

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN ELECTION CAMPAIGNS: FACEBOOK AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN TURKEY

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Abstract

Together with developments in new communication technologies the emerging concept of web 2.0, has also brought to our agenda various social networks that enable users to generate their own content. One-way communication of traditional media has transformed into two-way and interactive forms of communication with social media. Social media that has economic, social and cultural effects, changes the structure of communication. Election campaigns comprise one of the areas in which social media shows its effects.

Social media that enables interactive content has become a medium for political parties' and candidates' promises, where image and reputation are promoted for voters and public opinion, also providing a platform from which to conduct their election campaigns. Through election campaigns that are conducted at social media, parties and candidates may inform voters with text, video or visual elements and they also have the opportunity to communicate more directly with them. On the other hand, voters or people who support or wish to criticize the candidate/ political party can contribute by generating content through social media. Social media was demonstrated to have a particularly important function in the United States presidential elections in 2008 and 2012. Social media is being used by political parties and candidates in Turkey too because of its significant effects on election campaigns. The latest example of this was seen at the August 2014 presidential elections, in which the president was chosen by the public for the first time.

This study aims to analyse how social media was used by the candidates during the presidential elections of August 2014. Therefore, the Facebook-using practices of two presidential candidates- Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Ekmeleddin İhsanoglu- has been analysed by the quantitative content analysis method, based on Baxter, Marcella and Varfis' (2011) study.

Key Words: Election Campaigns, Social Media, Facebook