Chapter 27
The Political Use of Social Networking Sites in Turkey:
A Systematic Literature Analysis

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ABSTRACT

There are many developments affecting societal, cultural, and political relations. The ubiquitous spread of information and communication tools (ICTs) are among these developments. Studies in literature are not indifferent to the impacts brought about in politics by ICTs, particularly by social networking sites (SNSs). During the research, many studies were found that focus on changes and transformations induced by ICTs that unprecedentedly affect interactions and relationships in political life. SNSs, a part of ICTs, have transformative effects on elected and their voters. Though there are many papers that focus on SNSs and political use of SNSs, a void was observed in relevant literature focusing on synthesizing the literature on particular country cases. For this reason, a systematic literature analysis was performed. Findings of this chapter on the political use of SNSs in Turkey indicate that political actors do not fully take advantage of SNSs and their potentialities. The political use of SNSs presents a rhizomatic formation rather than being hierarchical.

INTRODUCTION

Developments in information and communications technologies (ICTs) have transformed many facets of society, including political and democratic relationships among citizens and representatives. What is previously seen difficult is regarded a routine of daily life lately with regard to access to information and political participation at the individual level. For example, paying bills using ICT tools, face to face communication through online means, appealing to administration through online means, even online voting in some countries are among these transformations. There is also a transformation with regard to ICTs use. The shift in web 1.0 to web 2.0 or web 3.0 also introduces new ways and potentialities to understand politics and to involve in political matters. Particularly, the growing rate of internet penetration in urban and rural fields supports a new media environment and political culture. In addition to the existence of actual life (offline), people also could have an existence in online platforms, mainly through social network sites (SNSs). It is arguable that the line between online and offline existence is being gradually ambiguous. Although there is an interaction between offline and online spheres, SNSs play a serious role to influence the offline sphere.

The digital behaviors of users is drawn attention in various disciplines such as marketing (Paquette, 2013; Alalwan, Rana, Dwivedi, & Algharabat, 2017), branding (Gancho, 2017; Alam & Khan, 2015), computer science (Thelwall, 2017), education (Tess, 2013; Hashim, Tan, & Rashid, 2015), health care (Merolli, Gray, & Martin-Sanchez, 2013), administration (Alryalat, Rana, Sahu, Dwivedi, & Tajvidi, 2017) and politics (Shirky, 2011). This chapter focuses on the political use of SNSs in a particular country by conducting a systematic literature analysis.

Technology through media serves well as a political mediator for various cases at different times. For instance, according to Benedict Anderson (1983), the emergence of nationalism is associated with the development of printing technologies (newspapers, books or any other printed outlets). Goebbels, notorious propaganda Minister of Germany at that time, used the radio in order to forge a legitimate basis for Nazi policies. Similarly, television (TV) is assessed as a political mediator in two aspects. Some scholars like Baudrillard (1981), criticized media in the context of the TV with regard to cultural formation and regeneration. Jhally and Livant (1986) pointed out the economy-politic relationship developed behind the TV screen. It is important to highlight that all studies and policies mentioned above are dominated through a top-down manner. That means neither printed materials nor radio/TV allow two-way communication. That is why media research mainly and mostly focuses on state formation, capitalism, or the critical cultural perspective aiming to reveal who the actual actors are that positioned behind.

It is worth note that the domination of the top-down manner is about to be replaced by communication technologies enabling two-way, or multi-way interaction. Shirky (2011, p. 29) remarks the change by giving examples of how short text messaging (SMS) contributed to collective action movements such as 2004 protests in Spain, and 2009 protests in Moldova.

Today relationships between media and politics are tackled in the context of social networking sites (SNSs). There are at least two reasons. First, social media does not present a one-way communication or information provision environment by public authorities but it is also interactively used by common people for many purposes, including political ones. People participate in online political discussions; use SNSs as a news source to feed in addition to employing them as a means of collective action. Secondly, political actors prefer SNSs to impel constituencies to move or search for ways to legitimate actions and discourses by dispersing them as wide as possible. For these very reasons, it is arguable that neither

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