

Chapter 15

Elections and Social Media: An Overview

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ABSTRACT

Today, using of the internet extended social media by individuals habitually enables both the business firms and politicians to reach their target mass at any time. In this context, internet has become a popular place recently where political communication and campaigns are realized by ensuring a new dimension to political campaigns. When we examine the posts and discussions in the social media, we can say that they are converted into open political sessions. As there are no censorship in such channels, individuals have a freedom to reach to any partial/impartial information and obtain transparent and fast feedback, and with this regard, political parties, leaders and candidates have a chance to be closer to electors. In this study, it is aimed to give information about the social media, present what medium has been used for election campaigns from the past until today and besides, by considering the effects of effective and efficient use of social media and new trends related to the internet by politicians, together with their applications in the world, to make suggestions about its situation and application in Turkey.

INTRODUCTION

Innovations realized in technology within the last 20 years have also caused a change in information and communication and in parallel of this, dramatic changes have occurred in the mass communication medium. In the traditional media, in other words in printed and visual media, the events are announced to the public by means of newspaper, radio and television channels and

communication is established in this manner. The social media concept that has occurred with the developed computer, internet and mobile technology is a virtual medium where individuals interact in user base by sharing their thoughts, works, photographs, videos, etc independently from time and place and they connect to each other by means of online media with which sharing and discussion is a fundamental principle. In the printed and visual media we call as traditional

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-8358-7.ch015

media- television, newspapers, radio and other mediums- the communication is unidirectional. However, in the social media, mutual interaction with the target mass exists.

Internet, the biggest supporter of today's modern communication media, began to be used in 1970's and reached to large masses from every culture and class in 2000's and today, it is being habitually and widely used by all users. Today, the social media provides an influence area with its increasing speed and through a new dimension it gives to the policy and marketing relation, it has become a popular platform recently where political communication and campaigns are realized. While the social media, an important medium for political marketing of today, presents many opportunities to political parties, candidates and leaders in reaching to electors, spreading of ideas and ensuring support and monitory sources; it also provides great opportunities to electors in learning of policies of parties, reaching to political candidates and transmitting their wishes and opinions and this empowers the political communication and interaction (Akar, 2006; 5).

The effect of social media on policy was firstly realized in 2008 elections made in USA and the importance of social media and necessity of its effective use was recognized. When it was announced in the press that the success of Barack Obama who won the elections lied in effective and efficient use of social media, other world's leaders began to make their political campaigns interactively. This was a great experience for discovery of social media in election campaigns. After that, the social network sites such as video sharing sites- MySpace, Facebook, Twitter and Youtube – have become an important political marketing medium.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Though there is not a generally accepted social media definition, when we examine the related

definitions, we see that the social media is defined simply as; it is an interactive online communication channel that can be developed, participation of large target mass can be ensured and that accommodates and connects all societies (Kalafatoğlu, 2010: 17). Taşçı defines the social media comprehensively as; “ it is an online platform used by people to share their ideas, opinions, experiences and perspectives and to make communication with each other.” (Taşçı, 2010; 23-26).

The social media is a humanistic communication method with which sharing and discussion is a fundamental principle without time and place limitation through its mobile -base use. In the social media, telecommunication and social communication is ensured by means of words, visuals and sound files and people share their stories and experiences under this structure. (<http://tr.wikipedia.org>, 2013). The on-line content that is established by internet users rather than professional writers or journalists and accessible by other users by means of interactive technology according to Goeldner and Ritchie is deemed by Akar (ErözveDoğubay; 2012; 134) as web sites that enable deeper social interactions (established on web 2.0 technologies), formation of community and success in cooperation projects (Akar; 2010; 17); According to Hatipoğlu; it is defined as internet platforms where people communicate by means of writings, photographs, videos and sound files. In the foundation of the said concept, “communication” and “sharing” lies. (Hatipoğlu, 2009: 72). The social media that makes some changes in production, distribution and using of information have features such as being digital, interactive, hyper-textual, network structured, virtual and simulative (Lister and others 2009:13).

The social media is a virtual medium and platform where the internet users can contribute in the content, share their opinions and suggestions and is connected to for purpose of business and entertainment. These social platforms generally contain applications such as chat rooms,

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