

THE IMPACT OF FACEBOOK POLITICAL ADVERTISING ON THE POLITICAL BEHAVIOR OF INDIVIDUALS

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Abstract

Social networks, which are widely used in communication and information exchange as a result of technological developments, become one of the effective methods of communicating with consumers. Increasing the impact of social networks every day and the increase in the number of consumers benefiting from the internet, increase the number of advertisements through digital channels. It can be said that the share of new media in advertising investments is increasing day by day and the digital advertising sector is able to compete with television advertisements. Politicians can reach their target audience with Facebook political advertising messages to disseminate their ideas, to influence the thoughts of individuals and to adopt their ideas. It is possible to say that political advertisements are widely used during election periods through social networking sites.

The aim of this study is to determine the impact of Facebook political advertising on the political behavior of individuals. In this context, a questionnaire was applied to 416 Facebook users. The research data was tested with Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis. In the result, political message, political trust and political situation factors are positively related to political behavior of individuals. Also, in the study, it is found that political messages, political trust, and political situation factors have positive effect on political behavior of individuals.

Keywords: Facebook, Online Political Advertising, Political Behavior.

Özet

Teknolojik gelişmeler neticesinde iletişim ve bilgi alışverişinde yaygın olarak kullanılan sosyal ağlar, tüketicilerle iletişim kurabilmenin etkili yöntemlerinden biri olmaktadır. Sosyal ağların her geçen gün etkisini daha da güçlendirmesi ve internetten faydalanan tüketicilerin sayısındaki artış, dijital kanallar aracılığı ile yapılan reklamların artmasına neden olmaktadır. Yeni medyanın reklam yatırımlarındaki payının her geçen gün arttığı, dijital reklam sektörünün neredeyse televizyon reklamları ile rekabet edebilecek konuma geldiği ifade edilebilmektedir. Politikacılar fikirlerini yaymak, bireylerin düşüncelerini etkilemek ve fikirlerini benimsetmek için hedef kitleye Facebook politik reklam mesajları ile ulaşabilmektedirler. Sosyal paylaşım siteleri aracılığı ile siyasi reklamların seçim dönemlerinde oldukça fazla kullanıldığını söylemek mümkündür.

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Bu çalışmanın amacı, Facebook politik reklamlarının bireylerin politik davranışlarına etkisinin belirlenmesidir. Bu kapsamda Facebook kullanıcılarına yönelik olarak 416 kişiye anket yapılmıştır. Araştırma verileri Korelasyon ve Çoklu Regresyon Analizi ile test edilmiştir. Sonuç olarak politik mesaj, politik güven ve politik durum faktörleri ile bireylerin politik davranışı arasında pozitif yönlü ilişki olduğu belirlenmiştir. Araştırmada politik mesaj, politik güven ve politik durum faktörlerinin bireylerin politik davranışları üzerinde etkili olduğu tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Facebook, Online Politik Reklam, Politik Davranış

Introduction

Advertising is often described as persuasive, structured, and non-personal communication to products, services, and ideas (Arens, 2008:7; Saleem et al., 2015: 11). Advertisements (Kotler and Keller, 2012: 478), defined as the introduction of goods, services or ideas through mass media such as newspapers, magazines and television, have received new forms of advantage with internet advertising (Jothi et al., 2011: 234). The digital advertising sector in Turkey has almost come to a position to compete with television ads.

Social networks, which are widely used in communication and exchange of information, are one of the effective methods of communicating with consumers. Social networks which allows people to communicate and share information with other people by creating an online profile (Bronstein, 2013: 173), is getting more and more popular in people's lives. While social networking sites transform into advertising and marketing platforms for businesses, it has become a source of information for consumers to be informed about products and services (Yıldız, 2016: 157). Social media, created for personal interaction among people but expanding in scope with different activities over time, is also used in marketing to connect with consumers, interact and ultimately reach corporate goals through this platform. Similarly, political parties or candidates use social media extensively in order to communicate with their followers, spread their thoughts and inform their followers (Dutta and Bhat, 2016: 518).

Communication provides the opportunity to explain the ideas of managers and political leaders to individuals or voters. The importance of communication stems from the understanding that political leaders and executives can best influence their audience through effective messaging and communication to achieve their goals (Abugre, 2017: 18). It can also be said that Facebook is a modern political tool that brings advertising messages to the target audience and provides various opportunities for political interaction and exchange of information (Yousif and ALSamydai, 2012: 85-86), bringing political parties or candidates closer to the masses. In this context, advertising which is a political promotion mix is very important for the political candidates or parties to create

a positive image on the voters and to inform the target audience. The general purpose of political advertising (Cwalina et al., 2011: 219), which is an effective tool for the adoption of the information related to the candidate and the party by the target group, is expressed as follows (İslamoglu, 2002: 150; Tan, 2002: 87; Divanoglu, 2008: 115):

- Informing the public about the leader, programs and practices
- Create party, candidate image and dependence
- Inform the audience, resolve concerns and introduce innovations
- Introducing and reminding the party, leader, candidate
- Reaching out to people who cannot be reached with propaganda
- Encouraging the audience to participate in political participation

Strengthening the influence of social networks day by day leads to an increase in the number of consumers who use the Internet and advertisements made through digital channels. Today's individuals are spending time in social networks. For this reason, businesses or institutions are expanding their marketing campaigns to reach individuals through online platforms and are very interested in advertising through social networks. Facebook, that connects people to each other and promotes social interaction, is becoming a platform of hope for introducing a product or service (Kodjamanis and Angelopoulos, 2013: 57). Despite the positive or negative aspects of Facebook advertising, online advertising is still seen as important factor shaping the consumer buying process (Hardwick et al., 2015: 8). With social media becoming popular in Turkey as well as all over the World, it shows that political advertisements via social networking sites used quite extensively as well as product and services. Political sharing through social media is said to be stronger than traditional media (Dutta and Bhat, 2016: 517).

Social media, used as a tool in political advertising, is being used extensively to communicate with voters. Especially in recent years, social media platforms have become widespread as a political communication environment. Political parties also use social media for marketing and advertising purposes as social media become a common means of communication (Safiullah et al., 2017: 10). Politicians reach the target audience via Facebook political advertising messages in order to disseminate their ideas, influence their thoughts and adopt their idea. Political advertising needs to be formulated as a communication methodology that proposes solutions to problems and also should include ideologies that political parties or candidates defend (Yousif and Alsamydai, 2012: 90).

Based on the dimensions Yousif and Alsamydai (2012) and Gad (2015) used in their studies, within the scope of the research, the sub-dimensions of advertising were determined as political messages, political trust and political situation. The political message includes advertising for political parties or candidates and discussing or sharing the contents of these ads with other users on Facebook which we can use as a

tool of modern political promotion. Trust factor is very important in social interactions and long-term relationships (Ahmed et al., 2011: 131). The factor of trust (Dabula, 2017: 81), which is the basis of many interactions, including a political party and voters, has been evaluated in this study as to the sincerity and reliability of political content advertisements shared on Facebook. The political situation factor refers to the situation related to the impact of the political messages shared on Facebook and the various political promotional campaigns on society.

It is stated that Facebook advertising messages allow consumers to develop attitudes about purchasing intention (Yang, 2012: 50) and that Facebook advertising has a positive effect on behavioral attitudes (Duffet, 2015: 498). It is also stated that Facebook advertisements have a significant impact on the purchasing behavior of young consumers (Rehman et al., 2014: 395). Considering the fact that viewing political messages on Facebook may affect voting behavior (Bond et al., 2012), Facebook offers a number of new opportunities to the parties to increase their campaigns, allowing parties to connect with voters. In this context, Facebook advertising can be the main component of the parties' campaigns (Bakir and McStay, 2017; Walsh, 2017; Dommet and Temple, 2018: 190-191).

Zumofen (2016) examined effects of political advertising on voting behavior. Similarly, Kaid et al. (2007) investigated effects of political advertising on young voters. It is stated that the political commitment messages made with Facebook affected the political attitudes of the people (Safiullah et al., 2016: 96). Gad (2015) found that political commitment campaigns on social networking sites were influential on individual attitudes but not on choice. (Safiullah et al., 2017) stated the fact that political parties are associated with social media, is effective in winning elections. Turska-Kawa (2013) investigated the relation between political trust and electoral behavior. Grönlund and Setälä (2007) examined trust on voter turnout and satisfaction. As result they found a positive effect of trust on turnout and satisfaction. In this sense, it is believed that the study will be useful for understanding the relationship between Facebook political advertisements and political behaviors and effect of political advertisements on political behaviors of individuals.

1. Research Aim, Model and Hypotheses

The aim of this research is to determine the relationship between political advertisements (political message, political trust, political situation) and the political behavior of individuals and the direction of this relationship. In this direction, research model is shown as Figure 1.

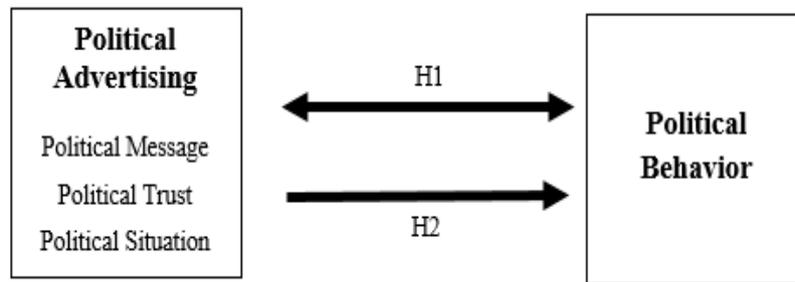


Figure 1. Research Model

Research hypotheses are as follow.

H1: There is a positive relationship between Facebook political advertising and political behavior.

H2: Facebook political advertising has an impact on political behavior.

2. Scope of the Research

The main mass of the research is facebook users. Research data were gathered from Facebook users by online questionnaire between 02/04/2018 – 30/05/2018. The sample size of the research is 416. Yousif and Alsamydai (2012) and Gad (2015) studies were used for research and scale-up. The demographic characteristics of the participants are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Education	N	%	Age	N	%
Elementary	37	8,9	18-28	236	56,7
High School	81	19,5	29-39	107	25,7
University	234	56,3	40-50	42	10,1
Master/PhD	64	15,4	51 and above	31	7,5
Visit Frequency	N	%	Marital Status	N	%
Less than 1 hour	118	28,4	Married	130	31,3
1-2 hour	112	26,9	Single	286	68,7
2-3 hour	61	14,7	Occupation	N	%
3-4 hour	58	13,9	Self-employment	28	6,7
4-5 hour	46	11,1	Official	70	16,8
5 hour and more	21	5,0	Contract employee	29	7,0
Income	N	%	Tradesman	21	5,0
1500 TL and below	161	38,7	Student	169	40,6
1500 TL – 3000 TL	136	32,7	Housewife	21	5,0
3001 TL – 4500 TL	70	16,8	Retired	21	5,0
4501 TL – 6000 TL	31	7,5	Worker	31	7,5
6001 TL and above	18	4,3	Other	26	6,3
Gender	N	%	Total	416	100
Female	200	48,1			
Male	216	51,9			

3. Analysis of Research Data

3.1. Reliability and Validity Analysis

Reliability and validity of scales were tested by Cronbach Alpha Coefficient method and Factor Analysis. General Alpha of the scales are; 0,750 (Political Message), 0,899 (Political Trust), 0,873 (Political Situation) and 0,825 (Political Behavior). According to these results, it is possible to say that the research is generally reliable.

The "Barlett Test" and the "Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Test" were applied in order to determine whether the data set obtained in the research is suitable for factor analysis. The Bartlett test indicated that there was a sufficient level of correlation between variables to perform Factor Analysis ($p=0,00<0,05$). And also Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) is 0,875 so it can be said that the variables are suitable for factor analysis. Factor Analysis results related to the variables used in the research are as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2. Factor Analysis Results

Component	Eigenvalues	Variance (%)	P
Political Message	2,007	66,916	,000
Political Trust	1,833	91,631	,000
Political Situation	1,775	88,761	,000
Political Behavior	1,703	85,129	,000

3.2. Testing Research Hypotheses

In the research, the relationship between Facebook political advertisements (political message, political trust and political situation) and the political behavior of individuals was investigated by Correlation Analysis and the effect levels were analyzed by Regression Analysis.

3.2.1. Correlation Analysis Results

Correlation Analysis was performed to measure the relationships between the variables and the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Correlation Analysis Results

	Political Behavior	Political Message	Political Trust	Political Situation
Political Behavior	1	0,656*	0,722*	0,382*
Political Message		1	0,747*	0,516*
Political Trust			1	0,346*
Political Situation				1

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

As a result of Correlation Analysis, it is seen that there is a positive relationship between Facebook political advertisements and political behavior. As seen in Table 3 political behavior has the strongest relationship with political trust (0,722) and the weakest relationship with political situation (0,382). So H1 hypothesis was accepted.

3.2.2. Regression Analysis Results

In the model, regression analysis was applied to measure the effects of political message, political trust, and political situation variables on political behavior, and the results are as shown in Table 4 and Table 5.

Table 4. Regression Model Summary

Model	R ²	Std. Error	Durbin-Watson
1	0,554	0,78762	1,809

As seen in Table 4, political message, political trust and political situation explain 55.4% of the total variance. Durbin Watson is 1.809. This value (between 1.5 and 2.5) indicates that there is no autocorrelation (Kalaycı, 2010: 267).

Table 5. Multiple Regression Analysis Results

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			P
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p	
Constant	0,506	0,112		4,516	0,000	0,00
Political Message	0,097	0,024	0,215	3,968	0,000	
Political Trust	0,336	0,031	0,531	10,756	0,000	
Political Situation	0,054	0,024	0,087	2,276	0,023	

As result of regression analysis, the most important factor for the political behavior scale is political trust (0,531) and the other factors are political message (0,215) and political situation (0,087). According to the table, regression equation as follow.

$$\text{Political Behavior} = 0,506 + 0,215 \text{ Political Message} + 0,531 \text{ Political Trust} + 0,087 \text{ Political Situation}$$

According to the regression equation 1 unit increase in political message factor increases political behavior by 0,215 units, 1 unit increase in political trust factor increases political behavior by 0,531 units and 1 unit increase in political situation factor increases political behavior by 0,087 units. So H2 hypothesis “Facebook political advertising has an impact on political behavior” was accepted.

Conclusion

As a result of technological developments, it is very important in today's competition conditions that all institutions which are profit-oriented or non-profit to use influentially their social media environment effectively within the scope of their promotion studies. The increase in the number of people using the internet, naturally has led to an increase in advertising through digital channels. In this context, facebook, one of the most used social media environments, attracts the attention of marketers and leads to increased interest in the academic works.

In the study, the relationship between Facebook political advertisements (political message, political trust and political situation) and the political behavior of individuals was investigated by correlation analysis and the effect levels were analyzed by regression analysis.

As a result of Correlation Analysis, positive relationship between Facebook political advertisements and political messages was found. Also according to regression analysis, Facebook political advertisements (political message, political trust, political situation) have positive effect on political behavior. The independent variables that are found to be influential on political behavior are respectively political trust, political message and political situation. In this context, it can be said that more attention should be given to advertisements made for political purposes, taking into consideration the effects of advertisements made via Facebook on individuals.

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