

TRANSFORMATION IN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION: FROM TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATION TO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE¹

Can KADEROĞLU

Selcuk University Social Sciences Institute Graduate, Konya, Turkiye,

can.kaderoglu89@gmail.com, ORCID: 009-005-7693-1295

Doç. Dr. Hayriye Nur GÖRKEMLİ

Selcuk University Faculty of Communication Department of Public Relations and Publicity, Konya,

Turkiye, ngorkemli@selcuk.edu.tr ORCID: 0000-0001-5506-1343

ABSTRACT

Political communication, used to gain or maintain political power, is a multidimensional and dynamic process that involves many disciplines. This process takes place not only between the party, candidates and voters, but also with any individual or group that can influence the electoral process. When it comes to political communication, it begins not only during the election period, but also with the establishment of a political party and the laying of the foundations of the party's ideology. It requires the cooperation and interaction of a wide range of professionals, including academics, journalists, advertisers and public relations experts. Historically, political communication activities began with face-to-face communication. Today, with the development of media and communication technologies, it is also carried out through mass media. Although traditional communication channels are still used effectively, new media stand out in political communication because of their pervasiveness and interactive features. In particular, the development of Internet technologies has made it possible to have two-way interaction with large masses in political communication, especially in digital environments such as social media, without any problems of time, space and control. Later, artificial intelligence rapidly entered our lives, enabling various critical practices, from predicting election results to developing strategies and campaigns for different constituencies. This study, which is based on literature, explains how political communication has gone through a journey from face-to-face communication to the use of artificial intelligence over time, starting from the definition of political communication and also including political communication theories. The study discusses the threats and opportunities of the transformation of political communication. In addition, suggestions on what kind of precautions can be taken against these threats are also included.

Keywords: political communication, digital political communication, social media, artificial intelligence

INTRODUCTION

Political communication covers all kinds of communication strategies designed to convey the messages of political parties to voters. Political parties and actors use traditional mass communication tools and new media technologies to inform voters and to change the targeted attitudes and behaviors of voters. While traditional methods such as face-to-face communication techniques, rallies,

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demonstrations or citizen meetings are used in political communication; nowadays, new media technologies and especially social media platforms that eliminate the concept of time and space and offer the opportunity to reach voters anytime, anywhere are used intensively.

In this study, which is based on literature, national and international academic sources on the subject are examined and first the concept of political communication is mentioned, then political campaigns and the tools used in this process are given. The prominent Web 2.0-based applications that we call new media and that were added to these tools later, their effectiveness in political communication and the potential problems that digital political communication may create are conveyed. Finally, the opportunities and threats offered by artificial intelligence, which is on the agenda, within the scope of digital political communication are given.

1. POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

The concept of politics has a deep-rooted history dating back to Ancient Greece. Civilized societies have moved away from their primitive lives and formed political thought as a result of organization and various groupings (İşçi, 2004: 21). From a politician's perspective, politics is a profession centered on social communication that regulates organized and social balances of power, organizes/determines the sharing and distribution of all economically limited resources, and carries out intensive communication between the parties during these processes (Louw, 2005: 101-105). It is seen that there is no consensus among political scientists on the concept of politics. The reason for this is the intense relationship of politics with factors such as authority, state, power, and strength that permeate social life, and the richness of meaning that the word is loaded with. For this reason, it can be said that politics is not a simple concept, but on the contrary, it expresses a deep social phenomenon (Eroğul, 1974: 29).

The concept of political communication, which emerged from the combination of the concepts of politics and communication, which have become two important elements of social life today, is of increasing importance in studies related to both politics and communication. Political communication, which is an important method used to gain political power or to ensure the sustainability of the existing government, manifests itself in many different forms and grounds.

A variety of definitions have been made for the concept of political communication. In the simplest and most basic way, Steven Chaffee defined political communication in his book "Political Communication" as "the role played by communication in the political process" (Chaffee, 1975: 5-13). Political communication, a concept closely related to democracy, was designed for politicians to receive the votes of the society, which are their declarations of will with the right to vote and has gained its current meaning through today's developing mass communication technologies (Tokgöz, 2008: 24-56). Regarding this issue, Uslu (1996: 790) defines political communication as one-way or two-way communication efforts in which advertising, public relations and propaganda techniques are used according to the requirements of time and conditions in order to gain the support and trust of the public and to come to power. As a simple definition, political communication is communication made with various communication techniques and types in order to make certain goals and ideologies designed by political actors accepted by a certain segment of society or large masses such as countries or blocks and to mobilize them when necessary (Aziz, 2008: 91-168). Political communication; It is a dynamic and active system in its entirety, although it has a structure that quickly adapts to social conditions in terms of process, content and applications and often leads to sociological transformations. There are a number of factors that prevent the concept of political communication from falling into stagnation. The increasing population and the sociocultural structure that develops accordingly, the transformation of politics into a scientific discipline, the mass media and the new media elements created by them due to the developing technology, together with the effects of the globalizing world, are transforming the political arena into a more modern structure. The new political parties and leaders that come onto the scene, with a very diverse and colorful structure, can somehow attract the attention and interest of every segment of society, and political campaigns can cause sociological transformations with the dynamism they create by ensuring the formation of a

participatory, pluralistic structure that is the expectation of democracy (Akyol, 2003: 4-10). Political communication is the process of communicating the party's programs, ideas and promises developed within the scope of political marketing to the voters (Pirtini, 1993: 328). Political communication focuses on the interaction between political actors, the media and the voters by acting as a bridge between the dreams and expectations of the voters and the goals and passions of the candidates (Trent et al., 2011: 16) (De Vreese, 2006: 8). According to Aziz (2011: 3), political communication can be defined as communication carried out by political party organizations using various communication techniques in order to make voters, other political organizations and countries accept and, when necessary, implement certain ideological goals of the parties. In other words, political communication is not only a narrow structure that establishes the connection between the party, candidates and voters, but also a process that ensures the establishment and development of connections with all individuals or groups that can affect the election process.

1.1. The Function and Processes of Political Communication

When it comes to political communication, the first thing that comes to mind is the perception of election periods and the activities carried out during those periods, but political communication is the beginning of the process in an ideological sense with the laying of the foundations of the ideology on which a political party will be built during its establishment phase. Although the goal seems to be election and result-oriented, it is actually a variable structure. The political organization, leader and actors involved in these processes, on the other hand, are not only dominant in a certain phase of this formation but also in all its dimensions; they generally work with professional teams consisting of academics, journalists, advertisers and public relations experts who have synthesized literature in the field such as communication and political information, and who have a professional background (Uztuğ, 2008: 189-248).

Freud, who brought a critical perspective to political communication processes, examined people's decision-making processes in depth in his book *Mass Psychology*; and stated that what actually convinces the masses is not the statements and promises of leaders but factors such as favor and tolerance towards the loved one, which lie in the depths of human psychology and consciousness. He emphasizes that the love or hatred of voters towards a politician does not make it possible to see his good or bad actions, and thus, it is not possible to talk about objective judgment and decision in voter preferences. According to Freud, the only power that makes voters submit to the wishes of politicians is love (Freud, 2014: 32-128). Similarly, Lippmann states that voters make their political preferences far from logical reasons; they make their choices depending on their family factors, upbringing, personal attitudes and behaviors, as well as their level and quality of education; their overall demographic structure, and the intense political message and data bombardment they are exposed to (Lippmann, 1997: 28-32). Political actors use both face-to-face communication and mass media communication methods to reach voters and convey political messages and discourses to them. In cases where the voter and the politician are in the same environment; Face-to-face communication, which is considered the most effective method in terms of persuasion and influence, can mostly take place in the form of election rallies, public concerts, symposiums, congresses and patient visits made by politicians. These social situations are processes where politicians can touch the voters and carry out two-way communication more appropriately with their gestures and facial expressions. Applause by voters for the political leader speaking at political rallies and symposiums, participation in conversations, non-reaction or whistling as a reaction due to the excitement or dissatisfaction in the environment and leaving the rally area are important in terms of the feedback function of face-to-face communication (Aziz, 2008: 91-168). Face-to-face political communication methods technically take place in terms of communication sciences by having the method and content of interpersonal communication. For this reason, it is also very valuable for political parties in terms of creating a sense of belonging and party loyalty, as it allows them to establish more intimate, emotional, friendly and relative relationships. Today, many concepts have changed under the influence of sociological and scientific norms depending on the spirit of the times, and the concept of politics has also received its share of this change. The reason why the concept of political communication, now accepted as a

discipline and the subject of several academic articles and theses, has attracted so much attention and value is undoubtedly due to its transformation into a mechanism that operates according to scientific norms. As in the past, politicians have accepted that politics cannot be done by making estimated voter expectations at the desk and determining the processes to be carried out in line with these estimates. They have preferred to do politics in accordance with the conditions of the time with scientific methods such as public opinion polls, voter analyses and going into the field. Another change and transformation in the field of politics is that mass communication tools have taken their place among the arguments for political communication due to the fact that it is not possible to reach the target audience voters through face-to-face communication due to the increasing population and urbanization rates and the increase in the number of target audience voters accordingly (Uztuğ, 2008: 189-248).

Mass media assumes the role of an intermediary between the existing source, namely political parties and their organizations, and the recipient, namely the target audience, the voters. It provides fast and effective communication by coding and reinterpreting all messages that are the subject of politics in accordance with its own infrastructure, by bending the physical rules of distance and time in favor of the parties. During this process, it can ensure that these political messages are discussed and brought to the agenda in society it highlights and serves certain messages. In this case, it can shape what is discussed, how it is thought and what is dealt with in society by creating the 'agenda setting' model. From the research conducted on the effect and power of manipulation on mass media, agenda setting also indirectly suggests political preferences to the masses, by convincing them that the issues it brings to the agenda are important and valuable (Kalender, 2000: 172-215). Uslu (1996:790-811) has grouped the functions of political communication under seven basic headings. These can be listed as follows:

- Communicating Political Messages: Political parties must create a political identity that will distinguish them from other political parties and actors. While creating this identity, political parties make use of ideological arguments, norms and values, political ethics, party symbols and emblems. In addition to these, they must develop solution proposals for the current problems in society, create a set of messages in line with the desired goal and convey them to the target audience voters. In a sense, this action is referred to today as a party election manifesto or manifesto. The point to be noted here is that the messages included in this manifesto must be in a form and quality that will cover the entire society in a clear and understandable manner. For this reason, mass communication tools are among the most effective political communication methods in terms of coverage and effects (Kalender, 2000: 172-215).
- Ensuring the Effectiveness and Permanence of Messages: In today's current political activities, it is not enough to just produce messages and serve them to the voters. The key to success in this process is to ensure the effectiveness and permanence of the messages conveyed. For this, it is necessary to benefit from political communication methods as much as possible. As a result of politics becoming transparent with political communication, persuasion processes should be carried out democratically by using reliable methods for both individuals and the masses. Political activities should be reviewed according to the reactions of the people and revised if necessary, and political messages should be effective and permanent by acting in accordance with the spirit of the political movement and not compromising political independence (Akay, 2012: 172-226).
- Measuring Public Expectations: While producing a political message, political parties and actors are expected to create a message in line with the ideology and policies of the party, which are a kind of compass, while considering the expectations of the people, which is their target audience. Since messages designed disconnected from society and far from its realities cannot be successful, the agenda and expectations of the people should be known. Therefore, in order to determine public expectations and agenda, it is necessary to measure them using indirect and direct communication methods. Direct communication methods are defined as

interpersonal communication methods consisting of face-to-face voter visits. In this way, it is possible to observe the expectations of the people by directly touching them. Indirect communication is reaching large voter groups and masses through mass communication tools in the face of the difficulty of reaching them individually (Uslu, 1996: 790-811).

- Establishment of Feedback Channels: The political communication process necessitates a two-way communication. While it is necessary to observe the response of the messages prepared by political parties and served by politicians in the public, it is necessary to know whether they meet the expectations of the public in accordance with their purpose, and the goal is to convince the voters. If these results are ultimately determined by the votes coming out of the ballot box, it is certain that it will create desperation in the face of unexpected negative returns. Therefore, without waiting for the elections, the response of the messages served by the party in the public eye can be measured with methods such as public opinion polls and various surveys, voter visits, and a healthy balance of social demand and political supply can be established (Kalender, 2000: 172-215).
- Influencing Opinion Leaders: Opinion leaders are individuals who have the power and potential to indirectly direct and influence voters' decision-making tendencies within the political communication mechanism in society. While these individuals are generally dominant group leaders who can organize in crowded environments such as cities, they are generally composed of academics, journalists, writers, intellectuals and intellectuals who can offer different perspectives, thoughts and comments to society on certain issues. It is also important in terms of political communication that opinion leaders are loved by the masses they address and that the public shows favor to them. Since their involvement in political communication processes will also make a valuable contribution to the effectiveness of the campaigns, it is very important to establish continuous and systematic relationships with these opinion leaders. Their invitations and participation in events/organizations organized by party organizations are also important in terms of the acceptance and acceptance of their political messages by the target audience (Uslu, 1996: 790-811).
- Increasing Agenda Setting Ability: Agenda setting, which emerges as a result of the effective use of political communication, is important in terms of attracting the attention and interest of the public. Political parties can provide the condition of attracting the attention of the public, which they need when they explain themselves to the public and express their ideas and thoughts during the campaign processes, by the method of setting the agenda. Political parties that manage to set the agenda and maintain it have the chance to appeal to and reach large masses; while also creating an image of the party as very strong and capable of solving problems in the eyes of the public (Akay, 2012: 172-226).
- Gaining Advantage Over Political Rivals: Politics, as an organizational structure, takes place in a competitive environment with its rivals who act in line with the same goals and objectives as in all other organizational structures. The primary political goal is for a political party to come to power. For this reason, it is essential to stand out from other parties and gain superiority over political rivals. It is essential for the party that aims to achieve this superiority and come to power to internalize democratic methods in order to achieve these goals. In order to have an advantage over its opponents, it is very important to convey political messages to the society correctly and ensure their acceptance. For this, the communication process and functions should be well known and should form the basis of a political campaign in a very effective and efficient manner. Thus, political communication methods/techniques used correctly will make it possible to reach the entire target audience, while also ensuring that the messages are perceived correctly and are permanent, and will bring success (Kalender, 2000: 172-215).

1.2. Areas Where Political Communication Interacts

The fact that different scientific disciplines generally interact and feed on each other is valuable in terms of scientific integrity and complementarity. For this reason, there can definitely be one or more scientific fields where almost all sciences interact. The fact that political science and

communication are so intertwined and create a discipline such as political communication is a very good example in this respect. Political Communication; While benefiting from all areas of social sciences including social anthropology, geography, history, philosophy, sociology, social psychology, law, economics, and even literature for the discourses and texts produced, it also interacts intensively with the primary elements of communication sciences such as public relations, propaganda, marketing and advertising (Anık, 2003: 19-56). It is seen that political communication has established an interactive partnership on four basic areas. These areas will be briefly explained below.

Political Communication and Political Public Relations

In terms of the application areas and strategies of political communication and public relations; it is seen that their aims and objectives are quite similar and that they have many common points that support each other in line with these goals. As a result of the harmony and harmony in these common points, political communication and public relations have come together under the same roof and created the concept of 'Political Public Relations' (Habermas, 2011: 62-67). The aim of establishing good relations and creating friendly communication between the parties, which is at the core of political public relations, and the mission of establishing permanent ties between the target audience, the public, and the political party it serves, based on the principle of honesty, make public relations quite valuable in terms of politics. Political public relations, which serves politics, prevents the public from viewing politics and politicians as a mechanical phenomenon and/or only as a legal entity by establishing ties between the political party and the voters; and transforms into a structure where emotional ties can be established between politics and the voters. In this way, it becomes possible for political parties to control and direct voters from their attitudes and behaviors to their tendencies, reactions to events and political preferences. Similarly, it turns into a process where both parties gain by allowing voters to demand their expectations from politicians and administrators and to have their needs met in terms of service. This process, which is beneficial for both parties in terms of political public relations, makes political communication respectable and direct; and has an impact on voters in terms of the social reputation of politics. This respect, power and influence of political public relations in the eyes of the public imposes great responsibility on political public relations experts and every individual in this field, including academics. In this respect, political public relations carries out its activities in terms of accountability (Süllü, 2010: 220). While political public relations can be perceived differently by voters, it is also evaluated by assigning different meanings to politicians. In the eyes of politicians, political public relations; It is described as the necessity of good communication and correspondence between state organs and powers, government, social security institutions, police, army, courts and all elements representing the state; target audience, voters, families, tribes, clubs, federations, unions and associations. From the public's perspective, the quality of service and communication in all state institutions is perceived as the government's success. In terms of this perception, it is also a correct analysis to see state elements as a public relations process in order to create an image and be positioned correctly (Özerkan, 1997: 19-67).

Political Advertising

The messages that political parties and political candidates construct through mass media in order to be elected and come to power and the campaign processes they implement are defined as 'Political Advertising' by advertisers (Tokgöz, 1986, 116-137). Since political advertising is an instrument used in the process of conducting political campaigns; it is carried out with the aim of convincing, persuading, controlling and directing the voters' attitudes and behaviors. Political parties and candidates become parties to political advertising by conveying their political messages created depending on marketing strategies with the channel and time elements they purchase from mass communication means. In political advertising, the message is constructed with a political perspective, and unlike general advertising, this time instead of the promoted product and service, it turns into the politician himself, his vision and promises. One of the criticisms brought about in the field of advertising is that the quality and content of the product offered by the advertisements are not considered, and rather the quality, price and performance of that product and service are their share

in the advertising pie, and therefore the money they will earn the advertising agency. For this reason, in the eyes of the society, there is a prejudice that advertisements are prepared in exchange for money and the aim is to ensure that the public consumes them in some way with the visual appeal of the advertisements created and the appeal of the messages presented. It is possible that these social prejudices, which also surround political advertising, may turn into a negative perception in the society and negatively affect the current social image and popularity of a politician as a result of their advertisements. The fact that political advertising is a method frequently used by politicians despite this potential threat perception makes political advertising; It is a method aimed at gaining the fastest effect in the limited time periods available such as election campaigns with messages that will be created in accordance with the determined type and quality of voters. In such limited times, political advertising is quite effective in introducing political candidates to the voters and creating the desired image or polishing the created images (Damlapinar, 2005: 143).

Political advertising can reach all individuals using those channels and tools through mass media. Depending on the nature of the designed advertisement, it can also target more specific voters such as a group, society, or supporter group, and present advertisements with forms and content that will attract them and enable political persuasion. While the ability to convey the desired messages to selected groups from all the masses that make up society is the reason why political advertising is preferred, the primary targets of political advertisements in general are undecided, hesitant voters and voters who make mass transitions between parties, which are accepted as floating votes (Kaid, 1981: 5-41).

Political Marketing

As one of the definitions accepted in Turkey and used in academic circles, marketing is the planning and implementation process regarding the development, pricing, promotion and distribution of goods, services and ideas that will meet the needs in order to realize exchanges that will ensure the achievement of business goals (Mucuk, 2006: 56-77). In political marketing, just like the purposes of a business, while serving the purposes of political parties, it also fulfills the quality of promoting the activities it carries out in order to introduce political candidates to the society like a product and to maintain the love and interest of the voters. Again, as in the marketing process, there is a shopping, exchange/exchange in political marketing. Here, while politicians promise to meet the legal regulations, reforms and demands of the voters in return for their votes, the voters demand to purchase improvements that will touch their socio-economic and political life as a service from the politician in return for their votes. As a result of this shopping, meeting the expectations provides satisfaction and continuity, while the continuous and active operation of political marketing as a process before and after the election consolidates the gained voters and ensures the acquisition of new voters. The concept of market, which is the first and fundamental element of marketing, appears before us in political marketing as target audience and voter analysis. In political marketing, the process begins with voter analysis, that is, the determination of the needs and expectations of the target audience. By preparing election promises and manifestos that are in line with the expectations of the analyzed voter, services such as a product that the voter needs in return for his vote are offered. In the final stage, after the voter goes to the ballot box and votes, political marketing reaches the final goal by performing the sales action with the rate of votes it has gained (Bostancı, 1995: 7-41). Political marketing; keeps the interest and attention in politics alive and increases it with the stages of informing, introducing, attracting attention and interest, and encourages the electorate to participate in politics. With these elements of interest and attention it creates, it also ensures that the public addresses the problems and creates public opinion. While the relations of politicians with the public only occur from election to election in the traditional understanding of politics, due to the nature of political marketing; it can be continuous and active. This situation enables the power at the top of the democratic power pyramid to be shared with the public, which is considered the base, and enables informed, talented and experienced citizens outside of politics to contribute to politics (Akyüz, 2015: 81-97). In other words, political marketing: It is the process of persuading the political party and its actors by behaving in accordance with the conditions of being a party in the mind, heart and ideal of

the target audience, the voters, by adapting to them, introducing themselves, being known and knowing who the voters are, as a result of establishing good relations. It is all the activities carried out with the aim of increasing the difference between the opposition and the rival parties by maintaining the persuasion process carried out and the reflected vote rate (Bongrand, 1992: 13-61).

Political Propaganda

Propaganda is the one-sided and intense flow of messages created using an authoritarian and one-sided language in order to channel a selected target audience in a certain direction in the society, or to make the subject that constitutes the content of the message accept it, and to ensure that the masses take sides by accepting a thought and opinion. In terms of language and style; Although propaganda has its own unique style, the messages are short and striking, and the language used is constructed with imaginary motifs that appeal to the imagination (Aziz, 2008: 91-168).

Propaganda, which has the ability to change and direct people's attitudes, behaviors and thoughts, achieves its power through visual and auditory, music, painting, sculpture, poster, verbal and written elements that appeal to senses and emotions. Mass media have transformed into highly effective social control tools beyond their classical purposes of use, thanks to the structure of propaganda, which is designed with messages that will penetrate these human sense, emotion and psychoanalysis codes (Lasswell, 1986: 69-76). There is an intense and continuous flow of information with one-way communication with messages coded with visual and auditory elements (Bektaş, 2002: 121-258). According to Edward L. Bernays, the founder of modern public relations, propaganda is: Continuous and consistent efforts to design and create events or to shape events in order to influence the public's actions, thoughts or relationships with a group (Asna, 2012: 56-98). Politics and political actors have used propaganda in their political campaigns by highlighting it more in their daily political communication processes and in crisis phases where extraordinary periods are experienced. Election periods are as critical and important for politics as a football team competing in the final match for a cup. In this context, during these political campaign processes where election campaigns are held, political messages create an intense and one-sided flow of information with the effect of propaganda. The general opinion is that today's societies can easily perceive whether the message presented to them is propaganda or not. For this reason, it is observed that propaganda, which is at the center of campaigns and constitutes a large part of it, is not directly structured in a way that tells the voters to choose us, but rather in a way that will put alternative candidates, namely rival parties, in a difficult position and make them look weak and inadequate in the political arena. Messages structured with the language of 'Don't choose them because...' are indirectly served as the solution and authority in order to prevent the creation of such resistance within propaganda, such as the prejudice and persuasion resistance that the public creates against political advertisements (Anık, 2003: 41-62). Political propaganda is structured on very delicate balances in line with the system, parties and objectives it serves. The most important element that needs to be shown sensitivity in the political propaganda process is the necessity of not including the element of pressure. If pressure or its implications are included in this process, this situation will lead to boycott. Or if money or material promises are used as economic influence tools in the political propaganda process, this will lead to deception and deception. For this reason, political propaganda needs to be carried out with much more contemporary and technical methods by being based on an idea, an ideology (Özkan, 2004: 71-157).

1.3. Political Communication Theories

In addition to approaches that include the issues of "libertarian structure" and "right to information in communication", which are considered as the most important elements of political communication in countries governed by democracy; there are also critical approaches in the brackets of media, politics and public opinion. Based on studies conducted to evaluate the capacity of the power in the media to influence the masses within political processes, three different models can be mentioned. These models are; liberalist-pluralist model, mass manipulation model and hegemonic model (Alemdar and Köker, 2011: 227-228). These three models can be summarized as follows:

Liberalist-Pluralist Model:

Liberalism, which emerged after the French Revolution, is a political movement that includes concepts such as freedom, more advanced ownership rights than before, and the free market. In this political movement, where education, health and social planning are made with the aim of not disrupting the stability in the markets, individuals are examined by dividing them into two groups as “self-sufficient” and “self-sufficient” (Aydın, 2014: 6). In societies governed by the ideology of liberalism, in addition to fundamental rights and freedoms, the communication sector is also within the scope of legal security. In liberal countries, it is believed that a series of actions that renew themselves and correct their mistakes through pluralism and free market conditions are correct, and it is argued that there is a quality control mechanism in the mass media. In these structures, the view that a “bad” newspaper that does not comply with the values, norms and interests of society will be deleted from the media platform by a “good” newspaper is widespread. The flood of information for the society, which arises from open competition in the free market economy, finds the “truth” by the individual choosing what is in line with their own interests and views, and the balance of good is thus ensured. The decision-making and supervisory role in society arises from this choice evaluated within the framework of this rationality. In the liberalist-pluralist theory, the media, which is assumed to make impartial and objective broadcasts, acts as a bridge between the two groups by broadcasting news about “the demands of society” and “what those in power have done and want to do”. According to the liberalist-pluralist understanding, politicians have to work harder by seeing the controlling aspect of the media in society. The voter, who has this interaction in mind, does not have difficulty in making rational decisions in the elections and choosing which view to choose (Oktaç, 2002: 28).

Mass Manipulation Model:

In the mass manipulation model, contrary to the liberal-pluralist view; the thesis that the target audience is directed through the mass media is defended. According to the Marxist system, this model is realized through the stages of creating a social mind through propaganda. Within the aforementioned ideological scope; in parallel with the goals of the political actors and the priorities of the system, the society is subtly directed by the mass media. According to this theory, the political actor is in an educational position, while the public is a community with limited knowledge that needs to be educated by being subjected to an information attack through mass media (Durmaz, 2015: 21). In this theory, it is stated that the target audience does not have any effect on the political process, and the media only tries to influence the masses through manipulation. This model is quite similar to the “hypodermic needle” (syringe under the skin) model advocated by Laswell regarding mass manipulation. In this theory of Laswell, it is mentioned that mass media inject certain content into people’s veins, and as a result, the desired reactions begin to emerge in the target audience. Bernard Cohen, on the other hand, says that the media is quite successful in telling the target audience what to think about, rather than what to think. Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw define this situation as “the media’s ability to set the agenda” (Alemdar and Köker, 2011: 229).

Hegemonic Model:

In this type of model, the claim that the media deliberately tries to manipulate is rejected. The class that is the peak point of media clusters and is formed by the dominant power in this field wants the type of broadcasting that is the guardian of the systematics that are valid among the people and consist of hegemonic values and aims to spread this system. In general, the results of the researches conducted on communication have been obtained that the broadcasts made in the media are in the direction of keeping the current status quo alive and supporting it. Some of the messages sent from the media to the target audience are interpreted without opposing the thought system and goals of the people in power. This interpretation makes the status quo even stronger than before. The media, which can be considered as the most important information center regarding the political events on the agenda; according to this approach, is the transmitter of the values agreed upon by the society both indirectly and directly. Compared to the other two models that are at different ends, the hegemonic model can be defined as a role form that suggests that in addition to the mass media reflecting the

wishes, expectations and views of the society, they also cause a consensus to emerge on some issues in the society. Within this model, there is no conscious guidance by the mass media; however, a desire to create bias can be observed with the involvement of political and material balance concerns. Within the scope of this view, although the owners of the mass media seem to be shifting towards a certain ideology or balance, it is claimed that the team and the executive group that create the news almost always conduct autonomous and institutionalized journalism (Oktay, 2002: 29).

When the “task of spreading the idea of the dominant power” in the media in the hegemonic model is examined in the context of political formations and elections, the media is a negative structure for the parties that are not in power. This structure can be evaluated as one of the biggest elements that will hinder pluralism in political studies carried out on the eve of elections. At this very stage, the need for political parties to create their own areas emerges. The internet, which is an important part of new communication technologies, helps to eliminate the imbalance factor in terms of the presentation intervals of the parties in power and opposition in the media on a temporal and discursive basis (Alemdar and Köker, 2011: 229).

1.4. Political Communication Tools

Political communication has been carried out using various tools from history to the present. While a wide range of political communication tools can be evaluated from history to the present, including public speaking, coffeehouse interviews, messengers, sultan's decrees and touts, political communication in its modern sense is mainly carried out through mass communication tools. These can be examined under four headings: written and printed tools, audio and visual tools, events and new media.

Written and Printed Tools:

All tools used in communication have also been used in the field of public relations and political communication. Written and printed tools emerged after the invention of writing and became widespread after the invention of the printing press. The most important tools of written political communication are undoubtedly newspapers. On the other hand, materials such as magazines, brochures, handbooks, leaflets and bulletins are also counted among the written and printed tools used in political communication.

Audio and Visual Tools:

In the nineteenth century, when techniques identified with elements such as the Industrial Revolution, the capitalist system, modernization and urbanization came to the fore, the book and newspaper industry rapidly spread. Following the rapid growth of this circulation and the increase in the literacy rate in modern society, radio and television broadcasting left their mark on the period in the twentieth century (Outhwaite, 2008: p. 423). With the introduction of radio into our lives in the 1950s, the Cold War showed itself through the ‘radio wars’. In this sense, the place of radio among audio and visual tools is quite important. In addition to audio devices such as audio cassettes, speakers, megaphones, television has emerged as an important invention that combines sound and image in both mass communication and political communication. Thanks to television, the age of visuality has begun in the world. Accordingly, projects, ideas, messages, etc. that do not have visual value or cannot be viewed have lost their effect in terms of political communication (Çankaya, 2015 p.81)

Events:

Among the tools used in political communication, social events held with communities have an important place. Activities used as political communication tools in order to understand what the public thinks and to influence this include meetings, rallies, dinners, visits, campaigns and public opinion polls.

New Media:

Depending on the developments in media and communication technologies, the use of new media in political communication has surpassed traditional media. With the many conveniences it provides, the use of new media technologies has also been quickly discovered by political actors and they have started to benefit from these technologies in order to achieve their own goals. Political parties and candidates can use the internet as a continuous political communication tool to promote themselves and provide news and information, and they also use it intensively, especially during election campaigns, to influence voters' votes (Aziz, 2015: 77-78). The next section of the study will provide more detailed information about the use of new media technologies in political communication.

2. DIGITALIZATION IN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

The internet, which dates back to the 1960s when the Cold War was raging (Eldeniz, 2010:19), has developed rapidly over time and become an important means of communication today. The internet, which has a significant impact on communication in particular, has brought flexibility to the concepts of time and space and eliminated the concept of distance. In the development process of the internet, following Web 1.0 technologies that were static and open to one-way use, Web 2.0 technology, where users have an active role, can make comments and suggestions, create communities, and have easy-to-use opportunities, has emerged, along with Wikis, blogs and social networks, creating a major transformation in all kinds of communication processes, especially political communication. In the following process, a rapid transformation has been experienced, from Web 3.0 (Karakulakoğlu, 2015:117), which allows for the interpretation of interconnected data, to Web 4.0 technologies, where virtualization comes to the fore and artificial intelligence and augmented reality concepts come to the fore. Web 3.0, a system that can understand what people want to do and offer solutions accordingly thanks to its database that interprets relationships and meanings; and Web 4.0 technologies, where the concepts of time and space gain flexibility, have the potential to greatly affect political communication.

Below, the journey of political communication, especially transformed by Web 2.0 technologies, and future expectations will be discussed.

2.1. New Media

With the digitalization of communication technologies and their entry into social life, the concept of "new media" has begun to be discussed. New Media was conceptually put forward in the 1970s by researchers interested in social, psychological, economic, political and cultural studies in information and communication-based research. It manifested itself with computer and internet technology, which became important in the 90s (Dilmen, 2014:114). During the 1990s, Europe and Japan became the most important centers of new media studies (Manovic, 2014:158) and has held an important place in social life until today and has been the subject of many discussions.

When defining new media, Manovich used the following expressions; "All existing communication tools were converted into digital data that computers could access and were able to calculate graphics, moving images, sounds, shapes, areas and texts. In short, they became a collection of computer data. Media became new media." (2011:467-70). This definition emphasizes the feature of new media, which includes many features such as the development of computer technologies and image-sound-writing, namely its digitalization. Technically, the media in which information integrated with computer and information technologies is carried and transmitted in digital form is new media (Aslan, 2013:106). New media is seen as an effective communication area that has the characteristics of hypertextuality and modularity with its digital coding system, allows mutual interaction between its users, and is defined as an important tool of today's information age (Çambay, 2015:241). Although many academic studies refer to the internet and internet-based applications, it is also possible to collect computers, mobile phones and digitally converted radio, television, cameras and photo machines under the title of new media tools (Sert, 2014:284). Many things, including the internet, websites and computer games, CD-ROMs, virtual reality applications, digital televisions and three-dimensional animation applications, are described under the name of new media (Aytekin and

Sütçü, 2012:4). When defining new media, there is also a comparison with traditional media. The first use of the term new media was in McLuhan's article "The Later Innis" in Queen's Quarterly magazine in 1953 (Aslan, 2013:103). McLuhan emphasized the characteristic features of new media in his article. Some of these characteristics are electronic information and global access power (Aslan, 2013:103). There are some features that distinguish new media from traditional media tools and allow the media to be called new. These features that constitute new media tools and environments are defined as digitality, interaction, linked texts (hypertextuality), multimedia (multimedia) formality, user-centered content production, virtuality and dissemination (Binark and Löker, 2011:9-12).

- *Digitality*: In order to understand digitalization, it is necessary to first examine the concept of digitalization. Digitalization covers a whole process that includes the conversion of analog messages (words, pictures) into signals consisting of separate beats that can be transferred, processed and stored in an electronic environment (Ormanlı, 2012:32). Digitizing messages in the form of images, texts and sounds and easily transferring, sharing or accessing these messages between media provides the digitalization of information. The processing of images, sounds and texts together has created a large and wide area of multimedia applications designed with computer technologies. In addition, communication tools such as telephones, photographs, music, television, radio and computers are also being digitized.
- *Interaction*: One of the most important features of new media environments and tools is that they allow mutual interaction within the communication process. Interaction is considered to be the main feature of new media. New media technologies offer their users the opportunity to produce media content as well as consume it. This interaction encourages the user not only to consume but also to produce. Interaction on new media is the ability of the receiver participating in the communication process to be a transmitter at the same time with the help of technical arrangements or to increase the user's control over the message. New media tools and environments are designed to provide mutual interaction between the receiver and the source. The user can control the information provided by the tool at any time and in any way he wants, send feedback to the data source instantly and in this way, a continuous and multi-faceted communication can be provided where the source is the receiver and the receiver is the source (Sanlav, 2014:32). Examples of this interaction on new media are comments made on news published on the internet, users on social media accounts liking and commenting on each other's posts and sharing the same post on their own accounts.
- *Linked Text Feature*: The fundamental difference in presenting new media content is the linked text feature. This is also called hypertextuality. When viewed from the development process of computer technology; if any visual, verbal or auditory information sends other information within itself via the network and provides access to this information, it is a linked text. (Sanlav, 2014:34). Linked text or hypertextuality; It is defined as providing easy access to other alternative media and texts via links and tags over an interface or network (Narin, 2016:119). Thanks to this feature of hypertextuality, users can easily access texts, easily move from one text to another, in other words, they can navigate through texts. While there are beginning and end concepts in texts in other media types, the end concept ends with the hypertextuality feature of the new media environment (Binark, 2014:17). This situation shows that the beginning and end boundaries have disappeared in new media texts. The existence of the hypertextuality environment in the new media provides its users with many advantages such as easy access, easy navigation, contribution to production, and interaction. The structure of the linked text has brought the feature of interactivity to internet environments. With the connection of web pages in different databases on the media with hypertextuality, a phenomenon with a global structure has emerged worldwide. The desired parts of digitally coded texts can easily be transferred or transformed to other digital texts or parts. In this way, all parts of the texts can be at an equal distance from the sender and the receiver.
- *Multimedia Formalities*: It is seen that different text formats coexist on the Internet. The new structured form of writing, image and sound offered to users through new communication technologies is multimedia (Bingöl, 2014:160). Multimedia is defined and categorized as a

synthesis of digitalized media such as animation, graphics, text, sound and video that affect two or more senses, a computer-controlled, integrated media, presentation, storage and preservation form (Bingöl, 2014:160). Multimedia is of great importance in terms of easy comprehension of the content in new media and effective expression of the content. In a news story read on the internet, accessing videos related to the same news on the same page as the news text or a video message containing an advertisement for a brand sent to our mobile phones, etc., show how frequently multimedia is used in new media. In other words, it is an indication that multimedia exists in new media.

- *Content Production:* New media is also examined in the context of content creation and presentation. In new media, users play an active role in the creation of content. In the new media environment, individuals are both users and content providers. Thanks to new media technologies, devices themselves have become media environments. Smart mobile phones, computers, tablets, etc. have become data storages. Individuals create their own newspapers and cat TV channels with various new media tools and applications, watch what they choose, not what is presented to them, and share what they want. Integrated new media environments, where transition between screens is facilitated, provide flexibility, speed and convenience to individuals' communication (Uğurlu, 2016:216). The characteristics of their users are also reflected in the content of new media. The fact that new media users are shy, change-oriented, fast and sensitive to visuals causes new media content to become old very quickly after a certain period of time and the need for renewal is felt. What enriches and makes new media content attractive is that the content is presented to users quickly by diversifying it with features such as sound, motion, and image over a single channel. The internet, which is considered the most important source of new media today, can present content to its users without any limitations by diversifying it with features such as sound, motion, and image over the same channel. Thanks to the internet, content is free from time and space limitations. Users can access the content they want whenever and wherever they want.
- *Dissemination:* Dissemination is the application where digital data travels over the network and the data is accessed over the network. This structure facilitates the dissemination of data and its content. It makes it possible for different types of data to be used by different applications. This network, where communication takes place, is mostly large networks consisting of interconnected networks such as the internet, or applications working on smaller networks such as local networks. Thanks to the dissemination feature of networks, users can access different applications and work with these applications at the same time. In short, diffusion is the rapid distribution of any text in the interface over the network, and the ability to access this text again and again at different times and spaces (Binark and Löker, 2011:12). Thanks to the diffusion feature of new media, receivers are both active and have the position of being producers and consumers at the same time.
- *Virtuality:* Virtuality, another feature of new media, defines the quality of the media user's communication with the media. It is virtuality that provides the user with the feeling of being there. Virtuality is actually the space where people feel they are present while communicating online. One of the important effects of the network-based feature of the media is experiencing and sharing the feeling of being somewhere indirectly through virtual presence and the feeling of being together with others through mediation (Çomu and Binark, 2013:14). Virtual reality; Rather than a concrete object or space, they are environments where users experience auditory, visual and tactile sensations, a movement opportunity and direction power as in a real physical space through data in a computer system (Timisi, 2005:91). Virtual reality environments are environments designed for specific purposes in terms of basic mechanism mentality. These environments have the feature of being a mutually supportive power between the digital environment devices of new media (Gezgin and İralı, 2017:96). Cyberspace is the state where users can be completely connected to each other without being affected by any physical limitations through computer and internet systems (Gürkaynak and İren, 2011:265). If it is explained by giving an example, cyberspace is an uncertain/boundless place where a

phone conversation takes place, neither inside the phone nor on the phone of the other person being talked to, bringing two people together. It is a place that you are in but nowhere else (Timisi, 2005:92). Communication experiences such as video calls made and e-mails received are real and these communications have taken place in virtual space. Virtual space gives the user the feeling of being there. In video calls made with smartphones, despite the distances, the effect of face-to-face communication is felt in the conversation. This situation has made virtuality an important feature of new media.

2.2. Political Communication and Social Networks

Social media are web service providers that allow users to create an open or closed profile in a limited system, establish connections within the same system, view and follow interconnected lists that include other users. It is described as a common name for online applications and websites that allow people to share their thoughts, interests and information, and allow for mutual interaction. (Dikmen, 2011:160).

Social media has become popular in a short time because it offers its users the opportunity to be both a receiver and a giver, the level of interaction can be increased in the communication process, and provides certain opportunities such as synchronicity and community creation. In social media, information is produced by an individual or a brand and is generally sent to the recipients without being subject to intensive scrutiny, by providing a two-way communication opportunity (Altunbaş, 2014:46). The fact that content is not subject to intensive scrutiny in social media has also increased the number of information whose accuracy is questionable.

It is seen that social media applications are used effectively in political communication. The main social media applications actively used in political communication are briefly given below.

X (Twitter): With X (formerly known as Twitter), which is seen as the most effective social media application in terms of receiving news today, users can choose to follow certain topics, create a type of dialogue and share a certain feed with their millions of followers (<https://www.britanni-ca.com/topic/Twitter>).

Facebook: One of the most popular social media applications is Facebook. Facebook, which has been the most used social media platform since its launch in 2004, has maintained this position for many years and then given way to Instagram. According to the Digital in 2025 Global Overview report (<https://wearesocial.com>), it is currently the third most used social media platform. Individual and corporate memberships can be made with the application. While a person can open their own page and share, organizations such as municipalities, political parties, restaurants, sports clubs also continue their existence on this platform. These shares are also used to increase recognition and promote.

Instagram: Created by Kevin Systorm and Mike Krieger and first called “Burbn”, Instagram serves as a mobile photo (and video) capture and sharing environment. In this social media application, people can share both their own and non-own images with their friends and can make the images and videos they want to share different with filters (Hu et al. 2014: 595). Instagram has rapidly risen to become the most used social media platform, surpassing Facebook, which has been the leader for many years, according to the Digital in 2025 Global Overview report (<https://wearesocial.com>).

YouTube: On YouTube, one of the most used social media sites in our country, there is no sharing other than video sharing. On YouTube, people can receive feedback through comments from other users under the videos they share. Today, it can be said that the effectiveness of television is weakened compared to computers, as the act of watching television can be done through mobile devices such as mobile phones. In the face of this weakening, especially the new generation spends more time on computers rather than television, and the distance between traditional media and new media is increasing day by day.

In addition to the social networking sites Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube, there are also other popular networks. Some of these are as follows:

WhatsApp: This application allows you to send and receive messages between people without paying for SMS messages via an internet connection. The person using the application can stay in touch with groups that are very important to him/her, such as his/her family or work colleagues. With this application, messages, photos and videos can be shared with up to 256 people at once in group chats.

Facebook Messenger: This application, which was launched on May 9, 2011, is an instant messaging service and software application that can provide written, audio and video communication. Thanks to the use of Facebook Messenger, it is possible to reach people on the Facebook application instantly on mobile or on the website. With this application, you can communicate with options such as messages, audio and video calls; posts can be supported with photos, videos, stickers and some effects.

Google Plus: The date of emergence of Google Plus is June 28, 2011. The user can prepare and write a short article about himself/herself on Google Plus, as on Twitter, and include the address of the website he/she owns in the introduction section. As you progress through the profile creation page, you are given the opportunity to mark the place of residence in detail on Google Maps, along with routine questions such as education status and profession.

2.3. The Effect of New Media Technologies on Political Communication

In this century, which we can call the age of technology and the internet, our connection with new media technologies is increasing day by day, as computers and the internet have become the focal point of our lives. Thanks to new media technologies and social media platforms, easy, cheap and fast access to information, facilitating information sharing and the expansion of communication networks are among the elements that direct individuals to social media platforms. These environments, where virtual groups are formed and all kinds of ideas such as social, cultural, political, etc. are shared, have begun to become important social areas of the globalizing world. For this reason, it has undoubtedly become a normal situation that new media technologies affect every area of humanity, as well as the political world and therefore political communication.

The Organizing Effect of New Media on Political Communication: When we look at the positive effects of new media technologies on political communication, we will encounter a very broad framework. In this context, the effects of new media technologies on the political field can be mentioned in a very wide range from websites to social media accounts, from e-mails to mobile applications. However, social media, which is one of the new media technologies, has an organizing feature in terms of allowing people to gather around any idea beyond just sharing emotions, thoughts, photos and videos. Social media, which has caused a change in the basic communication order, has brought about a change in the understanding of society directed by those who are governed.

Interaction: According to Rogers, new media technologies have three features. The first of these is that new media provides interaction. The presence of interaction is necessary in the communication process. The second is de-massification. New media technologies can be de-massification enough to allow private message exchange with each individual within a large user group. The third is asynchronous. The most important opportunities of these technologies are that new media technologies offer individuals the opportunity to send and receive messages at a convenient time, eliminating the necessity of simultaneity (Geray, 2003: 18). For all these reasons, benefiting from these benefits of new media technologies in political communication activities has become one of the indispensable elements of political campaigns. Because traditional methods alone are no longer sufficient to change voter behavior.

Access and Up-to-dateness: According to Brown and Gunter, they provide the following explanation regarding the benefits provided to political parties and leaders by using the internet and new media technologies in particular in their election campaigns. According to this explanation; The

developments in the design of the parties' websites and the functional features of these sites, along with the opportunities provided by the internet, provide political parties with the opportunity to conduct market research on the web. Based on this, it becomes easier to identify the audience that can provide potential support and to access this audience. In particular, the fact that a large part of the information circulation is on the web provides the opportunity to access information easily. In addition, the fact that web content can be easily updated and therefore provides the opportunity to access up-to-date and rich information and, most importantly, that users can provide feedback are among the most important positive effects of new media technologies. In addition to all these, the creation of a database of the audiences and the determination of the needs of special interest groups and the necessary arrangements made based on this are also important effects (Alemdar and Köker, 2011: 236). It is an important advantage for the corporate web pages of political parties and leaders to be compatible with new media technologies and social media tools, especially to have versions suitable for smartphones and tablets. In addition, it is extremely important that the content shared on the site is also connected to the social media accounts of the political party and leaders. Thanks to social media platforms that enable the shared content to be announced to a wider audience, the visitor traffic of web pages will also increase. In addition, mastering the language of new media technologies strengthens the bond between political actors and young people who grew up with new media technologies (Bostancı, 2013: 216-217).

Aziz (2008) stated that regarding the positive effects of new media technologies and the internet on political communication, the fact that political actors can freely express themselves as if they have their own means of communication and influence the target audience is one of the important opportunities of new media technologies. It is faster and easier to convey messages quickly and update them when necessary, especially through web pages, compared to traditional media tools. Easy access and the ability to receive feedback via e-mail have minimized the distance between voters and political actors. Due to the feature of internet technologies being intertwined with other mass media tools mentioned in the media convergence theory, presenting messages multiple times through different channels in different environments provides access to more people. For example, a political actor addressing the public using the traditional rally method and sharing the sounds, images, videos and photos of the rally simultaneously on web pages and social media platforms can provide access to millions of people at once (Aziz, 1981: 80-81).

Advantages Against Censorship: The fact that new media technologies are much more difficult to control by political authorities than traditional media is an important opportunity for its users. Of course, this situation, which is an opportunity for users, can also pose a significant threat to political authorities. The fact that traditional media tools can be more easily controlled by political authorities and are open to manipulation and disinformation has turned interest in them into an opportunity, as it creates an area where even the most radical ideas, such as social media, can be shared freely (Köseoğlu, 2013: 119).

Data and Archive Opportunities: The fact that WEB sites have the ability to collect information about their users is a great advantage in terms of measurement. Especially Google analytics, alexa, and youtube insight are sites that are used to obtain many different analytical data on the internet. It is possible to reach various information such as how many people visit the site, which pages people browse on that site, what they are interested in on the site, and how much time they spend through these measurement tools (Soydan, 2013: 179-190).

Low Cost Opportunities: The high cost of political advertisements in traditional media tools and especially on television, and the high advertising rates, were making it difficult for political candidates. For this reason, candidates preferred different methods in order to reach voters in election campaigns (Özkan, 2007: 25). The low cost of new media technologies is seen as a great opportunity, especially by political parties and candidates. In election campaigns, leaders and parties can reach voters more easily and provide information flow through sites and pages that are opened with less cost.

Publicity: Thanks to new media technologies, it is very successful in producing and consuming information, and in doing so, spreading it quickly in the virtual environment. This rapid spread offered by the virtual environment and the internet has made it easier for individuals to express their expectations and demands. Individuals who are not content with just receiving information from their environment, become the source of information themselves after a while and become the producers of political content and information. In this case, political parties and leaders need to take into account this situation of the voters and renew their political communication methods and policies in this context and keep them constantly up to date (Özkır and Yiğitbaşı, 2013: 333).

Participation: In democratic systems, the strength and continuity of political powers in elections, which help political powers gain legitimacy and regulate the relationship between the rulers and the ruled, depends on their acceptance and support by the electorate (Yavaşgel, 2004: 11-12). Especially in Turkey, where participation in political processes is low, the follow relationship on Twitter, a social platform offered by new media technologies that politicize individuals with the virtual public sphere it contains, provides the electorate with a functional political participation (Keskin and Sönmez, 2015: 359).

Thanks to new media technologies and the free environment provided by the internet, various political communities are being formed through sites. These groups formed under the name of virtual communities can come together for various reasons. These virtual communities can help create a new understanding of partnership and coexistence in society by creating new common values. These established communities can be shaped around a certain political view or around political leaders (Sayımer, 2008: 45). One of the duties of political powers is to determine such communities with significant members and to gain a significant advantage by conducting political information activities on these platforms.

Feedback: The limited feedback in traditional communication tools such as newspapers, radio, television, which are formed by the dissemination of messages from a certain center, the high cost of publication, limited access, and the inadequacy of the self-control system, and the fact that the internet has overcome these reasons more, has increased the interest in the internet. The internet, which adds a different dimension to interpersonal communication, has created new generation internet services with the rapid changes in communication technologies (Yolçu, 2011: 11).

The use of the internet, the source of new media technologies in political communication, has become extremely effective especially in the pre-election and post-election period. The fact that the internet provides two-way communication and is interactive, facilitates feedback, and transmits the planned information much more easily and quickly has made the internet an attractive element for political parties and leaders (Fidan and Özer, 2014: 213).

Election studies and political activities carried out by focusing on new media technologies and the internet create important opportunities in terms of public services. Increasing the communication established by minimizing the distance between voters and political actors, citizens receiving feedback by rapidly conveying their opinions, suggestions and complaints, and also giving administrators the chance to analyze, report and provide feedback on these issues are some of the opportunities of the internet in political life. However, the fact that it provides transparency and dialogue between citizens and the government, and is an important factor in attracting the new generation, who are most closely involved with technology, to public services and activities, is one of the important advantages that new media technologies provide to both voters and elected officials, namely political leaders, actors and administrators (Borins, 2011: 90-92)

Access and Transmission of Information: One of the effects of new media technologies on political communication is that it is effective in preventing the situation where voters keep their distance from politics, also known as 'political apathy'. Increasing the effectiveness of a political campaign and reinforcing the attitudes of supporters and keeping them active during the political campaign process are extremely important. Political party members who have access to the information provided by new media technologies can play an intermediary role in conveying this

information to other voters. In this way, the attention of individuals who are not interested in the campaign is also drawn. In particular, information disseminated through the web pages of political parties has an important effect in reaching both the voters in general and the people working in the party, and provides a regular flow of information (Kalkan, 2016).

Supervising the Administrators: Since it is a platform open to the public, new media is an area where communication can be observed by large segments of society. In this respect, it allows the administrators to be supervised. The fact that feedback occurs directly and very quickly also turns this supervision into a warning mechanism. According to Yeğen, with social media, society can supervise, warn and comment on the administrators when necessary (Yeğen, 2013: 33).

2.4. Negative Aspects of New Media Technologies

Aziz (1981:82) lists the negative effects of new media technologies and the internet on political communication as follows: The fact that information shared on the internet can easily be changed and deleted undermines trust in information. The fact that it is not known who is behind the information or messages shared also casts a shadow on the reliability of the messages. Interruptions in access to the internet due to insufficient infrastructure and technological opportunities can delay access to information. In cases where the target audience's relationship with technology, the rate of ownership of technology or technological equipment is insufficient, problems may arise in terms of political messages creating the desired effect on the receiver.

Among the negative effects of new media technologies, the free movements of individuals in a virtual environment that offers an unlimited field and does not recognize any rules can create serious problems in terms of political communication. Individuals who struggle in the face of the endless flow of information may experience problems regarding the accuracy and reliability of information. Individuals, each of whom becomes a source of information on their own, may occasionally struggle in the face of the content produced and shared. Individuals who share all kinds of ideas and opinions in the face of events and situations without any need for censorship can become a threat to this virtual environment when the time comes (Babacan, 2014: 73). As Castells states, although technological developments have a positive effect in general, the insecurity created by the internet, especially in the political field, is very deep and is experienced worldwide (Castells, 2001: 67). Because social media, in particular, poses the risk of false information being circulated for different purposes due to the difficulty of monitoring (Parsa and Akmeşe, 2013: 126). Individuals who grow up with the tools and equipment offered by new media technologies, while gaining positive benefits from these tools, also encounter some negative problems. The segment most exposed to this situation is the young generation. Individuals who grow up with the internet from a young age and spend a large part of their daily lives in the virtual environment constantly share content and gain information. However, due to reasons such as the internet being a free environment and being far from control, the content shared contains serious threats. One of these threats is the language problem. Because individuals can find a place for themselves on social media by disregarding the rules of language during their posts (Gül, 2013: 1350). Not content with this, young people can exhibit attitudes that will seriously offend the other party by sharing posts that include political insults and curses on social media platforms. The structural feature of social media platforms, which are among the new media technologies, and their openness to interaction are the main features that distinguish them from traditional communication tools. The problem that this reason causes is that they can be easily manipulated, provoked and diverted from their purpose. In addition, the fact that social media tools are open to information pollution and news disinformation threatens the reliability of information. For example, an image related to any event or situation can be manipulated and the event can be transformed into a completely opposite message. This image that is shared afterwards can lead to misinformation of the masses and even the formation of mass actions (Babacan, 2014: 137). One of the most striking features of the political use of new media technologies and social networks is the use of social networks in organizing political actions. Social networks, which serve as a common platform in organizing political actions, also serve as a bridge for politicians to reach the public. In addition, the fact that social networks are areas where information about political scandals is shared firsthand

constitutes the most important problematic dimension of social networks that politicians should take into consideration today (Uğur, 2013: 73).

As it is also expressed in theoretical criticisms of new media technologies, especially the internet, the problem of commercialization and surveillance comes to the fore with the internet. This problem, which has recently become more evident in political issues, has become an important problem in almost every area of human life. In the past years, leaks and publications such as Wikileaks and Snowden are important in terms of showing the seriousness of the situation. Since the use of the internet has started to increase significantly throughout the country and has spread to almost all layers of society, the threat of surveillance is increasing significantly. This threat can be for commercial purposes, as well as in terms of violating the security of the country and the privacy of private life (Çakır, 2015: 35-36). For the reasons mentioned above, parties need to be careful about the use of new media technologies and the internet during the political communication process, especially during election campaigns. It is of great importance for the electorate to make news and posts that are believed to be reliable and that will not cause disinformation. Otherwise, a wrong post can suddenly become the main agenda of social media platforms. For this reason, political parties should be careful about the national or international political, economic, etc. they may want to share all kinds of developments with the voters instantly and convey the issue to the citizens. A mistake at this point may lead to serious crises both nationwide and in the international arena. For this reason, the use of new media technologies in political communication activities should be effectively carried out by experts in the field of the parties.

2.5. Artificial Intelligence and Political Communication in New Media

After discussing the importance, advantages and disadvantages of using new media in political communication, it would be useful to emphasize artificial intelligence-supported applications that have entered our agenda more intensely in recent years.

Artificial intelligence is a technology that continuously records the actions we take in the digital environment in 'big data', processes and classifies this information and offers suggestions to users. The data classified thanks to this technology can be used in different political scenarios. The actions that users take in the digital environment without knowing that they are being watched are called a kind of 'digital footprint', and artificial intelligence offers a function that makes it easier for people to make decisions with this data. Today, many businesses have increased their profitability to higher levels, especially with marketing activities, with artificial intelligence operating on big data (Kurnaz 2022).

The use of artificial intelligence in politics has been slower than in other areas. The use of data as a political input in the digital system and the making of political inferences with it is new but rapidly developing. While Chat GPT and generative intelligence were heard of only by a small part of the world in the fall of 2022, Open AI reached 300 thousand weekly users worldwide in December 2024, and this figure exceeded 400 million in February 2025 (<https://ticaret.gov.tr>). It is possible to say that artificial intelligence is experiencing a faster growth than any social media platform (De Vreese and Fabip Votta 2023).

- Today, it has become possible to analyze data obtained from social media, surveys and voter registrations with artificial intelligence, reveal the tendencies of voters, make inferences about election results and develop different strategies for different voter groups. At the same time, it can be tested with various simulations how a designed strategy can have an impact on the public. Communication strategies that guide politicians can be designed by determining which messages resonate in big data, and rhetorical strategies and campaigns optimized in terms of content, target audience and timing can be produced by analyzing previously effective speeches. Smart assistants that can automatically and instantly answer voters' questions during busy election periods are another convenience that artificial intelligence can offer. On the other hand, it is possible to implement bot analyses against disinformation and applications that prevent manipulation of society thanks to artificial intelligence (De Vreese and Fabip

Votta 2023). In addition to those listed above, it would be appropriate to mention some points to be considered in the use of artificial intelligence in political communication. Kurnaz (2022) drew attention to some issues regarding the use of artificial intelligence in political communication:

- First of all, it should be noted that the data collected via digital platforms in political communication cannot be generalized to the entire society. Since the data only reflects the results of the users of the examined platform, it is possible to make misleading inferences. Since it will be more accurate to obtain some results by blending the data with other data sets (satellite images, people's responses in political surveys, preferred TV programs, etc.) from both digital platform users and social media, it is important to develop much more advanced applications.
- It is possible to carry out operations such as creating political perception, creating public opinion and directing the agenda through bots, which are artificial intelligence applications that provide content production, message transmission and automatic answering of questions. However, it is also frequently used by malicious implementers for purposes such as spreading false news and polarizing society.
- It is possible for personal data to be stolen and transferred to different political groups as well as foreign governments, different interest groups or terrorist groups.
- Groups that share their own thoughts and follow people with similar views can become radicalized and polarized against different ideas within the same agenda bubble thanks to artificial intelligence algorithms. With algorithms presenting people with content they will like, it has become difficult to encounter content with different ideas. People can believe that everyone thinks like them.

With the widespread use of artificial intelligence in political communication, the problem of increased, alternative and unreal content proliferating also comes to the fore. This situation brings forward 'ethical' discussions as well as new discussion topics such as the extent to which citizens can trust politics and newspaper content or how they can distinguish the real from the fake.

3. CONCLUSION

Politics, whose origins date back to the Ancient Greek era, is a discipline that regulates social power balances for politicians and requires intense communication between authorities and citizens in social and economic terms. Political communication, used to gain political power or to maintain current power, is a multidimensional and dynamic process encompassing many disciplines. This process takes place not only between the party, candidates and voters, but also with all individuals or groups that can affect the election process. When it comes to political communication, it does not only start during election periods, but also with the establishment of a political party and the foundations of the party ideology, and requires the cooperation and interaction of a wide range of professionals, including academics, journalists, advertisers and public relations experts. While political messages are conveyed through political communication, on the one hand, the public's reactions to the messages can be observed and political activities can be reviewed. Political communication plays an important role in understanding the expectations of the public. It is possible to measure the response of the messages served by the party to the public with methods such as public opinion surveys and various polls and voter visits. Political communication also affects academics, journalists, writers, intellectuals and intellectuals who can offer different perspectives, thoughts and comments on certain issues to the society. Effective political communication increases the agenda-setting skills of political circles. As a result, a successfully conducted political communication process provides a great advantage against political rivals.

Political actors use both face-to-face communication and mass media in the political communication process. In situations where voters and politicians are in the same environment such as rallies, concerts, symposiums, congresses, and street visits; face-to-face communication, which is considered the most effective method in terms of persuasion and influence, is used. On the other hand,

mass media provide the opportunity for fast and effective communication. In this process, the way some messages are highlighted and served can shape what is talked about, how it is thought and what is dealt with in society. Political communication with mass media has a great impact in terms of coverage and the size of the impact it creates. In the political communication process carried out with mass media, written and printed tools and audio and visual tools are used within the scope of traditional media. Depending on the developments in media and communication technologies, the use of new media in political communication has surpassed traditional media. With the many conveniences it provides, the use of new media technologies was quickly discovered by political actors and they started to benefit from these technologies in order to achieve their own goals. Digitality, interaction, hypertextuality, multimedia (multimedia) formality, user-centered content production, virtuality and dissemination are the features that distinguish new media from traditional media tools. Today, the most important use of new media in political communication is social media. Social media has become popular in a short time because it offers its users the opportunity to be both a receiver and a transmitter, the ability to increase the level of interaction in the communication process, and certain opportunities such as synchronicity and community creation. Applications such as X, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Whatsapp are actively used in political communication. These applications offer many advantages to their users such as facilitating organization in the political communication process, providing fast interaction, easy access and being up-to-date, less censorship, cheapness, the ability to store past data as an archive, prevalence and broad participation. Since the interactive feature of social media enables feedback, it supports two-way communication. Since it is a platform open to the public, new media is an area where communication can be observed by large segments of society. In this respect, it also allows the administrators to be controlled. Thanks to artificial intelligence, a technology that continuously records our actions in the digital environment in 'big data', processes and classifies this information and offers suggestions to users, it has become possible to reveal voters' tendencies, make inferences about election results and develop different strategies for different voter groups. At the same time, it is possible to test how a designed strategy can affect the public with various simulations. Communication strategies that guide politicians can be designed by determining which messages resonate in big data, and rhetorical strategies and campaigns optimized in terms of content, target audience and timing can be produced by analyzing previously effective speeches.

It is seen that along with the innovations brought by artificial intelligence in political communication, it is also used for purposes such as spreading fake news and polarizing society with its unethical use. This situation highlights 'ethical' discussions and can also shake citizens' trust in politics and the reality of newspaper content. On the other hand, groups that follow people with similar views can be exposed to the same agenda thanks to artificial intelligence algorithms and become radicalized and polarized against different ideas within this agenda they are in.

It is expected that the subject of 'artificial intelligence literacy', which is the ability to distinguish between fake and real information, to look at the information accessed from a critical perspective and to improve questioning, will become increasingly important in the coming period. It is anticipated that in the future, those working in the field of political communication will need to work in collaboration with experts outside their fields, especially in law and technology, on the effective and ethical use of artificial intelligence in political communication.

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