channels.

There's a growing trend of circulating videos from Türkiye under the banner of propaganda and political campaigning on platforms like YouTube. For instance, in the 2007 general elections, there were approximately 4.000 videos related to the CHP and its candidates, around 3.000 videos concerning the AK Party (including anti-propaganda videos), and nearly a thousand videos related to the Nationalist Movement Party and the Felicity Party, all shared on YouTube. Such viral productions then became increasingly commonplace.

In the 2009 local elections, the interest of political parties in social media platforms increased. An organized way has been tried to ensure the organization of young people in particular. The youth branches of the party have used social sharing network such as Facebook extensively on these platforms to explain party policy and announce their activities. Some mayoral candidates have also conducted election activities from these platforms. Young people have been employed and selected especially as the target audience.

In the 2009 local elections, the interest of political parties in social media platforms increased.<sup>193</sup> An organized way has been tried to ensure the organization of young people in particular. The youth branches of the party have used social sharing network such as

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<sup>193</sup> Tanyıldızı, İmik, Nural (2011) Siyasi Partilerin Halkla İlişkiler ve Kamuoyunu Bilgilendirme Çalışmaları: Türk Basınında 29 Mart 2009 Yerel Seçimleri (Doktora Tezi), İnönü Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, p.112.

Facebook extensively on these platforms to explain party policy and announce their activities. Some mayoral candidates have also conducted election activities from these platforms. Young people have been employed and again, young people have been selected especially as the target audience. In the 2011 General Elections, it is observed that political parties and leaders used the possibilities of new communication technologies more intensively<sup>194</sup>. With the widespread use of Twitter as well as Facebook in political communication campaigns, social media has gained a huge following. Türkiye' was the 4th country which used Facebook most in 2008<sup>195</sup>. The Turkish people, who show great interest in mobile phones and the Internet, have shown the same interest in social media. Facebook and Twitter are a fruitful area for political organizations in terms of spreading the practice of organizing and enabling individuals, especially young people, to participate in the political communication process as active actives and requesters, not as passive recipients anymore. In order to use social media effectively in the election processes, the parties have now started allocating significant budgets and employing cadres. In a serious structure, strategic decisions have been tried to be taken and implemented in order to conduct political communication processes in an efficient manner.

Starting around 2009-2010, the adoption of Twitter became widespread in Türkiye, particularly among relatively young lawmakers who possessed a high level of digital literacy.<sup>196</sup> These lawmakers gained thousands of followers through their Twitter accounts. Notably, political party leaders also began to actively use Twitter, especially in the lead-up to general elections. Twitter, a social media application, is essentially a microblogging platform. Launched in 2006, Twitter allows users to compose messages of up to 280 characters, referred to as "tweets." Microblogging combines the best elements of email, SMS, blogging, and instant messaging.<sup>197</sup>

While other social media platforms were also actively used in the local elections in 2009 and other elections, it was quickly adapted to the constantly transforming and changing

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<sup>194</sup> Yılmaz, Feyza Şerife (2020) ‘ Siyasi Partilerin Kampanya Uygulamaları: 2002, 2007, 2011 Genel Seçimleri’, (Yayımlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi), Gazi Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, p.184-187.

<sup>195</sup> **Koca, Alit Altuğ**, (2009) Facebook 2008 değerlendirmesi ve artan Türk popülasyonu, <https://webrazzi.com/2009/01/15/facebook-2008-degerlendirmesi-ve-artan-turk-populasyonu/> Accessed: 25.06.2023.

<sup>196</sup> **Akdeniz, Perihan** (2022) ‘Popülizmin Siyasal İletişim Kapsamında Kullanımı: Yerel Siyasal Aktörlerin Twitter Hesaplarının Karşılaştırmalı İncelemesi’, (Yayımlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi), Selçuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, s.41.

<sup>197</sup> **Aktaş, Safa Görkem** (2023) ‘Ağ Toplumunda Dijital Medya Sahipliği: Elon Musk ve Twitter Örneği, Düşünce ve Toplum Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi’, Vol:5 Issue: 1, p.38.

structure of new communication technologies. During this period, especially young people belonging to political parties used Facebook and partly Twitter to make propaganda for their parties. Some mayoral candidates have also tried to reach their voters on Facebook.

During the June 12, 2011 elections, social media platforms were also used quite actively and systematically by parties and leaders. Alongside the Justice and Development Party, the Republican People's Party, and the Nationalist Movement Party as well as independent candidates conducted their political campaigns on platforms like Twitter and Facebook. Independents were the most vigorous users of social media, followed by the AK Party and MHP. The CHP was the party that used social media the least.

The 2011 elections witnessed the rise of opposition figures, especially independent candidates, who struggled to find a place in traditional media such as television, newspapers, and radio. Social networks such as Facebook and Twitter offered them a more direct route to reach voters swiftly.<sup>198</sup> From this point onward, the direction of political communication underwent a significant transformation. For politicians of all statures and parties, social media became the most effective means to engage and communicate with the public. Just like in the rest of the world, the majority of politicians, bureaucrats, institutions, and organizations in Türkiye embraced social media platforms to directly deliver their messages. Given the limitations on the use of radio and television in Turkish election campaigns, the environment was ripe for the dissemination of messages and content through unrestricted social media channels. Placing political party and candidate advertisements in the virtual realm didn't demand the substantial budgets required for TV broadcasting. This enabled politicians to reach a wide audience efficiently.

Behind the political parties' increasing internet use compared to the previous period, the increase in Internet ownership and usage in Türkiye is also possible to show the increase in the internet usage rate of the young voters in home and school. TV advertising films, the ability to move to the virtual environment, the internet to be economical than other media, the ability to track the recycling, content as more information to allow sharing can be mentioned features such as.

The influence of the "social media phenomenon" on all aspects of daily life has become an undeniable reality, and this phenomenon has now firmly entered the realm of

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<sup>198</sup> **Binark, Mutlu/ Bayraktutan, Günseli** (2013) *Aydın Karanlık Yüzü: Yeni Medya ve Etik*, İstanbul, Kalkedon, p.54-55.

politics. Social networking applications like Facebook have led people to transition from anonymous identities to virtual identities, sharing personal information even when it does not fully align with their offline lives. Politicians recognize that their potential voters are active on platforms like Facebook and Twitter, making these platforms natural environments for communication. Moreover, these platforms allow politicians to efficiently organize their party activities and connect with their supporters.

Considering the recent elections, it seems that the political party that is more visible on social media platforms is the AK Party. It is possible to assess this situation as the social media visibility of the party represented in the Parliament with the largest number is widespread, but it is also possible to say that the party that makes the most efforts to communicate with broad segments.

Another important point is that when political parties use social media as a political communication activity, it turns out that political parties with relatively successful practices and strategies are parties that invest in web 1.0 technologies during the years that can also be described as the discovery period of the web as a means of political communication, and effectively use new media environments every semester, directing the youth branches of the party to voluntarily exist in these environments. When evaluated from the point of view of leaders, it is also possible to talk about the reflection of rhetoric in rallies and similar areas on the Internet.

In this context, the interaction between social media and politics creates a new level of communication between social networks, society, political institutions, and individuals. This interaction takes place in a direct or semi-direct environment. The new media landscape has made politics more participatory, allowing greater engagement from citizens<sup>199</sup>. As such, a political communication campaign on social media involves disseminating information about the political party and leader, continuously updating this information, inviting users to participate in or support party actions both online and offline, creating social networks and virtual communities within social media platforms, and translating virtual community support into offline actions under certain circumstances. Moreover, the hyper-textual nature

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<sup>199</sup> **Darı, Bahadır. A, Sosyal** (2018) 'Medya ve Siyaset: Türkiye'deki Siyasi Partilerin Sosyal Medya Kullanımı', Njosos Al-Farabi International Journal On Social Sciences/ Al-Farabi Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi. Vol.:1 Issue: 1, (2018).p.8-9.

of social media enables the propagation of the political party and leader's discourse and facilitates the sharing of user-generated content.<sup>200</sup>

#### 4.3.Strategies of Political Elections

Political parties and leaders engage in fierce competition on social media platforms. While parties develop and execute communication strategies within legal boundaries, there are instances where individuals resort to illegitimate methods. Analyzing the strategies employed on social media during election periods reveals the prominence of reverse propaganda tactics as a form of manipulation. Similar to US elections, individuals who position themselves against a particular side use offensive language towards opposition parties and particularly undecided voters, aiming to discredit the party they oppose. They employ unfounded news and exploit the emotional vulnerabilities of the masses, attempting to manipulate them through visual content and disseminate disinformation about opposing parties. These tactics, which are employed worldwide, are evident in the strategies pursued on social media during general elections in Türkiye, reflecting attempts to influence voter behavior. These efforts to shape the political landscape through social media, whether internal or external, pose a threat to national sovereignty.<sup>201</sup>

Therefore, it is imperative for nations to implement monitoring measures, especially concerning fake news and cyberattacks, and to establish regulatory frameworks, particularly for social media companies.

In the same way, the unlimited accessibility provided by social media networks and the unlimited freedom area can also cause cultural values, ethnic identities, religious sanctities to be violated, humiliated and corrupted from time to time. Political ideologies and those who take political positions also attract attention as the segments that are most insulted in this context. With the unlimited accessibility that social media offers to users, the space of freedom leads to the polarization of society. Among people, it can also cause hatred and similar feelings to become more intense.

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<sup>200</sup> **Erdoğan, A. Teyfur /Yumrukuz, Özlem** (2021) 'Sosyal Medya'nın Doğası,' Uluslararası Halk Bilimi Araştırmaları Dergisi, Vol:4, Issue: 6 p.173-197. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/1726594> Accessed: 23.07.2023.

<sup>201</sup> **Saf, Hacı Hasan** (2023) 'Höristik Karar Alma Sürecinin Popülizm 2.0'daki Kullanımı: Donald Trump'ın Tweetleri Üzerine Bir Analiz', Aksaray İletişim Dergisi, Vol: 5, Issue:2, p.71,79-80. <http://aid.aksaray.edu.tr/tr/download/article-file/3004735> Accessed: 30.04.2023.

The global structure of social media networks that are conducive to manipulating the political mechanism is of an alarming size. This situation has shown itself in a number of events. It has been openly admitted that some elections were interfered with. Social media, which unveils the thoughts traversing the minds of individuals and enables them to share these thoughts with the entire world almost instinctively, has a direct impact on politics. Given the rampant utilization of fake news, defamation, insults, and hate-fueled posts, it is crucial to recognize that social media holds the potential to create an unparalleled paradigm of perception management within politics.<sup>202</sup>

Particularly concerning national and religious values, which hold special sensitivity in society, the manipulation of specific profiles on social media as marionettes, where expressions, actions, and discourses that would be deemed criminal in real life are showcased, cultivates an environment conducive to the manifestation of behaviors that align with social violence and indignation.

Social media is seamlessly intertwined with politics; no one who is connected online can evade its influence. Internet usage is progressively rising in our globalized world. Even in less developed nations often referred to as third-world countries, the internet has become an integral part of life. Politicians operating within this context, aiming to disseminate their ideologies universally, now recognize the power and advantages of harnessing social media. Similarly, individuals desiring to exhibit purpose-driven or reactionary social responses have come to acknowledge the potency of social media. Virtually all contemporary politicians actively engage with the internet and social media platforms. Likewise, countless individuals across the globe engage in online communication and content creation.

Perhaps the most important event that showed the power of social media and the Internet on social movements was the Arab Spring. The uprisings of people inhabiting Arab states, subjected to oppressive rule by undemocratic regimes, were catalyzed by violent incidents stemming from a tragic death. The demise of a young man who immolated himself in Tunisia in 2010 due to unemployment and the inability to support his family triggered swift social reactions, sparking the onset of the Arab Spring. People initially organized around this event primarily employing social media, particularly platforms like Twitter. Actions carried out on the streets and in squares encountered brutal suppression. Curfews

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<sup>202</sup> **Kiraz, Ersel** (2019) ‘Sosyal Medya ve Algi Yönetimi: İngilterenin Brexit Sürecinde Sosyal Medya Dezenformasyonu’, *Paradoks Ekonomi, Sosyoloji ve Politika Dergisi* Vol: 15, Issue: 1, p.1-16.

were imposed. Yet, actions orchestrated through social media evaded all attempts at prevention. People united through social media, expressing their demands in this manner, and consequently achieved success.<sup>203</sup> These and akin occurrences underscore that events and developments across the world can instantaneously and expeditiously reach individuals globally via social media and the internet. McLuhan's renowned aphorism encapsulates this scenario: "The world is a global village ."<sup>204</sup>

An example of such social movements was also witnessed in our country. In 2013, numerous marginalized and anti-government groups in Türkiye utilized social media as a catalyst to protest the planned removal of trees in Gezi Park. This action managed to spread across the nation. Users gained information through social media platforms. Informed users have communicated and organized themselves through social media tools. Twitter is undoubtedly the most important social media tool in this process.. Through Twitter, users shared their opinions on the issue, provided interactive communication and realized information traffic.<sup>205</sup> Notably, during the Gezi Park protests, the world experienced its most tweeted year (in comparison to the number of users). A staggering total of 143,795,432 tweets were generated. Beginning on May 1, with around 1.8 million active Twitter users in T Türkiye, the number of users surged to 10 million by June 10, the period when the events unfolded. On June 1 alone, a record-breaking 18 million tweets were posted.

All political figures, parties, institutions, associations, and organizations actively employ social media and the internet. The interactivity it offers, the ability for politicians to reach a broader audience rapidly, and the ease of gauging public reactions contribute to making social media a potent political tool. Politicians worldwide, including those in Türkiye, utilize social networks to gain recognition among a larger populace, connect with more voters, and efficiently evaluate public sentiment.

Concurrently, as technological advancements continue, politicians utilizing social networks seem to be closer to achieving these objectives compared to those relying solely on traditional media methods. By analyzing content and messages, one can track societal

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<sup>203</sup> **Korkmaz, Ali**, 'Arap Baharı Sürecinde İnternet ve Sosyal Medyanın Rolü', International Symposium on Language and Communication: Research Trends and Challenges (ISLC) [https://www.academia.edu/3464365/Arap\\_Bahar%C4%B1\\_S%C3%BCrecinde\\_%C4%B0nternet\\_ve\\_Sosyal\\_Medyan%C4%B1n\\_Rol%C3%BC](https://www.academia.edu/3464365/Arap_Bahar%C4%B1_S%C3%BCrecinde_%C4%B0nternet_ve_Sosyal_Medyan%C4%B1n_Rol%C3%BC) Accessed : 21.04.2023.p.2148.

<sup>204</sup> **Varol**, 144-145.

<sup>205</sup> **Doğu, Burak/ Özçetin, Burak/ Bayraktutan, Günseli/ Binark, Mutlu/ Çomu, Tuğrul/ Aydemir, Telli, Aşlı / İslamoğlu, Gözde** (2014) *Siyasetin Yeni Hali Vaka-ı Sosyal Medya*, İstanbul, Kalkedon Yayınları, p.93.

concerns and the prevailing mood through these channels. Politicians amass substantial followers, enabling them to instantaneously communicate their thoughts, opinions, and announcements. Similarly, large audiences express their support and views by following politicians' personal pages. The followership count of some politicians' personal Twitter accounts reaches millions.

Social networks are extensively utilized by politicians and political parties during election periods. In many countries, these platforms have become the primary means of communication during election campaigns. The history of social media platforms is relatively recent, and their intensive use, especially in the political arena, can be regarded as new. Political parties and figures acknowledge using social media platforms for political purposes and during election cycles. These networks afford politicians the means to introduce themselves, articulate their ideas and objectives, and gauge voter sentiment in return.

Essentially, politicians receive pre-election feedback, enabling them to anticipate voter preferences more accurately. A new Twitter feature facilitates polls, allowing politicians to gauge public opinions on proposed actions, streamlining the process of aligning policies with voters' preferences. This enables politicians to tailor their strategies based on the pre-election voting ratios. Politicians assert that if they engage openly, they can effectively reach many people via social media, thereby maximizing their benefit by directly interacting with constituents and addressing their demands. Even local leaders utilize social media to share their activities, elevating communication speed to new dimensions at a time when conventional communication methods are viewed as routine press releases.

Moreover, individuals find a more objective and open environment for discussing politicians and their political perspectives. During the 2008 US presidential election, social networks such as Facebook enabled users to share political ideas, endorse their preferred candidates, and engage with others on political matters. Another factor motivating politicians to embrace social media is its substantial popularity among young people. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, especially among the youth, showcase the extensive use of social media for politicians to effectively introduce themselves and interact with their constituents. In tandem with evolving communication technologies, new methods continually emerge in light of prior elections. The waning interest of young people in traditional media mandates the use of social media platforms to reach them. Politicians

openly express that the widespread use of social media among young people garners their interest<sup>206</sup>.

A study conducted at a prominent US public university indicated that during the 2008 US presidential election, 65% of individuals aged 18 to 29 participated in at least one political activity. Similarly, in Türkiye, it was found that 98% of individuals aged 18 to 25 possessed at least one social media account, and 24% expressed their political opinions via these platforms.<sup>207</sup> Rather than the traditional political environment where politicians address rallies and participants applaud every statement, social media empowers voters to shape content and respond to every word spoken by politicians. This dynamic fosters a more democratic, transparent, and open-for-discussion election process. Considering the benefits of well-utilized social media in elections, a look back at the 2008 US presidential election highlights that President Obama reached 13 million individuals through his mailing list, 5 million through social networks, and gained 3 million online donors. As a testament to Obama's successful social media strategy, \$500 million in online donations were collected.<sup>208</sup>

Social networks compel politicians to exhibit greater transparency and consistency, affording them the chance to gauge the public's perception of every move and promise prior to elections. Simultaneously, the interactive communication offered by these networks streamlines traditional campaign efforts, making them more cost-effective and efficient. Social networks not only introduce novel campaign methods but also accelerate established approaches. Additionally, politicians are drawn to social networks because conventional campaigns tend to be overlooked by voters and lack attention. Following the current trajectory, social media tools are poised to become the paramount means of communication in forthcoming elections.

To illustrate, the election campaign of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, a candidate in the 1994 Local Elections for Mayor of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, can be a good example. Back then, Erdoğan conducted face-to-face endeavors to acquaint the people of

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<sup>206</sup> **Ergen, Banu** (2013) 'Barack Obama'nin 2008 Başkanlık Seçim Sürecini Kazanmasında Yeni İletişim Teknolojileri ve Sosyal Medyanın Kullanımı', (Yüksek Lisans Tezi) Kocaeli Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, p.3, 88-89.

<sup>207</sup> **Hernandez, Yamiemily**, 'The Technology Gap Across Generations: How Social Media Affects the Youth Vote', Vol: 20, (2020) p.4-15. <https://scholarship.shu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1047&context=pa> Accessed: 11.04.2023.

<sup>208</sup> **Manovich, Lev** (2013) 'Media After Software' Journal of Visual Culture, Vol: 12, Issue: 1, p.30-37. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470412912470237> Accessed: 11.04.2023.

Istanbul with his election agenda, proposed actions, and promises. Propaganda efforts involved traversing streets with portable sound systems, a common practice among politicians of that era. Contrastingly, present-day social media empowers even financially constrained or unsupported parties to conduct election campaigns effectively.<sup>209</sup>

The fact that everyone has an account on social networks, there is a personal sharing, the freedom to speak about the issues that one wants triggers a big mistake. It is thought that everyone is a social media expert, knows this medium well and that success stories are written here. However, social media is not solely marked by success stories; not everyone possesses the adeptness required to strategize and execute campaigns effectively through this medium. Consequently, videos, words, and misinformation lacking credibility can appear in people's news feeds, often subjected to mockery by the masses. Analyzing the demographic distribution of Türkiye's population in terms of age reveals a youthful populace inclined towards effective social media use. This audience, initially perceived as apolitical until recent events, is poised to play a pivotal role in the upcoming election.

In light of these considerations, the imperative for candidates to leverage social media for election campaigns is becoming increasingly evident. Furthermore, an approach that portrays the candidate as an individual emerging from the public rather than a distant, official, and insincere political figure should be adopted. The use of language that conveys a sense of superiority or employs uninspiring expressions should be avoided.

When the Twitter accounts of party representatives or prominent politicians are managed in the opposite way, undesirable situations can arise. Therefore, it creates a more sincere impression for candidates to give their messages themselves; or even if possible, to send their own tweets instead of printing them to someone. Support can be obtained for managing this communication process more professionally.

Campaigns carried out on social media platforms have evolved into a pivotal component of political communication endeavors. Consequently, strategies aimed at enhancing the candidate's image are implemented on these platforms. The critical factor is that these strategies seamlessly integrate into the flow of interaction, appearing natural rather than overt. Recognizing that the public perception of politicians is frequently shaped through social networks, comprehensively understanding user groups and devising tailored

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<sup>209</sup>Özkan Abdullah (2018) 'Siyasal İktidar İnşasında Lider Olgusu: Lider Tipolojileri Bağlamında Recep Tayyip Erdoğan İncelemesi', (Doktora), İstanbul Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, p.49, 354,379.398.

approaches are deemed the foremost steps in establishing a sound strategy. Conducting a thorough and effective analysis of the target audience allows for precise targeting, resulting in a high success rate in reaching the intended audience.<sup>210</sup>

The most important thing that candidates should pay attention to in this regard is that they should deliver the right message to the right target audience with the right timing, just like in traditional media. Because the primary objective of the candidate here is to draw the attention of those who are far from the idea rather than those who have the potential to vote for him. In this sense, the accuracy of the messages and their delivery to the masses through the right channels is of great importance.<sup>211</sup>

#### **4.4.The New Face of Social Media and Political Communication**

The communication activities conducted by leaders and the political parties they are associated with with the aim of influencing the attitudes and voting behaviors of the target audience primarily during election periods, are referred to as political communication. As mentioned earlier, political communication broadly encompasses the use of various communication types and techniques by political actors to garner acceptance for their political programs and ideological goals, adapting them to different circumstances and translating them into action when necessary. While political communication is often perceived as a systematic communication effort during political campaign seasons, it actually encompasses practices that extend beyond electoral cycles. In fact, every political party and leader has the ongoing responsibility to maintain continuous communication with their target audience, employing strategies to maintain legitimacy and either sustain or expand their share of power. Mass media, frequently employed for this purpose, prioritize the interests of the target audience by delivering information on national and global agendas, thus framing the issues it focuses on and elevates on its agenda as significant. In this way, leaders shape the agenda.

Each advancement in communication technologies reshapes the dynamics of existing social communication channels and imparts distinct transmission characteristics. This is because each new addition to the mass communication infrastructure, along with the

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<sup>210</sup>**Aydın, Taner**, (2021) ‘Siyasal İletişimde Sosyal Medya Kullanımı: Milletvekilleri Örneği’, (Yüksek Lisans Tezi), Karamanoğlu Mehmet Bey Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, p.78.

<sup>211</sup> **Binark, Mutlu** (2011) p.12.

semantic practices it engenders, induces shifts in the nature of the structures it joins. Every new technology introduced carries with it unique uses and practices, necessitating tailored solutions.

In this context, the emergence of new media due to the integration of Web 2.0 technology into the communication system has also influenced the prevailing modes of social sharing and expression through user-generated content. Within this context, political communication has become well-suited to the communication practices facilitated by social media. The concept of new media, which integrates and aligns political processes with the genuine social context, sometimes even fostering alternative political relationships, encompasses computers, the Internet environment, mobile phones, game consoles, or tablets—essentially, all technologies that seamlessly integrate into everyday life and significantly transform individual routines. These technologies, often imperceptibly, augment the daily life experiences of individuals, intensifying use due to various social needs.<sup>212</sup>

As previously mentioned, the concept of social media, which enables social sharing through communication technologies known as new media, is characterized by websites hosting social content that provides participants with the opportunity to express themselves within virtual environments. Users can make friends, join groups, and contribute to these platforms by sharing ideas and opinions, posting comments, and sharing content.

In the cyberspace created by virtual networks, social media provides an environment that enables users to engage actively. Social media, characterized by different forms of relationships compared to the real social context, has emerged as a highly preferred domain for political communication in contemporary times. This is primarily due to its substantial user base and its cost-effective capacity to disseminate individual and organizational news and information<sup>213</sup>. In Türkiye, where political participation is relatively low, social media serves as a public space that offers virtual participation in political processes, actively contributing to the political awareness of individuals. Moreover, social media surpasses the one-way and mass-oriented content often associated with traditional mass media, establishing an interactive link between leaders and their target audience that can be

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<sup>212</sup> **Binark, Mutlu/Bek, Mine Gencel** (2007) *Eleştirel Medya Okuryazarlığı: Kuramsal Yaklaşımlar ve Uygulamalar*, İstanbul, Kalkedon Yayınları.p.90-92.

<sup>213</sup> **Ertekin, Ahmet** (2020) ‘Siyasal İletişimin Amerikanlaşması Bağlamında Ak Parti’nin Siyasal İletişim Çalışmalarının Gazeteler Üzerinden İncelenmesi’, *Erciyes İletişim Dergisi*, Vol:7, Issue: 1, p. 679-702. DOI: <http://10.17680/erciyesiletisim.660181>

considered relatively akin to face-to-face interaction. In this context, the advantages of social media in constructing a leader's image come to the forefront, serving as a realm where political communication activities can be conducted with ease.

As with any communication system, there are apps on Twitter that regulate relationships and put them into a specific format. Interaction on Twitter is provided through the “follow” function. Each user is capable of following other users whom they like and consider close without the need for approval. The reciprocal nature of the follow-up process has given rise to a new form of relationship called "follow-up." Twitter affords the opportunity to follow leaders who are often regarded as figures of authority, statesmen, and wise individuals in Turkish political culture. In a sense, Twitter supports its users in becoming more engaged in politics. All posts on the followed user's page become visible on the follower's private page. Followers respond to the leaders' shared content, known as "tweets," using a feedback mechanism referred to as a comment, thereby engaging in an interactive process.

Another frequently used application within the follower relationship is "retweeting." The Retweet feature, which enables a leader's tweet to be showcased on followers' pages, allows messages of varying content to reach a wide audience. At this juncture, the concepts of passive and active engagement come to the forefront. Some users actively participate in disseminating content from the leaders they follow through retweets, while others simply follow without engaging in content sharing. An important aspect to note here is the negative engagement and participation of users who do not support the leader. Current news reports reveal instances where opposing users have posted criticisms and derogatory comments on leaders' Twitter accounts. The other function that Twitter offers within the follower relationship is the "Add to my favorites" feature, permitting a leader's tweet to be stored among followers' favorite tweets. This application positions leaders' tweets within the favorite tweets section on users' pages, enhancing the connectivity between followers and leaders. From the leaders' standpoint, examining the follower relationship reveals the potential to strengthen bonds established with the target audience and convey a particular image<sup>214</sup>.

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<sup>214</sup> <https://www.brandingturkiye.com/twitter-tarihi-twitter-nedir-nasil-kullanilir-ne-ise-yarar/> Accessed. 01.07.2023.

When the follow-up relationship is examined from the perspective of leaders, it is possible to strengthen the bonds established with the target audience and to transfer the image. Based on the idea that individuals' identity and relationships on social media affect the real social context, close and face-to-face relationships will facilitate access to different types of voters. Given the social environment that each user is expected to affect, there is an exponentially increasing spread. Moreover, the high number of followers of the leader affects the attitudes of undecided voters and creates a positive image. The idea that crowds will always attract attention, an understanding of Propaganda origin, is actively applied in political communication processes. The effect with the crowd at rallies is achieved at a similar rate as the number of followers. Therefore, the follow-up relationship is an area of political struggle in terms of building their leader image.<sup>215</sup>

The reflections of a leader's ideology within Turkish political culture can also be observed in political communication processes on social media. Particularly, when examining the Twitter accounts of leaders and their affiliated political parties within the context of the follower relationship, it becomes evident that the leader's identity and image hold prominence over the party identity. Analyzing the messages and content of both parties and leaders in terms of image and perception management on Twitter provides valuable insights for comprehending the concept of leadership within Turkish political culture.

The Internet, television and social media constitute the three most effective tools in the political decision-making process of young people. On the contrary, communication methods like election posters, decals, brochures, radio broadcasts, and public opinion surveys are found to be less effective during the decision-making stage. Traditional media and conventional methods of campaigning are gradually diminishing in impact, particularly among young individuals. Conversely, communication mediums such as television, newspapers, radio, and public opinion surveys remain more potent in shaping political decisions. When it comes to utilizing social media effectively and obtaining information, there are similar usage patterns between men and women. During each new election cycle, the importance of social media continues to grow, particularly as a platform where young people gather information about events and individuals, engage in communication, send and receive messages.

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<sup>215</sup> **Keskin, Savaş/ Sönmez, Mehmet Ferhat** (2015) "Liderler ve Takipçileri: Siyasi Parti Liderlerinin Twitter Performansları ve Takip İlişkisi", *Selçuk İletişim*, Vol:9, Issue: 1.p.339-362.  
<https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/178267> Accessed: 21.02.2023.

#### 4.4.1. Elections, New Media and New Voters

The fact that people spend most of their time on the internet and social media naturally means being directly exposed to the current and political information and news flows. People choose the ones according to their political views from this information flow and follow them. When it comes to political issues on social media, the general tendency of people is to follow, like a political candidate or party, add or delete a political news on their profile, discuss political issues with instant posts on the agenda, or re-share the post they like. Especially during election periods, activities such as adding or deleting a political application, expressing opinions and thoughts on political issues, sharing the messages and contents of a political person, candidate or leader, commenting on a political content and replying to others on political issues are frequently seen<sup>216</sup>.

An increase is observed in the use of social media during election periods. This applies to both politicians and voters. Intense propaganda activities to influence people at the decision stage, politicians enter into a great competition to affect these political preferences. For example, those who clarify their political decisions long before the elections; When candidates are determined and compared to those who decide at the ballot box, they participate more frequently through social media.

In other words, voters who show strong loyalty to a party or candidate and have an attitude that is difficult to change. According to the undecided, adding or deleting a political application, discussing a political information in social media applications, discussing a political information in an instant chat application, sharing a photo of a political person, candidate or leader, etc. they implement political participation activities more frequently. This result may also indicate the existence of an effect called the reinforcement effect.

Nearly half of the population in Türkiye consists of young individuals, making it the youngest country in Europe in terms of the elderly population. However, historically, the political engagement of young people has not been prioritized due to long-standing habits. Constraints and control mechanisms have prevented harnessing the potential of the young population. Nevertheless, Türkiye's ongoing radical transformation process, initiated in the early 21st century, has spurred paradigmatic changes in the realm of youth, as well as various other domains. This shift has ushered in policies that promote an "active and engaged youth"

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<sup>216</sup> **Şişman, Ömer Rasim** (2018) 'Siyasal İletişim, Siyasal Liderlik ve Yönetim Anlayışları, Türkiye'deki Seçmenler Üzerinden Sosyal Medyada Siyasal İletişim Model Önerileri' (Yüksek Lisans), Haliç Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, p.68, 71-72.

ethos, replacing the previous "passive and disengaged youth" approach. The characterization of social media as a more open platform for young individuals, alongside its roles as a political and social arena, serves as an encouraging factor for the participation of youth in political life.

A widespread culture of political participation serves as a notable indicator of an egalitarian and democratic society. Particularly in the last century, advancements in communication technologies, coupled with the affinity of the youth towards such advancements, amplify the significance of youth engagement in politics. Social media provides an avenue for large sections of society, especially young individuals, to express their desire for active involvement within the political system. It allows them to intervene directly or indirectly and, when necessary, through legitimate means. These platforms afford them the opportunity to share their perspectives, aiming to influence the governmental decisions and actions taken in alignment with their ideas. Overall, social media empowers young people to engage actively in the political discourse, fostering a more democratic and participatory society<sup>217</sup>.

As in other fields, the neglect of young people in politics has been the biggest obstacle for them to turn to political participation. Traditional media and one-way communication gave them limited representation when it comes to political issues. With the new media, they have gained a place where they can at least express their thoughts on social, political, economic and cultural issues. As today's youth increasingly distance themselves from the traditional framework of representative liberal democratic politics, which is often channeled through established political institutions, they are actively seeking alternative public spaces for self-expression. In this pursuit, social media platforms emerge as prominent arenas where they can voice their opinions. Despite presenting both advantages and disadvantages, social media provides them with a platform to articulate their political beliefs, viewpoints, and reflections.

In this study, it is frequently stated that the first and most important of the two main areas in which young people participate politically, apart from active politics, is information and communication technologies. Young people use the rapidly developing communication technologies, especially social media, and they realize their political participation through

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<sup>217</sup> **Şener, Gülüm/ Emre, Ögün, Perrin/Akyıldız** (2015) 'Türkiye'de Sosyal Medyanın Siyasi Katılıma Etkileri', *Folklor/Edebiyat*, Vol: 21, Issue, 83, p.75-98.

social media. Another area in which young people participate politically is their activities in non-governmental organizations. In these platforms, young people try to influence their political decision-making processes.

Politicians who are aware of the situation also change their communication strategies in order to turn the changing society and the new situations that arise with the change in their favor. Social media provides direct interaction as an important communication tool that brings politicians and voters together, strengthens two-way communication and is very effective in this regard. Young people actively participate in discussions from these platforms, but this action they do may not be active. In other words, they may actually be a passive follower of politics. The point that should not be considered here is that social media is not a direct way of participation on its own, but a tool for informing and sharing young people.

In 2013, the Ministry of Youth and Sports conducted a research study titled "Youth and Social Media" to decipher the attitudes and behaviors of individuals aged 15 to 29 in relation to social media. Findings revealed that the overwhelming majority of young people in Türkiye utilize social media, with a slight prevalence among women.<sup>218</sup> This substantial usage rate—ninety-five percent—positions Türkiye as one of the leading countries in terms of social media utilization globally, a trend that continues today.

Considering the various ways in which young people employ social media, it's apparent that their primary activities include following posts from individuals and institutions, as well as commenting on content shared by their friends. In terms of purposes, young individuals predominantly use social media for entertainment (60 percent) and information (59 percent), demonstrating their active rather than passive presence on these platforms. From a political standpoint, a significant portion of young people view social media as a political and social platform. They assert that social media holds the potential to mobilize masses and drive collective action.

From the point of view of the future of new media and one of the most important problems that may be encountered in the future seems to be the discussion on post-truth. It is an increasingly important concept and points out the problems that people will face in the

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<sup>218</sup> **Gençlik Ve Spor Bakanlığı** (2013) 'Gençlik Ve Sosyal Medya Araştırma Raporu', İpsos Araştırması, Gençlik Araştırmaları Yayın No: 4. [https://yayinlar.gsb.gov.tr/Public/Files/GAD\\_12.Sayi.pdf](https://yayinlar.gsb.gov.tr/Public/Files/GAD_12.Sayi.pdf) Accessed: 21.04.2023.

future. It is being discussed extensively in the West, especially in academic circles, and serious publications are being made on this subject. To briefly define post-truth, it is possible to characterize it as a period in which truths, truths, facts lose their importance. As Baudrillard said, simulation has replaced reality.

The Post-truth debate has been heavily debated, particularly in terms of the future of democracy, as false news spread over the internet has affected both the referendum on Brexit and the 2016 US presidential election results. Social media platforms, especially Twitter and Facebook, have been repeatedly accused of spreading “fake news.” In particular, it seems to be a concept produced against the fact that people can be misled by these fake news and information flows. Post-truth is expressed as people's unquestioning acceptance of raw information and news feeds that come in front of them instead of searching for the truth<sup>219</sup>.

When the press appeared at the end of the nineteenth century and in the years when media such as cinema, radio and TV were used especially for propaganda purposes, false news and false reporting led to important debates in the field of Information Ethics. On the other hand, the situation has become more complicated since the 2000s, when participating consumers came into play. Hempbel refers to the fact that the subject of false news, which has become a topic of discussion again and further exacerbated by the concept of post-truth, is not in fact new and does not appear with new media. According to Hempbel, the second important issue in the post-truth period is the increased interest in preconceived news. Users turn to content that suits their worldview, which eliminates suspicion of content.<sup>220</sup> Additionally, a noteworthy challenge arises from the decline in the pursuit of quality news content, stemming from the deteriorating functioning of traditional media and the erosion of trust in information sources.

However, the new media, on the one hand, has made it possible for users to access a wide variety of data, on the other hand, it has become an environment in which fake news and misinformation are spreading rapidly. According to a study, it has been found that only close to half of young people watch television as the main source of news and information for young people. When we look at advertising revenues, it is seen that while television still has a significant share, digital media has far outpaced print media. In the same way, it is seen

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<sup>219</sup> **Açıklan, Şuay, Nilhan** (2022) ‘Post-Truth Bağlamında Sosyal Medya’, İletişim Kuram ve Araştırma Dergisi, Issue:57, p.3-4. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/2090939> Accessed: 11.07.2023.

<sup>220</sup> **Karagöz, Kezban**, (2018) ‘Post-Truth Çağında Yayıncılığın Geleceği’, TRT Akademi. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/516966> p.682.

that the new generation is much more active in their habits of receiving news from the Internet.

As news access media, smartphones are increasingly replacing computers, and news sharing over social media is increasing rapidly.<sup>221</sup> In the last three years, the main sources of news have shifted, with traditional media experiencing a decline and social media and online news channels witnessing significant growth due to the rapid advancement of web 2.0 technologies, as outlined in the report. While news consumption through Facebook and Twitter decreased in 2017 compared to 2016, news sharing through the smartphone app WhatsApp surged from 17% to 25%. First of all, according to Keyes<sup>222</sup>, one of the figures who gave rise to the concept of post-truth, the reason behind our lying and doing so at an increasing rate is the lack of sufficient sanctions around us to punish fraud, or even to view lying as a means to achieve a 'higher purpose'. This can be sometimes economic, political, cultural, or related to our individual ambitions. The motivations for lying can be diverse, and over time, finding reasons to deceive ourselves can even become enjoyable. While New Media has gained more influence due to the increasing penetration of technology and threatens the availability of accurate information reaching the public, journalists continue to hold a special position with the power to influence both the news and the public through their work.

In this regard, as social actors in the post-truth era, journalists are expected to assume more responsibility. At this juncture, the most significant problem facing journalists who cater to the public's need for news coverage in the post-truth era is the progressively blurring line between truth and falsehood, which has emerged as a result of technological advancements.<sup>223</sup>

There is a danger that social networks, which are stated to contribute greatly to the culture of participation and democracy, will turn into a platform where fake news plays a significant role and distortions occur. The negative impact of important political elections on fake news on social networks has led to the formation of a desperate mood in every sense. Especially during election periods, these true news are frequently included. Stories like these

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<sup>221</sup> Newman, Nic/ Fletcher, Richard/ Kalogeropoulos, Antonis/ Levy, David A. L./ Nielsen, Rasmus Kleis (2017) 'Digital News Report', Reuters Institute.  
[https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Digital%20News%20Report%202017%20web\\_0.pdf](https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Digital%20News%20Report%202017%20web_0.pdf) s.e.t. 23.07.2023.

<sup>222</sup> Güven, Ahmet (2020), 'Hakikatin Yitimi Olarak Post-Truth: Bir Kavramsallaştırma Denemesi', İnsan&İnsan, Vol:7, Issue:23, p.20-36.

<sup>223</sup> Karagöz, p.678-708.

are being spread on social media platforms, especially produced on Facebook, because Facebook's algorithm prioritizes participation. A reliable way to attract readers with post-truth journalism is sensational news. They produce untrue but interesting content about politicians that people do not like. They are trying to mislead the public with some fake content.<sup>224</sup>

Individuals who have become reliant on information and communication technologies tend to accept news and information on these platforms at face value without critically questioning their authenticity. While people may initially turn to these platforms for entertainment and daily routine, they can easily fall for unreal narratives presented to them. To discern the truth from falsehood within the overwhelming flow of information and data, it is essential to implement checks and provide individuals with proper training.

The significant issue at hand is that the internet is erasing the traditional distinction between professional news gathering and amateurishly produced information and news. Fake news websites or profiles designed to resemble legitimate online newspapers or authentic journalist profiles on social media can easily reach a vast online audience. This is further compounded by the prevalence of genuine news organizations within the digital landscape. It is unquestionably evident that perceptions and beliefs play a pivotal role in shaping an individual's understanding of society. Data-driven campaigns have the potential to manipulate public comprehension of events and influence how these events should be interpreted. Certain operations may even be orchestrated to manipulate the public's perception of reality. Various interest groups consistently seek to exert influence over broad sections of society to steer them in their desired direction. The Cambridge Analytica scandal stands as a significant exemplar of this phenomenon<sup>225</sup>.

It is necessary to consider the psychological and theoretical foundations of the post-truth phenomenon, its emergence and development, the manifestation of practical reality in the direction desired by the rulers, and the concealment of social inequalities as much as possible in accordance with the orientations of marginal individuals or groups. It is known from ancient experience that belief systems and perceptions shape an individual's perception of society, and how data-based campaigns can be designed to manipulate the public's

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<sup>224</sup> Karagöz, 704-705.

<sup>225</sup> Özdemir, Umut (2022) 'Facebook-Cambridge Analytica Skandalının Katılımcı Kültür, Dijital Emek Sömürüsü ve Mahremiyetin İhlali Çerçevesinde İncelenmesi', Egemia Ege Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Medya Ve İletişim Araştırmaları Hakemli E-Dergisi, Issue: 10, p. 22-34. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/egemiadergisi/issue/69605/999935> Accessed. 21.04.2023.

understanding of how events are and how they should be, and those broad segments of society can be manipulated on them. Now, with much more advanced communication technologies, this is happening in a much more sophisticated way.

People who use social media share the same environments with people who are suitable for their own world of beliefs and thoughts. The news sources they read, receive information from and follow reflect the common climate of thought. People tend to coexist with people like themselves on social media platforms. People in this situation, called echo chambers, will only see thoughts and content that echo their own views in these channels. Companies such as Facebook, Google, and Twitter are developing personalized algorithms that deliver personalized content to individuals' online news feeds. Undoubtedly, this is driven by commercial motives, as the internet's de-massification feature is fully operational. The goal is to prioritize advertising and thereby increase revenue for these companies. Consequently, an implicit capitalist logic is followed, rather than an explicit political agenda. Over time, echo chambers, previously utilized primarily for generating advertising revenue, have also been leveraged to serve certain political interests. Using filters applied to people's comments, shares, likes, and reactions, classifications are established, leading to the dissemination of fake news through social networks. As a result, societies can be misled or guided, particularly through the proliferation of fake news. This method has been employed to interfere in numerous elections globally. The Cambridge Analytica scandal and the Brexit campaign serve as illustrative examples of such interference<sup>226, 227</sup>.

Both examples highlight how political campaigns and elections can be influenced in the digital age. They brought attention to issues like data privacy, ethical campaign practices, and the use of digital media, raising awareness about how political interventions can occur and impact democratic processes.

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<sup>226</sup> Aksoy, Abdülkadir/Türkölmez, Onur (2020) 'Dijital Çağa Demokrasiyi Çağırarak: Cambridge Analytica Skandalı', Journal of Political Administrative and Local Studies (JPAL) Vol:3, Issue:1,p.41-59. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/1095149> Accessed: 11.04.2023.

<sup>227</sup> Cambridge Analytica was a data analytics company that used personal data misuse and psychographic profiling to support political campaigns. A scandal that came to light in 2018 revealed that the company had improperly harvested the personal data of millions of Facebook users without their consent and intended to use this data for political campaigns. This data was used in political campaigns, including the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election and other elections. This scandal sparked a significant debate about personal data privacy and data misuse. Brexit refers to the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union, which was the result of a referendum held in 2016. The outcome of this referendum was heavily influenced by political campaigns. The Brexit campaign, in particular, effectively utilized new communication technologies, such as social media and digital advertising. During the campaign, the use of misleading information and propaganda techniques raised many questions about the campaign's honesty and integrity.

The inefficiency of the algorithm on which internet technology is based against true news and real news are of utmost significance. False news has been around in history. Since ancient times, Society has been tried to be driven by misinformation or disinformation. But today, New Media has made available to everyone an infrastructure that supports false news content and enables its rapid spread. Thus, the impact of the rapid spread of false and unsubstantiated news through social media is never comparable to that of traditional media<sup>228</sup>.

The concept of “post-truth”, which implies that reality has been corrupted and that truth has begun to lose its meaning, has recently begun to affect international relations. The concept has begun to be raised further especially during the US presidential election and the Brexit referendum, with allegations that Russia tried to influence the process through media and cyber-attacks. In this context, false news and disinformation has been a problem that Türkiye has faced both inside and outside recently. Labels, concepts and information used in foreign media reports about Türkiye can negatively affect Türkiye's image in the international arena.

Considering these speculative and disinformative processes, one of the most significant illustrative examples is the Cambridge Analytica scandal. To provide a concise overview of this issue, it's pertinent to discuss it briefly. By 2018, it had become evident that Facebook, boasting an active user base nearing one-third of the global population, possessed an extensive repository of data containing highly personal information about its users. As the foremost social media platform worldwide, Facebook naturally amassed a substantial data pool, leading to ongoing curiosity about how it utilized this personal data.

During various periods, Facebook's statements indicated that it aimed to facilitate effective communication between users and advertisers, even though its business model inherently revolved around this aspect. However, a scandal emerged toward the end of 2017, revealing that Facebook had the capability to utilize user data for other purposes beyond what they publicly declared. This controversy exposed that individuals' data, encompassing factors such as age, gender, religion, and political opinions, along with their Facebook activities including profile data, shares, comments, and likes, could be exploited for significant political manipulation. The data obtained through this manipulation was used

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<sup>228</sup> Karagöz, p.682.

without users' awareness or consent, leading to serious ethical concerns and questions about user privacy.

This is literally the misuse of data to effect, direct and change mass behavior. Cambridge Analytica Scandal in summary, in exchange for a commitment to the protection of Facebook users to expand their social networks that they offer their consent with personal data, again, except with the permission and knowledge of users to Cambridge Analytica, a research firm and collected through various politicians during the election periods and be presented to politicians in the light of these data, regional or global-scale internet advertising and political discourse, which includes the opportunity to develop recognition of the publication of an event. Initially, this process, which seems to be very innocent, social media sharing satisfy the tastes of users, the profile information from unauthorized collection of private correspondence in terms of a privacy scandal, is facing many of the data as voting behavior when considered in terms of concepts such as democratic practices and political populism, politics and political science and is an event that can bring serious discussions in terms of the theory of democracy.

The company's debut on the political scene, which is the most obvious example of the misuse of personal data, especially in the electoral processes, was in question during the US Senate Elections in 2014. Facebook shares, likes and comments on the shares, private messaging, as well as the profile information of the participants and their Facebook friends in this test, in terms of the personality test application produced by the company, provided access to many intimate contents such as. In addition, this information was also matched with the answers given by users in the “The Big Five” personality test developed by the company<sup>229</sup>. All these data are mapped by matching the location information of the users and filtered according to different categories (age, gender, political opinion, etc.) and reveals a large pool of mapped data. Thus, for example, in the pool, which shares U.S. through the data in a given period in a state dominated by political and social sensibilities Facebook, this is some of peoplewho share your likes or comments and those of the big five Test, which is tied with the heavy footsteps of the state of feeling on a correlation between political preferences and feelings can be established. Thus, in a very sophisticated way, personal data

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<sup>229</sup> **Eker, Suvay, Halime** (2022) ‘Sosyal Ağlar Büyük Veriden Nasıl Yararlanır: Facebook ve Twitter’, Bilgi Yönetimi Dergisi, Vol: 5, Issue: 1. (2022). p.118-130. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/1928084> Accessed: 04.02.2023.

has been used for political purposes. It has also been claimed that Cambridge Analytica was influential in the 2015 Brexit process and the 2016 US elections in favor of Donald Trump.

In today's world, where false and misleading information can be utilized for disinformation purposes in the media, a robust strategy is required in this domain to counteract such situations. These situations pose significant challenges in terms of data and information security, necessitating measures to safeguard the well-being of individuals, societies, and the nation. In this context, cyber security holds vital importance, not solely from a political standpoint, but also in shaping the future of society across virtually every field that concerns both society and individuals.

#### 4.5. Research - 2015-2018 General Elections

In addition to communication tools such as radio, television, newspapers and magazines used by political actors in order to convey messages to the electorate and get votes from their votes in political communication, social media channels, which are now called new media technologies, have started to be used frequently, depending on technological developments.<sup>230</sup>

Due to the decrease in TV viewing times, changes in newspaper reading habits, and the diversification of information access channels through technology, traditional media has relatively lost its power, and there has been a rapid increase in the demand for social media platforms, which are extensively used by the young population.

Web 2.0 platforms, such as social media, have had a greater and swifter impact on political communication compared to previous internet tools. The main reason for this is that they are shaped by user feedback and interactions among users.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> **Özgür, Ömer Faruk/ Özgen, Ebru** (2018) 'Obama Ve Erdoğan'ın Seçim Kampanyaları Örneğinde Sosyal Medya Kullanımı Üzerine Analiz', *Uluslararası Hakemli İletişim ve Edebiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Issue: 18, p.25-53.

<sup>231</sup> **Wenker, Nicolas Laurent** (2012) 'Revolution 2.0—The Political Impact Of Internet And Social Media Proliferation In Authoritarian Countries', (Master Degree) The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Department of Political Science, [https://cdr.lib.unc.edu/catalog?f%5Badvisor\\_label\\_sim%5D%5B%5D=Robertson%2C+Graeme&f%5Baffiliation\\_label\\_sim%5D%5B%5D=Department+of+Political+Science&f%5Blanguage\\_sim%5D%5B%5D=http%3A%2F%2Fid.loc.gov%2Fvocabulary%2Fiso639-2%2Feng&f%5Bresource\\_type\\_sim%5D%5B%5D=Masters+Thesis&locale=en&per\\_page=20&sort=system\\_create\\_dtsi+asc](https://cdr.lib.unc.edu/catalog?f%5Badvisor_label_sim%5D%5B%5D=Robertson%2C+Graeme&f%5Baffiliation_label_sim%5D%5B%5D=Department+of+Political+Science&f%5Blanguage_sim%5D%5B%5D=http%3A%2F%2Fid.loc.gov%2Fvocabulary%2Fiso639-2%2Feng&f%5Bresource_type_sim%5D%5B%5D=Masters+Thesis&locale=en&per_page=20&sort=system_create_dtsi+asc) Accessed: 21.04.2023.

The use of social networking in political communication has become a growing phenomenon. The 2006 US Congressional elections pioneered the use of Facebook and Myspace in political campaigns.<sup>232</sup>

During the 2008 US Presidential election campaign, Barack Obama made history by actively using social media and ultimately winning the election.<sup>233</sup> Since then, social media has gained serious traction among politicians in numerous countries worldwide and has been acknowledged as one of the primary communication channels.

The most important point that distinguishes Twitter from other social media platforms and causes it to be positioned in a different place is that it is used extensively by journalists, non-governmental organizations and politicians. The active use of Twitter, one of the social media platforms, by activists, journalists and participants in the events known as the Arab Spring in 2010, and the fact that they interacted with the whole world and announced the events, made Twitter the most preferred platform in political communication<sup>234</sup>.

Looking at the 2015 June elections, it is seen that there were 37.7 million active internet users in Türkiye, while 40 million active social media accounts are in use. In the same period, the number of Twitter users was 5.6 million, making up 14% of social media users. When it comes to the June 2018 elections, internet users reached 54.33 million and social media accounts reached 51 million. Again in 2018, the number of Twitter users was 8.8 million, which corresponds to 17% of social media users. Table-1 demonstrates the number of Internet, social media and Twitter users in the World and Türkiye in 2015 and 2018.

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<sup>232</sup> **Ancu, Monica** "Online Social Networks and Political Campaigns": Mann, Robert/ David, D. Perlmutter (Ed.) (2011) Political Communication: Within The Manship School Guide, Revised and Expanded Edition, United States of America, Louisiana State University Press, p.204.

<sup>233</sup> **Bimber, Bruce** (2012) Digital media and citizenship, Cambridge University Press, p.410.

<sup>234</sup> **Meral, Kevser Zeynep** (2021) 'Sosyal Medyanın Arap Baharındaki Rolü', Yeni Medya Elektronik Dergisi, Vol:5, Issue:1 .p.26-34.

**Table 1.** The Number of Internet, Social Media and Twitter Users in the World and Türkiye

|      | Internet<br>Number of users |                  | Social Media Number of<br>users |            | Twitter<br>Number of users |                |
|------|-----------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|------------|----------------------------|----------------|
|      | World                       | Türkiye          | World                           | Türkiye    | World                      | Türkiye        |
| 2015 | 3.010<br>Billion            | 37.7<br>Million  | 2.078<br>Billion                | 40 Million | 284<br>Million             | 5.6<br>Million |
| 2018 | 4.021<br>Billion            | 54.33<br>Million | 3.196Billion                    | 51 Million | 321<br>Million             | 8.8<br>Million |

According to TÜİK data, the population of Türkiye was 77.6 million at the beginning of 2015 and the number of Internet users was 43,4 million in 2015. According to those statistics, it is seen that the ratio of active Internet users to the population was 55,9 % in 2015. The ratio of those who use social media platforms with 40 million users to the population is 51.5%, and the ratio of those who use Twitter with 5.6 million users to the population is about 7.2%.<sup>235</sup>

When looking at countries based on the number of active social media accounts in 2015, China ranked 1<sup>st</sup> worldwide with 629 million accounts, whereas Türkiye was ranked 9<sup>th</sup> with a user count of 40 million. Moving to 2018, China once again claimed the 1<sup>st</sup> position with 911 million users, while Türkiye maintained its 9<sup>th</sup> place position with 51 million users. The progression of rankings remained consistent. Table 2 shows the top 10 countries in the world according to the number of active social media users in 2015 and 2018<sup>236, 237</sup>.

<sup>235</sup> **Hanehalkı Bilişim Teknolojileri Kullanım Araştırması**, (2015).  
[https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Hanehalki-Bilisim-Teknolojileri-\(BT\)-Kullanim-Arastirmasi-2015-18660](https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Hanehalki-Bilisim-Teknolojileri-(BT)-Kullanim-Arastirmasi-2015-18660)

<sup>236</sup> **Datareportal**, ‘Digital 2015: Global Digital Overview’ <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2015-global-digital-overview>. Accessed. 28.06.2023

<sup>237</sup> **We Are Social**, ‘Digital In 2018: World’s Internet Users Pass The 4 Billion Mark’  
<https://wearesocial.com/uk/blog/2018/01/global-digital-report-2018/> <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2018-china>. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2018-turkey> Accessed. 28.06.2023.

**Table 2.** Top 10 Countries by Number of Active Social Media Users in the World

|          | Country        | 2015<br>Number of users (Million) | 2018<br>Number of users (Million) |
|----------|----------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1        | China          | 629,0                             | 720                               |
| 2        | USA            | 186,0                             | 230                               |
| 3        | India          | 118,0                             | 250                               |
| 4        | Brazil         | 96,0                              | 130                               |
| 5        | Indonesia      | 72,0                              | 130                               |
| 6        | Russia         | 67,0                              | 67,8                              |
| 7        | Mexico         | 56,0                              | 83                                |
| 8        | Philippines    | 40,0                              | 67                                |
| <b>9</b> | <b>Türkiye</b> | <b>40,0</b>                       | <b>51</b>                         |
| 10       | England        | 38,0                              | 44                                |

According to TÜİK data for the year 2015, social media ranks first among the Internet usage purposes. In Türkiye, 80.9% of the individuals who used the Internet in the first three months of 2015 used social media to create profiles, send messages or photos, etc. when sharing content, and 70.2% of users use the internet to read online news, newspapers or magazines. The proportion of those who use the Internet to participate in online voting on a social or political issue was 12%, while the rate of reading or sharing opinions on the same issue was 22.3%. Table 3 shows the proportion of selected activities carried out by Internet users on the Internet in Türkiye.<sup>238</sup>

<sup>238</sup> Hanehalkı Bilişim Teknolojileri Kullanım Araştırması, (2015).  
[https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Hanehalki-Bilisim-Teknolojileri-\(BT\)-Kullanim-Arastirmasi-2015-18660](https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Hanehalki-Bilisim-Teknolojileri-(BT)-Kullanim-Arastirmasi-2015-18660)

**Table 3.** Activities of Internet Users on the Internet in Türkiye (2015)

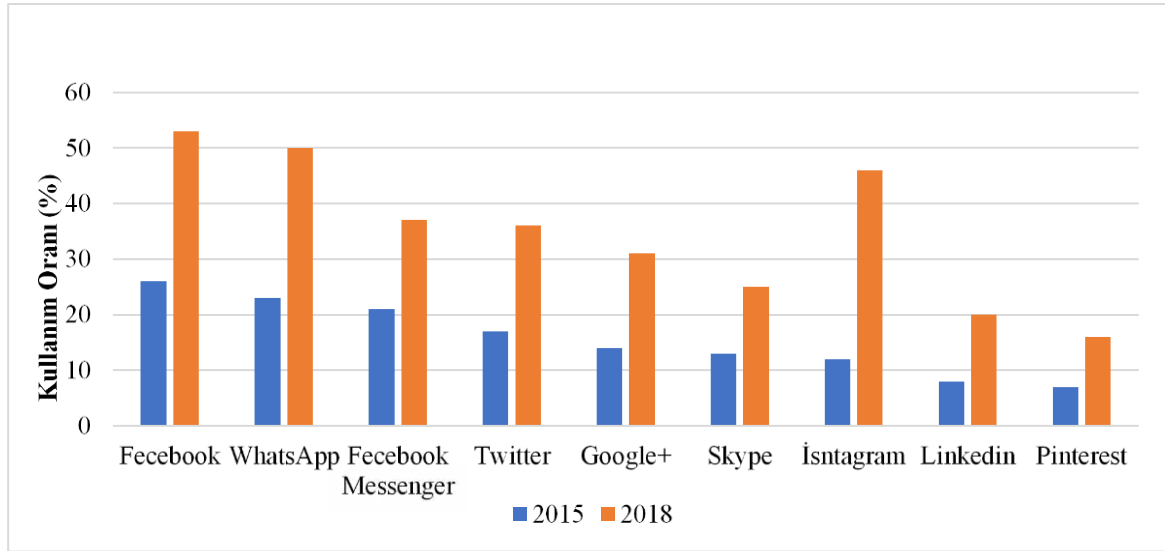
|   | Activities on the Internet                                                           | Ratio (%) |
|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | Creating a profile on social media, sending messages or photos, etc. content sharing | 80,9      |
| 2 | Reading online news, newspapers or magazines                                         | 70,2      |
| 3 | Text, image, photo, video, music, etc. uploading content to any website for sharing  | 62,1      |
| 4 | Reading or sharing opinions on social or political issues                            | 22,3      |
| 5 | Participate in an online vote on a social or political issue                         | 12        |

Source: TÜİK Household Information Technologies Usage Survey, 2015

When we examine the activities of Internet users, it becomes evident that around 8 out of every 10 individuals are engaged with social media. Simultaneously, it is observed that 7 out of every 10 people utilize the Internet to access news. However, concerning political participation, only 1 out of every 5 individuals reads or shares political topics on the Internet.

Facebook, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, T Türkiye witter, and Google+ rank among the top 5 most frequently used social media platforms in Türkiye. The graph below illustrates the most utilized social media platforms and their usage rates in Türkiye for the years 2015 and 2018.

**Figure 1.** The Most Used Social Media Platforms in Türkiye 2015-2018



**Source:** Global Internet and Social Media User Statistics 2015-2018

<https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2015-Türkiye> Erişim:22.12.2022

<https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2018-Türkiye> Erişim:22.12.2022

The introduction of Twitter in 2006 is an important milestone in political communication, changing the way social media has been used by giving a new dimension to the concept of social media around the world. From the point of view of politicians, Twitter is an important platform that can be used for visual, audio, written information, interaction, messaging and allows addressing an anonymous crowd.<sup>239</sup> When looking at Twitter; the “tweeting” feature, which allows the user to share their ideas, opinions, activities, discourses and statements in writing from the public and limited to 140 characters message forwarding box of the Twitter account, is the most noticeable privilege. There are three main components used for interaction on Twitter, where other users can directly follow the account owner (follower) and all Twitter users, whether they are followers or not, can interact with the shared tweet content. The first of these is the “like” feature, where the account holder can express that other users like the content she/he shares. The second is the “retweet” feature, which users can use to express that they agree with the content shared by the account holder or to enable it to reach more users. The third most important feature is the “Mention” feature, where users can communicate their feelings, thoughts and ideas to

<sup>239</sup> **Silsüpür, Özer** (2016) ‘Siyasal iletişim aracı olarak Twitter’ın kullanımı: 07 haziran 2015 genel seçimi üzerine bir çalışma’ Gümüşhane Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Elektronik Dergisi Vol: 4, Issue: 2, p. 725-747. <https://doi.org/10.19145/gujofoc.77651>

the account owner in a public way, just like in the tweeting feature, under the sharing made by the account owner.

Social media and Twitter, which started with the use of social media and Twitter as an effective communication channel by Obama in the 2008 and 2012 US elections and which politicians prefer to actively use in political communication over time, have become one of the most important new communication tools for politicians in Türkiye, as well as all countries of the world.

In this study, a comparative analysis was conducted on the June 7, 2015 and June 24, 2018 elections. The research focused on the methods of Twitter usage and the accounts of political leaders during the 3-month periods preceding each election. Specifically, the Twitter accounts utilized by political party leaders during the June 2015 elections, which marked their entry into Parliament as a mode of political communication, were compared with the Twitter accounts of political party leaders who once again participated in the June 2018 elections. Additionally, the individual Twitter accounts of each leader with verified badges (blue badges) were separately examined to understand how they employed the Twitter platform for political communication.

The General Elections for the twenty-fifth term of the Turkish Parliament took place on June 7, 2015, with the participation of 20 political parties and independent candidates. The election witnessed a high turnout of 83.92%, and four political parties secured parliamentary seats by winning the necessary number of deputies. The following Table 4 presents the political parties that gained parliamentary representation and their respective voting percentages.

**Table 4.** Political Parties Entering the Parliament in the 2015 June Elections

|   | <b>Political Party</b>                   | <b>Party Leader</b> | <b>Vote Ratio</b> | <b>Number of Deputies</b> |
|---|------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | Justice and Development Party (AK Parti) | Ahmet Davutoğlu     | %40,87            | 258                       |
| 2 | Republican People's Party (CHP)          | Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu  | %24,95            | 132                       |
| 3 | Nationalist Movement Party (MHP)         | Devlet Bahçeli      | %16,29            | 80                        |
| 4 | Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP)          | Selahattin Demirtaş | %13,12            | 80                        |

**Source:** Yüksek Seçim Kurulu (YSK) <https://www.ysk.gov.tr/tr/7-haziran-2015--25-donem-milletvekili-genel-secimi/3304> Accessed: 22.12.2022

When the Twitter accounts of the political party leaders who entered the parliament in the June 2015 elections are examined, it is seen that they use the platform intensively for political communication and political propaganda purposes, and the interactions of the target audience with politicians. Table 5 shows the number of followers and interactions on the Twitter accounts of the four political party leaders who entered the Parliament in the June 2015 elections in 2015.

**Table 5.** Twitter Accounts and Interactions of Political Party Leaders (2015)

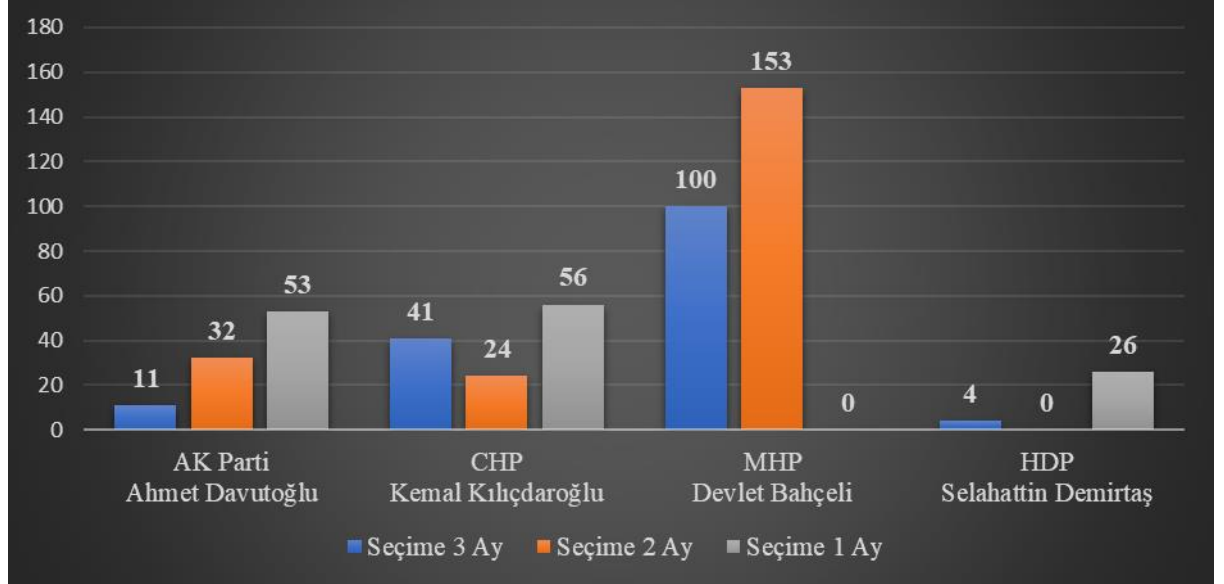
|   | <b>Party</b> | <b>Party leader</b> | <b>Number of Followers</b> | <b>Number of Tweets</b> | <b>Number of Likes</b> | <b>Number of Retweets</b> | <b>Number of Mention</b> |
|---|--------------|---------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | AK Parti     | Ahmet Davutoğlu     | 5.909.728                  | 96                      | 195.854                | 145.719                   | 47.753                   |
| 2 | CHP          | Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu  | 6.333.859                  | 121                     | 125.279                | 87.371                    | 31.089                   |
| 3 | MHP          | Devlet Bahçeli      | 5.171.301                  | 253                     | 200.362                | 333.200                   | 11.799                   |
| 4 | HDP          | Selahattin Demirtaş | 1.673.303                  | 30                      | 89.534                 | 59.756                    | 21.350                   |

When examining the June 2015 election period, it becomes evident that among the leaders of the political parties that secured seats in Parliament, CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu had the highest number of followers, while HDP leader Selahattin Demirtaş had the fewest followers. Throughout the three-month period from March 2015 to June 7, the election day, MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli was the most active in terms of tweeting, while HDP Leader Selahattin Demirtaş tweeted the least. Analyzing the total number of likes and retweets, it is apparent that the politician who garnered the highest interaction was MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli. In terms of total number of mentions, the politician with the most interaction was AK Party leader Ahmet Davutoğlu.

When observing the monthly Twitter activity of the political parties that participated in the June 2015 election and entered Parliament, a distinct pattern emerges. AK Party leader Davutoğlu consistently increased his tweet frequency as the election date approached. In contrast, CHP leader Kılıçdaroğlu and HDP leader Demirtaş exhibited higher tweet activity one month before the election compared to the first two months. It is worth noting that MHP

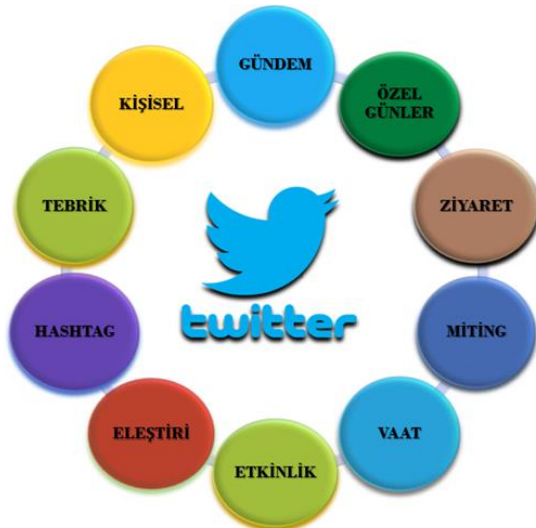
leader Bahçeli shared extensively during the initial two months, but significantly reduced his sharing activity as the election was only a month away. For a visual representation of the tweet sharing intensities of these leaders in the three months leading up to the June 2015 elections, refer to Figure 2.

**Figure 2.** Twitter Sharing Intensity of Leaders in the June Elections of 2015



The ten titles determined by classifying the personal shares made by the leaders of the political parties entering the Parliament during the June 2015 election period through their approved accounts (with blue badges) in a quarterly period by content analysis method are shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3.** The Issues Shared by the Leaders during the June Election Periods of 2015 and 2018



In the tweets shared by the leaders as text, live broadcast, visual and video, the daily election issues and those about the country's agenda are gathered under the title of “agenda / gündem”, religious/national holidays that coincide with the election period, celebrations “special days / özel günler”, trips made for election propaganda purposes “visit / ziyaret”. The speeches delivered by the leaders in front of their constituencies are categorized as "rallies / miting," while the pledges they make if elected are grouped as "promises / vaat." Furthermore, the various activities, events, and gatherings they participate in to connect with voters during the election period are classified as "events / etkinlik." Additionally, posts highlighting the mistakes or criticisms of rival parties or candidates are collected under the label "criticism / eleştiri." Posts containing hashtags before words or phrases to generate interest among social media users and create trending topics are categorized as "agenda-setting." Contents shared for celebratory purposes fall under "congratulations / tebrik," while tweets expressing the leaders' personal opinions are sorted into the "personal / kişisel" category. The number of tweets shared by the leaders during the June 2015 election period, based on these categorized topics, is presented in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Topic Distribution of Tweets Shared by Leaders (2015)

| <b>Topic title</b> | <b>AK Parti<br/>Ahmet<br/>Davutoğlu</b> | <b>CHP<br/>Kemal<br/>Kılıçdaroğlu</b> | <b>MHP<br/>Devlet Bahçeli</b> | <b>HDP<br/>Selahattin<br/>Demirtaş</b> |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Agenda             | 33                                      | 35                                    | 81                            | 7                                      |
| Special days       | 3                                       | 12                                    | 35                            | -                                      |
| Visit              | 4                                       | 2                                     | 4                             | -                                      |
| Meeting            | 32                                      | 27                                    | 28                            | 1                                      |
| Plight             | 6                                       | 9                                     | 4                             | 2                                      |
| Activity           | 3                                       | 4                                     | 5                             | -                                      |
| Criticism          | -                                       | 14                                    | 49                            | 2                                      |
| hashtag            | 7                                       | -                                     | -                             | -                                      |
| Greeting           | 4                                       | 3                                     | 2                             | -                                      |
| Personal           | 4                                       | 15                                    | 41                            | 2                                      |
| <b>TOTAL</b>       | <b>96</b>                               | <b>121</b>                            | <b>253</b>                    | <b>15</b>                              |

When the tweets that the leaders shared during the June 2015 election period are evaluated in terms of their subject coverage, it is seen that all the leaders shared “agenda”, “rally”, “promise” and “personal” at least once. It is noticeable that other leaders, except AK Party leader Ahmet Davutoğlu, did not do any “hashtag” work during the June 2015 election period, and Ahmet Davutoğlu did not share any tweets on “criticism”. It is also noteworthy that all the leaders share the most about the “agenda”.

In addition to the aforementioned categories, the personal posts shared by the leaders of the political parties who participated in the June 2015 parliamentary election were subjected to discourse analysis. During the three-month period leading up to the election, these posts were analyzed and categorized into word groups. The ten most frequently used words by the leaders in their tweets, along with their frequency ratings, were identified. This analysis highlights the words that the leaders used most often in their political communication during the June 2015 election period. The most frequently used words by the leaders and their corresponding frequency ratings are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7.** The Most Frequently Used Words by Leaders in Their Tweets (2015)

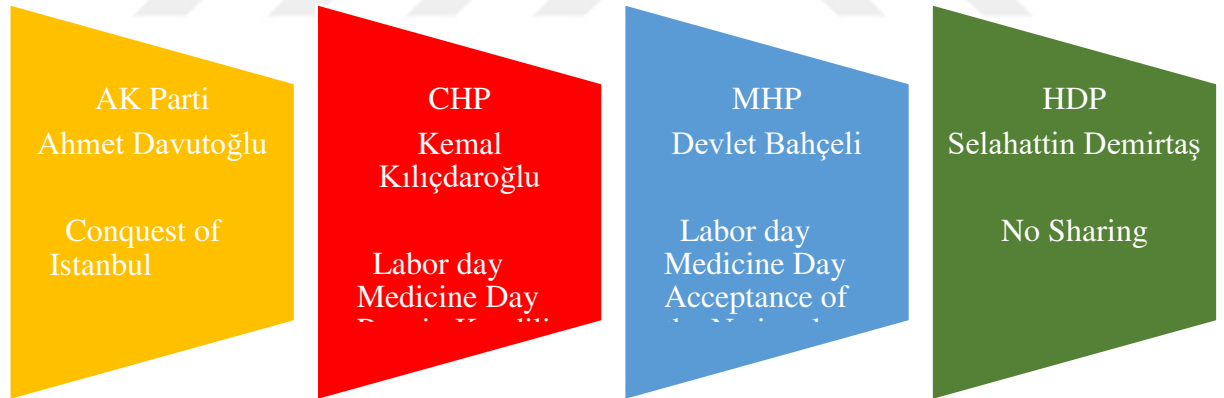
| <b>AK Parti</b><br><b>Ahmet Davutoğlu</b> |    | <b>CHP</b><br><b>Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu</b> |    | <b>MHP</b><br><b>Devlet Bahçeli</b> |    | <b>HDP</b><br><b>Selahattin</b><br><b>Demirtaş</b> |   |
|-------------------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------------|----|-------------------------------------|----|----------------------------------------------------|---|
| Türkiye                                   | 18 | Türkiye                                 | 12 | Türkiye                             | 21 | Allah                                              | 8 |
| AK Party                                  | 17 | Terror                                  | 8  | People                              | 10 | People                                             | 8 |
| Terror                                    | 10 | CHP                                     | 7  | Woman                               | 8  | HDP                                                | 7 |
| God                                       | 9  | Peace                                   | 6  | Democracy                           | 7  | Peace                                              | 7 |
| Country                                   | 7  | Democracy                               | 5  | Independence                        | 7  | Media                                              | 7 |
| President                                 | 6  | Davutoglu                               | 5  | State                               | 6  | War                                                | 4 |
| Democracy                                 | 6  | Martyr                                  | 5  | Mehmet Akif                         | 6  | Massacre                                           | 4 |
| Greeting                                  | 6  | State                                   | 4  | God                                 | 6  | Meeting                                            | 4 |
| Demirtaş                                  | 5  | People                                  | 4  | Country                             | 5  | Envoy                                              | 3 |
| Stability                                 | 5  | Homeland                                | 3  | Peace                               | 4  | Chest                                              | 3 |

Looking at the words used by the leaders in their tweets, it is noteworthy that the word most frequently used by the leaders of the AK Party, MHP and CHP is “Türkiye”, while the

word most frequently used by the HDP leader is “Allah”. The reason why the totals of the frequency ratings differ according to the leaders is due to the number of tweets they send and the content length of the texts. While the word that AK Party leader Davutoğlu uses least frequently is “stability”, the word that CHP leader Kılıçdaroğlu uses least frequently is “homeland”. While MHP leader Bahçeli used the word “peace” least frequently, HDP leader Demirtaş's least frequently used word was “ballot box”.

There are also posts by the leaders for “special days” for the electorate. One of the leaders of the political parties that entered the parliament in the June 2015 election period, AK Party Chairman Davutoğlu, “Conquest of Istanbul”, CHP Chairman Kılıçdaroğlu “Labor Day”, “Medicine Day” and “Regaip Kandili”, and MHP Chairman Bahçeli “Labor Day”, “Medicine Day” and “The Acceptance of the National Anthem” while broadcasting a twitter message on the days of HDP Demirtaş Chairman, it can be seen that HDP Chairman did not share a message. The topics shared by the Leaders on special days in the June 2015 election period are given in Figure 4.

**Figure 4.** Leaders' Special Day Shares



When analyzing the visual content shared by the leaders of the political parties that participated in the June 2015 parliamentary election, including photos, videos, and live broadcasts from their verified accounts, it becomes evident that the highest number of visual shares were made by AK Party leader Davutoglu. On the other hand, the lowest number of visual shares were observed from CHP leader Kılıçdaroğlu. Notably, MHP leader Bahçeli did not share any images through his Twitter account during the June 2015 election period.

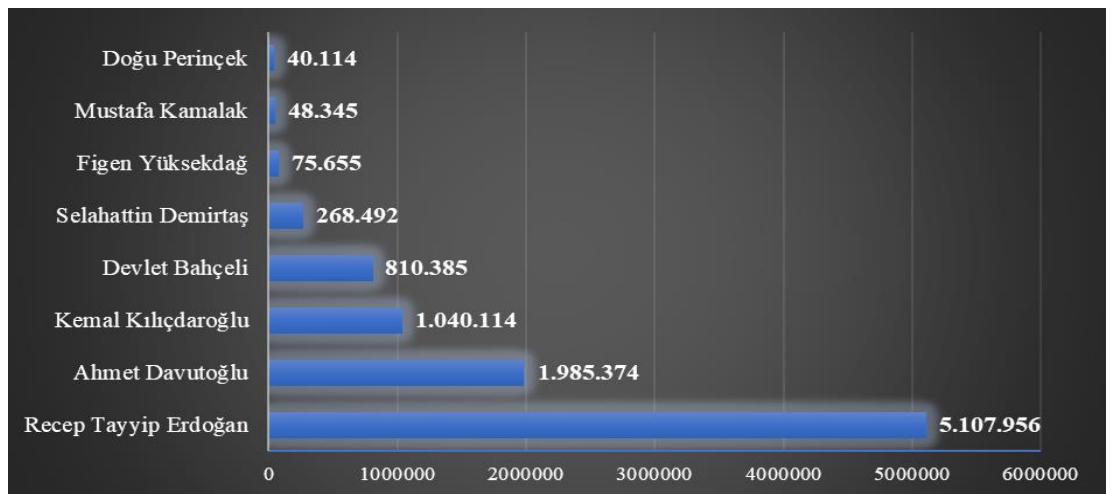
Figure 5 illustrates the visual sharing patterns of the leaders via Twitter throughout the June 2015 election period.

**Figure 5.** Visual Use of Leaders in Tweets (2015 year)



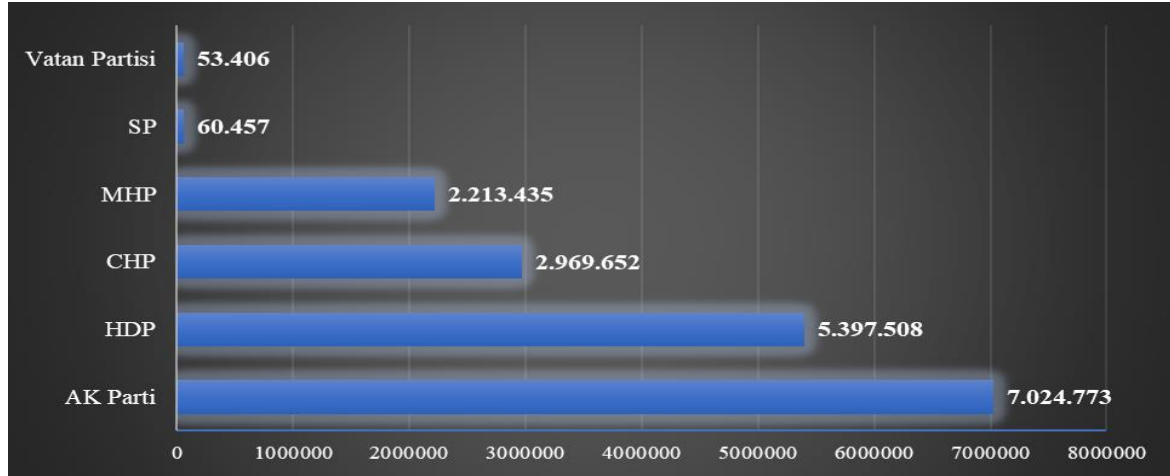
From another point of view, it is seen that AK Party Founding Chairman and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is the most talked about leader on Twitter among leaders of all political parties participating in the same election (August-November 2015). There were about 5.1 million social media shares about Erdoğan during the election period, while there was about approximately 2 million shares about AK Party Chairman Ahmet Davutoğlu and 1 million shares about CHP Chairman Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu. In relation to this issue, the number of shares on leaders is given in Figure 6.

**Figure 6.** The Status of Leaders being Talked About on Twitter (2015)



In the same election period (August-November 2015), when the political parties participating in the elections are discussed on Twitter, it is seen that the most talked about party is the AK Party with approximately 7 million shares. HDP follows AK Party with 5.4 million shares and CHP with 3 million shares. Figure 7 shows the number of speeches of political parties.

**Figure 7.** The Situation of Political Parties on Twitter (2015)



Türkiye's 27th term parliamentary general elections were held on 24 June 2018 and 8 political parties and independent candidates participated in the election. In the 2018 June elections, where the turnout rate increased by approximately 5% compared to the 2015 general elections and was at the level of 88.18%, 5 political parties were entitled to enter the Parliament by electing deputies. The following Table 8 shows the political parties that can elect deputies and their voting rates.

**Table 8.** Political Parties that Entered the Parliament in the June 2018 Election

|   | Political Party                          | Party Leader         | Vote Ratio | Number of Deputies |
|---|------------------------------------------|----------------------|------------|--------------------|
| 1 | Justice and Development Party (AK Parti) | Recep Tayyip Erdoğan | %42,28     | 295                |
| 2 | Republican People's Party (CHP)          | Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu   | %22,80     | 146                |
| 3 | Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP)          | Pervin Buldan        | %11,53     | 67                 |
| 4 | Nationalist Movement Party (MHP)         | Devlet Bahçeli       | %11,20     | 49                 |
| 5 | Good Party (İYİ Parti)                   | Meral Akşener        | %10,14     | 43                 |

When analyzing Table-8, it becomes apparent that the four parties that secured seats in the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye during the June 2015 elections also maintained their positions in the June 2018 elections. In addition, the İYİ Party managed to secure a parliamentary seat, becoming the fifth party to do so. Looking at the voting percentages, the AK Party experienced a 2-point increase in votes during the 2018 elections compared to the 2015 elections. However, the CHP's votes decreased by 2 points, the HDP's by 2 points, and the MHP's by 5 points. In terms of the number of deputies, both the AK Party and CHP gained more deputies in the 2018 elections compared to the 2015 elections, while the HDP and MHP witnessed a reduction in the number of deputies.

Shifting focus to the Twitter accounts of the political party leaders who entered the parliament in the June 2018 elections, it becomes evident that they utilized the platform more intensively for political communication and propaganda during the 2018 June elections, as opposed to the 2015 June elections. Additionally, the target audience displayed increased engagement with these politicians during the 2018 June elections. Table 9 furnishes details regarding the number of followers on the Twitter accounts of the five political party leaders who secured seats in the Turkish Grand National Assembly during the 2018 June elections, along with the interactions they received.

**Table 9 .** Twitter Accounts and Interactions of Political Party

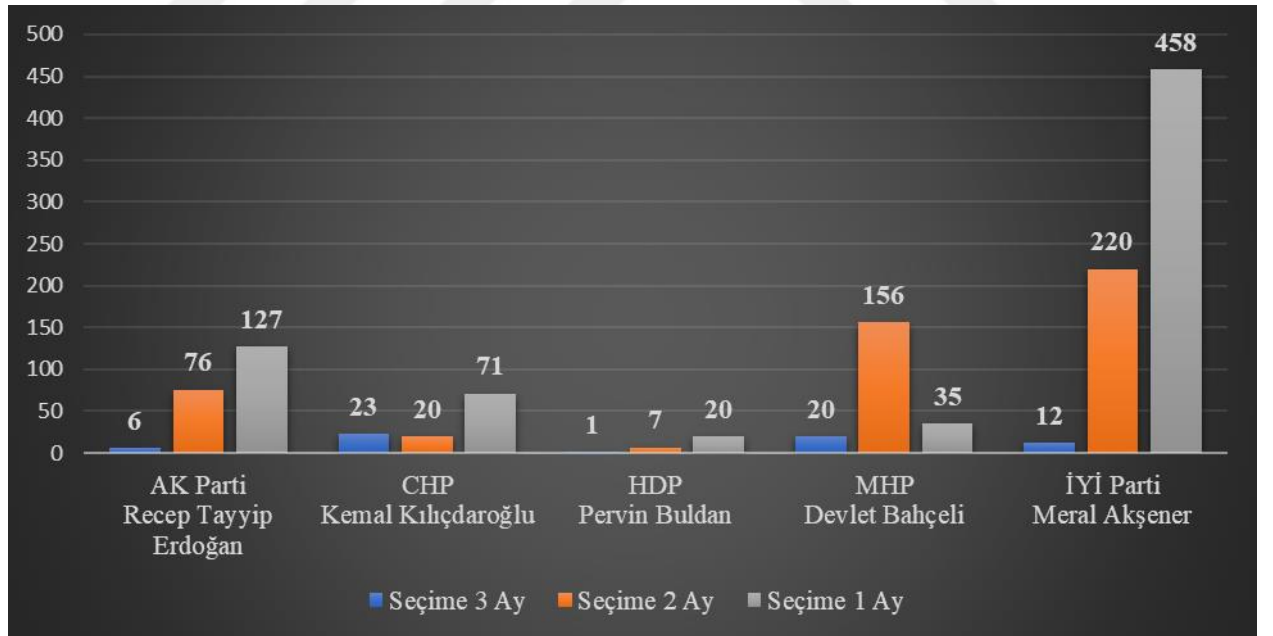
|   | <b>Party</b> | <b>Party Leader</b>  | <b>Fallowers</b> | <b>Tweets</b> | <b>Likes</b> | <b>Retweets</b> | <b>Mentions</b> |
|---|--------------|----------------------|------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1 | AK Parti     | Recep Tayyip Erdoğan | 13.157.812       | 209           | 3.308.685    | 790.276         | 138.757         |
| 2 | CHP          | Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu   | 6.186.264        | 114           | 874.183      | 151.372         | 42.674          |
| 3 | HDP          | Pervin Buldan        | 503.292          | 28            | 58.455       | 9.833           | 2163            |
| 4 | MHP          | Devlet Bahçeli       | 4.811.175        | 211           | 341.325      | 91.564          | 14.008          |
| 5 | İYİ Parti    | Meral Akşener        | 2.546.074        | 690           | 3.581.447    | 532.844         | 113.732         |

In the June 2018 election period, it was observed that Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the leader of the AK Party, had the most followers, while Pervin Buldan, the leader of the HDP, had the fewest followers among the leaders of the political parties that participated in the parliamentary elections. Among these leaders, Meral Akşener, the leader of the İYİ Party,

posted the highest number of tweets during the three-month period from March 2018 to the election day on June 24th. On the other hand, Pervin Buldan, the leader of the HDP, exhibited the lowest level of tweet activity. Furthermore, when considering the total count of likes, retweets, and mentions, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the leader of the AK Party, received the highest level of engagement.

When examining the monthly tweet-sharing patterns of the political parties that participated in the June 2018 election and their leaders, several observations can be made. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Meral Akşener consistently increased number of their tweets as the election date approached, indicating their efforts to engage with their audience. Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, the leader of the CHP, and Pervin Buldan, the leader of the HDP, displayed more intensive tweet sharing one month before the election, compared to the initial two months. Notably, Devlet Bahçeli, the leader of the MHP, exhibited a significant surge in tweet sharing two months before the other leaders, but his activity subsided considerably as the election drew closer. The tweet-sharing patterns of the leaders in the three months leading up to the June 2018 elections are depicted in Figure 8.

**Figure 8.** Twitter Sharing Intensity of Leaders in the June Elections of 2015



According to the subject headings classified in Figure-1 above, the number of tweets shared by the leaders during the June 2018 election period is shown in Table 10.

**Table 10.** Topic Distribution of Tweets Shared by Leaders (2018 year)

| Topic title  | <b>AK Parti<br/>Recep<br/>Tayyip<br/>Erdoğan</b> | <b>CHP<br/>Kemal<br/>Kılıçdaroğlu</b> | <b>HDP<br/>Pervin<br/>Buldan</b> | <b>MHP<br/>Devlet<br/>Bahçeli</b> | <b>İYİ Parti<br/>Meral<br/>Akşener</b> |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Agenda       | 21                                               | 26                                    | 11                               | 126                               | 117                                    |
| Special days | 8                                                | 12                                    | 2                                | 43                                | 24                                     |
| Visit        | -                                                | 1                                     | -                                | -                                 | 21                                     |
| Meeting      | 79                                               | -                                     | 10                               | 8                                 | 58                                     |
| Plight       | 22                                               | 8                                     | -                                | -                                 | 32                                     |
| Activity     | 15                                               | 37                                    | -                                | -                                 | 26                                     |
| Criticism    | -                                                | 1                                     | 2                                | 16                                | 89                                     |
| hashtag      | 58                                               | 24                                    | 2                                | 18                                | 97                                     |
| Greeting     | 5                                                | 5                                     | -                                | -                                 | 15                                     |
| Personal     | 1                                                | -                                     | 1                                | -                                 | 6                                      |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>209</b>                                       | <b>114</b>                            | <b>28</b>                        | <b>211</b>                        | <b>485</b>                             |

When the tweets that the leaders shared during the June 2018 election period are evaluated in terms of their subject coverage, it is seen that all the leaders shared “agenda” and “special days” at least once. While only AK Party leader Ahmet Davutoğlu did hashtag work in June 2015 elections, it can be observed that all leaders did “hashtag” work intensively by the June 2018 elections. It should be noted that AK Party leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has never shared tweets on the topic of “criticism” during the June 2018 election period, while IYI Party leader Meral Akşener is the leader who shares the most tweets on the topic of “criticism”. During the June 2018 election period, the leader of the IYI Party, Meral Akşener, tweeted the most, while the HDP Leader Pervin Buldan tweeted the least. In the “rally” shares, which are also an indicator that the Twitter platform is being used very actively in political communication, voter outreach and election propaganda during the June 2018 election period, it would be appropriate to emphasize that AK Party leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was more active than other leaders.

As for the June 2018 election period, as well as the leaders of the political parties that entered the Parliament during the June 2018 election period, the personal shares that they made during the three-month period through their approved accounts were divided into word groups using the discourse analysis method. The 10 most frequently used words and

frequency ratings of the tweets shared by the leaders during the June 2018 election period were separated and emphasis was placed on the words they use the most in political communication. According to the discourse analysis, the words that the leaders used most frequently during the June 2018 election period and their frequency degrees are given in Table-11.

**Table 11.** The Most Common Words Used by Leaders in Their Tweets (2018)

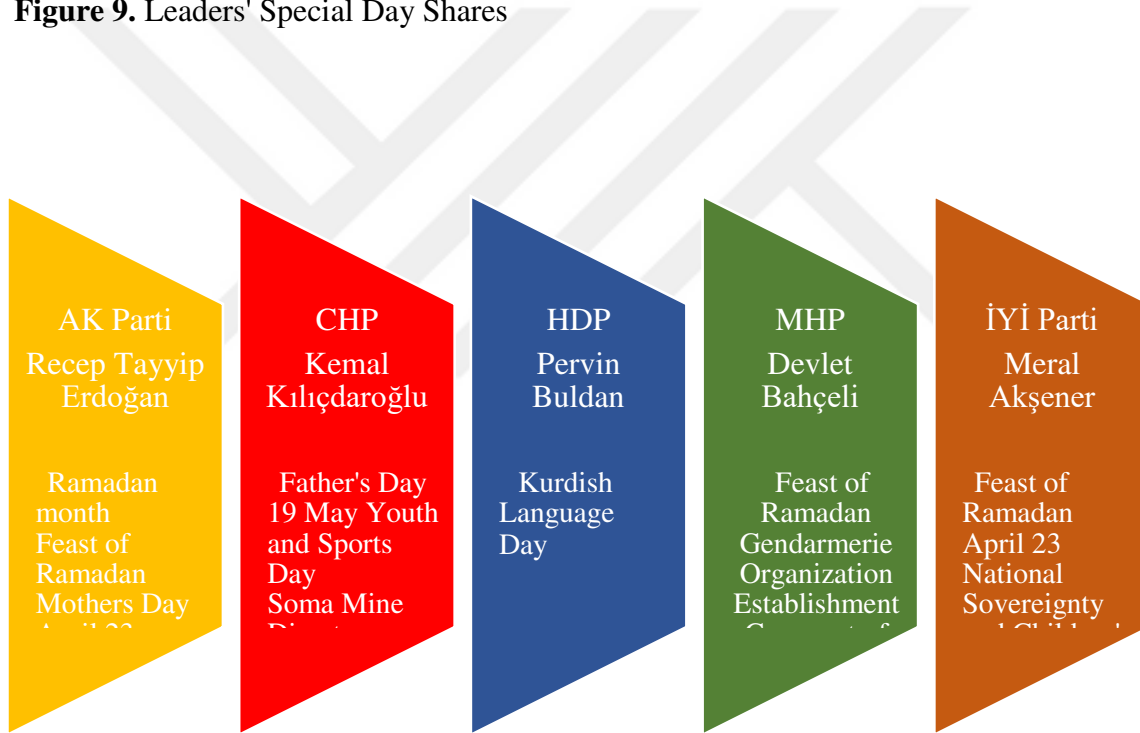
| <b>AK Parti<br/>Recep Tayyip<br/>Erdoğan</b> |    | <b>CHP<br/>Kemal<br/>Kılıçdaroğlu</b> |    | <b>HDP<br/>Pervin Buldan</b> |   | <b>MHP<br/>Devlet Bahçeli</b> |    | <b>İYİ Parti<br/>Meral<br/>Akşener</b> |     |
|----------------------------------------------|----|---------------------------------------|----|------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|----|----------------------------------------|-----|
| Türkiye                                      | 92 | People                                | 33 | Chest                        | 7 | People                        | 64 | Türkiye                                | 419 |
| Time                                         | 89 | Guest                                 | 16 | President                    | 6 | Turkish                       | 52 | People                                 | 351 |
| Thanks                                       | 36 | Vote                                  | 13 | HDP                          | 5 | Türkiye                       | 29 | God                                    | 155 |
| June 24                                      | 21 | Justice                               | 9  | June                         | 4 | Allah                         | 25 | Country                                | 107 |
| Strong                                       | 19 | TBMM                                  | 8  | Demirtaş                     | 3 | President                     | 18 | Council                                | 105 |
| Homeland                                     | 14 | Türkiye                               | 8  | President                    | 3 | CHP                           | 17 | State                                  | 102 |
| People                                       | 11 | Right                                 | 8  | AKP                          | 2 | Democracy                     | 14 | Good Party                             | 78  |
| AK Party                                     | 10 | Peace                                 | 6  | Erdogan                      | 2 | June 24                       | 12 | Economy                                | 45  |
| State                                        | 6  | June 24                               | 6  | Country                      | 2 | Vote                          | 12 | Vote                                   | 42  |
| Democracy                                    | 6  | Person                                | 6  | Woman                        | 2 | FETO                          | 12 | Erdogan                                | 36  |

Analyzing the words used by the leaders in their tweets, it is notable that the word most frequently used by the AK Party and İYİ Party leaders is “Türkiye” , while the MHP and CHP leaders often use the word “nation”. In comparison to the June 2015 election period, it is observed that the AK Party leader's most frequently used word remains unchanged, while the CHP and MHP leaders replaced the word “Türkiye” with “nation”,

which they frequently used during the June 2015 election period. The variation in frequency degrees among the leaders is due to the number of tweets they posted during the June 2018 election period and the length of their content. Among the 10 most commonly used words by all leaders, the shared words are “Türkiye” and “nation”.

Examining the leaders' "special days" posts targeted at the voter base during the June 2018 election period, AK Party Chairman Erdogan posted four Twitter messages, CHP Chairman Kılıçdaroğlu posted eight, HDP Chairman Buldan posted one, MHP Chairman Bahçeli posted seven, and İYİ Party Chairman Akşener posted six on special occasions. The topics of the leaders' posts on special days during the June 2018 election period are presented in Figure 9.

**Figure 9.** Leaders' Special Day Shares



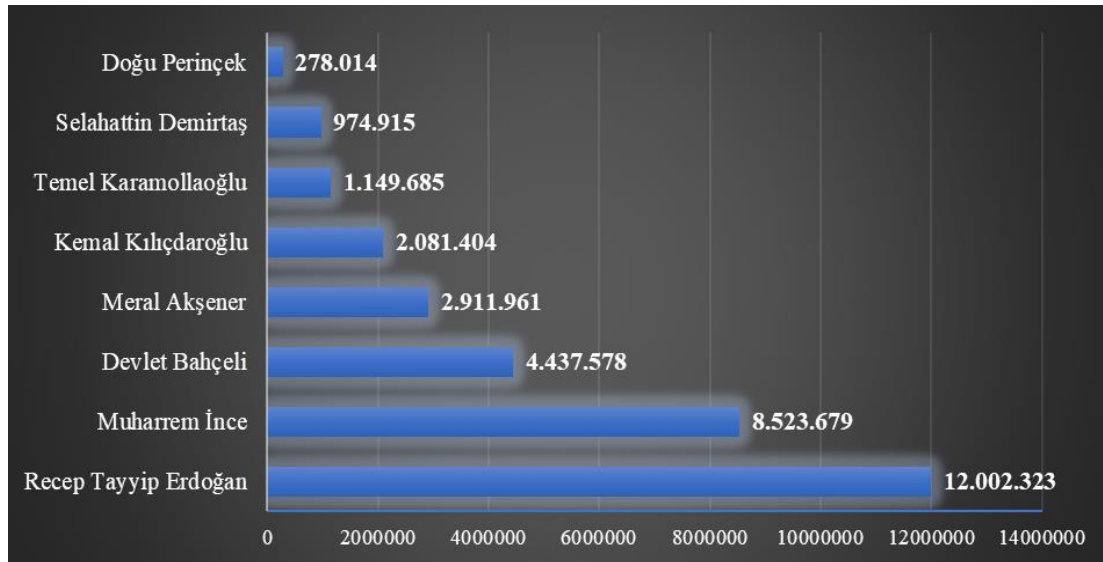
When analyzing the visual posts, including photos, videos, and live broadcasts, shared by the five political party leaders who entered the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye during the June 2018 election period, it becomes evident that İyi Party leader Akşener posted the highest number of images, while HDP leader Buldan posted the fewest. Notably, MHP leader Bahçeli did not share any images during the 2018 June election period, unlike the 2015 June election period. Figure-5 provides an overview of the visual content sharing by the leaders on Twitter during the June 2018 election period.

**Figure 10.** Visual Use of Leaders in Tweets (2018 year)



During the June 2018 election period (April - June 2018), it is seen that who had been talked about most on Twitter among the Chairmans and political leaders of all political parties participating in the election is AK Party Chairman and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. CHP Presidential Candidate Muharrem İnce follows Erdoğan with approximately 8.5 million shares and MHP Chairman Devlet Bahçeli follows İnce with 4.4 million shares. Among these shares, 12 million shares were shared during the election period. Figure 11 shows the number of times leaders were spoken about.

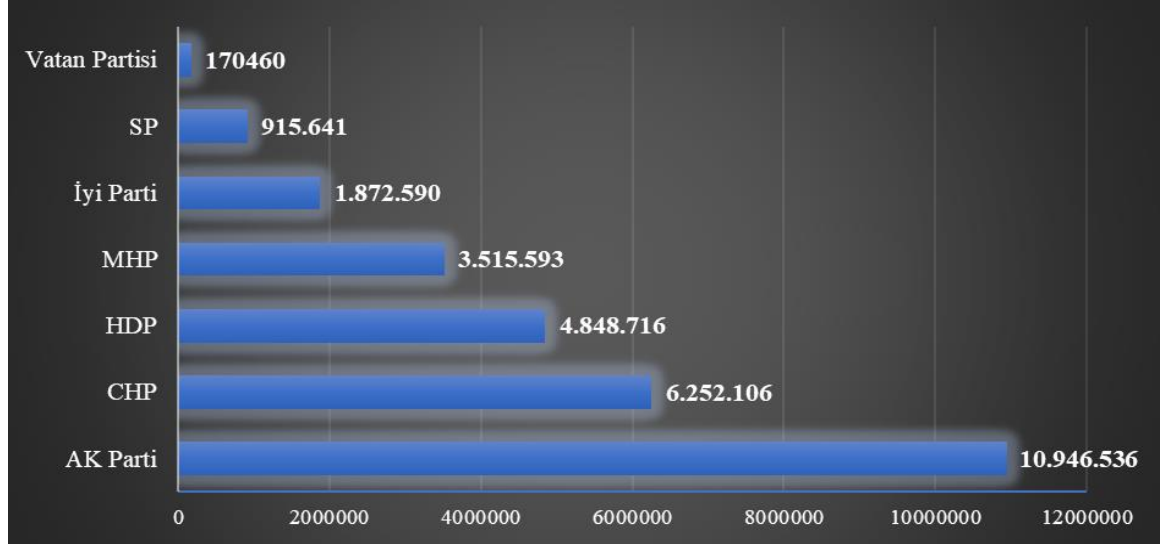
**Figure 11.** The Status of Leaders being Talked About on Twitter



In the same election period (April – June 2018), when the political parties participating in the elections are examined on Twitter, it is seen that the party that had been talked about most is the AK Party with approximately 10.9 million shares. The AK Party is

followed by CHP with 6.2 million shares and HDP with 4.8 million shares. Figure 12 shows the number of speeches of political parties.

**Figure 12.** The Status of Political Parties being Talked About on Twitter (2018)



#### 4.5.1. Analysis of the Individual Twitter Accounts of the Political Party Leaders

In this section, the individually approved twitter accounts of the Presidents of the 4 political parties that entered the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye in the 2015 elections and the candidates of the 5th political party that entered the Parliament in the 2018 general elections were analyzed. The political parties that entered the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye in the 2015 general elections were the AK Party, CHP, HDP and MHP. In the 2018 general elections, the AK Party, CHP, HDP, MHP and İYİ Party were entitled to enter the Parliament.

The content of the tweets shared by the political party leaders for three months during the election period (March-June 2018), whose individual Twitter accounts are currently analyzed, was examined, the way of using Twitter as a political communication tool and the interactions of the target audience voters were discussed by analyzing the subject and discourse.

#### **4.5.1.1.Recep Tayyip Erdogan (AK Party)**

Born in 1954, Erdogan was elected as the Mayor of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality in the local elections of March 27, 1994. On August 14, 2001, he founded the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) and was elected the Founding Chairman of the AK Party by the Board of Founders. Erdogan entered parliament as a Siirt Deputy during the term, and became the 59th Prime Minister on March 15, 2003.

As the Chairman of the AK Party, he assumed the post of Prime Minister by receiving 46.6% of the vote in the 2007 general elections and 49.8% in the June 12, 2011 general elections. On August 10, 2014, Erdoğan won the 12th Turkish Presidential election by direct public vote for the first time in Turkish political history and he managed to become the President of the Republic of Türkiye in the first round.

With the Constitutional amendment adopted by popular vote on April 16, 2017, the way for the people to elect the president has been opened and there is no obstacle to having a president also being a member and leader of a political party. Erdogan was re-elected as the Chairman of the AK Party on May 21, 2017. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who was re-elected President as the AK Party Leader with a 52.59% vote share in the presidential elections held on June 24, 2018. Erdogan has been re-elected as the President in 2023 general elections with 52.18 of votes and he continues to serve as the first President of the Presidential Government System.

June May 3, 2018, Recep Tayyip Erdogan was nominated as the Presidential candidate of the AK Party and the People's Alliance in the elections to be held on June 24, 2018 with the signature of 316 deputies.

Looking at the approved Twitter account used by AK Party Chairman Erdogan, who actively used Twitter during the 2018 general elections, it appears that the social media accounts of the project (@tryuzyili) and Erdogan's picture, given with the slogan “The Turkish Century is Starting” in the background, are located. Erdogan's profile information, which uses a profile picture facing the horizon, contains the following phrases: “President of Türkiye and AK Party Chairman”, as well as the link “Ankara, Türkiye” as location information, and Erdogan's “Telegram Account” as a link. According to the his profile biography, it can be seen that Erdogan joined Twitter in August 2009, Erdogan's profile also

showed that he followed 104 people and had 19.6 million followers. Figure 6 shows the approved Twitter account of Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

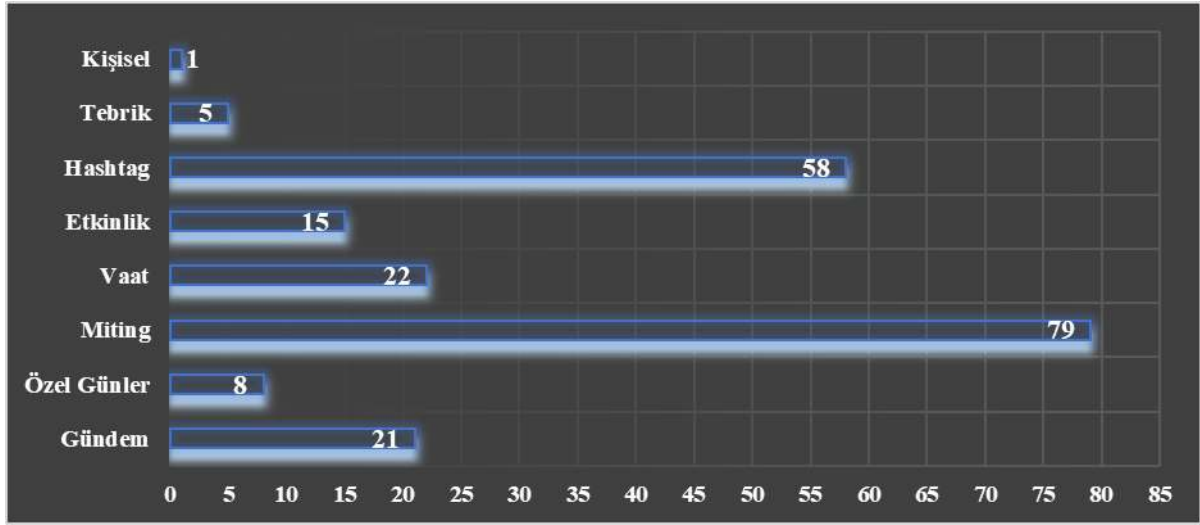
**Figure 13.** The Appearance of Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Official Twitter Account



According to the “TwiplomacyStudy 2018” report, which aims to measure the activities of heads of state and governments by Deciphering Twitter data, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was 4th among the most followed leaders of 2018. There is an approved twitter account named “Erdogan Digital Media (@RTEdijital), where Erdogan, who is next in line, also makes digital media shares.

During the 2018 election period (March-June 2018), it is seen that Erdogan, who shared 209 tweets for three months, shared the most about “rally” and tweeted the least about “personal”. The following figure 14 shows the tweets that Erdogan shared during the June 2018 election period according to their topics.

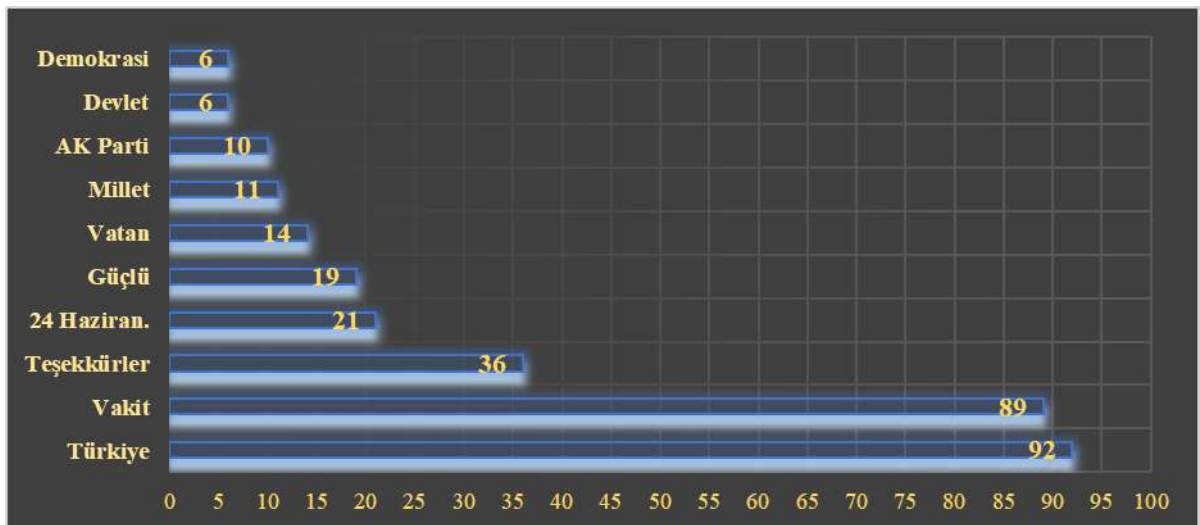
**Figure 14.** Topics Recep Tayyip Erdogan Tweeted



As can be seen in Figure 14, Erdogan's shares, except for the “hashtag” works, are collected in the headings “rally”, “promise”, “agenda” and “event”. As the leader of a party that is still in power in the 2018 elections, it is a remarkable element that Erdogan shares quite a lot about the “promise”.

It is seen that Erdogan uses the word “Türkiye” most often when the 10 words he uses most frequently and the frequency ratings of the shares he made during the June 2018 election period are analyzed by discourse analysis. Figure 15 shows the words that Erdogan used most frequently and their frequency ratings in his tweet exchanges during the June 2018 election period.

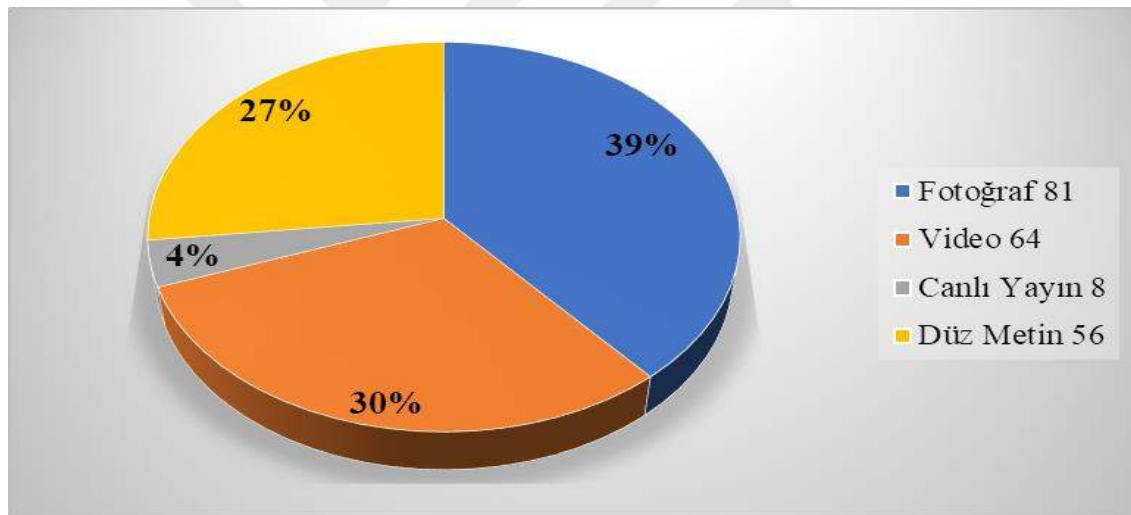
**Figure 15.** Words most frequently used by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan



As depicted in Figure 15, Erdogan used the word "Türkiye" 92 times in terms of frequency, followed by the word "time" used 89 times, and the phrase "thank you" used 36 times.

Examining Erdogan's visual shares, which encompass photos, videos, and live broadcasts during the June 2018 election period, reveals that he shared 81 photos, 64 videos, and 8 live broadcasts. This emphasizes his considerable emphasis on sharing visual content like photos and videos. Considering that Erdogan published a total of 209 tweets throughout the June 2018 election period, his dedication to sharing visual elements is noteworthy. Figure 16 presents Erdogan's proportions of visual sharing.

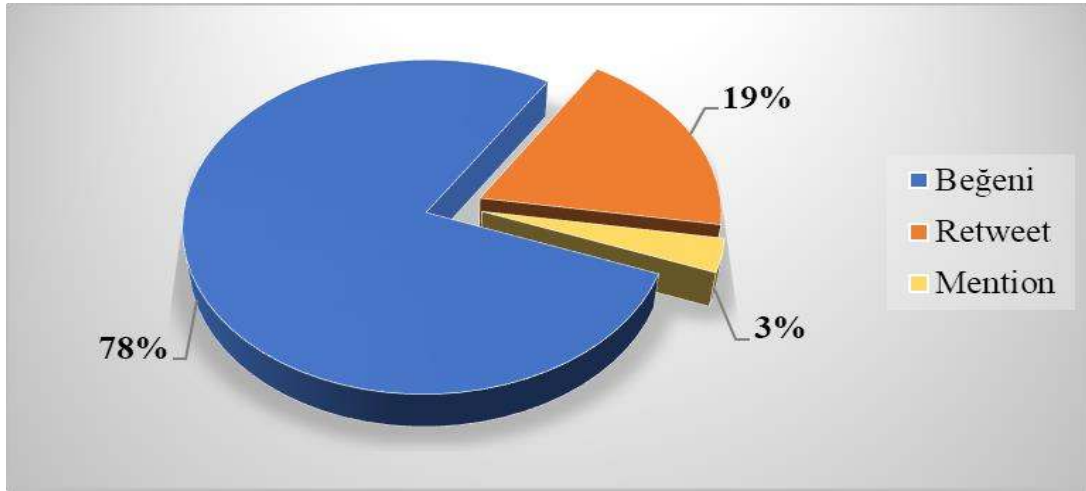
**Figure 16.** Recep Tayyip Erdogan's visual sharing rate



When observing Erdogan's visual sharing distribution in Figure 16, it can be observed that 39% of Erdogan's tweets contain photos, 30% involve video sharing, 27% are plain text, and 4% consist of live broadcasts.

Analyzing the engagement rates of tweets shared by AK Party leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan during the June 2018 election period, it's apparent that out of the 209 tweets he shared, they garnered a total of 3,308,685 likes and 790,276 retweets from users. Furthermore, users mentioned his tweets in 138,757 instances. Figure 17 visually represents the interaction rates of users with Erdogan's tweets.

**Figure 17.** Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's User Interaction Rates



Throughout the June 2018 election period, AK Party Leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's tweet shares garnered a cumulative interaction count of over 4 million. As depicted in Figure 17, a breakdown of these interactions reveals that 78% of them comprise likes, 19% consist of retweets, and 3% are mentions.

The most favorable tweet of Erdoğan during the June 2018 election season was the one he posted on June 23, 2018, featuring images from a rally conducted in Istanbul. This particular tweet garnered 46,418 likes and 7,057 retweets. The tweet with the highest number of likes is provided in Figure 18.

**Figure 18.** Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Most Liked Tweet



Source: <https://twitter.com/RTErdogan/status/1010537702176055297>

When the tweet given in Figure-2 is examined, it is noted that Erdogan also uses the words “Thank you”, “Türkiye” and “Time”, which he uses most often in his shares, as indicated in the discourse analysis.

June 2018 Erdogan's tweet that was retweeted the most during the June 2018 election period is the one he shared on June 17, 2018, which also includes the images of the rally held in Istanbul. This post was liked by 46,251 users and retweeted by 11,226 users. Erdogan's most retweeted tweet is given in Figure 19.

**Figure 19.** Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Most Retweeted Tweet



Source: <https://twitter.com/RTErdogan/status/1008387877477249025>

When the tweet given in Figure 15 is examined, it is noted that Erdogan also uses the words “Thank you” and “Time”, which are the words he uses most often in his discourse analysis. Erdogan, who also included 4 images in his share, included the Turkish Flag and rally participants in the image, shared his own photo with his wife Emine Erdogan in another image, and in the last image, he shared his own photo while greeting the crowd.

#### **4.5.1.2.Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu (CHP)**

Kılıçdaroğlu, who was born in 1948, worked as the General Manager of the Social Security Institution between Dec. 1992 and 1999. Kılıçdaroğlu entered the Parliament as a Deputy of the Republican People's Party Istanbul in the General Elections in 2002 and has been the Chairman of the Republican People's Party since May 22, 2010.

In the 2011 elections, the first election Kılıçdaroğlu entered during his term as chairman, the CHP became the second party after the AK Party by receiving 25.98 % of the votes in 2011. In the election held on June 7, 2015, and it remained in second place again with 24.95% of the votes.

Kılıçdaroğlu, who nominated Muharrem Ince as his party's Presidential candidate in the presidential elections held on June 24, 2018, became the second party to enter parliament with 146 deputies by receiving 22.65% of the votes in the general elections held on the same date.

Looking at the approved twitter account used by CHP Chairman Kılıçdaroğlu, who actively used Twitter during and after the 2018 general elections, it appears that he prefers to use a photo of a rally with carnations in the hands of his wife Selvi Kılıçdaroğlu and other people in the background. Using a profile picture of Kılıçdaroğlu in a suit with a Turkish Flag on the back, Kılıçdaroğlu's profile information includes “Ankara, Türkiye” as location information next to the phrases “Chairman of the Republican People's Party - Democratic Uncle of the Young People – Mr. Kemal”. It is also known that he joined Twitter in June 2010, Kılıçdaroğlu's profile shows that he follows 3 people and has 8.9 million followers. Figure 20 shows the approved twitter account of Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu.

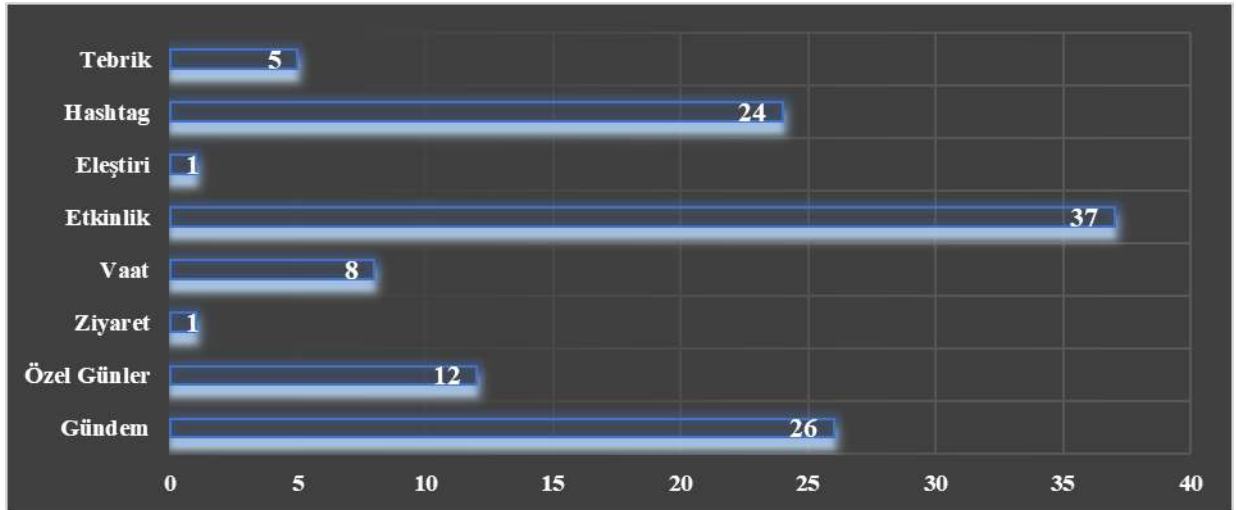
**Figure 20.** Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu Official Twitter Account View



Source: <https://twitter.com/kilicdarogluk>

It is observed that Kılıçdaroğlu, who shared 114 tweets during the June 2018 election period for three months, shared the most about “events” and the least about “visits” and “criticism”. The Figure 21 given below shows the tweets that Kılıçdaroğlu shared during the June 2018 election period according to their topics.

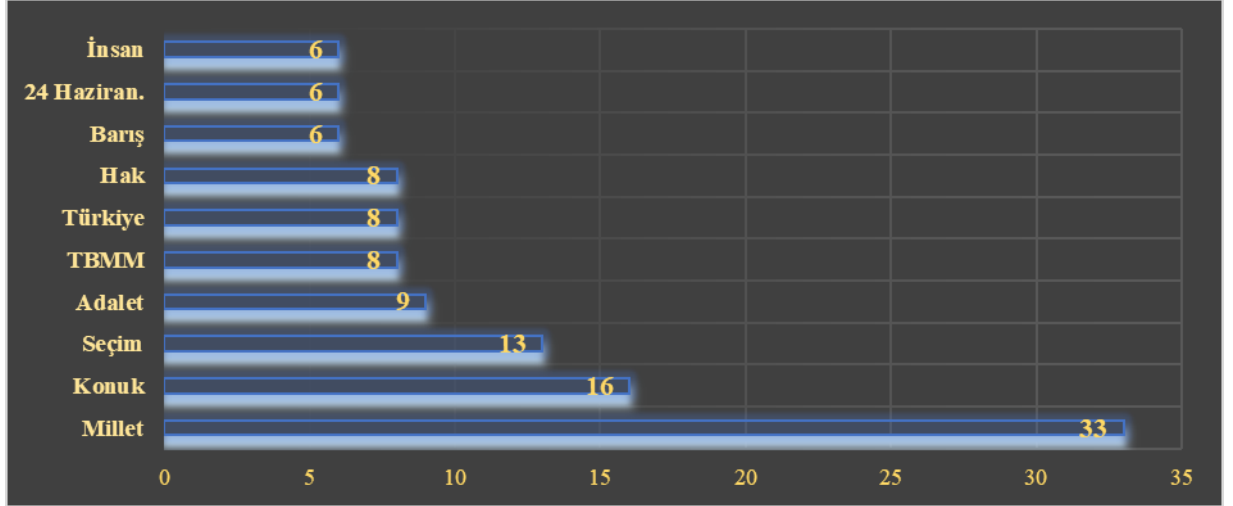
**Figure 21.** The Topics Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu Tweets About



As can be seen in Graph-12, Kılıçdaroğlu's shares, excluding the “hashtag” works, are collected in the headings “event”, “agenda”, “promise” and “special days”. As the leader of a party that is still the main opposition party in the 2018 elections, it is a noteworthy element that Kılıçdaroğlu shares quite a lot about the “event”.

A discourse analysis of Kılıçdaroğlu's posts from the June 2018 election phase discloses his predominant use of the word "Nation." Figure 22 visually represents the words Kılıçdaroğlu utilized most frequently in his tweet communications during the June 2018 election period, along with their respective frequency ratings.

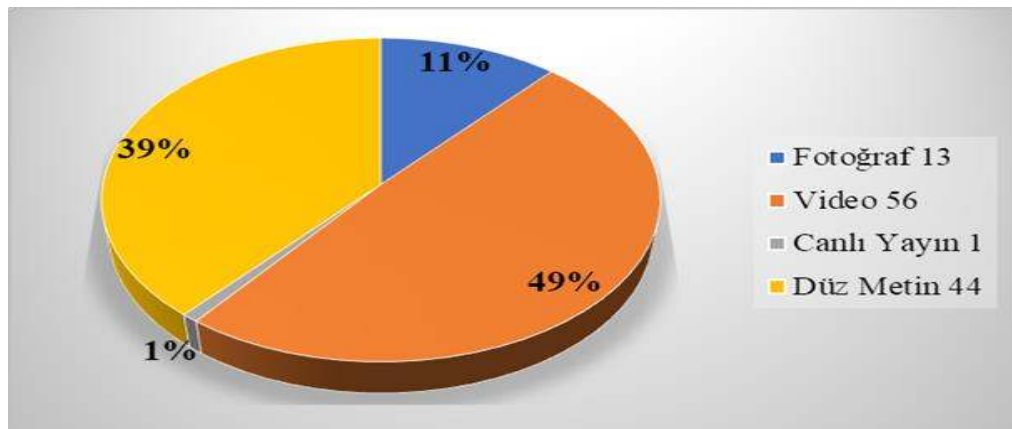
**Figure 22.** Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu's Most Frequently Used Words



As indicated in Figure 22, Kılıçdaroğlu employed the term "Nation" 33 times, followed by the word "guest" used 16 times, and "election" used 13 times in terms of frequency in his tweets.

Reviewing Kılıçdaroğlu's visual posts during the June 2018 election period, encompassing photos, videos, and live broadcasts, it becomes evident that he shared 13 photos, 56 videos, and 1 live broadcast. Given Kılıçdaroğlu's aggregate of 114 tweets throughout the June 2018 election period, the fact that he conducted only one live broadcast stands out. Figure 23 illustrates Kılıçdaroğlu's distribution of visual sharing types.

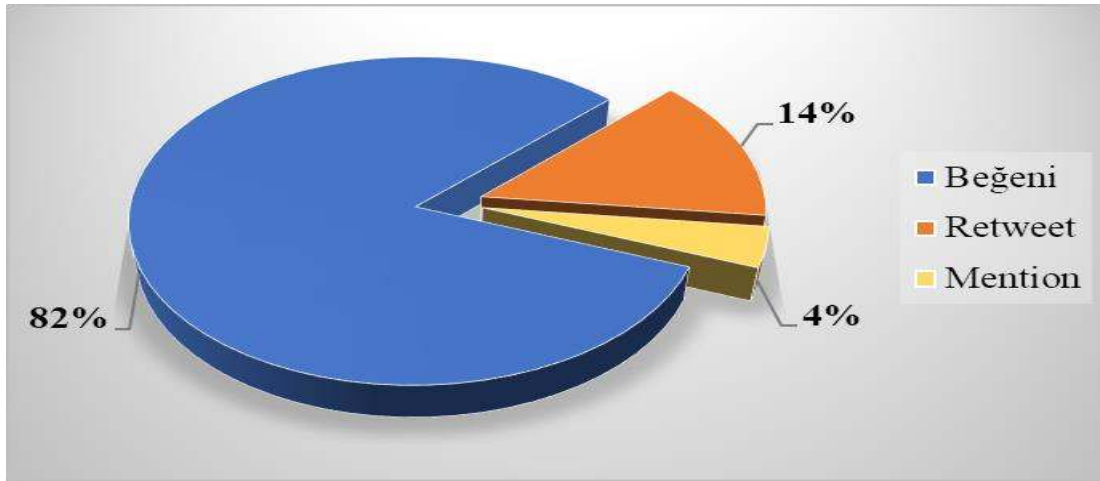
**Figure 23.** Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu Visual Sharing Ratio



According to Kılıçdaroğlu's visual sharing ratio in Figure 23, 49% of the tweets shared are video shares, 39% are plain texts, 11% are photos and 1% are live broadcasts.

CHP Leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu's tweet interactions during the June 2018 election period reveal that 114 of his tweets were collectively liked by 874,183 users. Additionally, these tweets were retweeted by 151,372 users to reach a wider audience. Furthermore, users composed 42,674 mentions in response to these 114 tweets. Figure 24 illustrates the user interaction rates with the tweets shared by Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu.

**Figure 24.** Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu User Interaction Rates



Although the total interaction of CHP Leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu's tweet shares during the June 2018 election period is around 1 million, as can be seen in Graph-15, 82% of them are likes, 14% are retweets and 4% are mentions.

During June 2018 election period, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu's most liked tweet is his 1.01-minute graphic video sharing that started while getting off the car, on June 18, 2018. This post was liked by 99,016 users and retweeted by 20,396 users. Kılıçdaroğlu's tweet with the most likes is given in Figure 25.

**Figure 25.** Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu's Most Liked Tweet



Source: <https://twitter.com/kilicdaroglu/status/1008678517993852928>

Even though CHP Leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu's tweet shares amassed a total interaction of about 1 million during the June 2018 election period, the distribution is illustrated in Graph-15, showing that 82% constitute likes, 14% are retweets, and 4% comprise mentions.

Throughout the June 2018 election period, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu's most favored tweet is a 1.01-minute graphic video shared on June 18, 2018, portraying his exit from a car. This particular post garnered likes from 99,016 users and was retweeted by 20,396 users. The tweet by Kılıçdaroğlu that garnered the most likes is provided in Figure 26.

**Figure 26.** Tweet used as a slogan by Kılıçdaroğlu



Source: <https://twitter.com/kilicdaroglu/status/1008678517993852928>

In the section given in Figure 26, it is seen that Kılıçdaroğlu's tweet, in which he used the slogan “come and claim your future” with the people around the election polling station, has received three million views.

#### 4.5.1.3. Pervin Buldan (HDP)

Born in 1967, Buldan became a candidate for Istanbul deputy from the People's Democracy Party (HADEP) in the general elections held on April 18, 1999, and could not become a deputy because his party could not pass the election threshold. Buldan, who was an independent candidate from Iğdır in the general elections held on July 22, 2007, managed to enter the parliament, and she joined the Democratic Society Party (DTP) group after entering Parliament and joined the party's successor, the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) after the DTP was closed by the Constitutional Court decision.

In the elections held on June 12, 2011, she participated in the elections again as an independent candidate from Iğdır. Buldan joined the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), which was founded in 2012, and she entered the parliament as an Istanbul deputy with his party's 13.12% of the vote in the June 7, 2015 elections and 11.7% in the elections held on November 17, 2015. Buldan became the HDP Leader on February 11, 2018 and she joined the Green Left Party together with Mithat Sancar in 2023. Buldan's former party, HDP which nominated Selahattin Demirtaş as its Presidential candidate in the presidential elections held on June 24, 2018, became the third party to enter the parliament with 67 deputies by receiving 11.7% of the vote in the general elections held on the same date.

Looking at the approved twitter account used by former HDP Leader Buldan, who did not actively use Twitter during the 2018 general elections and in general, it is seen that there is a group with photos of her in the background and she prefers to use the photo of her wearing a scarf with “Saturday mothers” written around her neck. Buldan, who prefers a smiling photo of herself as his profile picture, has a link to his party's internet address in addition to the phrase “HDP Co-Leader” in his profile information. Buldan's profile, which also includes the information that she joined twitter in October 2011, shows that she follows 246 people and has 696.5thousand followers. Figure 27 contains the approved twitter account of Pervin Buldan.

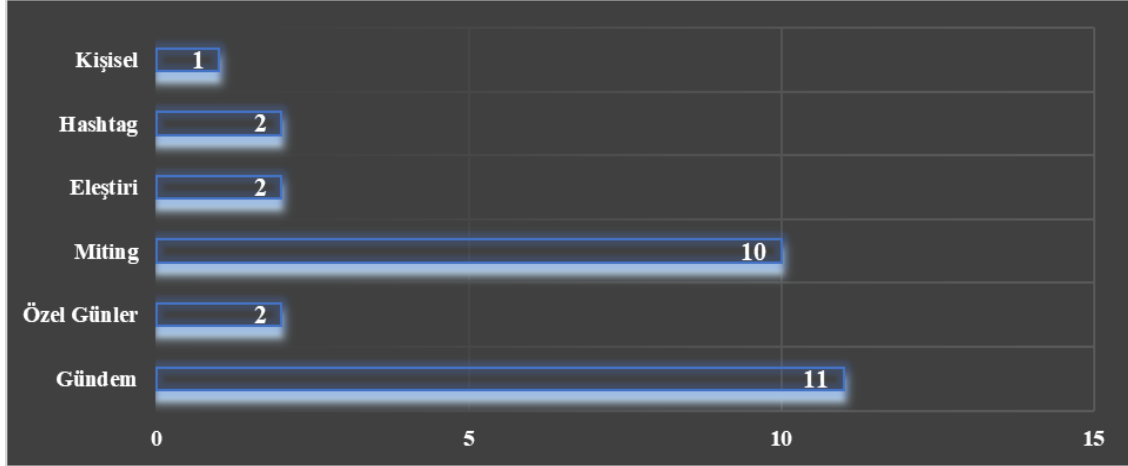
**Figure 27.** Pervin Buldan Official Twitter Account



Source: <https://twitter.com/PervinBuldan>

It is observed that Buldan, who shared 28 tweets during the June 2018 election period for three months, shared the most about the “agenda” and tweeted the least about the “personal”. The following Figure 28 shows the tweets Buldan shared during the June 2018 election period according to their topics.

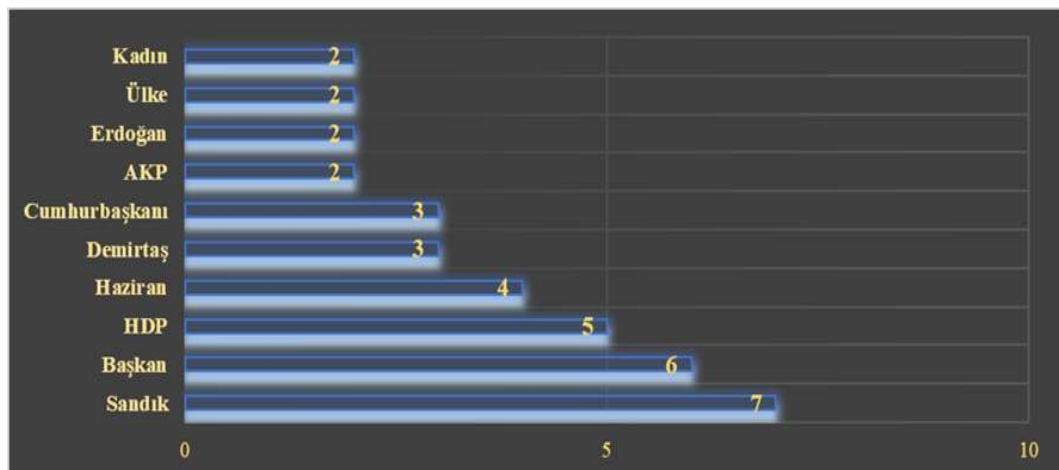
**Figure 28.** Topics Pervin Buldan Tweeted



As depicted in Graph-16, Buldan's tweets primarily fall into the categories of "agenda" and "rally," excluding the "hashtag" related content. It's interesting to note that Buldan's Twitter activity during the 2018 elections was limited, and she didn't share any posts related to politically relevant topics like "promise," "activity," or "visit."

Analyzing Buldan's tweets during the June 2018 election period reveals that she used the term "ballot box" most frequently among the top 10 words she employed. Figure 29 provides an overview of the most frequently used words in Buldan's tweets during the June 2018 election period and their corresponding frequencies.

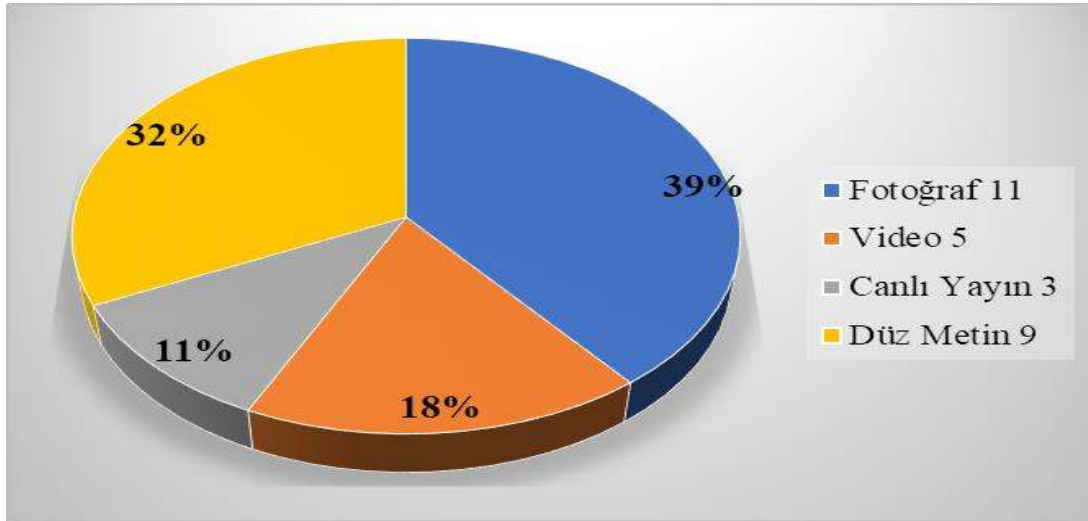
**Figure 29.** Most Frequently Used Words by Pervin Buldan



As illustrated in Figure 29, Buldan used the term "ballot box" 7 times in frequency, "president" 6 times, and "HDP" 5 times in her tweets during the June 2018 election period.

Analyzing Buldan's visual shares such as photos, videos, and live broadcasts during the same period reveals that she shared 11 photos, 5 videos, and 3 live broadcasts. Notably, Buldan posted a total of 28 tweets during the June 2018 election period, and her live broadcasts were relatively fewer. Figure 30 presents the distribution of Buldan's visual sharing types.

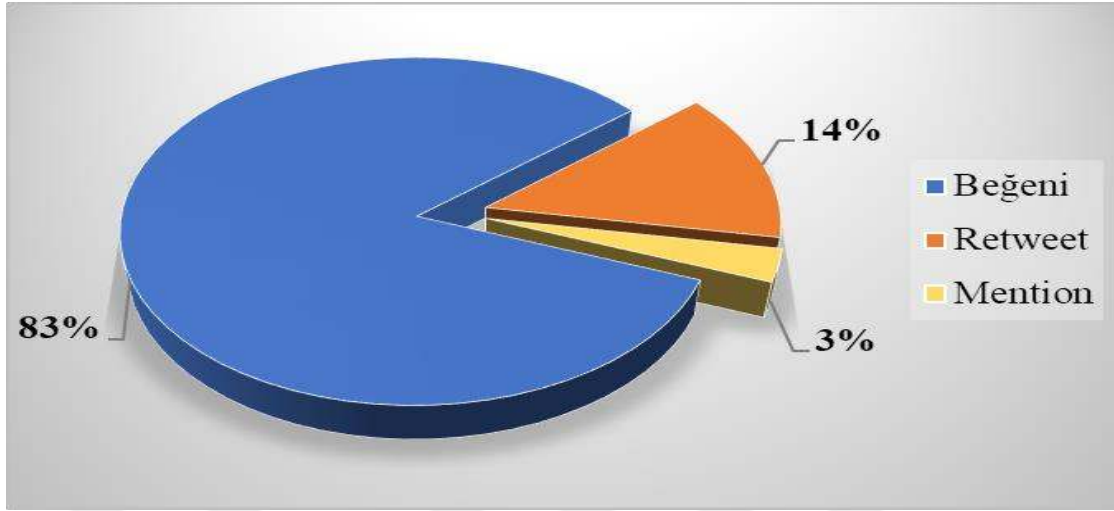
**Figure 30.** Visual Sharing Ratio of Pervin Buldan



According to Buldan's visual sharing ratio in Graph-18, 39% of the tweets shared are photo shares, 32% are plain texts, 18% are videos and 11% are live broadcasts.

When the interaction rates of the tweets shared by former HDP Leader Pervin Buldan are examined, it is seen that the 28 tweets she shared during the June 2018 election period were liked by 58,455 users in total and retweeted by 9,833 users in order to reach other users. In addition, 2,163 mentions (comments) have been written by users to these 28 tweets. Figure 32 shows the interaction rates of users to the tweets shared by Buldan.

**Figure 31.** Interaction Rates of Pervin Buldan Users



During the June 2018 election period, the interactions for the tweets shared by former HDP Leader Pervin Buldan remained relatively low, totaling around 70,000 interactions. However, Figure 31 illustrates the distribution of these interactions as follows: 83% in the form of likes, 14% as retweets, and 3% comprising mentions.

As for her most liked tweet during that period, Pervin Buldan's post featured a video in which she were at the Van Rally on June 23, 2018. This particular tweet received 3,737 likes and 1,499 retweets. Visual-8 provides more comprehensive details regarding Buldan's most liked and retweeted tweet.

**Figure 29.** The Most Liked and Retweeted Tweet from Pervin Buldan



Source: <https://twitter.com/PervinBuldan/status/1010570182149001221>

When the tweet shared by Buldan in Figure 32 with the title “ Intervention after the Van rally. We are right to say you are cruel” is analyzed; It is noteworthy that the video tweet shared by the @SiirDair user account was later deleted.

#### **4.5.1.4.Devlet Bahçeli (MHP)**

Bahçeli, who was born in 1948, was a faculty member at Gazi University Institute of Social Sciences, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Department of Economic Policy until 1987 and was appointed Secretary General of the Nationalist Labor Party (MCP) on April 19, 1987.

Bahçeli's became the leader of his party, Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) on July 6, 1997, and the party entered the parliament as the second party with 17.99% of the votes in the general elections held on April 18, 1999. Bahçeli also served as Minister of State and Deputy Prime Minister during the 57th Government.

Bahçeli, who resigned from the Presidency of the MHP because his party was below the 10% electoral threshold in the 3 November 2002 Turkish general elections, was re-elected as the Chairman in the congress held in 2003. The MHP, which took its place in the parliament with 16.29% of the votes in the elections of 7 June 2015 and 11.90% in the elections held on 17 November 2015, entered the parliament with 49 deputies with 11.10% of the votes in the 24 June 2018 general elections.

Bahçeli, who supported AK Party Chairman Recep Tayyip Erdoğan under the name of “People's Alliance” by not nominating candidates from his party in the parliamentary elections held in 2018, also continued this alliance in the 2019 local elections.

Looking at the approved twitter account used by MHP Chairman Bahçeli, who used Twitter very actively in the 2018 general elections, it is noteworthy that he preferred a plain gray background color without using anything in the background. In the profile information of Bahçeli, who uses a red party flag consisting of three crescents in the background and a profile picture consisting of his own photo, there is a link to his personal website with the extension “Ankara, Türkiye” as location information and “ DevletBahçeli.com.tr ” as a link, in addition to the expressions “Head of the Nationalist Movement Party” in his profile information. It is seen that Bahçeli, who also includes the information that he joined Twitter in November 2010, does not follow anyone in his profile and has 5.5 million followers. In Figure 33, there is the approved Twitter account of Devlet Bahçeli.

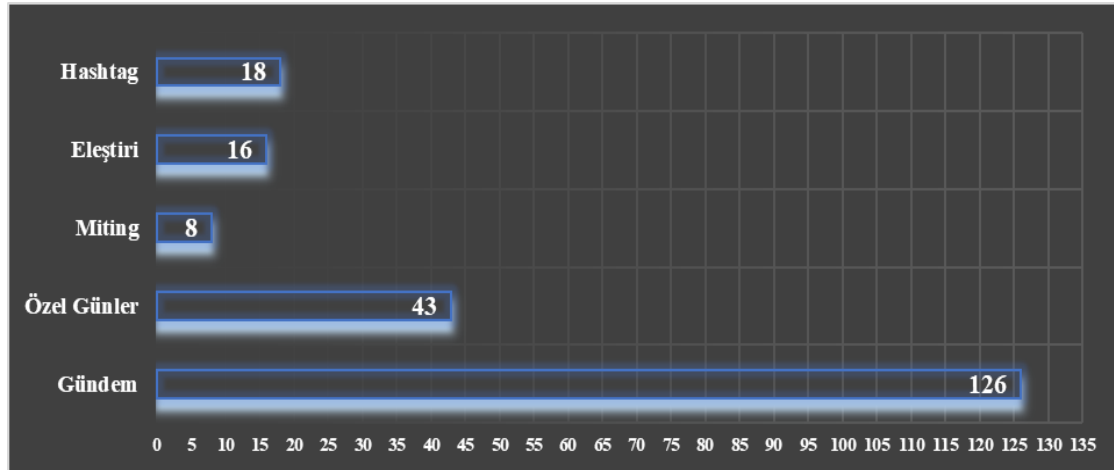
**Figure 30.**The View of the Official Twitter Account of Devlet Bahçeli



Source: <https://twitter.com/dbdevletBahçeli>

It is observed that Bahçeli, who shared 211 tweets over a span of three months during the June 2018 election period (from March to June 2018), focused the majority of his tweets on the "agenda," while the "rally" topic received the least attention. Figure 33 presented below illustrates the distribution of Bahçeli's tweets during the June 2018 election period based on their subjects.

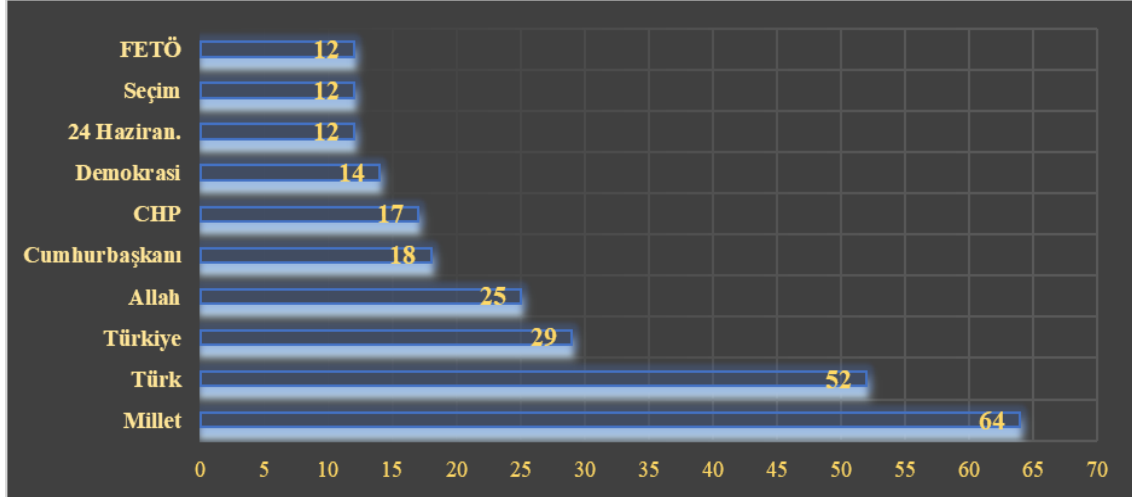
**Figure 34.** The Topics that Devlet Bahçeli Tweets About



As depicted in Figure 35 Bahçeli's posts are primarily categorized under the headings of "agenda" and "special days," excluding the "hashtag" content. Notably, MHP Leader Bahçeli does not engage in sharing topics such as "promises," "events," or "visits" that are commonly addressed in the political discourse.

Upon analyzing Bahçeli's posts during the June 2018 election period, it can be examined that he frequently uses the word "Nation" in his tweets. Figure 36 illustrates the most frequently used words by Bahçeli and their respective frequency ratings in his tweet shares throughout the June 2018 election period.

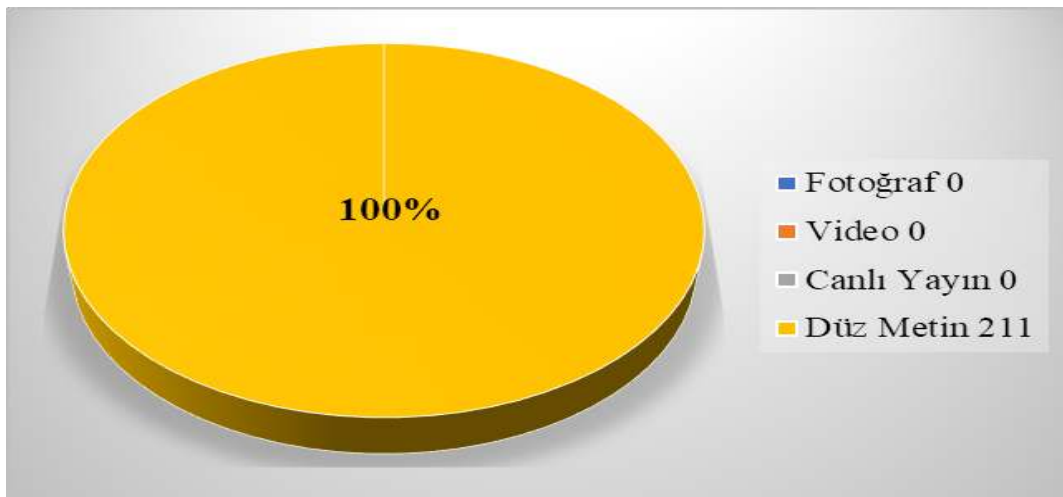
**Figure 31.**The Most Frequently Used Words of Devlet Bahçeli



As depicted in Figure 35, Bahçeli prominently uses the word "nation" 64 times in his tweet shares during the June 2018 election period. Additionally, he frequently employs the words "Türk" (52 times) and "Türkiye" (29 times) in his communication.

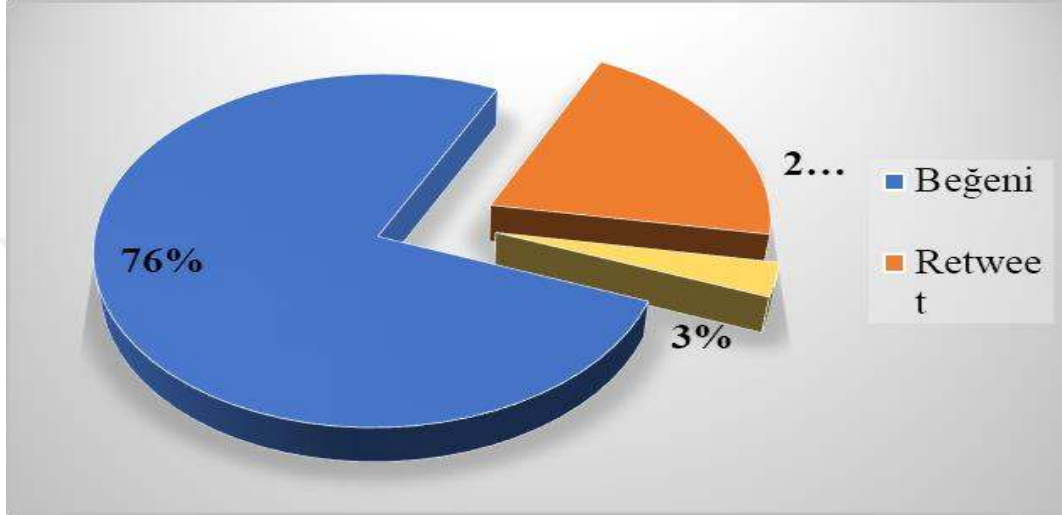
Regarding Bahçeli's visual content sharing during the June 2018 election period, it is noteworthy that all of his tweets were in plain text form without any visual elements such as photos, videos, or live broadcasts. Figure 36 illustrates the distribution of Bahçeli's visual sharing ratios.

**Figure 36.** Visual Sharing Ratio of Devlet Bahçeli



When the interaction rates of the tweets shared by MHP Leader Devlet Bahçeli are examined, it is seen that 211 tweets shared by MHP Leader Devlet Bahçeli during the June 2018 election period were liked by 341,325 users in total, and retweeted by 91,564 users in order to reach other users. In addition, 14,008 mentions have been written by users to these 211 tweets. Figure 37 shows the interaction rates of users to the tweets Bahçeli shared.

**Figure 32:** Interaction Rates of users with Devlet Bahçeli



During the June 2018 election period, the total interaction of MHP Leader Devlet Bahçeli's tweet shares was around 450 thousand, and as it can be seen in the Figure 37, 76% of them are likes, 21% are retweets and 3% are mentions.

The most liked tweet of Devlet Bahçeli in the 2018 June election period is the one he shared on 18 April 2018, stating that he supports Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as a presidential candidate. The abovementioned post was liked by 44,539 users and retweeted by 14,605 users. Bahçeli's most liked and retweeted tweet is given in Figure 38.

**Figure 33:** Devlet Bahçeli's Most Liked and Retweeted Tweet



Source: <https://twitter.com/dbdevletBahceli/status/986649883305275394>

Upon analyzing the tweet in Figure 38, it's evident that Bahçeli incorporates the words "nation," "Türkiye," and "Turk," which he frequently uses in his posts according to discourse analysis. The tweet emphasizes the "People's Alliance" and underscores the emphasis on the candidate, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

#### **4.5.1.5. Meral Akşener (İYİ Party/Good Party)**

Born in 1956, Akşener entered politics as a candidate for Kocaeli Metropolitan Municipality from the True Path Party (DYP) in the local elections of March 27, 1994. In the general elections held on 24 December 1995 from the DYP quota, she entered the parliament as a deputy from Istanbul and in the general elections of 18 April 1999 as a Kocaeli deputy.

Akşener, who served as the Minister of Interior in the 54th coalition government established by Necmettin Erbakan between 1996 and 1997, took her place in the parliament as the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) Istanbul deputy in the general elections of 22 July 2007, 12 June 2011 and 7 June 2015. Akşener was elected as the Deputy Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye along with Güldal Mumcu on 10 August 2007 and continued this duty until 23 June 2015.

Akşener, who was expelled from the MHP on September 8, 2016, was elected as the founding Chairman of the the Good Party on October 25, 2017. In the general elections held

on June 24, 2018, the Good Party, which entered the general elections with the CHP under the name “Nation Alliance”, received 9.96% of the votes and managed to enter the parliament as the fifth party with 43 deputies. In the Presidential elections held on the same date, the leader of the Good Party, Akşener, was able to receive 7.29% of the votes.

Looking at the approved twitter account used by Good Party Chairman Akşener, who actively uses twitter in the 2018 general elections, it is seen that there is a photo of Akşener taken in the library with the young people in the background. Akşener, who also uses a smiling photo with a book background on the back, as a profile picture, does not contain location information next to the phrase “@iyiparty Chairman”, which also tagged his party's Twitter account, and there is a link to Akşener's personal website as a link. It is seen that Akşener's profile, which also includes the information that she joined Twitter in May 2012, has followed 1.235 people and has 5.5 million followers. In Figure 40, Meral Akşener's approved twitter account is located.

**Figure 39:** Meral Akşener Official Twitter Account View

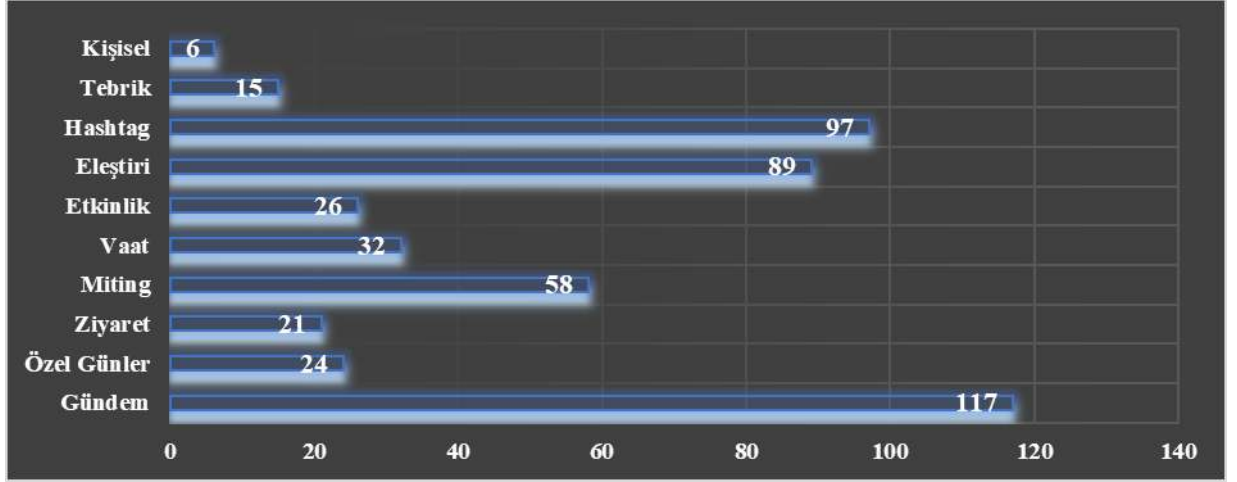


Source: [https://twitter.com/meral\\_aksener](https://twitter.com/meral_aksener)

It is seen that Akşener, who shared 485 tweets for three months in the 2018 June election period (March-June 2018), tweeted mostly on the “agenda” topic and the least on the “personal” topic. However, it is seen that she stands out as the leader who shares the most among the five political party leaders who entered the parliament. Figure 40 below

shows the tweets that Akşener shared in the 2018 June election period according to their subjects.

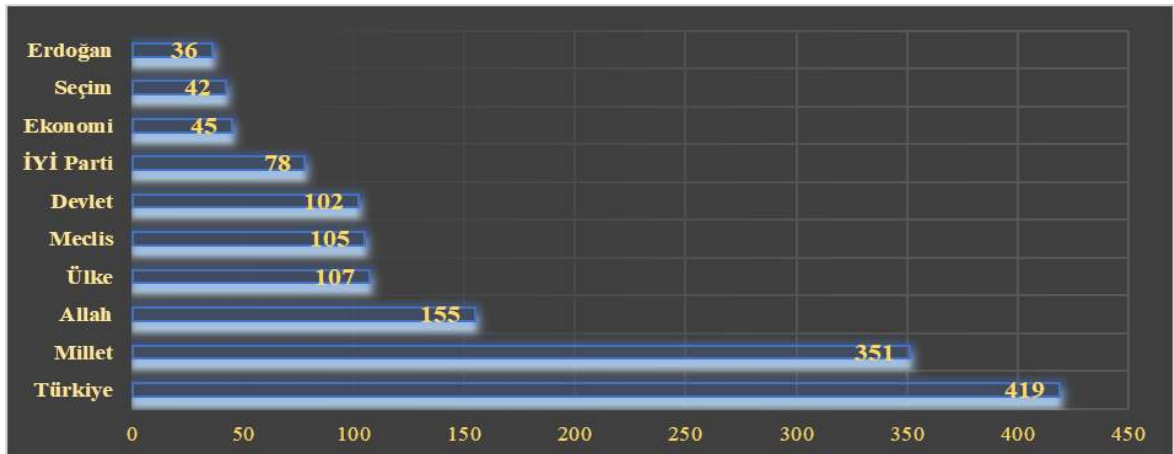
**Figure 40.** Meral Akşener's Tweeted Topics.



As seen in Figure 40, Akşener's posts are grouped under the headings of “agenda”, “criticism”, “rally” and “promise”, except for “hashtag” works. It is noteworthy that Akşener shares quite a lot about “criticism” among her posts, such as 89.

By analyzing the discourse of Akşener's posts in the 2018 June election period, it is seen that the word “Türkiye” is used most frequently when the 10 words she uses most frequently and their frequency levels are examined. In Figure 41, Akşener's most frequently used words and frequency of tweets during the 2018 June election period are given.

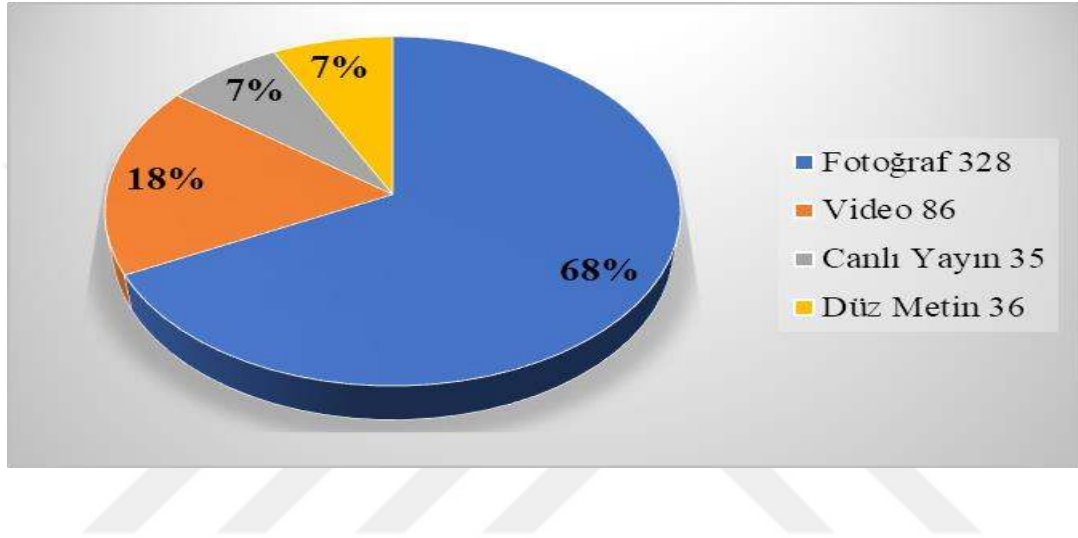
**Figure 41.** Meral Akşener's Most Frequently Used Words



As shown in Figure 41, Akşener, who uses the word “Türkiye” 419 times in frequency, used the word “nation” 351 times and the word “Allah” 155 times.

When analyzing Akşener's visual shares during the June 2018 election period, it's evident that she shared 328 photos, 86 videos, and 35 live broadcasts. Given that Akşener posted a total of 485 tweets during that time, her emphasis on sharing images like photos and videos is notable. The visual sharing ratios of Akşener are presented in Figure 42.

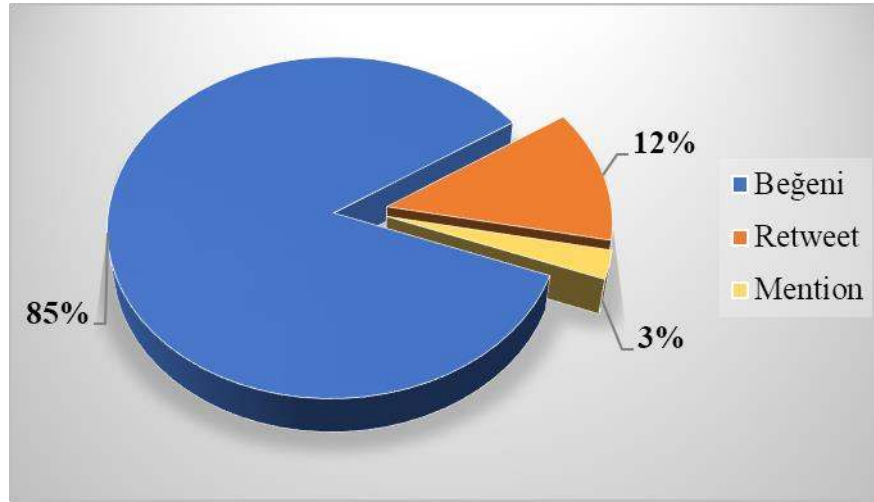
**Figure 42.** Meral Akşener Visual Sharing Ratio



Considering Akşener's visual sharing ratio, which is included in Figure 42 68% of the tweets shared are photo sharing, 18% are video sharing, 7% are plain text and 7% are live broadcasts.

When examining the interaction rates of the tweets shared by İYİ Party's (Good Party) Leader Meral Akşener, it's evident that the 485 tweets she shared during the June 2018 election period received substantial engagement. These tweets were liked by a total of 3,581,447 users and retweeted by 532,844 users to amplify their reach. Additionally, there were 113,732 mentions (comments) written by users in response to these 485 tweets. Figure 43 visually depicts the interaction rates of users with Akşener's tweets.

**Figure 43.** Meral Akşener User Interaction Rates



In the 2018 June election period, the total interaction of Good Party Leader Meral Akşener's tweet shares was over 4 million, and as seen in Figure 43, 85% of them are likes, 12% are retweets, and 3% are mentions.

The most liked tweet of Meral Akşener in the 2018 June election period is the one she shared on 23 June 2018 about going to the polls. The said post was liked by 34,717 users and retweeted by 4,378 users. Akşener's most liked and retweeted tweet is given in Figure 44. When the tweet given in Figure-14 is examined, it draws attention that Akşener also uses the word “nation”, which she uses most often in her shares, as indicated in the discourse analysis.

**Figure 44.** Meral Akşener's Most Liked and Retweeted Tweet



## CONCLUSION

The subject of this thesis was to present a general perspective in terms of the relationship between media and politics, the reflection of the communication between politicians and voters in the historical process, and to investigate the effect of the new media and Twitter in particular, especially during the election periods when the general course of political life is determined.

In this context, the study delved into both information and communication technologies, as well as political communication and behavior throughout history. An analysis was conducted with a comprehensive approach to the current situation, based on Twitter usage data from political leaders during the elections of June 7, 2015, and June 24, 2018. Thus, the interactions of people connected by social networks in the public sphere, these new media platforms, the way they communicate and the consequences of these were discussed. Some determinations were made about the effect of new media on politics, the way politicians use it, the political tendencies of the mass and its role in decision-making processes. In the research conducted on the basis of Twitter data before both elections, the effect and role of the new media on politics was examined by analyzing the way of doing politics, political behavior, attitudes and reactions depending on the developing technologies by revealing the numerical data of the election studies, the messages produced, the content, the shares and the interactions carried out on this platform. In today's world, where almost everything is connected to each other through networks, habits and lifestyles have changed along with the changing technology, organizational forms and communicative processes. The effects of this change in terms of new media-politics relationship are included in the basic plan of this study based on numerical data.

The study aimed to delve into how these platforms are employed to shape and influence voter perceptions. It sought to explore the strategies that political entities develop to meet the expectations of voters and to gauge the extent to which social media becomes an integral part of their overall election strategies. The study also aimed to evaluate the efficacy of these social media-driven strategies in shaping the decision-making processes and preferences of voters.

The media, which functions as an intermediary between the ruler and the ruled, is changing and transforming with the changing and developing technologies, as well as its

structure and role. This is particularly evident during election periods. Because the most common and effective planning and implementation of political communication studies is election periods. While political parties try to persuade large masses to gain votes and attract them to their side, they conduct analyzes and research to understand the tendencies of the voters, produce strategies and make plans accordingly. Compared to traditional media that offered one-way communication, social media offers a more neutral and interactive environment, especially in political communication.

Considering all the sociological background in the political communication process of the internet in the new era, the fact that it is an easily accessible, effective, efficient and low-cost platform also explains that it has become the main communication area especially in terms of the thoughts, ideologies, beliefs and political and social preferences of the young people. The distinctive aspect of new media from traditional media (newspaper, radio, television, cinema) is that it is interactive and multimedia.

By using the new media, which is now an important part of social, economic and cultural life, in politics, parties and political actors have the opportunity to reach large audiences who spend most of their time in these networks, directly and instantly, thanks to these platforms. Since the political priorities of political parties and their leaders are to expand their electorate, social media platforms have been the most effective way to achieve this. It has been frequently preferred in terms of directly addressing and reaching the audience, such as setting the agenda, providing discourse superiority, and reporting.

Among these platforms, Twitter has been used very effectively especially during election periods. Considering the characteristics of the new media, these platforms were especially preferred by political parties and their leaders to promote themselves and their discourses, and to inform the electorate about party activities with a regular flow of information. They have also been used to gather voters' opinions on certain issues, to collect financial support for the party to the extent permitted by political regulations, and to provide support and followers for the activities of the political party and/or its leader in offline environments.

For instance, during the June 2015 elections period, there were 37.7 million active internet users across Türkiye, with 40 million active social media accounts in use. In the same period, the number of Twitter users was 5.6 million, constituting 14% of social media users. By the 2018 June election period, the number of internet users had reached 54.33

million, and social media accounts had increased to 51 million. Once again in 2018, the number of Twitter users rose to 8.8 million, accounting for 17% of social media users. The increase is notably significant.

When examining the activities of internet users, it becomes evident that 8 out of every 10 individuals are engaged with social media. Simultaneously, 7 out of 10 people use the internet to access news. However, only 1 out of every 5 individuals engage in reading or sharing political issues online as a form of political participation. Given that a substantial portion of society invests a significant amount of time on the internet and social media, it has become imperative for politicians to formulate policies and strategies accordingly.

In terms of the relationship between new media and politics, the universe of the research was determined as the 2015 and 2018 general elections, and how political leaders used the Twitter platform was analyzed. In the tweets shared by the leaders as text, live broadcast, visual and video, the daily election issues and those about the country's agenda are gathered under the title of “agenda”, religious/national holidays that coincide with the election period, celebrations “special days”, trips made for election propaganda purposes “visit”. The speeches made by the leaders in front of the constituencies are categorized under the title of “rally”, the services they will perform if elected, the “promises”, and the openings and organizations they make to reach the voters during the election period are categorized under the title of “events”. In addition, other topics were discussed as criticism, polemic, personal, hashtag, and congratulations.

Perhaps the most important conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that while traditional media is evolving into new media, political party leaders seem to continue to be at the center of discussions, interest, social networks. Although the new media has presented a pluralistic, participatory, egalitarian environment, parties and their leaders are still at the center of political discussion, sharing and interaction on social networks. Political organization also seems to determine the clusters in the new media.

As stated in the study, traditional media offers a one-way communication, it is power-oriented by its structure, and the flow of news and information takes place unilaterally. Traditional media ownership demands a corporate organization that demands capital and power. This situation leads to the power concentration of politics and the media together.

There is almost a vertical communication from the media to society, a hierarchical flow. On the contrary, in the new media, there are opportunities to express thoughts,

opinions, reactions instantly. It has made mutual and dialogical communication possible in the new media with a horizontal and interactive feature.

However, while it still has the potential to create a universe of reality that spans the entire society at the point of discussing more democratic, social and political problems by mobilizing all layers of society, it does not seem to have opened such a path, especially in Turkish political culture.

As in traditional media, a leader-centered, polemic-based environment continues to exist on new media platforms. In the West, political leaders are not closely followed on social networks as in Türkiye. Although there are heated shares and intense shares on social media related to current issues, social media users can also be considered more like passive recipients of an agenda that revolves around leaders during election periods when political cadres are determined. Politicians do not have as many followers as those in Türkiye. The data in our research, which deals with political behavior especially during election periods, shows that the most important actors determining the political atmosphere and agenda in the new media continue to be political leaders. It did not construct itself as a civil societal entity.

Looking at the results of this research, first of all, the increase in the number of users, followers, shares and interactions between the two election periods is striking. The decrease in the number of followers of Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu can be explained by his not being a candidate in the 2018 elections. Bahçeli's, on the other hand, can be explained by the division of his party. However, despite this decrease, the clear increase in interactions shows that social media usage has increased at the point of participation. There was a significant increase in the number of followers of other leaders. Considering these data between these two elections, it is possible to say that with the increase in smartphone usage, the use of social media has also increased, the time spent on these platforms has extended, and political leaders are closely followed.

Secondly, it is seen that the leaders mostly shared about the rallies and touched on the issues related to the agenda. This use case, which is mostly notification and news, is similar to the use of traditional media. Parties and their leaders give this directly and instantly instead of giving information or making statements to the press by the relevant units. Likewise, they directly convey their views on issues related to the agenda through these platforms.

Thirdly, leaders are using social media more and more effectively and efficiently. The most obvious example of this is the use of hashtags. While hashtags, which are used to

increase interaction more on Twitter, are almost never seen in the 2015 general elections, they were frequently used in the 2018 elections. Likewise, the use of multimedia has increased.

Fourthly, in the analysis of the general elections, the 10 words most frequently used by political leaders in their tweets and their frequency levels were separated and the words they used most in political communication in the general elections were emphasized. “Türkiye”, “nation”, “state” and “homeland” stand out as the words most frequently used by leaders. It can be said that the messages and contents in which these words are used are frequently given, and that a nationalist discourse prevails in the election atmosphere and that the leaders try to bring it to the fore.

Finally, the posts highlighting the human side of the leaders have seen a lot. The fact that the photo of President Erdoğan with his wife, along with the photos of the rally, received the most likes, and those of other leaders included images intertwined with the public in their profile pictures, shows that the followers are also interested in such content in order to establish emotional bonds with the leaders.

When analyzing the Twitter accounts of the political party leaders who participated in the June 2018 parliamentary elections, it becomes evident that they utilized the platform more extensively for political communication and propaganda purposes compared to the June 2015 elections. Furthermore, the target audience exhibited greater interaction with politicians during the 2018 elections, a trend closely linked to the increasing use of smartphones, widespread social media adoption, and improved utilization of these platforms for communication. Over the past three years, there has been a significant increase in followers, tweets, likes, retweets, and mentions. As the usage of social media platforms has risen along with the time spent on them, political leaders have experienced a corresponding surge in interest, shares, and interactions on these platforms. During the 2018 general elections, the majority of shares were related to rallies. Notably, the use of hashtags was a prominent feature. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the leader of the AK Party and the politician with the largest follower base, emerged as the most effective and active user of the platform.

Through these shares and interactions, politicians can quickly engage a broader audience and gauge public sentiment. This showcases how new communication technologies serve as essential platforms for political figures aiming to inform voters and shape public opinion by managing information dissemination and establishing real-time communication.

However, the existence of echo chambers poses a challenge. People who share similar views, beliefs, and ideologies continuously interact on social media, creating an environment where opposing viewpoints are absent. Algorithmic data flows further reinforce this pattern, leading individuals to exist within a virtual network that reinforces their existing thoughts and perspectives. While political parties and their leaders develop social media strategies, they must seek ways to reach voters beyond these echo chambers. Moreover, they must adopt measures and strategies to counter the spread of disinformation and misinformation among voters susceptible to manipulation. Countries also bear the responsibility of safeguarding against these issues and maintaining vigilant cyber defense units. Instances such as the Cambridge Analytica scandal and Russia's interference in American elections serve as stark reminders of these challenges.

By 2023, while the number of internet users has increased to 72.5 million, 73.1 % of the population actively uses social media (BTK 2023 1st Quarter Report). The use of social media continues to increase all over the world and in Türkiye. Due to this strong relationship between Twitter and politics, it has become a more prominent platform in the 2023 general elections. For example, the increase is even more striking when looking at the number of followers. The number of followers of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan increased to 20.6 million, and the number of followers of Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu to 11 million. During the election period, voters first learned about important developments from social media and Twitter. The struggle during the election period has turned into a stage where sharing based on manipulation and fake news and information is made as well as true and real information.

The emergence of concepts like the metaverse, virtual reality technologies, augmented reality, and the Internet of Things, which are being discussed with new technologies on the horizon, indicates that societies are gearing up for a fundamentally different future. Societies and individuals are likely to continue undergoing rapid changes and transformations. In this evolving landscape, the insights, sources, and findings from studies exploring the extent to which new media innovations are utilized by politicians, as well as how voters respond to these innovations, become increasingly significant. As information and communication technologies continue to evolve, new media environments possess a dynamic nature that grows day by day. The findings from this research about their impact on political life and elections serve as a valuable model for researchers. They shed light on how politicians adapt to technological shifts and how these adaptations resonate with the electorate.

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