

FACTORS AFFECTING THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION BEHAVIOURS OF MIDDLE-CLASS CONSERVATIVE VOTERS: A RESEARCH ON GENERATION Y

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Abstract

This study is believed to be of great importance to policymakers, political parties and academics as it provides valuable insights into the factors that motivate or hinder the political participation of conservative voters. The contribution of the study to the literature is its comprehensive analysis of the multifaceted factors that affect the political participation behaviour of conservative voters. In this context, the aim of the study is to determine the factors that affect the political participation behaviour of Gen Y voters who can be defined as middle-class conservative voters based on the discussions in the relevant literature. In this connection, Gen Y (born between 1980 and 1999) voters who have the right to vote and be elected in Turkey were included in the study. Furthermore, the study employed a mixed-method approach by combining quantitative survey data (n=433) with qualitative literature to provide a comprehensive analysis. As a result of the analyses, it was determined that the internet and social media are effective on the political participation behaviour of Gen Y voters. In addition to this, another important finding is that their education level is effective on their political participation and perceptions of digital marketing. These findings emphasize the need for political parties to develop customized communication strategies to increase the political participation of Gen Y voters and be more effective in digital communication.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Gen Y
Political Participation Behaviour
Political Party
Voter Behaviour
Digital Marketing

Makale Hakkında

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ORTA SINIF MUHAFAZAKÂR SEÇMENLERİN SİYASAL KATILIM DAVRANIŞLARINI ETKİLEYEN FAKTÖRLER: Y KUŞAĞI ÜZERİNE BİR ARAŞTIRMA

Öz

Bu araştırma, muhafazakâr seçmenlerin siyasi katılımını motive eden veya engelleyen faktörler hakkında değerli bilgiler sunarak politika yapıcılar, siyasi partiler ve akademisyenler için önem taşımaktadır. Çalışmanın literatüre katkısı, muhafazakâr seçmenlerin siyasi katılım davranışlarını etkileyen çok yönlü faktörleri kapsamlı bir şekilde analiz etmesinde yatmaktadır. Bu kapsamda yapılan çalışmanın amacı, ilgili alan yazında yer alan tartışmalara dayanarak orta direk muhafazakâr seçmen olarak tanımladığımız Y kuşağı seçmenlerin siyasi katılım davranışları üzerinde etkili olan faktörleri tespit etmektir. Bu doğrultuda Türkiye'de seçme ve seçilebilme hakkına sahip Y kuşağı (1980-1999 arası doğumlu) seçmenler çalışmaya dahil edilmiştir. Ayrıca çalışma, kapsamlı bir analiz sağlamak için nicel anket verilerini (n=433) nitel literatürle birleştiren karma bir yöntem yaklaşımı kullanmaktadır. Yapılan analizler neticesinde Y kuşağı seçmenlerin siyasi katılım davranışları üzerinde internet ve sosyal medyanın etkin olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Bununla birlikte eğitim seviyelerinin siyasi katılım ve dijital pazarlama algıları üzerinde etkili olduğu tespit edilen bir diğer önemli bulgudur. Bu bulgular, siyasi partilerin Y kuşağı seçmenlerin siyasi katılımını artırmak ve dijital iletişimde daha etkili olabilmek için özelleştirilmiş iletişim stratejileri geliştirmeleri gerektiğini vurgulamaktadır.

Keywords

Y Kuşağı
Siyasi Katılım Davranışı
Siyasi Parti
Seçmen Davranışı
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INTRODUCTION

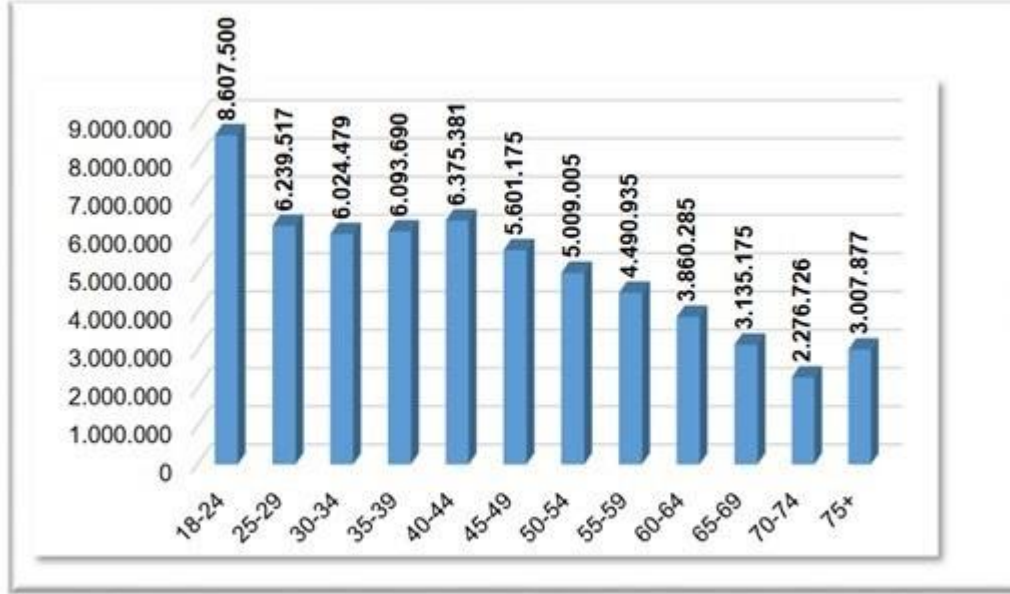
Today, determining the factors that are effective in the political participation behaviour of voters is of vital importance in terms of the political life of political parties and candidates (Mutlu, 2005: 19). Political parties and candidates want to direct voters and make them their supporters by following strategic policies to manipulate the factors that affect the political participation behaviour of voters (Topcu, 2006: 70; Tan, 2002: 122). Political parties and candidates win the elections by increasing their votes with the support of voters and gain the power to administer the government and state (Gökçe, 2013: 65). Political actors influence voters with their activities and can direct their voting behaviour. The factors affecting voter behaviour can be classified as socio-cultural, psychological and economic factors (Armutcu and Tan, 2023: 23).

Age factor is evaluated by political parties and candidates as one of the important socio-cultural factors affecting voter behaviours. Political parties and candidates segment voters by age groups in their political marketing activities and create political content accordingly. In this way, they establish more effective communication with their target audience and have the opportunity to build long-term relationships (Armutcu and Tan, 2022: 80).

When voter behaviours are examined, it is seen that voters belonging to different age groups exhibit different political participation behaviours. These differences between generations can cause differences in the political participation behaviours as well as in the political thoughts of voters. In this respect, political parties and candidates determine their target audience by determining the factors arising from generational differences and position their party accordingly (Divanoğlu, 2017: 268). For instance, it is observed that Gen Z voters tend to adopt a more radical and progressive approach, while voters belonging to Gen Y tend to develop and exhibit more conservative behaviours (Turan and Temizel, 2015: 143). It is known that there are differences among voters of different age groups, which leads to variations in their voting behaviours (Akdemir et al., 2014: 17; Turan and Temizel, 2015: 142).

In general, three different generation groups are mentioned today. These are defined as Gen X, Y and Z groups and political discourses and policies are determined to address the specific needs and desires of each of these groups (Armutcu and Tan, 2023: 21). Among these groups, the proportion of voters belonging to Gen Y and defined as middle-class voters is significant in 2023, accounting for nearly 40.73% (see Figure 1) of all the voters. Thus, it is crucial for political parties and candidates to identify the factors that influence the political participation behaviour of Gen Y voters, as they play a significant role in their success. In this context, the purpose of the current study is to determine the factors that are effective in the political participation behaviour of Gen Y (born between 1980 and 1999) voters, whom we define as middle-class conservative voters based on the discussions in the relevant literature.

Figure 1. Number of Voters in the 2023 Election



Source: www.ysk.gov.tr

This study consists of five sections. The introduction section forms the first part of the study, followed by the second section, which provides information about political participation and the concept of Gen Y voters. The third section includes the methodology, purpose, scope, review of the relevant literature, proposed model and hypotheses. The fourth section presents the empirical findings of the study, providing comprehensive results of the analyses conducted. Lastly, the fifth section of the study includes the conclusion and suggestions based on the findings obtained in the study.

1. Political Participation and Gen Y

Political participation behaviour refers to the active engagement of individuals in political processes. Through this participation, citizens can influence political decision-making processes, shape political institutions and support political change in a democratic society and it manifests itself in different forms such as participating in elections, engaging in political debates and consciously voting on political issues (Uluç, 2007: 12).

Political participation behaviour is defined as all the actions taken by voters to influence the decision-making mechanisms of the state (Kışlalı, 1995: 190). In this context, it can be stated that voters have the power to influence the decisions of central and local governments, whether they will remain in office and their policies/activities through their voting behaviour (Özbudun, 1975: 33). In other words, it is defined as all the activities that the voters take to influence the decisions taken or to be taken (Büyüktosunoğlu, 2013: 2). All

attitudes and behaviours of voters towards political events are evaluated within the scope of political participation activities (Görgülü, 2018: 5).

Among the numerous factors influential on voters' political participation behaviour, age is an important factor (Marien et al., 2010: 205). Voters tend to exhibit the same behaviours as the individuals in the generation group they are in, since they have lived in similar periods and have similar experiences (Kalaycıoğlu, 1983: 10). While the age factor is an important factor for voters to have the right to vote and to be elected, it is also an important factor in terms of forming a perspective on political events (Dursun, 2013: 110) because voters belonging to different age groups are exposed to different social influences and upbringing and this causes them to have different perspectives (Kahraman, 2011: 73-75).

Divanoğlu (2017) states that each generation exhibits different behaviours from another and argues that the underlying reasons for these behavioural differences are their needs and motivations, learning processes, personality, perceptions, attitudes and beliefs, the culture of the society and social class they live in, reference groups and family (Divanoğlu, 2017: 276). Some of these factors also affect voting behaviour. When studies on the generational groups to which voters belong are examined, it is found that Gen X is defined as those born between 1965 and 1979, Gen Y includes those born between 1980 and 1999 and Gen Z refers to those born in 2000 and onwards (see Table 1). In this regard, the political participation behaviours of Gen Y voters are frequently analyzed by political parties and candidates. The general characteristics of Gen Y voters are closely following technology, valuing family structure, emphasizing teamwork and striving for success, being open to innovation and being environmentally conscious (Mailiyamu, 2019: 30).

Table 1. Age Range by Generation

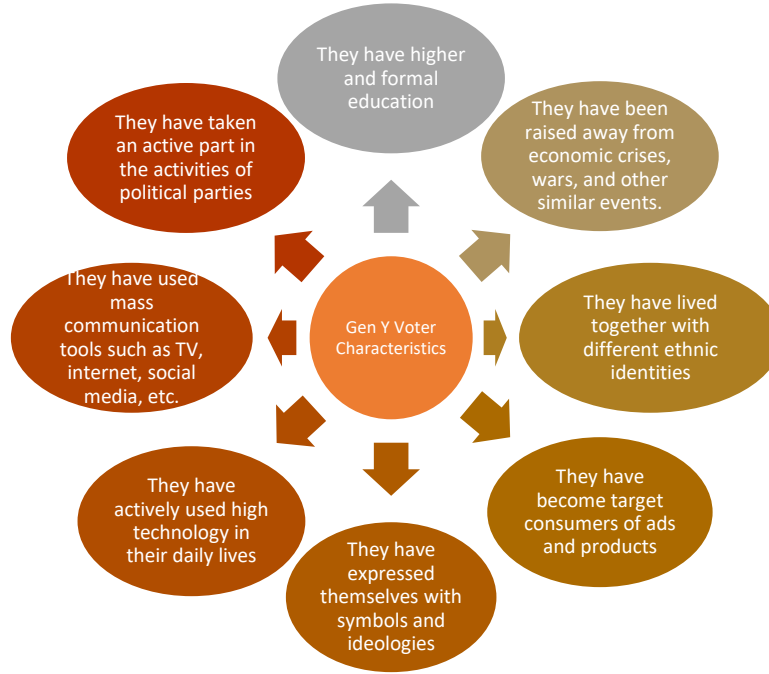
Name of the Generation	Period
Gen X	1965 – 1979
Gen Y	1980 – 1999
Gen Z	2000 and Onwards

Source: Armutcu and Tan, 2023; Mücevher, 2015; Çakmak and Çelik, 2017; Erdoğan, 2019.

One of the most prominent and indispensable characteristics of Gen Y voters is their perception of social networks and communication tools as an essential part of their lives (Topgül, 2015: 25). Furthermore, it can be stated that Gen Y individuals are educated individuals compared to other generational groups, as they have higher levels of education and have grown up entirely in a formal educational environment (Brown et al., 2009: 7). Gen Y is also defined as a self-aware and questioning generation that enjoys living life to the fullest (Twenge, 2009: 139). In this regard, it is known that Gen Y voters exhibit high levels of political participation, leading to high political participation rates. Gen Y actively uses technology in all aspects of their lives, they closely follow political developments and aim to shape these developments through their active voting behaviour. The main characteristics of Gen Y voters,

as expressed by Topgül (2015) and found in the relevant literature, are summarized in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Gen Y Voter Characteristics



Source: Topgül, 2015: 26.

2. Method

2.1. Purpose and Method of the Study

The purpose of the current study is to identify the factors that influence the political participation behaviour of Gen Y voters, who are defined as middle-class conservative voters. To this end, first, a pilot study was conducted on Gen Y (born between 1980 and 1999) voters using the questionnaire prepared in the study and thus the negative influences of common method bias were reduced. Following the pilot study, data were collected by sending a structured online questionnaire to a group of Gen Y voters selected by using the convenience sampling method to identify the factors influencing their political participation behaviours. In the self-report questionnaire, participants were initially asked about their age to include only Gen Y voters, born between 1980 and 1999, in the study. Thus, a total of 433 questionnaires were returned. In order to evaluate the questionnaire data collected from the participants, analyses were performed using the IBM SPSS 26 statistical program package. The items in the political participation scale within the questionnaire used in the study were taken from the questions in the political participation scale used by Armutcu and Tan (2023) and Erdoğan (2019) and were revised and used in accordance with the purpose of the study. The first part of the questionnaire included questions to determine the demographic characteristics of the participants, while the second part of the questionnaire included questions containing descriptive expressions of political participation behaviours. Finally, in the third part of the

questionnaire, questions created to determine the political participation behaviours of the participants were included. For the questionnaire used in the study, approval was obtained from the Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee of Gaziantep University with the permission document dated 06.06.2022 and numbered 193934.

2.2. Hypothesis Development and Model Formation

In this part of the study, the findings obtained as a result of the literature review on the subject are presented. Abadan and Yücekök (1966) found that economic factors are an important factor on voters' preferences. Similarly, Mueller (1970) states that unemployment and unemployment policies are important factors on voters' preferences. Fair (1978), on the other hand, states that voters take into account the past actions of the current government while voting and can change their voting behaviour in this way. In addition, Limanlılar (1991) found that the party's programme, ideology, leader and election campaigns are important factors on voters' political participation behaviours and preferences. Tan (1998) found that political party leader, promises and election campaigns are important factors in political marketing. Niemi et al. (2001) determined that the family has a significant effect on individuals' voting behaviour. Moreover, Ventura (2001) found that families transfer their political thoughts to their children and in this way, when their children come to voting age, they have the same political attitude and behaviour as their parents. Ay and Çağlar (2019) determined that digital marketing practices are effective on the political participation behaviours of Gen Y voters. Erdoğan (2019) determined that there is a significant difference between age groups in terms of voting behaviour. Bilginer and Çetin (2019) state that Gen Y voters are more affected by leadership characteristics. Armutcu and Tan (2020) state that political marketing and digital marketing practices affect voters' voting preferences. Öztürk (2020), on the other hand, revealed that the family has a significant impact on the political attitudes and behaviours of Gen Y voters. In addition, Hafızoğlu (2021) determined that social media and income levels are influential on the voting behaviours of Gen Z voters. Armutcu and Mavi (2022) determined that the party's ideology and political marketing factors were effective on the political behaviours of voters. Çetin and Karabulut (2023) found that environment, cultural, familial, social media and marketing activities are effective in the political participation behaviours of Gen Y voters. Armutcu and Tan (2023), on the other hand, found that mass media and leadership characteristics are effective but that their effect differs depending on the variables of income level and age. Based on the aforementioned studies and conceptual explanations, the developed hypotheses and the proposed research model (see Figure 1) for identifying the factors influencing voters' political participation behaviours are as follows:

H1: Gen Y voters' perceptions of the political product vary significantly depending on their income level.

H2: Gen Y voters' perceptions of digital marketing elements vary significantly depending on their income level.

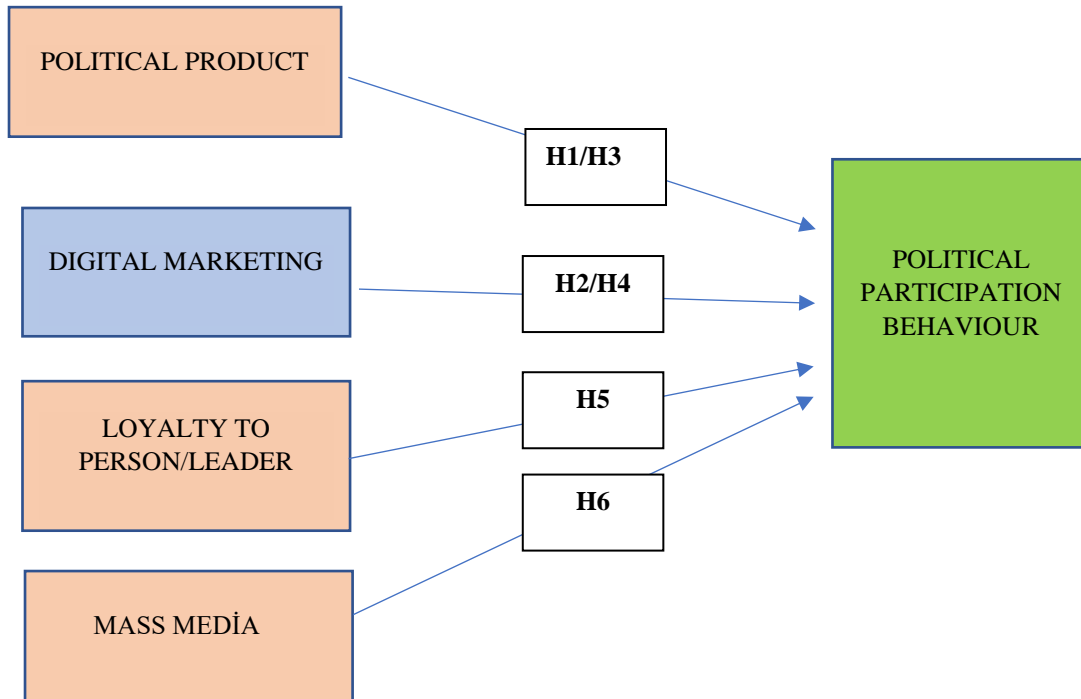
H3: Gen Y voters' perceptions of the political product vary significantly depending on their education level.

H4: Gen Y voters' perceptions of digital marketing elements vary significantly depending on their education level.

H5: Gen Y voters' perceptions of the degree of loyalty to the person/leader vary significantly depending on their gender.

H6: Gen Y voters' perceptions of the frequency of using mass media vary significantly depending on their gender.

Figure 3. Proposed Conceptual Research Model



3. Empirical Findings of the Study

3.1. Descriptive Findings Related to the Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

In this part of the study, the findings related to the demographic characteristics of the participants are presented. The frequency and percentage values of the demographic information of the participants are given in Table 2. As seen in Table 2, 67.4% of the participants are male and 32.6% are female. Of the participants, 65.5% are married and 28.9% are single. When the education level of the participants is examined, it is seen that 54.5% have

an undergraduate/graduate degree, 18.5% are high school graduates and 13.5% have an associate's degree. On the other hand, 30.7% of the participants are workers and 30% are civil servants. Finally, 45.3% of the participants have a monthly income of 3001-7000TL, 17.6% 1001-3000TL and 16.4% 1000TL and less.

Table 2. Findings on the Demographic Information of the Participants

		n	%
Gender	Female	141	32.6
	Male	292	67.4
Total		433	100
Marital Status	Single	125	28.9
	Married	301	69.5
	Divorced	7	1.6
Total		433	100
Education Level	Primary school	21	4.8
	Middle school	38	8.8
	High school	80	18.5
	Associate's	58	13.4
	Undergraduate/graduate	236	54.5
Total		433	100
Occupation	Worker	133	30.7
	Civil servant	130	30.0
	Housewife	46	10.6
	Student	56	12.9
	Self-employed	66	15.2
Total		433	100
Income level	1000TL and Less	71	16.4
	1001-3000TL	76	17.6
	3001-7000TL	196	45.3
	7001-10.000TL	68	15.7
	10.000TL and More	22	5.1
Total		433	100

3.2. Findings on the Participants' Political Participation Levels

In this part of the study, the findings on the political participation levels of the participants are presented. In this context, the findings regarding the frequency and percentage values calculated for the responses given to the questions asked about the participants' political participation level and loyalty to the leader are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Findings on the Participants' Political Participation Level and Loyalty to the Leader

Statements	n	%	X	SS
Political Participation Level				
I'm not very interested in politics	127	29.3		
I only vote	139	32.1		
Apart from voting, I watch politics on TV and talk about politics.	109	25.2	2.24	1.056
I actively participate in politics	50	11.5		
I have a high level of participation in politics	8	1.8		
Loyalty to the Leader				
Very weak	27	6.2		
Weak	55	12.7		
Undecided	112	25.9	3.50	1.129
Strong	154	35.6		
Very strong	85	19.6		
Total	433	100.0		

As seen in Table 3, 32.1% of the participants only vote, 29.3% are not very interested in politics, and 25.2% engage in political discussions and watch politics on TV in addition to voting. Furthermore, it is seen that 35.6% of the participants have strong loyalty to the leader, 25.9% are undecided and 19.6% have very strong loyalty.

3.3. Findings on the Participants' Use of Mass Media

In this part of the study, the findings on the participants' use of mass media are presented. In this context, the findings on the frequency and percentage values calculated for the responses given to the question asked about how many times in a week the participants use important mass media such as television, internet, magazines, radio and social media are given in Table 4. When the frequency of use of television, one of the mass media, of the participants was examined, it was determined that 30.7% used it every day and 29.3% used it 1-2 days a week.

Table 4. Findings on the Participants' Frequency of Using Mass Media

Mass Media	I never use		1-2 days a week		3-4 days a week		5-6 days a week		Every day			
	X	SS	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Television	3.20	1.439	51	11.8	127	29.3	74	17.1	48	11.1	133	30.7
Internet	3.97	1.328	23	5.3	66	15.2	52	12	53	12	239	55.2
Magazine	1.91	1.160	208	48	135	31.2	41	9.5	21	4.8	28	6.5
Radio	2.11	1.248	173	40	145	33.5	50	11.5	26	6	39	9
Social media	3.89	1.427	40	9.2	59	13.6	48	11.1	46	10.6	240	55.4

As seen in Table 4, 55.2% of the participants use mass media every day and 15.2% use 1-2 days a week. On the other hand, 48% of the participants never read magazines. In addition, it is seen that only 9% of the participants listen to the radio every day and 40% do not listen to the radio. Finally, it is seen that 55.4% of the participants use social media every day.

3.4. Findings on the Participants' Ways of Political Participation

In this part of the study, the findings on the participants' ways of political participation are presented. When the findings on the participants' ways of political participation given in Table 5 are examined, it is seen that 94.5% of the participants have voted in a political election, 90.3% have not occupied any position in a political party and 76.7% have not been involved in the activities of any NGOs or similar organizations.

Table 5. Findings on the Participants' Ways of Political Participation

Items	Yes		No		X	SS
	n	%	n	%		
I have voted in a political election	409	94.5	24	5.5	1.06	0.229
I have occupied a position in a political party	42	9.7	391	90.3	1.90	0.296
I took part in the activities of all kinds of NGOs and similar organisations (associations, foundations, communities, unions, cooperatives, etc.).	101	23.3	332	76.7	1.77	0.423
I have served in the city council/youth council.	24	5.5	409	94.5	1.94	0.229
I want to be actively involved in politics in the future	126	29.1	307	70.9	1.71	0.455
I write a petition to the municipality or similar authorities regarding any problem I have experienced	253	58.4	180	41.6	1.42	0.493
I share posts with political content (visuals, video, music, comment, etc.) on the social media	103	23.8	330	76.2	1.76	0.426
I watch political programs on television	262	60.5	171	39.5	1.39	0.489
I watch political campaign advertisements aired on television by political parties	197	45.5	236	54.5	1.55	0.499
I follow the current news and columns about politics in the newspaper.	156	36.0	277	64.0	1.64	0.481
I learn about current political issues and share my knowledge with people around me	231	53.3	202	46.7	1.47	0.499
I try to persuade the people around me to vote for the political party and candidate I support	137	31.6	296	68.4	1.68	0.466
I express my opinion by participating in the surveys conducted during the election periods	177	44.09	256	59.1	1.59	0.492
I attend political panels, discussions, conferences and meetings as a listener	104	24.0	329	76.0	1.76	0.428
I have taken part in the election campaign of a political party/candidate	74	17.1	359	82.9	1.83	0.377
I have attended a rally, demonstration, march etc. of a political party	136	31.4	297	68.6	1.69	0.465

Continuation of Table 5

I have taken part in an online protest	51	11.8	382	88.2	1.88	0.323
I have participated in a mass walkout	60	13.9	373	86.1	1.86	0.346

As seen in Table 5, 70.9% of the participants will not be interested in actively engaging in politics in the future, 76.2% avoid sharing any political content on social media and 60.5% watch political programs on television. In addition, Table 4 shows that political advertisements on television (54.5%), newspaper and column articles (64%), candidate campaigns (82.9%), political conferences (76%) and surveys (59.1%) do not have a significant impact on the political participation behaviours of Gen Y voters. Furthermore, it is determined that 53.3% of the participants share their political knowledge with the people around and 58.4% contact relevant public institutions and organizations when facing an issue. Finally, it is seen that 68.6% of the participants have not attended any political rallies, demonstrations or marches, 88.2% have not participated in any protest actions online, and 86.1% have not participated in a mass walkout.

3.5. Factor Analysis, Validity, Correlation and Reliability Analysis Results

The EFA (Exploratory Factor Analysis) test was conducted to determine the factor structure and construct validity of the Political Participation Scale (PPS). For the EFA test, first, the direct oblique rotation test and the principal component method were selected and the test was carried out. Büyüköztürk (2011) states that it is correct to use the direct oblique rotation method when there is a relationship between the factors, while the principal components method is one of the most frequently used methods in studies (Büyüköztürk, 2011: 126).

It is seen in Table 6 that the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) value is 0.927. A value above 0.50 is considered acceptable for the adequacy of the sample size, while a value of 0.80 or above is considered excellent (Field, 2009: 647; Tavşancıl, 2005: 29-31). Thus, the KMO value obtained from the EFA test indicates the adequacy of the sample size. Furthermore, KMO values were calculated for each item and the smallest KMO value was found to be 0.845. The Bartlett test value (Bartlett Sphericity ($\chi^2(105) = 5958.101$; $p < 0.05$) obtained from the EFA test can be seen in Table 6. The Bartlett Test result shows that the items are suitable for factor analysis and that the correlation values are large enough for the EFA test.

As a result of the EFA test, it was determined that PPS consisting of 16 items has two sub-dimensions and these two sub-dimensions explain 71.399% of the total variance. The first sub-dimension explains 14.764% of the variance while the second sub-dimension explains 56.635% of it. In addition, the 5th item in PPS with a factor loading below 0.40 was removed from the scale. In Table 6, the distribution of the items used in the Political Participation Scale to the sub-dimensions and the factor loading values of each item are given.

Table 6. Results of the EFA

Items	Factor Loading Value	Factor Eigenvalue	Common Variance	Explained Variance	Bartlett's χ^2 (105)	KMO			
Political Product									
PPS 1	.770	2.215 (%14.764)	.615	71.399	5958.101 (p<0.05)	0.927			
PPS 2	.876		.740						
PPS 3	.869		.762						
PPS 4	.864		.763						
Digital Marketing									
PPS 6	.754	8.495 (%56.635)	.572						
PPS 7	.799		.603						
PPS 8	.809		.680						
PPS 9	.775		.659						
PPS 10	.894		.795						
PPS 11	.943		.822						
PPS 12	.910		.787						
PPS 13	.818		.730						
PPS 14	.784		.710						
PPS 15	.886		.763						
PPS 16	.835		.708						

As a result of the factor analysis performed, it was determined that PPS consists of two sub-dimensions (political product, digital marketing) and the first sub-dimension has 4 items (1-4 items), while the second sub-dimension has 11 items (6-16 items). While the smallest factor loading value was found to be 0.754 (PPS6), the highest factor loading value was found to be 0.943 (PPS11). In this context, as the validity of the items with a factor loading value over 0.40 is accepted as ideal (Field, 2009: 666), the items can be said to make important contributions to their respective sub-dimensions.

After the factor analysis of the data, before starting the analysis of the data, it is necessary to examine whether the data are normally distributed in order to decide which tests to use. To this end, kurtosis and skewness values are examined. There are two different ranges accepted in the relevant literature to test the assumption of normal distribution. In the first range, a value in the range of ± 2 for skewness and kurtosis coefficients is considered to be an indicator of normal distribution (George and Mallery, 2010: 231) while in the second, the value should be in the range of ± 1.5 (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013: 618). In this context, it can be observed from the results of the normality tests presented in Table 7 that the calculated skewness (-0.782) and kurtosis (0.432) coefficients fall within the specified ranges. Furthermore, as observed in Table 7, according to the calculated alpha coefficient (0.945) for the reliability of the scale is high (Özdamar, 2004: 633).

Table 7. Normality, Reliability and Correlation Results of the Political Participation Scale

Normality and Reliability Analysis			
		Statistic	Std. Error
Political Participation Scale	Skewness	-.782	.117
	Kurtosis	.432	.234
Cronbach's Alpha			
.945			
Pearson Correlation Analysis			
		Political Participation Behaviour	Political Product
Political Participation Behaviour	r	1	.595 (0.000)
Political Product	r		1
Digital Marketing	r		
			.976 (0.000)
			.420 (0.000)
			1

According to the results of the Pearson correlation analysis seen in Table 7, there is a positive, medium and significant correlation between the political participation behaviour of the voters and the sub-dimensions of the political participation scale (political product and digital marketing). There is a significant positive and strong correlation ($r=0.595$; $p<0.05$) between political participation behaviour and the political product and a significant positive and very strong correlation ($r=0.976$; $p<0.05$) between political participation behaviour and digital marketing. Furthermore, a significant positive and medium correlation ($r=0.420$; $p<0.05$) was found between the sub-dimensions of the political participation scale ($r=.420$; $p<0.05$).

3.6. Findings on the Items in the Political Participation Scale

In this part of the study, the frequency and percentage values for the items in the political participation scale are given in Table 8. When the political product factor is examined, it is seen that the candidate himself/herself is influential on the political participation of 63% of the participants, the candidate's ideology on the political participation of 58% of the participants, the activities of the party on the political participation of 61.7% of the participants and the party's ideology on the political participation of 53.3% of the participants.

Table 8. Findings on the Items in the Political Participation Scale

Items	X	SS	Very Unimportant		Unimportant		Undecided		Important		Very Important	
			n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
			Political Product Factor									
Candidate himself/herself	4.43	.94	12	2.8	14	3.2	24	5.5	110	25.4	273	63
Candidate's ideology	4.38	.90	8	1.8	16	3.7	31	7.2	127	29.3	251	58
Party's promises	4.43	.90	10	2.3	14	3.2	22	5.1	120	27.7	267	61.7
Party's ideology	4.27	1.00	14	3.2	18	4.2	38	8.8	132	30.5	231	53.3

Continuation of Table 8

Digital Marketing Product												
Public opinion survey results	3.37	1.26	46	10.6	63	14.5	101	23.3	131	30.3	92	21.2
The probability of the candidate winning the election	3.37	1.35	56	12.9	67	15.5	81	18.7	119	27.5	110	25.4
The effectiveness of the political campaign	3.49	1.24	38	8.8	59	13.6	94	21.7	135	32.1	107	24.7
Face-to-face interviews with voters	3.75	1.25	34	7.9	47	10.9	63	14.5	139	32.1	150	34.6
Television broadcasts	3.60	1.26	41	9.5	48	11.1	74	17.1	150	34.6	120	27.7
Newspapers / magazines	3.41	1.26	48	11.1	54	12.5	96	22.2	141	32.6	94	21.7
Radio broadcasts	3.29	1.27	54	12.5	61	14.1	107	24.7	129	29.8	82	18.9
Internet	3.84	1.23	36	8.3	31	7.2	59	13.6	146	33.7	161	37.2
Social media	3.96	1.24	34	7.9	37	8.5	53	12.2	140	32.3	169	39
Brochures, posters, advertisements, photographs, films	3.38	1.32	51	11.8	68	15.7	88	20.3	117	27.0	109	25.2
Rallies and demonstrations	3.46	1.35	53	12.2	55	12.7	90	20.8	109	25.2	126	29.1

When the items related to the digital marketing factor in Table 8 are examined, it is seen that the most important influence on the political participation behaviours of 539 participants comes from social media, followed by internet (37.2%) and television broadcasts (34.6%), face-to-face interviews (34.6%), newspapers/magazines (32.6%), political campaigns (32.1%), public survey results (30.3%), rallies/demonstrations (29.1%)) and the probability of the candidate winning the election (27.5%).

3.7. The Effect of Education Level on the Participants' Perceptions of the Political Participation Scale

The findings regarding the effect of education level on the participants' perceptions of the political participation scale are given in Table 9.

Table 9. The Effect of Education Level on the Participants' Perceptions of the Political Participation Scale

Factors	Education Level	n	X	SS	F	p	Significance Level
Political Participation	Primary school (1)	21	3.92	0.94	5.912	0.000*	4>5
	Middle school (2)	38	3.90	0.71			
	High school (3)	80	3.84	.84			
	Associate's (4)	58	4.08	0.78			
	Undergraduate and Graduate (5)	236	3.55	0.91			

Continuation of Table 9

Political Product	Primary school (1)	21	4.22	0.86	2.058	0.085	Insignificant
	Middle school (2)	38	4.30	0.68			
	High school (3)	80	4.25	0.81			
	Associate's (4)	58	4.61	0.51			
	Undergraduate and Graduate (5)	236	4.38	0.85			
Digital Marketing	Primary school (1)	21	3.83	1.04	6.803	0.000*	1>5; 2>5
	Middle school (2)	38	3.77	0.89			
	High school (3)	80	3.72	0.97			
	Associate's (4)	58	3.93	0.95			
	Undergraduate and Graduate (5)	236	3.29	1.10			

In this part of the study, it was determined that the participants' perceptions of the political participation scale vary significantly depending on their education level ($F=5.912$; $p<0.05$). According to the results of the TUKEY test, which was conducted to determine the source of this difference, the perceptions of the participants with an associate's degree ($X=4.08$) are significantly higher than those of the participants with an undergraduate/graduate degree ($X=3.53$). The difference between these two groups of participants was found to be insignificant for the political product factor ($F=2.058$; $p>0.05$). However, it was determined that the participants' perceptions of the digital marketing factor varied significantly depending on their education level ($F=6.803$; $p<0.05$). When the source of this difference was examined, it was found that the perceptions of the participants who are primary school graduates about digital marketing ($X=3.83$) are significantly higher than those of the participants with an undergraduate/graduate degree ($X=3.01$) and the perceptions of the participants who are middle school graduates ($X=3.77$) are significantly higher than those of the participants having an undergraduate/graduate degree ($X=3.29$).

3.8. The Effect of Gender on the Participants' Perceptions of the Leader and Mass Media

In this part of the study, the findings on whether the participants' perceptions of the leader and mass media vary significantly depending on gender are presented in Table 10. It is seen in Table 10 that the participants' perceptions of the leader vary significantly depending on gender ($t_{431}=-3.216$; $p<0.05$). The male participants' perceptions of the leader ($X=3.62$) are significantly higher than those of the female participants ($X=3.25$).

Table 10. Findings on the Effect of Gender on the Participants' Perceptions of the Leader and Mass Media

Variables	Groups	N	X	ss	t-Test		
					t	sd	p
Loyalty to the leader							
Loyalty to the Leader	Female	141	3.25	1.10	-3.216	431	0.001*
	Male	292	3.62	1.12			
Frequency of using mass media to reach information about political issues							
Television	Female	141	2.99	1.47	-2.052	431	0.041*
	Male	292	3.29	1.41			
Radio	Female	141	1.74	1.05	-4.581	332.38	0.000*
	Male	292	2.38	1.29			
Magazine	Female	141	1.67	1.03	-2.912	431	0.004*
	Male	292	2.02	1.20			
Internet	Female	141	3.78	1.36	-2.050	431	0.041*
	Male	292	4.06	1.30			
Social Media	Female	141	3.68	1.49	-2.167	431	0.031*
	Male	292	4.00	1.38			

Note: * denotes a significance level of 5% (0.05).

As seen in Table 10, the participants' perceptions of television vary significantly depending on gender ($t_{431}=2.052$; $p<0.05$). The male participants' perceptions of television ($X=3.29$) are significantly higher than those of the female participants ($X=2.99$). In addition, the participants' perceptions of radio ($t_{431}=4.581$; $p<0.05$), magazines ($t_{431}=-2.912$; $p<0.05$), internet ($t_{431}=2.050$; $p<0.05$) and social media ($t_{431}=2.167$; $p<0.05$) were also found to vary depending on gender.

3.9. The Effect of Income Level on the Participants' Perceptions of their Political Behaviours

Findings on the effect of income level on the participants' perceptions of their political behaviours are presented in Table 11.

Table 11. Findings on the Effect of Income Level on the Participants' Perceptions of Political Behaviours

Variables	Income Level	n	X	SS	F	p	Significance Level
Political Participation	1000 TL and less (1)	71	3.86	0.85	1.111	0.351	Insignificant
	1.001-3.000 (2)	76	3.74	0.96			
	3.000-7.000 (3)	196	3.73	0.87			
	7.001-10.000 (4)	68	3.60	0.82			
	10.000 and more (5)	22	3.50	1.05			
Political Product	1000 TL and less (1)	71	4.41	0.65	1.006	0.404	Insignificant
	1.001-3.000 (2)	76	4.30	0.93			
	3.000-7.000 (3)	196	4.41	0.76			
	7.001-10.000 (4)	68	4.40	0.73			
	10.000 and more (5)	22	4.09	1.14			
Digital Marketing	1000 TL and less (1)	71	3.70	1.07	1.165	0.326	Insignificant
	1.001-3.000 (2)	76	3.56	1.10			
	3.000-7.000 (3)	196	3.53	1.05			
	7.001-10.000 (4)	68	3.37	1.05			
	10.000 and more (5)	22	3.27	1.15			

As seen in Table 12, the participants' perceptions of their political behaviours do not vary significantly depending on their income level ($F=1.111$; $p>0.05$). In this regard, their perceptions of the political product factor ($F=1.006$; $p>0.05$) and the digital marketing factor ($F=1.165$; $p<0.05$) were found to not vary significantly depending on income level.

Table 12. The Results of the Hypothesis Regarding the Effect of Different Factors on the Participants' Perceptions of the Political Participation Scale

Hypotheses	Result
H1 Gen Y voters' perceptions of the political product vary significantly depending on their income level.	Rejected
H2 Gen Y voters' perceptions of digital marketing elements vary significantly depending on their income level.	Rejected
H3 Gen Y voters' perceptions of the political product vary significantly depending on their education level.	Rejected
H4 Gen Y voters' perceptions of digital marketing elements vary significantly depending on their education level.	Accepted
H5 Gen Y voters' perceptions of the degree of loyalty to the person/leader vary significantly depending on their gender.	Accepted
H6 Gen Y voters' perceptions of the frequency of using mass media vary significantly depending on their gender.	Accepted

RESULTS AND SUGGESTIONS

The factors affecting voter behaviours are very important for political parties and candidates because of their importance in shaping election results and political strategies. These factors provide valuable information about voters' motivations, preferences and priorities. By understanding these effects, political actors carry out political marketing campaigns by adapting their campaigns, messages and policy agendas to different voter groups. Knowledge about the factors affecting voters' political participation behaviours allows political actors to strengthen their existing supporters, persuade undecided voters, prioritize important issues and develop long-term strategies that are aligned with the evolving wants and needs of voters.

Political participation is an essential element of democratic societies and is crucial in understanding the factors that encourage or hinder the participation of conservative voters. The current study aims to examine the factors affecting the political participation behaviour of conservative voters. The study also explores the impact of political products and digital marketing on the political participation behaviour of voters. This study can make important contributions to policymakers, political parties and academics by providing valuable information on the factors that motivate or hinder the political participation of conservative voters. The contribution of the study to the literature is its comprehensive analysis of the multifaceted factors that affect the political participation behaviour of conservative voters.

As a result of the analyses made, it can be said that the political participation behaviour of Gen Y voters in terms of using mass media for active political participation is not at the desired level. Many of them only vote. There are many participants not interested in politics. Therefore, it is recommended that political parties and candidates develop more effective communication strategies to attract young voters and encourage them to participate in different ways. In addition, it was found in the current study that loyalty to the leader is considerably high (55.2%). This shows that political actors need to make more efforts to gain the trust of Gen Y voters. At this point, it can be stated that it is important to evaluate the potential of mass media to increase political participation and interest because Gen Y voters use the internet intensively.

While 55.2% of the Gen Y voters participating in the current study use the internet every day, 15.2% use it 1-2 days a week. The internet has become an important communication tool among Gen Y voters with its advantages such as quick access to information, easy access to social media, news and other content. Therefore, political parties and candidates should develop strategies to interact with Gen Y voters and inform them over the internet.

The use of social media among Gen Y voters is highly frequent. In the current study, it was revealed that 55.4% of the participants use social media every day. In this respect, social media is an important platform to reach Gen Y voters and to communicate political messages interactively. Political parties and candidates can shape their social media strategies to address the needs and desires of Gen Y voters, participate in discussions and use these platforms effectively to mobilize Gen Y voters.

Political participation refers to the active participation of individuals in political processes. Education level generally reflects an individual's level of knowledge, skills and social capital. Studies in the literature show that education level has a positive effect on political participation. It is stated that individuals with higher education levels generally have

more political knowledge, participate more actively in political processes and have a higher level of political participation. In this context, it is a remarkable finding of the current study is that the perceptions of the participants' with an associate's degree about the political participation scale are significantly higher than those of the participants having an undergraduate/graduate degree. This may be because participants with an associate's degree generally have more political knowledge, awareness and willingness to participate.

Based on the results obtained in the current study, it can be said that education level has an effect on political participation and digital marketing perception. Participants with an associate's degree approach political participation in a more positive manner. In addition, the participants with primary and middle education have a more positive perception of digital marketing. These findings show that political parties should develop strategies to increase the political participation of young people and to communicate more effectively on digital platforms, taking into account their educational level. In particular, the use of digital marketing tools should be made more widespread among Gen Y voters and customized communication approaches should be adopted according to education level.

The participants' perceptions of loyalty to the leader and mass media vary significantly depending on gender. It was determined that the male participants' perceptions of party programs, television, radio, magazines, internet and social media are more positive than those of the female participants. Moreover, the male participants' loyalty to the leader was found to be significantly higher than that of the female participants. This shows that the male participants have a higher level of trust and support for party leaders than the female participants. However, it was determined that the participants' perceptions of their political behaviours do not vary significantly depending on their income level. In other words, the income levels of the participants do not have a determining effect on their perceptions of their political behaviours.

The results of the study show that the level of political participation of Gen Y voters is insufficient and they are generally only active at the level of voting. Therefore, political parties and candidates should develop more effective communication strategies in order to attract the attention of Gen Y voters and explore different participation methods.

Gen Y individuals use the internet intensively and therefore it is important to use digital platforms such as internet and social media effectively in political communication. Education level is effective on political participation and digital marketing perception, and the participants with an associate's degree approach political participation in a more positive manner. These findings emphasize that political parties should develop customized communication strategies to increase the political participation of Gen Y voters and to be more effective in digital communication. Moreover, political parties and candidates should use the right communication strategies in order to reach and attract Gen Y voters. If political actors take into consideration the fact that Gen Y individuals use mass media intensively, they can increase the effectiveness of their political communication strategies and campaigns in terms of reaching voters. As a result, political parties and candidates can increase their electoral success and engage effectively with voters in democratic processes by considering the factors that shape the behaviours of voters.

Research and Publication Ethics Statement

I confirm that this work is original and has not been published elsewhere nor is it currently under consideration for publication elsewhere.

Contribution Rates of Authors to the Article

This article was prepared by a single author.

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