
Use of Twitter of Elazig Municipal Candidates: Example Of March 31 2019 Local Elections

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Abstract

During election periods, politicians make use of many communication tools. One of these tools is social media. Social media is used in election campaigns where it is a tool that can reach less cost and faster. In this study, Twitter usages of Elazığ municipal candidates were examined in 31 March 2019 Local Administrations Election. The main purpose of the study is to determine whether the municipal candidates actively use Twitter, a social media tool during the election campaign. Content analysis method was used in the research. The shares of municipal candidates who had personal Twitter accounts during the campaign were analyzed. According to the findings, most of the candidates for Elazığ municipal did not actively use their personal accounts on Twitter during the election. Most of the municipal candidates were found to be insufficient to inform the public through social media.

Keywords: Political Communication, Local Elections, Social Media, Twitter, Elazığ, Turkey

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1.Introduction

The emergence of political communication; it is based on a history as long as human existence and communication itself. Political communication involves the persuasion of the executives to maintain the managerial position (Sandıkçioğlu, 2012:3). Political scientists evaluate the importance of political communication in terms of the functioning of political systems. Communication scientists point out the role of communication in politics (Onay, 2012:31). Social media is a high volume and high velocity medium in which millions of user's complex web of communication (Weaver et al., 2018: 133). Twitter is a social medium that increases its popularity day by day. Twitter allows instant messaging to be shared via mobile and web. Twitter attracted the attention of especially famous people and quickly reached a significant number of users (Kuyucu and Karahisar, 2013: 131). The use of Twitter has become widespread in political communication (Vitak, et al., 2011; Genel, 2012; Momoc, 2013; Bayraktutan et al., 2014; Keskin and Sönmez, 2015; Pal and Gonavela, 2017; Weaver et al, 2018; Tosyalı and Sütçü, 2019; Tanyıldızı and Ateş, 2018; Tanyıldızı and Alptekin; 2019). This study has examined the use of the Twitter application by local politicians. The sample of the candidates of Elazığ municipal was selected. The aim of this study is to determine the level of Twitter usage of Elazığ municipal candidates during the election campaign.

2.Literature Review

Political communication is the attempt of political actors to make certain groups, masses and countries adopt their ideological aims by using various communication techniques (Aziz, 2017: 3). It serves as a tool to help politicians influence voters through democratic persuasion methods (Oktay, 1993: 77). Mcnair explains political communication with three items. As the first, it asserts that: all forms of communication carried out by politicians and other political actors to achieve certain goals. As the second: It is a process addressed to politicians and other political actors by non-political actors such as voters and columnists. As the third; Communication consists of news, commentary and other forms of policy-based media, including politicians, political actors and their activities (Mcnair, 2003:45).

If a general definition is made about social media; It is a participatory and more active type of media that sets its own agenda, has its own special rules and forms of communication. It is possible to talk about social media in a broader sense, as web sites based on Web 2.0 technologies, which enable deeper social interaction, community formation and cooperation projects (Akar, 2010: 17).

Political parties and political actors have been able to express themselves, their program and goals better through the internet. Considering in terms of people, it creates a reliable perception since it has the right to conceal one's political preferences. The voter can visit the parties' websites and get detailed information without politicize and hiding his political opinion. In this respect, the websites of political parties are a unique means of publicity and access to the public. (Gözüpek et al., 2007: 274) . For politicians; it is important to go down the streets and squares. But it is difficult to gather people in a physical space. It is extremely easy to reach a ready audience on social media. Politicians can be in constant contact with voters because there is no time and space limitation on social media (Sütçü et al., 2013: 185-186). Social media also influence the images of political actors. The media's understanding of political journalism

allows political actors to reach their private lives. Both journalists and other citizens use technology to see the other side of politicians (Helms, 2012: 658- 659).

During the previous decade, the use of social-media has increased considerably. The social media or social networking sites are used to build consensus among people. Twitter is one of the most famous social networking site or micro-blogging service where people post their messages defined as tweets. There are nearly 330 million averaged monthly active users as reported in 2017 (Sujay et al., 2018: 157). In particular, individuals and institutions use this component to share their positive opinions and assessments with wider audiences through Twitter. (Tarhan, 2012: 83). Today, it wants to benefit from these features of Twitter politicians. Political parties and candidates use Twitter for political communication.

3.Methodology

The main purpose of the study is to determine whether the municipal candidates actively use Twitter. Social media usage levels were determined based on the shares they made on their personal accounts. The research includes the shares of Elazığ municipal candidates from their personal accounts on Twitter between March 1 - 31, 2019. Candidates' tweet and retweet contents of their personal accounts were recorded daily. Social media usage levels were evaluated according to twitter usage practices. The interest of the municipal candidates to Twitter only through the shares they made on these dates was reflected in the study. The hypothesis of the study was not share the Elazığ municipal candidates information about local elections on Twitter in the March 31, 2019 Local Elections.

The content analysis method was used in the study. Content analysis was an objective, systematic and quantitative definition of the presented content of communication (Berelson, 1952: 17). Weber defined content analysis as follows: It is a research technique in which valid interpretations derived from the text are presented as a result of a series of transactions. These comments are about the sender of the message, the message itself, and the recipient of the message (Weber, 1989: 5). First of all, in order to provide data, it has been examined whether the individuals who are nominated as municipal of Elazığ are active participants on Twitter. Between 1 and 31 March 2019, a coding table was created on the computer according to the provincial and political parties they represent. Candidates' tweet-retweet shares are reflected on the coding schedule every day between the specified date period. The findings were proportional to the SPSS method and were recorded in the tables.

4.Findings

In this part of the study, it was evaluated with the content analysis method. The data obtained from the study are given in Table 1-7. Candidates are listed in alphabetical order.

Table 1. Twitter account status of candidates for municipal

Candidate's Party	Has a Twitter account	No Twitter account
Democratic Left Party Candidate	-	no
Good Party-Republican People's Party Candidate	yes	-

Independent Turkey Party Candidate	-	no
Justice and Development Party Candidate	yes	-
Peoples Democratic Party Candidate	-	no
The Felicity Party Candidate	yes	-
The Nationalist Movement Party Candidate	yes	-
Turkey Communist Party Candidate	-	no
Vatan Party Candidate	yes	-

In Table 1, it is first determined whether the candidates for municipal use Twitter or not. Nine candidates competed to become the municipal of Elazığ. It was determined that only 5 of them had Twitter accounts. Candidates who do not have a Twitter account are not included in the study.

Table 2. Number of municipal candidates in election campaigns

Municipal candidates	Number of Twitter shares
Good Party-Republican People's Party Candidate	150
Justice and Development Party Candidate	220
The Felicity Party Candidate	175
The Nationalist Movement Party Candidate	128
Vatan Party Candidate	2

When Table 2 is examined, the most active candidate for municipal who uses Twitter account is the candidate of the Justice and Development Party. This was followed by the Felicity Party candidate, Good Party-Republican People's Party candidate and the Nationalist Movement Party candidate, respectively. The candidate for the municipal of the Vatan Party took the last place because he tweeted only twice.

Table 3. Presentation of the shares of the candidates for municipal

Municipal candidates	Related photo usage		Related video Usage		Using irrelevant photo		Using irrelevant video		Plain Text	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Good Party-Republican	96	64	10	6,66	0	0	0	0	44	29,33

People's Party Candidate										
Justice and Development Party Candidate	191	86,81	28	12,72	0	0	0	0	1	0,45
The Felicity Party Candidate	153	87,42	21	12	0	0	0	0	1	0,57
The Nationalist Movement Party Candidate	113	88,28	12	9,37	3	2,43	0	0	0	0
Vatan Party Candidate	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	100

It was seen that the candidates of the municipal used more photographs in their sharing during the campaign. The Justice and Development Party candidate, and the Felicity Party candidate, also used video in their sharing. The candidate who shared the most plain text during the campaign is the candidate of the Good Party-Republican People's Party candidate. The Nationalist Movement Party candidate was among the candidates who focused on the use of photographs in their shares.

Table 4. Types of shares of municipal candidates

Municipal candidates	Number of shares with positive content		Number of shares with negative content		Neutral content shares	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Good Party-Republican People's Party Candidate	118	78,66	12	8	20	13,33
Justice and Development Party Candidate	201	91,36	1	0,45	18	8,18
The Felicity Party Candidate	77	44	4	2,28	94	53,71
The Nationalist Movement Party Candidate	80	62,25	22	17,18	26	20,31
Vatan Party Candidate	0	0	2	100	0	0

Table 4 examines the types of sharing of candidates for municipal. It is the candidate of the Justice and Development Party, which shares the most positive content. The Nationalist Movement Party Candidate is the candidate who shares the most negative content. The name that made the highest neutral share was the Felicity Party candidate.

Table 5. Shares related to the project of the municipal candidates

Municipal candidates	There is project sharing.		There is no project sharing.	
	f	%	f	%
Good Party-Republican People's Party Candidate	6	4	144	96
Justice and Development Party Candidate	21	9,54	199	96,45
The Felicity Party Candidate	5	2,85	170	97,14
The Nationalist Movement Party Candidate	12	9,37	116	90,45
Vatan Party Candidate	0	0	2	100

Table 5 considers the shares of the candidates for municipal projects. He is the candidate of the Justice and Development Party, which shares the highest number of projects. He also supported these shares with video. Although active Twitter, the name of the Felicity Party candidate was the one who shared the least number of projects via social media account. This was followed by the Good Party-Republican People's Party candidate and the Nationalist Movement Party candidate. Only two shares of the candidate of the Vatan Party are not related to the project.

Table 6. Interaction of municipal candidates with voters

Municipal candidates	There is interaction with voters.		There is no interaction with voters.	
	f	%	f	%
Good Party-Republican People's Party Candidate	6	4	144	96
Justice and Development Party Candidate	105	47,72	115	52,27
The Felicity Party Candidate	121	12	54	88
The Nationalist Movement Party Candidate	83	64,84	45	35,15
Vatan Party Candidate	0	0	2	100

In the findings obtained from Table 6, the responses of the candidates to the tweets were taken into consideration. According to the number of tweets, the candidate for municipal who has the most interaction with the voters is the Nationalist Movement Party. The candidate who makes the least interaction outside the Vatan Party is the candidate of the Felicity Party.

Table 7. The subject of the shares of municipal candidates

Municipal candidates	Explanation		Claim		Information		Criticism		Commitment		Praise		Service	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Good Party-Republican People's Party Candidate	24	16	10	7,81	17	11,33	8	5,33	88	58,66	3	2	0	0
Justice and Development Party Candidate	108	49,09	2	0,90	40	18,18	1	0,45	68	30,90	1	0,45	0	0
The Felicity Party Candidate	62	35,42	14	8	24	13,71	2	1,14	68	38,85	4	2,28	1	0,57
The Nationalist Movement Party Candidate	13	10,15	7	5,46	26	20,31	18	14,06	62	48,43	2	1,56	0	0
Vatan Party Candidate	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	100	0	0	0	0	0	0

In Table 7, the issues of shares of the candidates for municipal were examined. Candidates made the most promising discourses. The most promising municipal candidate during this period was Good Party-Republican People's Party Candidate. After the Good Party-Republican People's Party Candidate, the Nationalist Movement Party Candidate would not be wrong to state that it made many promises. The Nationalist Movement Party candidate was the most critical candidate. The Felicity Party candidate is in the first place with its ambitious exits. In particular, he frequently used the phrase “number one” in his social media accounts. The candidate of the Justice and Development Party was the candidate who shared the most explanations. The praise and service sharing were made very little by the candidates.

5. Conclusions

The many communication tools and methods have begun to change because of the transformation of technological at today. This situation has also reflected itself in the field of politics. New tools are becoming widespread, especially in political communication studies. Social media is one of them. Social media are preferred because it can reach many people in a

short time and at the same time, there is no other person in between and instant feedback can be obtained. In this research, the use of Twitter of the municipal candidates in the local elections of 31 March 2019 was analyzed. In this study, it was concluded that the information sharing of Elazığ municipal candidates in local elections on March 31, 2019 was not sufficient. It was determined that most of the shares were political issues rather than projects. Thus, the hypotheses of the research were confirmed. Although 9 people are candidates for municipal elections, only 5 candidates have twitter accounts. The four of these candidates have actively using Twitter. The local politicians need to expand the use of social media in order to interact with voters more effectively and less costly.

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