ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ / RESEARCH ARTICLE

Political Communication on Social Media: The Analysis of YouTube Advertisements for March 31, 2019 Local Elections

Sosyal Medyanın Siyasal İletişimi: 31 Mart 2019 Yerel Seçimleri YouTube Reklamları Analizi

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Abstract

In recent years, social media applications have been remarkably used in providing political information and participation. Social media is approached as a new meeting area where political actors and voters interact in political communication. Politicians actively and effectively use this medium during and beyond their election campaigns, particularly YouTube, which allows to see the number of views, the opportunity to comment on the videos and direct sharing. This article analyses the use of YouTube as a political communication medium by Turkey's five most popular political parties represented in the Grand National Assembly; AK Party, CHP, HDP, MHP and IYI Party; during March 31, 2019 Local Elections. The sample of this research consists of 120 political advertisements published on these political parties' official YouTube channels. The political advertisements were analysed by content analysis technique as a qualitative research method. According to the findings, the parties mostly prefer positive advertising language as an election strategy. In addition, we determined that the political advertisements published by CHP were closed to user interaction, and the other parties did not publish replies to the user comments on their advertisements. In sum, this paper argues that the parties utilized YouTube for promotion purposes in the same way as traditional media tools during this election period.

Keywords: Political Advertising, Social Media, YouTube, Local Election, Content Analysis

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Öz

Son yıllarda sosyal medya uygulamaları, siyasal bilgilenme ve katılım sağlanmasında dikkat çekici bir şekilde kullanılmaktadır. Sosyal medya, siyasal iletişimde siyasal aktörler ve seçmenlerin etkileşimde bulunduğu yeni bir buluşma alanı olarak ele alınmaktadır. Politikacılar bu ortamı seçim kampanyaları sırasında ve sonrasında, özellikle de izlenme sayısını, videolar hakkında yorum yapma fırsatını ve doğrudan paylaşımı görmelerini sağlayan bir araç olarak, aktif ve etkin bir şekilde kullanmaktadır. Bu makale, 31 Mart 2019 Yerel Seçimlerinde Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi'nde temsil edilen, Türkiye'nin en popüler beş siyasi partisi olan AK Parti, CHP, HDP, MHP ve İYİ Parti'nin YouTube'u siyasi iletişim aracı olarak kullanımını analiz etmektedir. Araştırmanın örneklemi, siyasi partilerin resmi YouTube kanallarında yayınlanan 120 siyasi reklamdan oluşmaktadır. Siyasi reklamlar nitel araştırma yöntemi olan içerik analizi tekniği ile analiz edilmiştir. Bulgulara göre, partiler çoğunlukla seçim stratejisi olarak pozitif reklam dilini tercih etmişlerdir. Buna ek olarak, CHP'nin yayınladığı siyasal reklamların kullanıcı etkileşimine kapalı olduğu, diğer partilerin ise reklamlarına yapılan yorumlara cevap vermediği tespit edilmiştir. Özetle bu makale; partilerin YouTube'u bu seçim döneminde, geleneksel medya araçlarıyla aynı şekilde, tanıtım amacıyla kullandıklarını savunmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Siyasal Reklam, Sosyal Medya, YouTube, Yerel Seçim, İçerik Analizi

Introduction

Before the 1950s, political communication activities in Turkey were carried out in the form of conversations and meetings of smaller groups with a small number of voters in auditoriums or squares. With the introduction of the media into people's lives, the number of people interested in politics became wider masses. In this way, the media served as a bridge between those who were governed and those who governed and had also created an environment for a large number of people to participate in politics.

In democratic systems, political candidates and parties face a number of problems in communicating with voters and convincing them. Here, political communication becomes crucial for democratic systems, since it offers the advantage of being under the control of the party and the candidate (Kaid, 1999; Kaid & Holtz-Bacha, 2006, p. 445). As media begin to be used in politics, politics transhaped and have been reorganized. The nature, manner, content, and impact of the message given to the voter have changed through these tools (Polat, Gürbüz & İnal, 2004, p. 19). Although the impact of the media influencing the masses has not changed, their technical characteristics, dimensions and qualities have changed according to the current era and the changes, transformations and developments that have occurred in this era.

This change, which occurred in parallel with the development of technology, has affected the field of political communication, where political issues and events are discussed, as well as communication technologies. The development of the internet-based social media (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, etc.) and the features that they have; have enabled political parties and candidates to utilize these media tools. Through social media, voters had the opportunity to follow political developments and communicate with politicians outside of election periods. Therefore, the use of social media platforms in the political arena paved the way for the

formation of political awareness of the voters, keeping their interest in political issues alive and increasing their participation in political processes. As in other countries of the world, the fact that the vast majority of voters in Turkey frequently use social media platforms has caused political parties and candidates to move the election race to these areas (Atabek, 2020, p. 38). In fact, election campaigns are now specially prepared for social media as well as traditional media. Social media tools such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram etc. allow interactive communication and do not necessitate the urgency of time and place. In addition, the content producer, that is the source, is also in the position of the receiver and it allows for dissenting opinions to be heard (Correa, Hinsley, & Zuniga, 2010; Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007; Hughes, Rowe, Batey & Lee, 2012; Lee & Ma, 2012; Special & Li-Barber, 2012). All of these opportunities have provided both voters and politicians to use these tools.

Among the social media platforms, YouTube, unlike other platforms, has a public mass media feature that allows its users to watch content wherever the internet exists without having any personal or corporate accounts. In addition, in the reports published by *Hootsuite* and *We Are Social*, which contains digital data from countries by year, it is also noted that YouTube is the most commonly used social media platform in Turkey in 2019 (92 percent), 2020 (90 percent) and 2021 (94.5 percent) (Datareportal, 2021). This situation reveals the necessity of studying on YouTube.

The most important feature that distinguishes social media tools from other communication tools is the interaction feature. Therefore, in this study, the types of political advertisements published on the official YouTube channel of the AK Party, CHP, HDP, MHP and IYI Party in March 31, 2019, Local Elections and how this channel is used by political parties are problematized. The aim of this study is to determine the types of advertisements used by the parties in political advertisements published on official YouTube channels between January 1, 2019, and March 31, 2019, as well as to reveal the status of parties benefiting from the interaction feature of the YouTube as a social media tool. Content analysis technique, which is one of the qualitative research methods, was utilized in this study.

Political Advertising in Turkey

The use of mass media and the political arena have been very influential in the development of political advertising in Turkey. The existence of a single party (CHP) government in Turkey until 1950 did not require any political campaigns or advertisements in this period. However, with the transition to multi-party life, there was a need for political campaigns and advertisements. At the same time, the widespread use and transportation of mass media has also affected this (Aktaş, 2004, p. 69; Tokgöz, 1977; Uztuğ, 1999, p. 25).

The first application of political advertising campaigns in Turkey was made in the 1950 elections. The Democrat Party, which was the opposition party, said, "*Enough, the word is to the nation!*" The advertising poster with the phrase "*Stop*" and a hand making a stop sign made its mark. This poster is considered to be the most effective advertisement in the field of political advertising in Turkey. In

the same period, the ruling party CHP had an advertising poster prepared with the words "*Give your vote to CHP for a Happy Future*" (Çevik, 1999, p. 120).

Real political campaign practices in Turkey entered our political life in 1977 with the initiatives of the Justice Party (Topuz, 1991, p. 6). Until this, political parties in Turkey have generally utilized promotional and advertising activities that would rather fall into a passive message classification. Given the development state of mass media in Turkey in 1977, it is difficult to say that there was an important development in the field of political campaigning before this date (Aziz, 2003, p. 85; Polat, 1996, p. 860).

In the 1980s, professionals began to be used more in political advertising campaigns. Political campaigns were broadcast on television programs, and the parties received professional help from advertising agencies for suitable dressing, speaking style and etc. for election campaigns. In this period, election campaigns started to turn into demonstrations in Turkey (Özkan, 2002, p. 84).

Since the 1990s, getting professional help in political campaigns is seen as a necessity in Turkey. Parties participating in the elections receive assistance from professional agencies, regardless of whether these are local or foreign, and make maximum use of new communication technologies in their campaign work.

Relationship between Political Communication and Social Media

Political communication is an interdisciplinary academic field that covers communication processes with political issues and events. Social problems, ideas, and issues are discussed in this field (Öztürk & Zeybek, 2020, p. 95). At the heart of political communication is the idea of informing voters about political processes, as well as including them in these processes. For this reason, in order to ensure and increase political participation, political parties or candidates use communication strategies prepared by experts in their political campaigns.

Political advertising as an integral part of political campaigns is a political communication activity that is frequently taken advantage of especially during election periods, and carried out with the aim of introducing and adopting the political candidates/party and images to the voters (Mutlu, 2012, p. 276). There are two types of political advertising strategies: positive political advertising and negative political advertising. Positive political advertisements are advertisements that highlight the candidate's attitude towards the issues, the actions s/he has taken in the past and are made to promote the leadership characteristics of the candidate (Walkosz, 1996, p. 20). Negative political advertisements, on the other hand, are advertisements that attack against the personal characteristics of the opponent, the ideas s/he defends, and the parties s/he is a member of (Surlin & Gordon, 1977, p. 89).

While these strategies in traditional mass media such as newspapers, radio, television, banners, billboards, etc. are mostly in the form of introducing and explaining the actions of political candidates or parties to voters, the use of the internet and the technical features of developing new communication technologies have allowed voters to participate in this communication. Especially social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, etc.,

which emerged in the 2000s and beyond have significantly changed many habits of people, especially the way they communicate (Güler, Veysikarani & Keskin, 2019, p. 2).

Social media tools have features such as allowing interaction and discussion, no time and place limitations, enabling content production and sharing, and having different views and voices, making it more attractive both for political candidates and parties and for voters (Altınbaş, 2015, p. 3). These features allowed individuals to spend time with social media tools rather than traditional media. Therefore, this has caused political communication activities to gain a place and be carried out on social media platforms (Ridout, Fowler & Branstetter, 2012, p. 2). So much so that social media tools have become important tools for conducting political campaign activities during election periods.

In providing political information and political participation, social media tools have been remarked as important channels (Balcı, Tarhan & Bal, 2013). For this reason, political parties, leaders, and politicians have become aware of the need to exist and benefit in these media. Hence, political parties, leaders, and politicians have signed up social media accounts on various social media platforms, either by themselves or by the experts they have authorized. Thereby, they can communicate more with voters and get faster feedback from them (Bekiroğlu & Bal, 2014, p. 143); social media platforms have started to be used more intensively in political communication campaigns.

Successful results of using the internet and social media in political communication campaigns around the world emerged in the 2000s. The 2000 presidential election in the United States is important in terms of using the internet as a new mass media tool in election campaigns. During campaigns in this election period, 144 million American citizens were informed by visiting the websites of parties or candidates from their homes (Kaid, 2002, p. 27). In the 2007 French presidential election, Nicolas Sarkozy set up a website to communicate with voters via the internet, emailed them, and published election-related activities via YouTube (Vesnic-Alujevic & Van Bauwel, 2014, p. 196). The effective and systematic use of social media was carried out by Barack Obama in the 2008 US presidential election. In this process, Obama both shared about the elections and gathered support for the election campaign on the interactive website mybarackobama.com and social media sites such as MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. For this reason, it is stated that social media was very effective in Obama's victory in the 2008 US election (Zhang, Johnson, Seltzer & Bichard, 2010).

The use of the Internet in political campaigns in Turkey occurred when parties advertised on news portals and websites in the 2002 General Elections, and with the 2009 Local Elections, social media platforms began to be used more systematically in election campaigns. (Onat & Okmeydan, 2015, p. 84). In fact, the similar implementation made by Barack Obama was used by AK Party in the local elections of March 29, 2009 in Turkey. AK Party founded a web page called "akadaylar.com" and informed all provincial candidates and organizations throughout the country about how to conduct a campaign in relation to the election process (Devran & Seçkin, 2011, p. 201).

Social media platforms are used extensively by both voters and politicians during election periods. Studies have shown that political actors effectively use social media not only during election periods but also at all other times. Among social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and

Instagram; YouTube, which has a large number of users (Datareportal, 2021), and is statistically the most used social media tool, is noteworthy for political campaigns.

YouTube as a Political Communication Medium

YouTube is a prominent social media platform for video sharing, founded in 2005 and purchased by Google in 2006. Users determine videos that are popular on the YouTube social media network. In these videos, users often show their abilities to the world through this social network (Ying, 2007, p. 16). YouTube, a public sharing platform, increases the number of users with this feature.

Politicians noticed the fact that YouTube has a large number of users and young voters who are very active in this network. Political candidates who want to keep up with new communication technologies and reach out to young voters have therefore decided to use YouTube effectively in their political campaigns. First, with the use of short video footage, YouTube started to be used in political communication (Aziz, 2010, p. 133). YouTube is now used in almost every stage of political campaigns. All the activities of political candidates, such as public meeting speeches, political advertisements, tradesmen visit, and open sessions, are available on the official YouTube channels of the candidates or parties and shared with the voters.

YouTube's features such as the number of views, the number of likes and dislikes, the opportunity to directly share, comment on the video, and include detailed text enable politicians to use this channel actively and effectively outside of election campaigns. Thanks to these features of YouTube, the party or the candidates can have certain information about the issues such as which content should be included more in their videos, what are the issues that occupy the agenda of the voters. Especially the "dislike" button, which is not found in other social media networks other than YouTube, ensures that this channel takes a separate place from the others.

Besides all these, the time and place problems found in traditional media channels do not exist on YouTube. Users can access and watch any video at any time. In addition, these videos can be placed as short advertisements in other content that users watch on YouTube. In this way, voters are exposed to the advertisement of the relevant party, or, thanks to the effectiveness of the advertisement, they can look at more and more content on the channel of the relevant party/candidate.

Ridout and Fowler's (2010), "21. Political Advertising in the 21st Century: The Rise of YouTube Advertising; they discussed the use of YouTube advertisements in political communication. The study was designed for the 2008 U.S. presidential election. In the context of this election, they concluded that the ways in which political advertisements created on YouTube are more memorable and that parties should adopt new advertising formats other than traditional advertising formats (p.1).

A study examining the use of YouTube in political communication campaigns in Macedonia found that political parties used YouTube to announce press conferences, party meetings and interviews to point at some negative situations to the voters, but the voters were restricted from commenting on these contents. According to the results, the study states that the interaction feature

of social media is ignored, and communication is used in a one-way manner (Emruli, Zejneli & Agai, 2011, p. 464).

In another study on the use of social media in political campaigns, it has been revealed that YouTube has changed the way political campaigns are conveyed to the voters, providing flexibility in the time, place, and number of watching videos, as well as bringing the communication between candidates and voters to the dimension of mutual communication, unlike traditional tools (Vonderschmitt, 2012).

In a study by Vesnic-Alujevic and Van Bauwel (2014), 67 YouTube political advertisements produced by 13 political parties were analyzed. As a result of the study, it has been determined that the duration of these advertisements is longer than the television advertisements, the use of slogans is less in advertisements, the number of likes, dislikes, and comments are low although the number of views is higher. The results of the study show that although YouTube is a platform that allows interaction, this feature is not used much (p. 208).

Within the scope of another research, 224 television advertisements of Barack Obama and Mitt Romney in the 2012 Presidential Elections of the USA and 191 advertisements published on YouTube were analyzed. The results show that television advertisements have more negative content, while YouTube advertisements have more positive content and are less policy-oriented. Apart from this, it has been observed that there is no difference between television and YouTube advertisements (Borah, Flowler & Ridout 2018, p. 230). Similarly, as a result of Sohal and Kaur's (2018), analysis of 147 YouTube advertisements on the Indian Parliamentary Elections, it was seen that YouTube advertising campaigns have more positive content and more information about the identity of the parties (p. 133).

On the other hand, in another study by Sohal and Kahur (2019) which investigated the importance of YouTube in communicating with voters during election periods, it was seen that the interactive features provided by YouTube were not sufficiently utilized by both politicians and voters. In addition, it revealed that advertising messages on YouTube have more negative and critical content (p. 17).

Also, Litvinenko (2021) analyzed 169 political videos published during the 2018 Russian Presidential election campaign with the content analysis technique. The results of the analysis concluded that the videos published on YouTube during the election process were dominated by dissenter opinions, and therefore YouTube was seen as an alternative communication tool (p. 1).

Although there are many studies on the use of YouTube in political communication studies globally, the number of studies on the use of this platform in political communication campaigns in Turkey is very low. One of these studies is Gürbüz's (2019) semiotic analysis of videos titled "*Yes, With All My Heart*" published on the official YouTube channel of AK Party during the 2017 Referendum. As a result of this study, it was found that AK Party used indicators related to economy, education, local, national, spiritual, and gender issues in its political advertisements (p. 203).

The study by Öztürk and Zeybek (2020) focuses on the use of the YouTube social network in the 23 June 2019 Istanbul Local Elections. In this study, the YouTube usages of Binali Yıldırım, a

candidate for the Cumhur Alliance, and Ekrem İmamoğlu, a candidate for the Millet Alliance, were examined. Between 6 May 2019 and 23 June 2019, 209 videos of both candidates were examined with the content analysis technique. According to the results, it has been determined that Ekrem İmamoğlu uses the YouTube channel more actively than Binali Yıldırım in terms of the number of video shares and interaction. When the findings are examined from the point of view of political advertising, it is seen that İmamoğlu mostly uses the strategy of promoting and recommending actions in political advertisements, while Yıldırım adopts the strategy of creating an image by keeping the past practices in the foreground (p. 92).

Methods

The main purpose of this study is to reveal the political advertising strategies and the use of YouTube's interaction feature in the political election advertisements broadcast on the official YouTube channels of the AK Party, CHP, HDP, MHP and IYI Party in the 31 March 2019 Local Elections.

The universe of this study is formed by the political advertisements published on the official YouTube channels of political parties on 31 March 2019 Local Elections. The sample of the study is from the Justice and Development Party (AK Party), the Republican People's Party (CHP), the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) and the IYI Party (its official acronym is also from the IYI Party). Considering the number of subscribers, it is seen that on YouTube, AK Party has 78 thousand , CHP 72.4 thousand, HDP 140 thousand, MHP 95.9 thousand and IYI Party has 38.2 thousand subscribers (YouTube, 2021). These data on the number of subscribers of political parties were obtained between 1-31 March 2021.

Except for the official YouTube channels of the sampled parties, advertisements by voluntary organizations, sympathizers, or advertisements that endorse or criticize the parties for any purpose, and advertisements made by the AK Party on a provincial basis were not included in the study. In this way, the goal is to make the data of the study more objective and generalizable. The time interval of the study was determined as January 1, 2019 and March 31, 2019. Considering that the parties focus more on campaign activities near the elections in order to keep their messages in memory, the mentioned time period has been taken into account. Advertising films published before or after these dates were not included in the study.

Content analysis technique was used in the study. According to Aziz (2008), content analysis is to find out how often the written and said material is stated, its analysis and quantification of uncountable according to the prepared explanatory directive (p. 121). As such, content analysis is both a quantitative and a qualitative technique (Balcı & Bekiroğlu, 2012, p. 272). According to another definition, content analysis technique is a research method that covers the classification of verbal and written data in terms of a specific problem or purpose, summarizing, measuring certain variables or concepts of these data and dividing them into categories to be scanned in order to extract a specific meaning (Arık, 1998, p. 119).

The studies of Balcı and Bekiroğlu (2012) and Bekiroğlu and Bal (2014) were benefitted in the forming of the coding form used in the study. The coding form, which has 18 classification systems, includes two main headings: "revealing the political advertising strategies of the parties" and "the parties benefit from the interaction feature of YouTube". The type of advertisements that the parties have published, the music used in the advertisement, the political actor, the dominant voice and the subjects they bring to the fore, the place where the advertisement was shot, and the duration of the advertisement are included in the form under the title of political advertisement strategies; the number of views of the advertisement, the number of likes and dislikes, the status of comments, the status of interaction, the number of comments and the status of replying the comments are included in the form under the title of interaction status to the political advertisement.

In the study, frequency analysis, Chi-Square Test, and One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to analyze YouTube advertisements. In order to ensure reliability in the content analysis technique, the same content was examined by another expert researcher, and the comparison was over 90 percent.

In this study, answers to the following research questions were sought:

Research question 1: How is the distribution of political advertisements published by the parties on their YouTube accounts?

Research question 2: What is the distribution of political advertising types according to parties?

Research question 3: What are the topics covered in political advertisements?

Research question 4: Is there a difference between the duration of the advertisements that the parties have published?

Research question 5: Is there a difference between the interaction status of the parties to their political advertisements?

Research question 6: Is there a significant difference between parties in terms of the number of comments on YouTube political advertisements?

Results

A total of 120 advertisements posted on the official YouTube channels of political parties before the local elections on March 31, 2019; 35% belong to HDP, 32.5% belong to AK Party; 29.2% belong to CHP, 1.7% belong to the MHP, and 1.7% belong to IYI Party. Considering the results, HDP was the party that posted the most political advertisements on YouTube during the March 31, 2019 local elections and then AK Party and CHP.

87.5% of these advertisements were published in the positive political advertising type and 12.5% in the negative political advertising type. Of the 105 advertisements published in the positive political advertising type, 50.5% were advertising (identification); 42.9% were advertising positive topics and 6.7% were advertising creating a legendary personality. Of the 15 advertisements published in the

negative ad type, 86.7% were published in the implied comparison type and 13.3% were published in the direct attack type.

During the 2019 Local Elections, parties preferred to cover more than one issue (23.3%) in the same advertisement in their political advertisements. Apart from this, the subjects they want to draw attention to are social rights with 9.2%, unity and solidarity with 9.2%, environmental sensitivity with 8.3%, and economy with 8.3% again. The subject that the parties emphasized the least was technology and communication with 0.8%.

In the advertisements examined, it was determined that 87.5% of the political parties used the emblem and slogan together, 7.5% preferred only the emblem, and 5% did not use the emblem and slogan.

Parties that prefer to use music in almost all the advertisements (95%); highlighted the voice of the presidential candidate and the voice of the party leader in 7.5% as the dominant voice.

While the parties shot the advertisements in which they talked about the projects they were considering implementing, in the studio environment (50%), the advertisements in which they explained the actions they had done in the past and introduced the mayoral candidates were created outdoors (49.2%). When we look at the use of political candidates in these advertisements, 55.8% of the advertisements do not include the political candidate, 25% of them use the party chairman, 17.5% prefer the mayoral candidate, and in 1.7%, both party leaders are used. It was seen that they showed both the chairman and the mayor candidate together.

50% of the ads are in the range of 31-60 seconds, 28.3% are in the range of 01-30 seconds, 10% are in the range of 61-90 seconds, 8.3% are in the range of 91-120 seconds, 3.3% It is noteworthy that the fame was broadcast in 120 seconds or more. According to the results, it has been determined that the ads are mostly published in the range of 31-60 seconds.

When we look at the status of allowing users to comment on political advertisements published by parties on YouTube channels, we reveal that comments are allowed in 70.8% of the advertisements, and not allowed in 29.2%. It has been determined that all the advertisements that do not allow comments belong to the CHP. On the other hand, it was found that 50.6% of the advertisements where comments were allowed were commented on, and 49.4% did not. It was observed that the comments made by the users for the advertisement were not given any feedback.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics on The Duration of YouTube Political Advertisements

	N	Min.	Max.	X̄
Duration of the ads.	120	12,00	267,00	50,30

When the descriptive statistics of the parties' YouTube advertising durations are examined, it has been found that the minimum advertisement duration is 12 seconds, and the maximum advertisement duration is 267 seconds. The average duration of advertisements is 50.30 seconds.

Table 2. Difference between Advertisement Durations of Parties That Publish Political Advertisements

	Parties	N	X̄	F	Sig.
Duration of the ads.	IYI Party	2	265,50	35,26	,000
	AK Party	39	60,12		
	MHP	2	52,00		
	HDP	42	42,42		
	CHP	35	36,42		

YouTube political advertising durations differ statistically between parties (F= 35.26; p= .000). Bonferroni test, one of the Post Hoc multiple comparison tests, was applied to find the lot that made the difference. According to the results of the analysis, it was revealed that the difference occurred between the IYI Party and other parties.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Political Advertisements Views

	N	Min.	Max.	X̄
Number of views of the ads.	120	68,00	7168894,00	476196,79

Considering the descriptive statistics results regarding the number of viewings of political advertisements published by the parties on the YouTube channel; it is seen that the least view is 68 times and the most view is 7,168,894 times. The average number of views of the examined ads is 476196.79.

Table 4. The Difference in the Number of Views of Political Advertisements by Parties

	Parties	N	X̄	F	Sig.
Number of viewing	MHP	2	4297095,50	19,67	,000
	IYI Party	2	2501671,50		
	AK Party	39	682465,79		
	CHP	35	318498,77		
	HDP	42	137677,57		

There is a statistically significant difference between the number of views of political advertisements published on YouTube by the parties examined within the sample (F= 19.67; p= .000). Bonferroni test, one of the Post Hoc multiple comparison tests, was applied to find the lot that made the difference. According to the results of the analysis, it was seen that the number of views of MHP ads was higher than the other parties examined.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics on Likes of Political Advertisement

	N	Min.	Max.	X̄
Number of ad likes	43	28,00	34000,00	1105,81

When the descriptive statistical results of the number of likes for the ads are examined, it is seen that the minimum number of likes is 28 and the maximum number of likes is 34000. It was found that the average number of likes for the ads was 1105,81.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics on the Dislikes of Political Advertisement

	N	Min.	Max.	$\bar{X}$
Number of ad dislikes	43	4,00	2700,00	172,11

According to the descriptive statistical results regarding the number of dislikes for the advertisements published by the parties, it was determined that the least number of likes was 4 and the most liked number was 2700. The average number of dislikes for advertisements is 172.11.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics on the Number of Comments Made to a Political Advertisement

	N	Min.	Max.	$\bar{X}$
Number of comments to the ads.	41	1,00	4591,00	173,75

When the descriptive statistical results of the number of comments made on the political advertisements published by the parties on their official YouTube channels are examined, it is pointed out that at least 1 and at most 4591 comments were made. The average number of advertisement comments is 173.75.

Table 8. Difference in Number of Comments on YouTube Political Advertisements by Parties

	Parties	N	$\bar{X}$	F	Sig.
Number of comments made	IYI Party	2	2459,50	13,52	,000
	AK Party	39	105,66		
	MHP	2	105,00		
	HDP	34	49,35		

The number of comments made to the advertisements published by the parties on YouTube differs statistically significantly (F= 13.52; p= .000). When the Bonferroni test results at the 5% level of significance are examined; a significant difference emerges between the IYI Party and other parties.

Table 9. Distribution of Political Actors Used in Political Advertisements by Party

Parties	Political Actor				Total
	Party Leader	Mayor Candidate	Both of them	No Political Actors Were Used	
AK Party	25	0	1	13	**39**
	83,3%	0,0%	50,0%	19,4%	**32,5%**
CHP	3	20	0	12	**35**
	10,0%	95,2	0,0%	17,9%	**29,2%**
MHP	2	0	0	0	**2**
	6,7%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	**1,7%**
IYI Party	0	0	0	2	**2**
	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	3,0%	**1,7%**
HDP	0	1	1	40	**42**
	0,0%	4,8%	50,0%	59,7%	**35,0%**
Total	**30**	**21**	**2**	**67**	**120**
	100,0%	**100,0%**	**100,0%**	**100,0%**	**100,0%**

83.3% of the advertisements featuring the party chairman as a political actor belong to the AK Party, 10% to the CHP, and 6.7% to the MHP. On the other hand, 95.2% of the advertisements in which the mayoral candidate is used as a political actor belong to the CHP and 4.8% to the HDP. 50% of the ads featuring both political actors are for the AK Party and 50% for the HDP. In addition, 19.4% of the advertisements that do not feature political actors belong to the AK Party, 17.9% to the CHP, 3% to the IYI Party, and 59.7% to the HDP.

Table 10. Distribution of Political Advertisement Types by Parties

Parties	Advertisement Type		Total
	Positive Advertising	**Negative Advertising**	
AK Party	39	0	**39**
	37,1%	0,0%	**32,5%**
CHP	34	1	**35**
	32,4%	6,7%	**29,2%**
MHP	2	0	**2**
	1,9%	0,0%	**1,7%**
IYI Party	0	2	**2**
	0,0%	13,3%	**1,7%**
HDP	30	12	**42**
	28,6%	80,0%	**35,0%**
Total	**105**	**15**	**120**
	100,0%	**100,0%**	**100,0%**

Considering the type of advertisements used by the parties in their advertisements, we find out that 37.1% of the positive political advertisements belonged to AK Party, 32.4% to CHP, 1.9% to MHP, and 28.67% to HDP. On the other hand, it is pointed out that 6.7% of negative political advertisements are belonged to CHP, 13.3% to IYI Party, and 80% to HDP.

Table 11. Difference in Interaction Status with Political Advertisements by Parties

Parties	Advertisements Interaction Status		Total
	Open to Interaction	**Closed to Interaction**	
AK Party	39	0	**39**
	45,9%	0,0%	**32,5%**
CHP	0	35	**35**
	0,0%	100,0%	**29,2%**
MHP	2	0	**2**
	2,4%	0,0%	**1,7%**
IYI Party	2	0	**2**
	2,4%	0,0%	**1,7%**
HDP	42	0	**42**
	49,4%	0,0%	**35,0%**
Total	**85**	**35**	**120**
	100,0%	**100,0%**	**100,0%**
(X^2= 120,00; df= 4; p= ,000)			

There is a significant difference between the interaction status of the parties with their political advertisements (X^2= 120.00; p= .000). When the crosstab analysis results are examined, it is seen that all advertisements for AK Party, MHP, IYI Party, and HDP are available to interaction, but all advertisements for CHP are not available to interaction. As a result, it is found out that advertisements of other parties other than CHP are available to users' comments.

Discussion and Conclusion

Election campaigns have become more important as political advertising evolves in various media environments and as once powerful societal factors lead to the debilitating effect of political trends through social changes. Now, traditional social structures have tended to lose their importance for the individual and a decrease has been experienced in the ability to prescribe individual behaviors in a connective way (Balcı, 2020). Political advertising is becoming more important day by day as a form of communication between voters and political candidates, political parties, and other participants in the political system. So much so that, most of the record expenditures of political campaigns are political advertisements. At the same time, when it comes to the democratic order, political advertising has become an important democratizing force in the political system; it has become a new and very effective platform for dialogue between the public and the political elite (Porto, 2006, p. 129). In other words, with the development of technology, the usage area of political advertisements has expanded, and social media has brought new initiatives to parties and candidates. Social media tools differ from traditional media tools in that they have features such as interacting, not having time and space limitations, providing content production, providing a discussion platform for different ideas, and being cheaper in terms of cost. The fact that social media offers these opportunities makes these tools very useful in terms of ensuring and increasing political participation for both political actors and voters (Balcı & Sarıtaş, 2015). Ensuring political participation, on the other hand, is very important in terms of supporting the rulers in the political field in the decisions regarding the solution of existing problems, as well as inspecting them and approving what has been done.

In this study, which discusses the use of social media in political communication, the aim is to reveal the use and interaction status of YouTube, which is the most used social media platform in Turkey, in the 31 March 2021 Local Elections. When the results of the analysis are examined, it is seen that HDP comes to the forefront as one of the parties that publish the most political advertisements. This result confirms the argument that YouTube is an alternative media tool for expressing different ideas and opinions, which is discussed in the literature, considering the cost and ideological difficulties of HDP in broadcasting commercials on traditional television channels.

When the advertisement analyzes of the parties are examined in terms of their campaign strategies, it is noteworthy that all AK Party and MHP advertisements were created in the positive political advertisement type, while all the IYI Party advertisements were created in the negative advertisement type. On the other hand, it is seen that CHP and HDP advertisements have mostly positive advertisements but also negative advertisements. Considering the positions of the parties in question (government, main opposition, opposition) and the alliances that these parties formed

during the mentioned election period (Cumhur Alliance and Millet Alliance), it can be said that the types of advertisements they used are also proper.

While the parties prefer to use more promotion (identification) advertisements in the advertisements that they have published in the type of positive political advertisement, this is followed by the advertisements of the positive subject. The fact that the elections are local elections can be interpreted as the right choice for the parties to prefer the promotional advertisement type. The implicit comparison type was used in most of the advertisements published in the negative advertisement type. In other words, the parties adopted the approach of making more inferences in order not to create the effect of the victim mentality in the minds of the voters, and it was left to the voters to find out who the attacked party was.

In the March 31, 2019 Local Elections, the parties preferred to cover more than one issue in an advertisement. These issues have generally been issues such as education, health, transportation, and social rights. Social rights, unity, and solidarity, environmental awareness are other issues that parties bring to their commercials. The subject of technology and communication, on the other hand, was the least discussed by the parties in their advertisements in this period. From the point of view of living in an era when technology and communication are at the forefront, this result can be evaluated as a negative situation for the parties. Because we now live in a rapidly digitalizing world due to reasons such as technological developments and unexpected epidemics. For these reasons, it is thought that technology and communication will make it easier for the parties to rank higher in importance, to catch up with this era and to ensure that they are active in the future of the country by including the voters of this era in the political arena.

It is found out that political parties prefer to use the emblem and slogan together in the advertisements examined. This result can be evaluated as a positive strategy in terms of keeping the parties in the memory of the voters. When we look at the use of political actors in political advertisements of the parties, it is seen that party chairman more appears as political actor in AK Party and MHP advertisements, and mayoral candidates appear as political actors in CHP advertisements, and political actors are not included in IYI Party and HDP advertisements. These results show that AK Party and MHP prepared for the elections in the general election atmosphere rather than the local elections, while the CHP followed a strategy suitable for the nature of the elections.

Parties broadcast advertisements mostly in the range of 31-60 seconds as advertisement duration. As a result of the analysis, it was seen that there was a significant difference between IYI Party and other parties in terms of advertising durations. Research findings indicate that IYI Party advertisements are longer in duration than advertisements of other parties.

When the advertisements published by the parties are examined in terms of users' interaction, it has been found that the political advertisements of AK Party, MHP, HDP and IYI Party's YouTube channels are available for users to comment, while CHP advertisements are not. According to this result, we can say that CHP does not fully benefit the YouTube network in terms of interaction with users, and this situation negatively affects the visibility of party advertisements. Because every comment and like on YouTube will allow more people to see the advertisement and watch it.

Considering the difference in the number of views of party advertisements, it was concluded that MHP advertisements were viewed more than other party advertisements. When the difference among the parties regarding the number of comments on the broadcasted party advertisements is examined, it has been found out that IYI Party advertisements have more comments than the other parties. However, it is noteworthy that both IYI Party and other parties did not respond to these comments.

Regarding the interactions of users with advertisements, CHP's closing their advertisements for comments, and AK Party, MHP, HDP and IYI Party's not responding to the content such as questions, requests, and requests for help in the comments made to their advertisements; it has been concluded that parties use YouTube as a means of promotion, as in traditional media tools, rather than being a social media tool.

As a result, it has been identified that in the 31 March 2019 Local Elections, the parties revealed their election strategies with the advertisements they published on the social media tool YouTube, but they could not use this tool in accordance with the full potential and opportunity of interaction.

This study aims to contribute to the literature in that there are not many studies on this subject in the field and that it has a sample difference from the previous study. In future studies on this subject, two similar social media (YouTube-Instagram or YouTube-TikTok) can be compared. At the same time, the impacts of YouTube advertisements on politic information, participation and voting preference can be investigated.

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