

Chapter 14

Reproduction of the City Image in Political Narrative

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ABSTRACT

The digital age has affected and changed individuals, businesses, marketing-advertising activities, and city and country governments. Designing action plans suitable for the digital age in political, economic, and social fields acting in accordance with the requirements of the digital age has almost become a necessity. In political communication, party leaders, candidates, and local administrators communicate with the public by using social media tools. In Turkey, after the local elections held on March 31, 2019, IMM, the decision of repeating election of 23rd June, was given. This study examines Twitter posts that are shared by the municipalities in Turkey. The study will examine how the image of the city is reproduced and transmitted within the political narrative in local elections.

INTRODUCTION

The digital age, which has been shaped as a result of developments and improvements in communication and information technologies, has affected and changed individuals, management of business, marketing-promotion-advertising activities, practices in different disciplines, and city and country administrations. In this context, in political, economic and social fields, it has almost become a necessity to design action plans suitable for the characteristics of the digital age, and to act in accordance with the requirements of the digital age, and to realize the applications in accordance with digital trends. As mentioned, new and digital age creates its own rules and shapes the demands and expectations of the digitalized individuals of the digital age. At the same time, it draws businesses and institutions into the digital age to meet these demands and expectations. The information and communication technologies revolution has directly or indirectly affected business practices and all people in every field in its thirty-year history since the 1990s.

Party leaders, candidates and local administrators communicate with the public by using social media within the framework of political communication, which is one of the areas where digital transformation is experienced. In fact, due to the characteristics of social media, practices such as using social media in

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order to convey campaign messages during the election periods by exchanging messages interactively and mutually, conveying messages both on general issues and specifically on political elections through the accounts of political and administrative units are frequently encountered. These practices show that the field of political communication adapts to the changing and digitally transforming world of communication. Over the years, social media is used more and more as a medium where political messages are transmitted during election periods.

The concept of city can be defined in terms of sociological, economic, cultural or quantitative criteria such as population and size. The concept of city discussed in this study is framed as a place that includes sociological, economic and cultural dimensions, and also expresses a certain unit administratively. Posters examined in this study have been shared by municipalities of administrative units representing the local governments considered in the definition of the city in Turkey.

Within the scope of this study, how the image of the city is reproduced and transmitted in the political narrative through the example of local elections will be examined. After the local elections held on 31 March 2019, it was decided to repeat the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality election on 23 June 2019. After this decision, the posters prepared by local governments of different provinces and districts and shared via Twitter and emphasized that they contribute to the realization of democracy by encouraging participation in the elections will be analyzed in the context of the city image. In the study, the areas where the image of the city will be traced are the geographical features of the cities, their historical texture, tourism potential or current touristic features, the status of facilities such as accommodation, eating and drinking, entertainment, sports, recreation, transportation, the architectural structure of the city, the characteristics of the residents of the city. In this context, it will be examined how these posters cover the above-mentioned elements that form the image of the city and create feelings, perceptions and impressions towards the city in the target audience. The main point emphasized in this study is that posters, which serve a political purpose and are an important part of the political campaign, also convey and reflect the image of the city. In other words, the political narrative and urban image intertwined and formed a powerful new narrative.

In the theoretical part of the study; the concept and the scope of city image, how the urban image is formed, what the urban image brings to a city, political participation in terms of democracy, traditional and digital media in political communication are explained. In the research section, examples of posters that are the subject of the urban image narrative that emerged within a political campaign will be examined.

The Concept of City Image

Kotler, Haider and Rein (2002, p.2) refer to the approach that cities are more than budget and jobs, and that cities are human, culture, historical heritage, physical assets and opportunities. According to them, cities are ranked, graded and evaluated in every conceivable dimension such as founding a family, looking for a partner, planning a holiday, holding meetings and meals. This evaluation made about cities is a way of thinking that reveals the image of the city.

Image is a concept that is difficult to define, measure, express and has ambiguities because it is both abstract and can be comprehended with different meanings and perceptions from person to person. According to the digital Oxford Learners Dictionary (2020) image is the impression that a person, an organization, or a product, etc. gives to the public. Based on this definition, it can be said that the subject of the image creates an impression and effect on the target with a perception. The importance of the concept of image stems from the fact that this effect results in a positive or negative way. According to

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