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SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ACTIVITIES' IMPACT ON POLITICAL
PARTICIPATION: AN ANALYSIS OF ISTANBULITES' POLITICAL
PARTICIPATION IN THE 2019 LOCAL ELECTION

BURCU GÜNAL
118689015

ASST. PROF. ESRA ARIKAN

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Social Media Marketing Activities' Impact on Political Participation: An Analysis
of Istanbulites' Political Participation in the 2019 Local Election

Sosyal Medya Pazarlama Aktivitelerinin Siyasal Katılıma Etkisi: İstanbulluların
2019 Yerel Seçimindeki Siyasi Katılımının Analizi

Burcu Günal
118689015

Tez Danışmanı: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Esra Arıkan (İMZA).....
İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi

Jüri Üyeleri: Prof. Dr. Beril Durmuş (İMZA).....
Marmara Üniversitesi

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Neşenur Altıniğne Ekici (İMZA).....
İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi

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ABBREVIATIONS

AMA: American Marketing Association

AKP: Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)

CHP: Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People's Party)

EFA: Exploratory Factor Analysis

E-WOM: Electronic Word-of-Mouth

İYİ: İyi Parti (Good Party)

MHP: Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (Nationalist Movement Party)

SNS: Social Networking Sites

SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

TÜİK: Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu (Turkish Statistical Institute)

TRY: Turkish Lira

WOM: Word-of-Mouth

4Ps: Product, Place, Price, Placement

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ABSTRACT

Throughout the world, the contribution of political marketing in helping politicians achieve the results they want in elections is widely acknowledged. Not surprisingly, political marketing as it was known in the 20th century has drastically changed due to the developments in the internet and communication technologies. By being one of the most prominent communication platforms, social media has turned into a valuable channel to be employed by politicians to realize their political campaign goals. On the one hand, politicians not only introduce their drafted policies and programs that they will implement once they are elected but also communicate to the electorate through social media. On the other hand, constituents gather information about political campaigns and perform various types of political participation that were not possible before. The harsh nature of zero-sum political game necessitates politicians to keep pace with social media's ever-growing features that have never ceased to amaze us. As expected, Turkish politicians employ social media tools to affect voters' behavior at a local or a national election. The two prominent candidates of the 2019 Istanbul Local Election have also integrated social media into their political campaign strategies. In this thesis, how social media marketing activities directly and indirectly through candidate image and political efficacy influence voters' political participation in the June 2019 Istanbul Local Election was examined. Survey results from 279 respondents show that all social media marketing variables are not directly related to political participation, candidate image, and political efficacy. It is also found out that the relationship was indirectly shaped via candidate image and political efficacy. Even if further research is needed to clarify the relationship, it is believed that the results of the study not only demonstrate the importance of studying social media marketing activities in political marketing but also reveal key aspects to pay attention to while developing political campaigns.

Keywords: political marketing, social media marketing, political communication, political participation, candidate image, political efficacy

ÖZET

Siyasi pazarlamanın, politikacıların seçimlerde istedikleri sonuçları elde etmelerindeki katkısı, tüm dünyada geniş çapta kabul görmektedir. Şaşırtıcı olmayan bir şekilde, 20. yüzyılda bilinen şekliyle siyasal pazarlama, internet ve iletişim teknolojileri endüstrisindeki gelişmelere bağlı olarak büyük ölçüde değişti. Bununla beraber en popüler iletişim platformlarından biri olan sosyal medya, politikacıların siyasi kampanya hedeflerini gerçekleştirmek için kullandıkları değerli bir mecraya dönüştü. Bu vesileyle hem politikacıların plan ve programları hakkında konuşmak ve seçmenlerle iletişim kurmak için yeni kanalları oldu aynı zamanda seçmenlerin de bilgi toplayacakları ve daha önce mümkün olmayan çeşitli siyasi faaliyetlere katılabilecekleri yeni yolları oldu. Sıfır toplamlı siyasi oyunun sert doğası, politikacıların sosyal medyanın bizi şaşırtmaktan asla vazgeçmeyen sürekli değişen ve gelişen özelliklerine ayak uydurmasını gerektirmektedir. Beklendiği gibi, Türk siyasetçiler yerel veya ulusal seçimlerde seçmen davranışlarını etkilemek amacıyla sosyal medya araçlarını kullanmaktadır. 2019 İstanbul yerel seçiminde de öne çıkan iki aday, sosyal medyayı kampanyalarına entegre etti. Bu tezde, adayların sosyal medya pazarlama aktivitelerinin doğrudan ve aday imajı ve politik öz yeterlilik aracılığı ile dolaylı olarak 2019 İstanbul Yerel Seçimi kapsamında seçmenlerin siyasi katılımlarını etkileyip etkilemediği çalışıldı. 279 katılımcının yer aldığı araştırma sonuçlarına göre her bir sosyal medya pazarlama değişkeninin siyasi katılım, aday imajı ve politik öz yeterlilik ile doğrudan bir ilişkisi bulunmamıştır. Ayrıca bu ilişkinin aday imajı ve politik öz yeterlilik üzerinden dolaylı olarak şekillendiği de görülmüştür. Her ne kadar bu ikili arasındaki ilişkiyi açıklığa kavuşturmak için yapılacak yeni araştırmalara ihtiyaç olsa da çalışma sonuçlarının, siyasal pazarlama kapsamında sosyal medya pazarlama faaliyetlerinin incelenmesinin önemini göstermesinin yanı sıra siyasal kampanyalar geliştirirken dikkat edilmesi gereken temel noktaları da ortaya koyduğu düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: siyasal pazarlama, sosyal medya pazarlaması, siyasal iletiřim, siyasal katılım, aday imajı, politik öz yeterlik

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Democracy is described as the empowerment of citizens by giving them an opportunity to elect people who will oversee developing policies and running the country for the benefit of the people (Schumpeter, 1976); therefore, citizen participation is the fundamental characteristic of democracy (McLeod et al., 2002). Democratic theorists assert that well-informed constituents lay the foundation of a well-functioning democracy (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996); however, if those informed citizens do not take any political actions, it would be impossible to ensure the continuation of a healthy democracy (Michels & de Graff, 2010).

After the formulation of policies and drawing the roadmap, which entails the party programs that politicians will run after winning the post, politicians and political parties do their bests to leverage the power of communication channels to affect citizens' decision-making process and motivate them to be politically active (Barnes, 1999). This is quite critical because elections are held periodically which is why the price to pay is high if a politician loses. This brings us to the crowning touch: developing a strategic political marketing plan that is a decision of great pith and moment that should not be taken lightly.

Lock and Harris (1996) explain political marketing as “the study of the processes of exchanges between political entities and their environment and among themselves, with particular reference to the positioning of those entities and their communications” (p. 21). Even if there was a time when the adoption of marketing terms in politics was not welcomed (Lock and Harris, 1996; Scammell, 1999) on the grounds that marketing methods applied in political marketing would not be hundred percent flawless (Dean & Croft, 2001); it is also believed that marketing has a lot to offer since politics is about satisfying the needs of voters (Reeves et al., 2006).

The prominence of benefiting from marketing approaches for the sake of making political dreams come true is acknowledged, especially when it is a do or die (Van Steenburg, 2015), and the marketing efforts not only lead the electorate to go the ballot but also motivate them to be politically active in general (Shachar, 2009). In other words, political entities work hard to create political marketing plans to make sure to boost the electorate's political participation since winning the election which is the ultimate aim of politicians is possible by increasing the political participation of voters. That is why measuring political participation in the previous election is a valuable start to forecast how the electorate will act at the next election. Despite the prominence of constituents' votes, political participation is taken at face value since there is a tendency to associate political participation with voting; however, it is beyond that.

Political participation can be described as “legal activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions that they take” (Verba et al., 1978, p. 46). With the technological enhancements, voters now have various types of political participation ways to engage with (Best & Krueger, 2005; Calenda & Meijer, 2009). A multitude of studies shows that the number of especially young people who are likely to participate in politics is on the rise thanks to the new communication channels (Boulianne, 2009; Dalton, 2009).

From its earliest days, there are some traditional political marketing methods such as *door-to-door canvassing*, *political rallies* (Norris, 2001) or *face-to-face communication*, *print media*, *radio*, *posters*, and so on (Hooghe et al., 2010); however, the immense technological changes in the last two decades have changed the communication paradigm shaping political mobilization methods (Bennett et al., 2008; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). With the increased popularization, the internet has turned into an unmissable tool for political communication (Jackson, 2007; Raof et al., 2013). Several studies were conducted to assess the relationship between the internet and citizens' participatory levels including online and offline

ways (Livingstone et al., 2005; Shah et al., 2001b; Wellman et al., 2001; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2009); however, both the results of early studies and recent studies on the relationship between the internet and political participation are mixed. On the one hand, Bimber (2001) finds that voter participation is not affected by the internet access. Unfortunately, other scholars also assert that the relation between the internet and political participation is negligible (Bimber & Davis, 2003; Davis, 1999; Katz & Rice, 2002; Scheufele & Nisbit, 2002). On the other hand, some scholars find that the internet has positively influenced political participation (Bimber & Copeland, 2011; Boulianne, 2009; Bucy & Gregson, 2001; Kenski & Stroud, 2006; Tolbert & McNeal, 2003; Weber et al., 2003; Whillock, 1997; Xenos & Moy, 2007). Against all hype about the internet, a multitude of studies shows that the internet galvanizes voters who are already politically active (Polat, 2005; Saglie & Vabo, 2009; Schiffers et al., 2009), which means that the internet fails to motivate people who choose not to take part in political activities even if there are more political participation ways than ever before.

With the existence of mixed results, a meta-analysis could be a good start to grasp the bigger picture. Research that covered 38 studies conducted by Boulianne (2009) shows that there is a positive but small impact of the internet use on participation. Bimber and Copeland (2013) also investigate the relationship between the impact of receiving information via the internet and political participation between 1996 and 2008. They find out that online political information and political participation vary from one election to another (Bimber & Copeland, 2013).

Social media refers to a “broad and growing portion of the internet that is designed as a platform which allows users, and groups of users, to create and exchange content, often in an interactive or collaborative fashion” (Gainous & Wagner, 2014, p. 2) has relatively new in our lives with its almost two decades of history (Williams & Gulati, 2008); however, it is completely observable that it has made a big difference in every aspect of life including the way we work, communicate with people, and express and exchange our opinions since its inception (Grudz et al.,

2016; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010; Van Dijck, 2012). Even if social networking sites originally allow users to interact with people they know or complete strangers for several reasons (Johnson & Kaye, 2014); the same platforms have also become an essential place for retrieving political information and has turned into a public space where users discuss political issues with one another (Kaye, 2010). Apart from different social media usage reasons and types, social media now carries weight to distribute or find any kind of information (Pepitone, 2010; Syn & Oh, 2015).

The 2008 USA Presidential Election played a huge role in increasing the popularity of social media. Studies about the election reveal the role of social media for voters to get to know about candidates and discuss the political issues with others (Fernandes et al., 2010; Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010; Vitak et al., 2011). With the increased popularity of social media in the recent decade, politicians throughout the world are prone to make the internet a milestone in their campaigns since it enables interactive communication with voters (Druckman et al., 2007; Kenski & Stroud, 2006), and it helps to reach out to millions of people in a short period of time (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Previous studies on the relationship between social networking sites and political participation show they are positively related to each other (Baumgartner & Morris, 2010; Dimitrova et al., 2014; Fernandes et al., 2010; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2010; Towner 2013), and the usage of social networking sites results in increased political engagement (Zhang et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2013). Other sets of studies also find a positive relationship between online and social media news consumption together with voting behavior (Bimber et al., 2014; Bode, 2012; Bond et al., 2012). In addition, a great amount of study also highlights that social media is an important catalyst for political participation even in non-election periods (Ekström & Shehata, 2016; Kahne et al., 2013; Tang & Lee, 2013; Theocharis & Quintelier, 2016; Vissers & Stolle, 2014; Xenos et al., 2014). Another important finding from communication literature shows a positive relation between voicing political views and political participation (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2014; Vaccari et al., 2015). Since expressing political views on social media, which makes

it possible to reach out masses, is way easier, it is logical to conclude that social media enables increased offline political participation (Bond et al., 2012).

To assess previous research results, Boulianne (2015) conducts a meta-analysis to uncover the relationship between these two concepts. The study discovers a positive link between social media use and political participation; however, it does not result in increased participation in election campaigns. She also adds that half of the studies which worked on the relationship between social media and engagement are not significant; however, she attracts attention to the importance of indirect impact and finds that consuming news via social media is positively related to engagement (Boulianne, 2016). Another astonishing study conducted by Boulianne (2018) which looked at the relationship between digital media and political and civic engagement over 20 years shows a positive relationship among two variables.

At the end of the day, the utilization of social media platforms to reach out to voters is an indispensable part of any political campaign (Raouf et al., 2013; Wills & Reeves, 2009) since there are 4.20 billion social media users around the world which equate more than 53% of the world's total population (Datareportal, 2021). More importantly, social media help politicians reach out to young voters since younger people prefer gathering political information via online media instead of counting on traditional news media (Bode et al., 2014). In addition to that, as time goes by, social networking sites have turned into an unmissable information source (Purcell & Rainie 2014; Shearer & Gottfried, 2017) which are supplied by users' close circles including their friends, family, or traditional news sources (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2013; Holt et al., 2013; Pasek et al., 2009; Towner, 2013). Interestingly, 78% of Facebook users stated that they accidentally come across the news items because of the people on their lists (De Silver, 2014). Those news items are way more effective on the grounds that it is expected that users' close circles evaluate the credibility of information before sharing (Bode, 2012). Given the massive potential audience available to consume content, politicians worldwide do

not have any other option but to integrate social media into their political campaign plans.

It is necessary to understand how social media marketing works and its impact on voter behavior since it stands out as an essential marketing and communication platform nowadays. The distribution of messages about any products or services through social media channels and interacting with people on the same channels are described as social media marketing (Taubenheim et al., 2008). The effects of social media marketing activities on the brand have been discussed within the scope of marketing literature (Balakrishnan et al., 2014; Chen & Qasim, 2021; ElAydi, 2018; Ibrahim, 2021; Ismail, 2017; Kim & Ko, 2012; Koay et al., 2020; Seo & Park, 2018); however, the study on social media marketing within the scope of political marketing has been limited (Attia et al., 2018; Hultman et al., 2019). For this reason, the impact of social media marketing activities of political candidates on candidate image, political participation, and political efficacy, which are three crucial variables in the political marketing literature, should be examined. Subsequently, social media marketing strategies to be used in the next election should be developed after the examination.

Four variables are used to work on social media marketing activities: content, credibility, interaction, and word-of-mouth (Hultman et al., 2019). Politicians distribute their campaign messages and stay in touch with their constituents by using social media as a campaign communication tool. Since gaining knowledge about politics via the internet is a low-cost activity that causes an increased interest in politics (Lupia & Philpot, 2005), politicians should carefully prepare the content of their posts on social media. Another critical aspect of social media marketing activities in politics is credibility since content and the source should be credible to ensure voters' attention. Expertise and trustworthiness are two pillars of credibility (Pornpitakpan, 2004). If a source is evaluated as credible, there is a more chance to convince the target audience to believe in whatever is said and promoted by the exact same source (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Maddux & Rogers, 1980). It is crucial

to keep in mind that credibility is not an unchanging characteristic of a source (Berlo et al., 1969) but more of a judgment of a receiver (Metzger et al., 2003); that is why users' motivation and ability to assess the credibility of a source or the information they receive should also be taken into consideration (Johnson & Kaye, 2014). An additional important aspect of social media marketing activities is interaction which is an outcome of the nature of social media marketing (Jara et al., 2014). With the help of marketing tactics, it is aimed not only to make politicians and political parties widely known but also to create a platform where politicians and the electorate could start a conversation about the current situation of the country and their hopes for the future (O'Cass, 2009). A wealth of studies, which tries to find out whether political participation can be initiated by news media consumption and interactive communication or not, concludes that it may happen especially among youth (Bachmann et al., 2010; Bakker & de Vreese, 2011; Bennett et al., 2009, 2011; Esser & de Vreese, 2007; Gil de Zúñiga & Valenzuela, 2010; Hampton, 2011; Kim & Kim, 2007). Finally, word-of-mouth (WOM) should be investigated to understand whether candidates' social media activities can change the election result or not. Several studies conducted by different scholars work on the relation between word-of-mouth and consumer attitude and intention towards the evaluated goods or services (Chatterjee, 2001; Kiecker & Cowles, 2001). The fun fact is that WOM has been found more influential than other marketing activities (Trusov et al., 2009). The underlying reason for this lies in how consumers evaluate the content's reliability (Gruen et al., 2006). Consumers perceive other people's product or service reviews as more credible than direct brand communication via different marketing and communication methods; that is why they give credence to WOM (Chatterjee, 2001). The same pattern is valid for electronic word-of-mouth (EWOM); however, its scope is way much wider thanks to the characteristics of new communication channels. Just like traditional WOM, e-WOM is a perfect way of collecting information regarding any goods or services (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006). Eventually, not only brand image (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012) but also consumers' purchase intention (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006) together with actual buying behavior are found to be molded by other consumers' online reviews (Park

et al., 2007; Yaylı & Bayram, 2012). It is uncovered that consumers happen to experience less cognitive load thanks to the other consumer's review while making a purchase decision resulting in the increased sales numbers (Ghose & Ipeiritis, 2006). Those findings also resonate in political marketing since electorates also look for hints from the sources they trust before casting the ballot to decrease the possibility of regret after the election.

Political campaigns are exactly like the promotion of commercial products, and the role of candidates are just like the role played by commercial products (Parker, 2012); that is why brands are conceived as an illuminating notion to comprehend voter behavior (Needham, 2006) since political communication may embody the voter's perceptions of candidate image (Benoit et al., 2001; Fridkin & Kenney, 2011; McLeod et al., 1996). In addition to those similarities among political marketing and commercial marketing, voters also behave like consumers, show their party preference, and choose the one to vote accordingly (Gordon et al., 2012). In today's world, the trend to approach people as brands have also flourished because marketing communication plans are developed for them just like developing a plan to promote good or service, and those people are called "human brands" (Thomson, 2006). That is why it is beneficial to look at brand image studies to work on candidate image within the political marketing literature. Brand image is "perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory" (Keller, 1993, p. 3); thus, any features and characteristics which enable a user to differentiate one good and/or service from another are the components of the brand (Saboo et al., 2016). Candidate image is also generated in the minds of voters while they are consuming content delivered by politicians (Hacker, 2004); hence, it is also identified as "clusters of voter perceptions of candidates" (Hacker, 2004, p. 4).

With its symbolic power, a brand is a powerful tool to impact consumers' preferences (Keller, 1993) because the consumer can make a choice quite easily by focusing on what the brand means to her/him, instead of researching the features of

different brands' products one by one (Maheswaran et al., 1992; Park & Lessig, 1981). This is also applicable in politics, and political brands also serve as a heuristic cue to decide whom to vote (Parker, 2012) because even if some voters focus on policies, election promises, and political ideology before making a political decision (Popkin et al., 1976), the rest concentrates on several shortcuts such as candidate image (Guzmán & Sierra, 2009; Schneider, 2004). By acknowledging the importance of candidate image, political candidates benefit from various communication tools to create powerful candidate images to show voters that they are different from other candidates and help voters while casting a vote during an election since voters try to navigate in the middle of information load to decide whom to vote (Needham, 2006; Parry-Giles, 2010) and the majority of voters do not show genuine and constant interest in politics at all (Sniderman et al., 1991). A multitude of studies conducted in the last decades shows that image has an impact on the election results (Allen & Post, 2004; Andersen & Kibler, 1978; Aylor, 1999; Fridkin & Kenney, 2011; Funk, 1999; Pancer et al., 1999); however, its importance and weight on voter's decision-making process has been on the rise as a result of the fact that "the modernization of the politics has turned politics into perception politics" (Landtsheer et al., 2008, p. 222) which means political campaigns have become a candidate-centric.

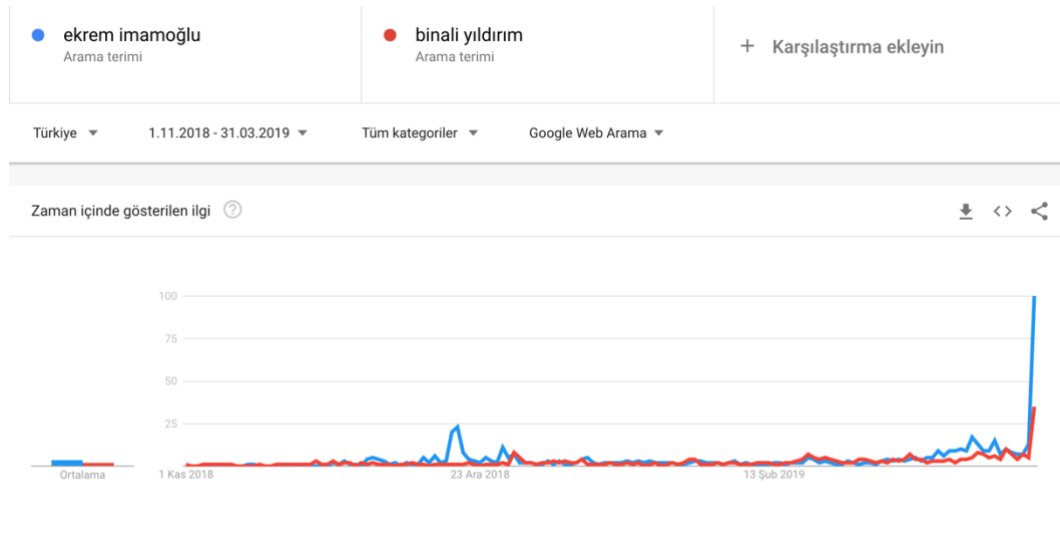
The study that investigated the role of political candidate brands during the 2012 and 2016 U.S Presidential Elections reveals that candidate image is an important variable that profoundly impacts voting intent (Van Steenburg & Guzmán, 2019). Another study investigating the applicability of voter behavior in the 2000 U.S Presidential Election reveals that the candidate is an important factor in the voter's decision-making process (Newman, 2002). It has been discovered that voters act like consumers in commercial settings (Reeves et al., 2006); that is why campaign developers should act as brand managers to identify how to shape their decision-making process (Banerjee & Chaudhuri, 2016) because this image also includes proofs of whether the candidate can fulfill his/her promises or not resulting in an increase or decrease of trust on the candidate (Smith, 2009).

When it comes to the electorate's political participation, political efficacy should also be at the center of attention. Wolfsfeld (1986) describes efficacy as "the beliefs that political actions can, in general, have an influence on the political process," and he adds that "the most immediate attitudinal explanation of political action" (p. 108). Political efficacy is composed of two dimensions: internal and external. To ensure the continuation of a healthy democracy anywhere in the world, citizens should feel politically competent (Vetter, 2002), which is about internal political efficacy, and they should see themselves as powerful players in the political life who can exert an influence over politicians (Wright, 1981) which is described as external political efficacy. In other words, internal political efficacy is about the self-perception about whether someone has enough information to be politically active, and external political efficacy is the evaluation of the responsiveness of government and/or political system. That is why the primary constituent of political efficacy is political information. As mentioned by Kaid et al. (2007), the way people gather political information impacts the level of political efficacy any voter has; hence not only the source but also means may change the election results. Some research also reveals that political candidates can successfully communicate their political messages and present their image to the electorate through internet campaigns (Kaid & Postelnicu, 2005).

The 2019 Turkish Local Elections was held throughout the entire country in the March 31, 2019. The Elections had a unique place in Turkish political history because political parties came together in a race in some places ("Political alliances expand scope", 2019). The most debated part of the local election was the election held in Istanbul since it was one of the most important cities in Turkey with more than 15 million residents ("İstanbul'un nüfusu azaldı", 2021). Istanbul's top two mayoral candidates running for the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality were People's Alliance candidate Binali Yıldırım and Nation Alliance Candidate Ekrem İmamoğlu. Binali Yıldırım was a nation-wide popular politician because he was Prime Minister of Turkey between 2016 and 2018 and President of the Grand National Assembly from 2018 to 2019 ("Binali Yıldırım", n.d). In addition to his

past political experiences, his candidacy was supported by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (“Erdoğan names former PM”, 2018). Conversely, Ekrem İmamoğlu who was the Mayor of Beylikdüzü, a western district of Istanbul, between 2014 and 2019 (“Son dakika... CHP'nin”, 2018), did not have a proven track record of nationwide political accomplishments. According to the survey conducted before the election, just 14% of the participants knew Ekrem İmamoğlu (Özkan, 2019). Yet again, the graph below obtained via Google Trends shows how frequently given terms – Ekrem İmamoğlu and Binali Yıldırım – were entered into Google’s search engine between 01.11.2018-31.03.2019. Before announcing his candidacy on December 18, 2018 (“CHP reveals Istanbul”, 2018), it is evident that there was not much public interest to get to know about Ekrem İmamoğlu. Having said that, it is crystal clear that he had a very tough job: to carefully plan his political marketing strategy to talk about his plans and introduce himself.

Figure 1.1. Google Search Trends Between 01.11.2018-31.03.2019

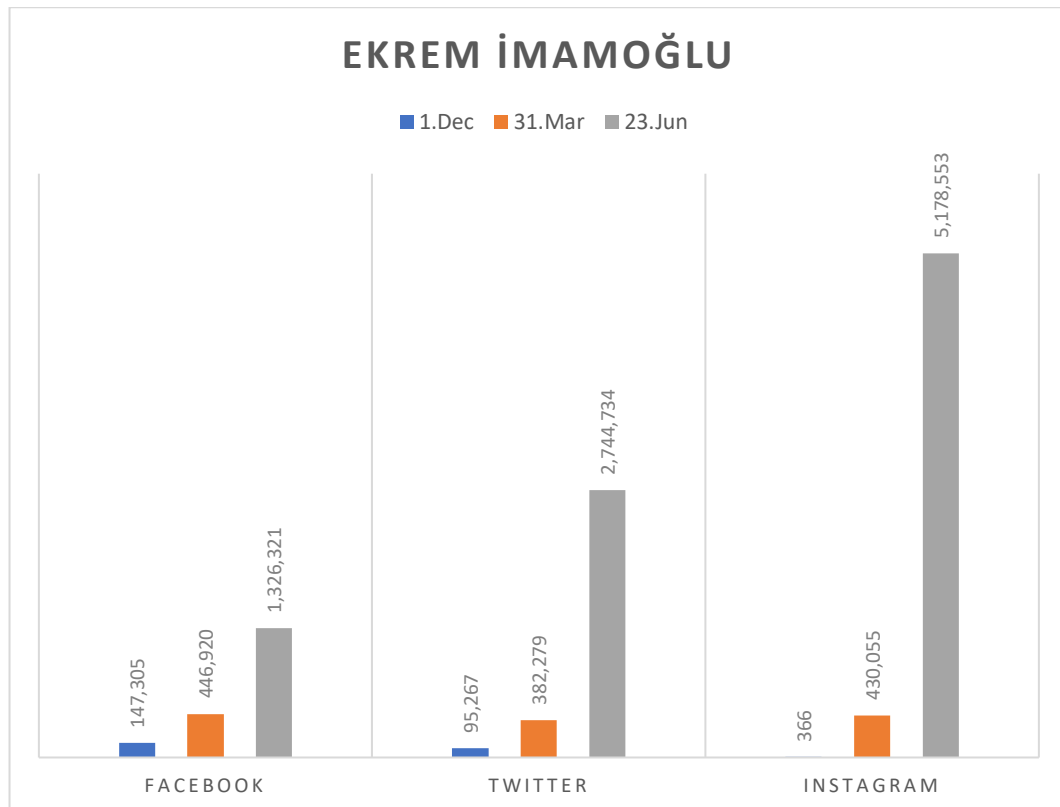


Source: (Google, 2021)

Two candidates were not indifferent to the trends and had a presence on social media. Before the election, Binali Yıldırım only had Facebook and Twitter accounts. He had 188.032 followers on Facebook and 1.592.539 followers on

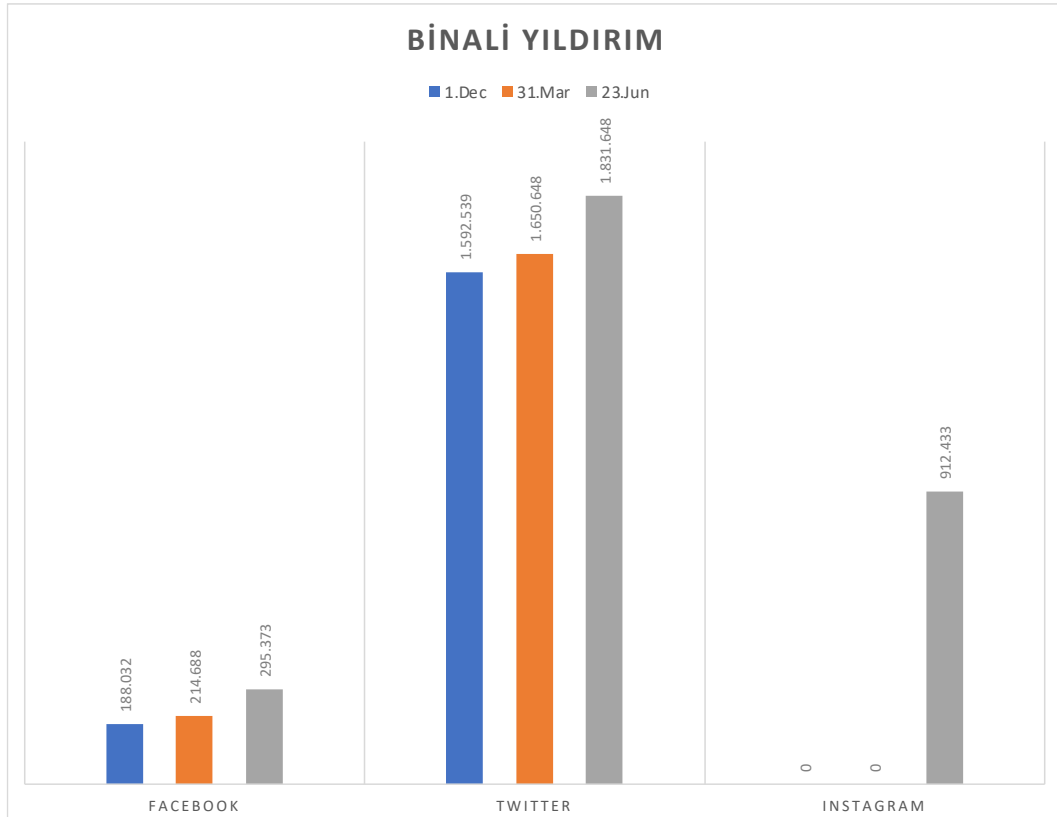
Twitter. On the other hand, Ekrem İmamoğlu had a presence on all popular social media platforms. He had 147.305 followers on Facebook, 95.267 followers on Twitter, 366 followers on Instagram, and 366 subscribers on YouTube (MuratSalman.net, 2019). By acknowledging the importance of social media in an effectively crafted political campaign, candidates extended their social media marketing campaigns to include social network platforms for the video and image content such as YouTube and Instagram in addition to their Twitter accounts (“Social Media Use”, 2019). Even if two candidates felt the urge to incorporate social media into their political campaigns, the numbers presented below show that there was a more significant increase in the number of Ekrem İmamoğlu’s followers (Murat Salman.net, 2019).

Figure 1.2. The Summary of Ekrem İmamoğlu’s Social Media Follower Growth



Source: (MuratSalman.net, 2019)

Figure 1.3. The Summary of Binali Yıldırım’s Social Media Follower Growth



Source: (MuratSalman.net, 2019)

While having more followers is one of the performance indicators of a successful social media presence, it is significant to keep in mind that interaction is another key metric to evaluate the social media performance since it shows whether the audience engage in content and helps to discover whether the posted content assists reaching campaign goals or not (Chen, 2021). On top of investigating the top two candidate's follower numbers, İnanç et al. (2020) examine the social media usage of politicians and parties in the local election held in 2019. They find out that Binali Yıldırım becomes the candidate who used text-based communication on Twitter the most by sending out 94 messages. On the other hand, Ekrem İmamoğlu has the most interaction with his text-based content receiving 240 thousand 315 interactions (İnanç et al., 2020). Another study which investigates how Istanbul and Ankara Metropolitan Mayor candidates of People's Alliance and the Nation Alliance utilize Twitter as part of their 2019 Local Election campaigns reveals that the candidates

of Nation Alliance get more interaction on Twitter than the candidates of People's Alliance (Çakır & Erkan, 2019).

The election period lasted more than six months since the official date of local election was the March 31st; however, the rerun election was scheduled on June 23rd. Even if it looked like Binali Yıldırım had an ace up one's sleeve with his popularity, the election result unexpectedly ended the 25-year dominance of AKP rule in Istanbul, and Ekrem İmamoğlu became a new mayor by receiving over 800,000 more votes than his opponent ("Istanbul voters pick", 2019). İmamoğlu's unforeseen victory raised question marks in the mind of the researcher of this thesis about the impact of social media marketing activities and whether the delivery of information through social media has or has not influenced people's choices and eventually the outcome of the election since he not only got more followers on his social media accounts but also received more interaction.

1.1. SCOPE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

According to the report prepared by Hootsuite and We Are Social (Datareportal, 2021), there were 65.80 million internet users and 60 million social media users in Turkey in 2020. The report also demonstrates the top social networking sites that are used in each country and YouTube and Instagram were the most-used social media platforms in Turkey. Another important takeaway from the report is that the average time spent on the internet was 7H57M, and social media was 2H 57 minutes in Turkey (Datareportal, 2021). Both the number of social media users and the average time spent on social media has been on the rise in Turkey. Additionally, Turkish young population made up 15,4% of the total population based on TÜİK's release (TÜİK, 2021) who will be an important percentage of new voters in the upcoming election. Consequently, political parties and candidates should work on their online political communication strategies with the clear hope to impact on the election result by mobilizing the youth.

In light of such information, Turkish academia has also had an interest in clarifying the relationship between social media and politics; however, the vast majority only analyses how political entities employ social media platforms mainly during election time (Akyuz et al., 2014; Arslan, 2019; Ayman, 2019; Baran, 2014; Kaderoğlu, 2020; Özgün, 2014; Toy, 2019; Yalçınkaya, 2018). That is why understanding the relationship between the social media marketing activities and political participation has the utmost importance since political campaigning requires huge amount of money. That is why campaign developers are in charge of strategic planning to find the most efficacious ways to communicate with the constituents and mobilize them to make sure to receive their unfailing support.

Based on the extensive literature review, it is found out that there is a dearth in the literature investigating the role of social media marketing activities of political candidates on voters' political participation in the era of social media. Consequently, to the best of researcher's knowledge, this thesis contributes to the political marketing literature by being one of the first empirical studies to test the research model of social media marketing activities influencing voters' political participation through candidate image and political efficacy.

1.2. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This study is organized as follows: Chapter Two analyzes the literature regarding political marketing, political communication, political participation, social media marketing activities, candidate image, and political efficacy. Chapter Three features the proposed model and details of research design. In Chapter Four, the results of the study are analyzed in detail. Chapter Five put the whole research in a nutshell where the findings of the study, its theoretical and managerial implications, limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research can be found.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter thoroughly investigates the existing literature on political marketing, political communication, political participation, social media marketing activities, candidate image, and political efficacy, providing a theoretical background for this study. It starts with an analysis of political marketing and political communication. In the following section, literature is reviewed on the impact of social media marketing activities on political participation. That will be followed by the explanation of candidate image and a review of the relation between social media marketing activities of candidates and candidate image and candidate image and political participation. In the final section of the literature review, the analysis of political efficacy and review of the relation between social media marketing activities of candidates and political efficacy and political efficacy and political participation will be provided.

2.1. POLITICAL MARKETING

Before delving into any topics, it is highly beneficial to understand the main terms that is why what political marketing stands for is quite a critical question to be answered. Up until around 1990, political marketing was not a popular subject in academia across the world, and propaganda and political marketing were used interchangeably (Scammel, 1999); however, political marketing has turned into a separate discipline, especially by virtue of the technological changes, the rising popularity of marketization in different industries together with the decline of partisanship (Perannagari & Chakrabarti, 2020). Since there is no one-size-fits-all strategy to be used in the elections around the world, all the actors in politics including politicians, political parties, and campaign developers, should fully understand the perks of political marketing to be able to design a great political campaign that will pave the way to the success: winning the election.

According to Castells (2007), politics is all about using the power of communication to affect the way people think. The electorate is the decisive player in politics where representative democracy is accepted because the voters allow politicians to develop policies with the votes they cast so that politicians can take part in the management position of the state (Kateb, 1981); hence, peculiar to election periods, people's opinions and attitudes come to be the focus of political entities more than ever because of the election results may deprive them of political power that they have or they could potentially have. As a natural consequence, political entities come together, work tirelessly to find a perfect formula to influence the electorate's preferences and win the election. For this very reason, political marketing can help them to reach those goals (Lees-Marshment, 2001a).

Even if the latest version of the American Marketing Association's description of marketing, which is "the activity, set of institutions and processes for creating, communication, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large" (American Marketing Association, 2017), is very comprehensive; however, it took considerable time to change the perception about marketing and enlarge its playground to the different sectors. There are several studies working on broadening the application of marketing beyond commercial goods (Arndt, 1978; Kotler, 1972). By being one of those scholars, Kotler and Levy (1969) assert that marketing should be more than selling goods; that is why, to prove their points; they analyze important marketing concepts such as product and consumer in different dynamics and the tools used by business firms including product improvement, pricing, distribution, and communication. After the detailed analysis, it is acknowledged that marketing is not an option but a necessity for non-commercial businesses regardless of their mission and vision (Kotler & Levy, 1969).

The evolution of marketing and its expansion to other fields may yield a perception that political marketing does not have its playground but a subfield of marketing; however, political marketing is a "cross-disciplinary" (Lees-Marshment, 2003, p.

4) study that benefits from several academic fields including communication, political science, and management (Scammell, 1999), and it is both complicated and hard to predict (Lees-Marshment, 2003). One of the most prominent scholars in the political marketing field, Lees-Marshment (2001a), stated that “Political marketing is a marriage between two disciplines, containing something from marketing and something from politics” (p. 693). She then works on this definition and states that

“political marketing is concerned with how political organizations such as political parties understand the demands of those they serve or seek support from, determine their behavior in response to public wants, and communicate them. It is not, as is often commonly thought, simply about election campaigns, even if marketing tools such as direct mail, polling, and targeting are used in campaigns” (Lees – Marshment, 2004, p. 6, as cited in Strömbäck et al., 2010; p. 75).

Even if it is believed that the nature of political marketing is quite unlike commercial marketing (Baines & Egan, 2001), political entities can benefit from the marketing approach since the main focus of marketing professionals is to analyze human behavior and develop strategies to persuade them in the light of the information they gain from research and analysis; that is why politicians with similar needs can enrich the way they approach political science by learning a lot from marketing (Butler & Collins, 1994). Each political party and candidate would like to make sure to get enough votes to gain a seat on the election day; that is why political marketing may mistakenly be valued as promotional activities; however, it is more complicated than that since the positioning of political entities in the electoral market is at the center of political marketing (Harrop, 1990). Even catch-all parties take advantage of political marketing planning since different policy offers may have been directed to different sections of populations or different rhetoric can be used to convince voters; however, some scholars objected to the

narrow approach of political marketing management (Henneberg, 2008; Henneberg & Ormrod, 2013).

Before mentioning the tidbits of political marketing, it is important to look at different definitions that can be found in Table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1. Definitions of Political Marketing

Author(s) & Year	Definitions
Butler and Collins (1994)	“Political marketing must be seen in the context of the wider political process in which the media participates, élite communicates, and the electorate decides.”
Grönroos (1990)	“Seeking to establish, maintain and enhance long-term voter relationships at a profit for society and political parties, so that the objectives of the individual political actors and organisations involved are met. This is done by mutual exchange and fulfillment of promises.”
Henneberg (2002)	“Political marketing seeks to establish, maintain, and enhance long-term political parties at a profit for society so that the objectives of the individual parties are involved are met, through mutual exchange and fulfillment of promises.”
Hughes and Dann (2009)	“A set of activities, process or political institutions used by political parties, individuals or candidates to create, communicate, deliver and exchange promises of value with voters, stakeholders and society at large.”
Lee-Marshment (2001a)	“A marriage between two disciplines, containing something from marketing and something from politics.”
Newman (1999)	“...the applications of marketing principles and procedures in political campaigns by various individuals and organizations. The procedures involved include the

	analysis, development, execution, and management of strategic campaigns by candidates, political parties, governments, lobbyists, and interest groups that seek to drive public opinion, advance their own ideologies, win elections, and pass legislation and referenda in response to the needs and wants of selected people and groups in society.”
Scammell (1999)	“Marketing offers a rational economic theoretical basis for explaining party and voter behavior that is more broad and inclusive than either the conventional political science campaign studies or political communications approaches.”
Wring (1996)	“The party or candidate's use of opinion research and environmental analysis to produce and promote a competitive offering which will help realize organizational aims and satisfy groups of electors in exchange for their votes.”

Source: (Researcher’s Own Construct, 2022)

As crystal clear in the chart above, there is no single definition of political marketing that everyone agrees upon, but there are different approaches to political marketing. Putting aside the disagreement regarding the definition, political marketing has its key performance indicators to be reached including gaining donations, increasing the number of volunteers, leading public opinion (Lees-Marshment et al., 2014;) and “advancing their ideologies, winning elections, passing legislation, and referenda” (Newman, 2016; p.17). To make these aims come true, political customers should be analyzed in detail to be segmented and targeted in the best way possible just like in the commercial marketplace (Smith & Hirst, 2001). Subsequently, marketing plans should be created based on the attributes of the target audience to impact the way voters behave. As Butler and Collins (1994) mention, marketers’ input in politics is extremely valuable as a result

of the fact that they have extensive knowledge and experience of using the analysis and persuasion of consumers, which is different from the “political salesmanship” approach, which could be found in the early days campaigning (Scammell, 1999, p. 719). Politicians need that information so badly resulting from the fact that political entities have to find a magical formula to spend limited but huge amount of money and time to accomplish their political campaign aims (Newman & Sheth, 1985); thus, there is no doubt that every single tip or knowledge to make this process more efficient will be very much appreciated. Inevitable marketing concepts such as segmentation and market research techniques are also used in political marketing, just like in commercial marketing (Niffenegger, 1988; Wring, 1997). Being the core of the marketing management, product mix – also known as 4Ps – can also be found in political marketing with slight differences. Niffenegger (1988) explains product as the sum of benefits to the voter; price as the sum of costs to elect any candidate; place as the ways of reaching out to the voter; and promotion as the strategies to be used to communicate the messages.

A significant number of articles suggests that marketing is totally relevant to politics (Butler & Collins, 1996; Harrop, 1990; Lees-Marshment, 2001b; Lock & Harris, 1996; Newman & Sheth, 1985; O’Cass, 1996, 2001a, 2001b; O’Shaughnessy, 2001) and the importance of marketing to any industry or its applicability to other fields including politics is not open to a discussion today (Savigny & Temple, 2010); so the gist of political marketing is about making the whole process is much more professional (Norris, 2000); however, there is also criticism and negative approach to political marketing (Henneberg & O’Shaughnessy, 2009; Lilleker, 2005). Some even stated that using marketing tools for political purposes leads to “atrophy and aberration” (Henneberg et al., 2009, p. 166). Several reasons can be found in the literature to support why marketing should not be applied to politics. First, political marketing received criticism for ethical reasons (Lock & Harris, 1996). Another important criticism is raised on the grounds that citizens are positioned as consumers (Scammel, 2007). It is also believed that the professionalization of political marketing and the marketing approach for image

building will diminish the importance of political ideas and principles (Corner & Pels, 2003) so that electorates will not be able to make a rational choice (Egan, 1999). At the beginning of the century, it is also discussed that importing techniques from marketing and applying them in the realm of politics is not possible on the grounds that those disciplines are distinct enough (O'Shaughnessy, 2001).

In today's circumstances, while acknowledging the negative approach to political marketing (Henneberg, 2004; Marland, 2003); there is no room for any discussion regarding its benefits, especially with the latest technological developments which allow political marketers to measure the effectiveness of their campaigns (Safiullah et al., 2017). Herein, it is appropriate to look at another critical headline: political communication to reveal whether candidates' social media marketing activities impacted voters' political participation in the June 2019 Istanbul Local Election.

2.2. POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

The harsh nature of zero-sum political game necessitates political parties to catch the zeitgeist to formulate their political campaign strategies with the most efficient tools for the sake of winning the battle over their opponents during an election time. In the previous section, despite the criticism pointed to the field (Lilleker, 2005), the importance of political marketing in politics (Cwalina et al., 2012) is unfolded since marketing is the key factor that helps candidates to claim victory on the election day (Reid, 1988). That is why working on a political marketing plan is more beneficial than discussing its nonsense.

Political communication is “an interdisciplinary endeavor that draws on theoretical, philosophical, and practical foundations of diverse disciplines of study including communication, political science, history, psychology, and sociology, among other” (Miller & McKerrow, 2010, p. 61). By positioning the responsibilities of promotion activities as being a subgroup of political marketing (Scammel, 1999), political communication occupies an important position in political marketing plans

resulting from the fact that it is a necessity to reach out to voters to affect their political preferences (Strömbäck & Kioussis, 2014), and political campaigns drafted for elections are merely political communication (Strömbäck & Kioussis, 2014).

Political communication in election campaigns is an attractive academic topic (Burton & Shea, 2010; Denton Jr et al., 2019; Maarek, 2011; Medvic, 2011; Plasser & Plasser, 2002) since it tries to understand whether campaign communication has an impact on the election result or not (Kavanagh & Cowley, 2010; McKinney et al., 2011; Sides & Vavreck, 2013). This is quite critical in the sense that political entities have limited resources to allocate for their campaigns; that is why they would like to have a strategic plan to make sure that they employ the most efficient tools to yield the best possible outcome ever. At that point, the analysis of previous elections will give important data to start with planning for the next election.

It is not going to be a surprise for anyone that politics is about “power, prestige, and income” (Downs, 1957, p. 137), and the main aim of any political entity around the world is to raise money to fund their campaign to increase the number of their voter base to ensure to get more votes than their opponents (Downs, 1957) and winning the election (Davis, 2005). All the policies drafted are the tools that politicians use to make sure that they will get enough votes to secure office (Downs, 1957); however, politicians need a strategic political communication plan to affect voters’ behavior to either make or retain them as a loyal supporter (Nimmo, 1970).

The principal purpose of political campaigns is to reach out to voters to explain why they should vote for them at the election and ensure increased mobilization (Towner & Dulio, 2012). Even further, campaigns are not only a fantastic opportunity to supply the necessary information to voters to help them navigate successfully in the election period but also it is a great tool to establish a relationship with them. That is why it can also be described as “a form of bloodless but serious marketing warfare” (Niffenegger, 1988, p. 15).

Campaigns, which “are formal and prescribed time periods where candidates spend considerable time, effort, and money to shape what citizens think about them” (Fridkin & Kenney, 2011, p. 61), should be carefully crafted for several reasons. First, electorates will have an idea regarding the characteristics of candidates, their expertise, and political orientation (Jacobson, 2015) with the help of campaign tactics. Beyond that, electorates will also be provided information about the general outlook of the country including the economy, international and domestic affairs, and so on (Jacobson, 2015). Finally, in addition to the media, which transmits political information to the masses, a political campaign is an important tool to be used by politicians to directly communicate their policy plans to the citizens (Hutchens et al., 2016), and it is one of those important information sources influencing voters’ decision-making process during election times (Potters et al., 1997).

Before developing and executing the political campaign, which will be the answer to the issue of getting elected and winning the election, it is very much needed to analyze the current situation of the political district and the opponents so that candidates, political parties, campaign developers, and lobby groups in some countries can come up with a strategic roadmap to get them to where they want to be which is winning an election for sure. Understanding the electorate is a great start as Le Cherminant and Parrish (2010) state “Political theorists from Plato and Aristotle to Hobbes and Hume and down to the present maintained that knowing the nature of the human mind, and specifically of its capacity to be misled or manipulated, was indispensable to any adequate understanding of political life” (p. 9). Although politicians are always in need of communicating their actions, political communication has become one of the top priorities during election periods; that is why political campaigns are specifically developed to make all communication efforts in line and serve the common purpose.

There are controversial findings on whether increased exposure to campaign information results in a more engaged electorate or not. Some scholars claim that

political information positively relates to efficacy and knowledge, which eventuates in more politically active citizens (Eveland & Hively, 2009; Kenski & Stroud, 2006). Freedman et al. (2004) reveal that political advertisements have a very significant function during campaign periods: to mobilize voters by enabling candidates or parties to disseminate necessary information. Additional findings from the study show that the more voters are exposed to these campaign communications, they not only become more informed about the candidates but also become more interested in the campaign messages. As a result, the likelihood of voting in the election will be higher (Freedman et al., 2004).

On the other hand, scholars declare that political information is directly related to increased cynicism and apathy (de Vreese & Elenbaas, 2008; Jackson, 2011). Some scholars also assert that skepticism should not be perceived as something negative inhibiting citizens to be politically active but a feeling which creates an urge to look more, resulting in a way more engaged and informed citizens (Hutchens et al., 2016; Pinkleton et al., 2012). Considering this information, distributing political campaign content throughout the platforms that the electorate can see is critical to making political dreams come true.

The importance of voter communication is unquestionable whether it is an election period or not; however, the nature of voter contact has been undergone a change owing to the technological developments in the last decades. Political entities have been using different mediums to reach out to the electorate throughout history. Before technological medium has dominated anyone's life, traveling around the city or country which permits face-to-face meetings providing personal touch was at the center of the political campaign (Enli & Skogerbø, 2013); however, using Internet-based mediums for political communication enable politicians to reach out to an increased number of the electorate (Papacharissi, 2002). At the end of the day, all mainstream marketing channels should be critically evaluated and then used to create an impact because the medium employed for political campaign may influence the election result (Kaid et al., 2007).

One of the most important ways to execute political communication is through mass communication channels. The management team, owner of the media company, and news presenters may impact how to cover the news about candidates and their policies which will affect voters' preferences (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). It is found out that the way media is structured and regulated is an important factor in whether people are informed while casting their votes or not (Bennett, 1990; Curran et al., 2009). Studies also show that citizens learn a lot about political issues via mass media channels (Alberg et al., 2010; Corrigan-Brown & Wilkes 2014).

Just before the millennium, another important technological medium has sent us signals to be the next popular communication platform: the internet. With the advent of the internet, not only commercial marketplace has found a new place to promote their products but also politicians have started enjoying the new playground to address the public. The practices of political communication have revolutionarily changed with the advent of the internet to promote political candidates in the second half of the 1990s (Johnson et al., 1999) as a result of the fact that users not only have new channels to reach out information but also, they can express their feelings and opinions with the help of the same channels (Zhou & Pinkleton, 2012). Apparently, the internet turned the tide of the political campaign, and the first serious usage of the internet during an election was the 2000 US Presidential Election (Verser & Wicks, 2006). Even if there was a hype about it, especially after McCain managed to collect several million dollars online, which is an important aspect of American politics; the internet did not change the whole picture as Davis evaluated "There was a giddy, expectant hysteria. Measured against lofty expectations, and impossible hype, the internet disappointed" (Davis, 2005, p. 241). Contrarily, some research reveals that campaigning through internet is better way of distributing campaign messages and candidate image to the voters (Kaid & Postelnicu, 2005) because the internet enables users to create content in different format, ranging from texts and images to audiovisual (Dijkstra et al., 2005). Gibson and McAllister (2011) also assert that web campaigns impact the

election result in Australia, and political entities who give weight to Web 2.0 tools profit more.

With the launch of Friendster in 2002, LinkedIn and MySpace in 2003, and Facebook in 2004 (Boyd & Ellison, 2007), two new concepts have entered in our lives: social media and social networking sites. Social media is described as “a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological, technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61); as “online tools and platforms that allow internet users to collaborate on content, share insights and experiences, and connect for business or pleasure” (Strauss & Frost, 2009, p. 326); as “content that has been created by its audience” (Comm, 2010, p. 2). Social networking sites are also described as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 211). The biggest challenge for political communication is not describing social media but understanding what it really means for political marketing and how helpful it is for politicians and the electorate.

Politicians cannot solely use traditional mediums to disseminate messages in this current environment, and political campaigns cannot be thought of without social media platforms (Perlmutter, 2008; Towner & Dulio, 2012). Social networking sites are a golden opportunity to expeditiously send out campaign messages which could not be possible in a traditional media environment (Vergeer, 2012). There are a lot of different social media platforms today, such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok. The information on these platforms can be found in different formats such as written articles, pictures, and videos which makes it possible to attract the attention of users who prefer different information formats. That is why as Vaccari (2013) claims, political campaigns executed online positively relate to both acceptance and reception of the political messages.

Social media brings several benefits to the table. Firstly, it makes it possible to eradicate the role of gatekeepers and intermediaries in disseminating the information by empowering the consumers (Katz, 1996). Gatekeeping is such an important aspect of traditional mediums since it is the process of deciding what content will take place in the news and how it is going to be manifested (Shoemaker et al., 2009); thus, people who work for mass media companies have the power to project the agenda of the day from the perspective they prefer (Schulz, 2017, as cited in Bennett & Pfetsch, 2018). In other words, journalists capture and fabricate the reality that everyone lives in as they wish (Shoemaker et al., 2001); however, they lost their “their monopoly” over the content with the introduction of the internet (Schulz, 2017, p. 4, as cited in Bennett & Pfetsch, 2018, p. 247). That is why social media integration into the campaign plan to control the information circulated during the election period empowers politicians (Towner & Dulio, 2011). Secondly, suppose the politician is the opposition party's candidate or represents a different worldview. In that case, s/he is unlikely to get the media’s attention (Hong et al., 2019), and social media is conceived as scarce as hen’s teeth. Another important benefit of using social media is that it increases the visibility of politicians (Golbeck et al., 2010; Graham et al., 2013; Hong & Nadler, 2012; Larsson, 2015; Ross et al., 2015). Politicians can also use these platforms to feel the pulse of the public by having a conversation with them and hearing their opinions (Enli & Skogerbø, 2013) since social media communication enables two-way communication. Lastly, the very existence of social media is an important factor in the increment of citizen engagement (Aldrich et al., 2016; Erkul & Kes Erkul, 2009). This increased communication that happens between the political entities and electorate results in not only increased political activities (Aldrich et al., 2016; Grant et al., 2010) but also changes the election’s results (Aldrich et al., 2016; LaMarre & Suzuki-Lambrecht, 2013; Tumasjan et al., 2011; Williams & Gulati, 2008). Especially for young voters, an online campaign is relevant to getting them interested in the election (Aldrich et al., 2016). Very recent research also finds the importance of social media platforms to get to know the agenda of the day, which

also increases the possibility of participating in the campaigns for digital native voters (Ohme, 2019).

While praising the possible benefits of the internet to political communication, it is vital to think of its limitations before being too excited. Primarily, the availability of information does not necessarily mean that the public will be informed on important issues and then cast their votes accordingly. It is found out that gender, education, and the interest in politics are the most influential variables on the public's level of knowledge about issues (Curran et al., 2009). Furthermore, it is not feasible to reach out to the whole electorate with the help of the internet because of the digital divide, which is "a division between people who have access and use of digital media and those who do not" (Van Dijk, 2020, p. 9). Another important issue regarding the internet is self-selection. The internet entitles any users to the ability to design their own media diet, which, unfortunately, or fortunately for some people – decreases the likelihood of exposure to different standpoints (Sunstein, 2001), and creates an opportunity to live in a bubble as they wish. In other words, even if there are hundreds of opportunities out there, people may choose not to follow any kind of news related to politics because they have the power and tools to do so (Kim, 2012; Zillmann et al., 2004).

From the facts stated above, one may conclude that the changes in the technology have inevitably created new possibilities for the political game including presenting new platforms to be used to reach out to voters with a minimal cost with additional benefits including increased engagement with voters, gathering political news before making any political decision; however if there is not a solid plan regarding how to make the best of it, the enthusiasm about technology means nothing but a load of nonsense. In the next section, what political participation stands for will be discussed to understand the ways to increase the electorate's political participation.

2.3. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Defining political participation and its scope is not a straightforward task since the ways of political participation have been evolving as a response to the technological changes and the political conjuncture of the country. Another big challenge is that the ways citizens can perform political participation are not universal, and some of the ways to participate in politics cannot be actualized in some countries. Regardless of the number of items to be used to describe political participation, it will remain as “the elixir of life for democracy” (Van Deth, 2014, p. 350).

It is obvious that citizen participation is one of the fundamental pillars of the continuation of the democratic system anywhere in the modern world because constituents should transfer their rights to politicians to rule the country; otherwise, it is not possible to talk about the existence of democracy (Roberts, 2004). According to the most popular definition, political participation is “legal activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions that they take” (Verba et al., 1978, p. 46). Based on the description, the same scholars also formulate the possible political participation ways such as “voting, working in campaigns, making financial contributions, contacting public officials, attending political protests” (Verba et al., 1995, p. 272). All activities engaged by citizens within a fixed time to change the country’s roadmap can be evaluated as political participation (Putnam, 1995); however, throughout the years, the nature of political participation has inescapably undergone changes as a response to the technological enhancements. Therefore, new capabilities, facilitated by technology, allow citizens to engage with politics in more diverse settings. With the birth of new activities that are also considered political participation such as sharing opinions about candidates on social media, it is very much needed to revise the description of political participation. Consequently, it is divided into two concepts: offline political participation and online political participation. The ways of online political participation include “writing to a politician online, making a campaign contribution online, subscribing

to political lists, signing up to volunteer for a campaign/issue online, sending a political message via email, and writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper online” (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012, p. 324). In their work on “Conceptualizing and Measuring Participation in the Age of the Internet”, Gibson and Cantijoch (2013, p. 709) classified online political participation into four categories: “e-party”, “e-targeted”, “e-expressive”, and “e-news”. The sun side of the introduction of new ways of political participation is that it gives a chance for those who cannot be engaged with traditional political participation methods due to the high costs (Brady et al., 1995) so that citizens who are politically inactive before can perform several political activities (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2010).

As it was proven in previous studies, both exposure to news and reaching the political information are nontrivial part of forming public opinion, and increasing political participation (Gil de Zuniga et al., 2014; Luskin 1990; Zaller, 1992) since voters evaluate which candidates will be the best option for their interest, and after that, they make decisions with the help of the information they gather (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Przeworski et al., 1999). Based on the previous researches, people who happen to consume news from traditional sources including newspapers, TV, and radio, are more likely to vote (Gil De Zúñiga et al., 2012; Smets & Van Ham, 2013), and it has a positive influence on political participation in general (Boulianne, 2009; Carpini, 2004; Eveland & Scheufele, 2000; Holt et al., 2013; Kaid et al., 2007; McLeod et al., 1999; Norris, 1996; Strömbäck & Shehata, 2010). TV programs about the news or public affairs are found to result in higher political participation (Norris, 2000; Rojas et al., 2005). With the recent incorporation of the internet into conventional media such as online newspapers and the rise of social media, another important issue to be investigated emerges: the impact of online news consumption on political participation. In line with the findings of the relationship between news media and participation, it is found out that online news media has also a positive impact on participation (Boulianne, 2009; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2009; Lawrence, et al., 2010; Lupia & Philpot, 2005; Papacharissi, 2002;

Shah et al., 2005; Xenos and Moy, 2007); however, Dimitrova et al. (2014) state that using online news sites did fail to increase users' political participation.

Even if the principal focus of political communication is social media today, everything related to the impact of the internet and communication technologies on political participation has started with the integration of the internet into daily lives. Being heavily used by youth around the globe, the Internet has paved the way to the birth of new ways of political participation through the internet's characteristics such as easy access and easy to use (Kruikemeier et al., 2013). Tolbert and McNeal (2003) expect an increase in participation since electorates can easily find information online about anything related to the election thanks to its fast and accessible nature. The 2004 US Presidential Election is seen as a milestone in terms of the integration of the internet to political campaign communication (Xenos & Moy, 2007). Back then, scholars felt the urge to lift the veil of mystery over the relationship between internet usage and civic engagement and political participation (Quintelier & Vissers, 2008; Scheufele & Nisbet, 2002; Shah et al., 2001b). Some scholars demonstrate that the internet does not play a big role in voter's political participation (Bimber & Davis, 2003; Scheufele & Nisbet, 2002), and it negatively affects the relationship between citizens and politicians and fails to connect with the ones who no longer show interest in politics (Davis, 2010). In response to this, other research findings prove the exact opposite on the ground that it leads to a significant change in political communication and political participation (Bentivegna, 2006; Bimber, 1998; Negrine & Papathanassopoulos, 2011; Norris, 2001; Polat, 2005). A set of interviews as a part of a study conducted in the United Kingdom on the internet's impact on institutional politics reveals that politics is way more transparent and accessible with the new media features that enable information sharing and receiving (Davis, 2010).

The phenomenal popularity of social media causes intense hype. Since the launch of social media and especially after Barack Obama's victory in 2008, the buzz about social media's impact on political participation has increased at a tremendous rate.

Taking advantage of social media platforms, former US President Barack Obama pivoted political communication around these platforms to mobilize young voters which is the most critical aspect of his campaign (Johnson & Kaye, 2014). The impact of social media use on political participation has been studied by considering different angles with the contribution of scholars around the world (Baumgartner & Morris, 2010; Bode et al., 2014; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012; Hargittai & Shaw, 2013; Valenzuela et al., 2012). Several researchers find out that there is a positive relationship between social media and political and/or civic participation, such as attending a rally, signing a petition, and contacting a politician (Bode et al. 2014; Broockman & Green 2014, Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2014; Holt et al., 2013; Pasek et al., 2009; Vitak et al. 2011; Xenos et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2013); however, these studies exclude voting in their examination. The findings from the study conducted by Towner and Dulio (2011) highlight important things. They find out that young voters have a higher degree of voting in the elections than the ones who follow websites and television when they come across the content on YouTube and Facebook (Towner & Dulio, 2011). Another study by Towner (2013) also confirms this finding. The result of the study claims that online information sources such as Twitter or Google+ are positively related to offline political participation.

Most studies focus on youth and are conducted in the Occident such as Spain and the Netherlands (Calenda & Meijer, 2009), Sweden (Sveningsson, 2014; Svensson, 2014), Australia (Xenos et al., 2014), the United Kingdom (Xenos et al., 2014), Italy (Vaccari et al., 2015), and the United States (Bode et al., 2014; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012). An important study, that investigates the 2010 and 2011 elections held in the Netherlands, reveals that social media do not have a major role during local elections; however, politicians who happen to have higher engagements scores on social media receive more votes during national elections (Effing et al., 2011).

Several study results show a positive relationship between the usage of social networking sites to share opinions and political participation (Ikeda & Richey, 2005; Vitak et al., 2011). The two social media platforms have become prominent

in the literature: Facebook and Twitter. Previous research on the impact of Facebook on college students' online and offline political participation shows a positive relationship among two concepts (Fernandes et al., 2010; Vitak et al., 2011). By enabling 280-character opinion sharing, Twitter is one of the most important social networking sites for political campaigns. Based on the data gathered, it is concluded that Twitter positively influences the political participation of voters (Towner, 2013; Zhang et al., 2013).

Another set of studies finds out that the use of social networking sites (SNS) increases political participation by reducing political apathy (Fernandes et al., 2010; Hayes, 2009). Additional studies also show that social media usage and blog use are positively related to political participation (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2009; Kim & Chen, 2016; Macafee & Simone, 2012; Valenzuela et al., 2012). A study focusing on 16-year-olds Belgium citizens also reveal that some online activities young people engage in may cause increased participation in political events regardless of the time spent online (Quintelier & Vissers, 2008). As opposed to these findings, several scholars do not become successful in finding a significant relationship between social media use and political knowledge (Baumgartner & Morris, 2010; Dimitrova et al., 2014; Lee & Xenos, 2019; Shehata & Strömbäck, 2018). One of the most important works about the field is a meta-analysis conducted by Boulianne (2015). Based on the analysis, it is found out that social media use has a positive impact on political participation; however, half of the coefficients in those studies are found statistically insignificant (Boulianne, 2015).

Yet again, user's online or offline participation is affected by the type of social media use (Bachmann & de Zuniga, 2013; Gil de Zuniga & Valenzuela, 2010; Holt et al., 2013; Tang & Lee, 2013; Valenzuela, 2013; Xenos et al., 2014). For example, a very recent study conducted in Hong Kong reveals that political participation is positively affected by creative social media use (Zhu et al., 2019). Another set of studies previously finds out that informational social media use (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012; Tang & Lee, 2013) and interactive social media use (Moeller et al., 2014;

Hyun & Kim, 2015) positively relates to political participation. A meta-analysis conducted by Skoric et al. (2015) show that different types of social media use including informational, expressive, and relational, are positively related to citizen engagement. They also discover that political expression via social media increases political participation. The political use of social media, especially Facebook and Twitter, is also positively related to online political participation (Yang & DeHart, 2016).

Based on the previous research, it is found out that mobilization of voters via conventional methods does not yield expected results (Gerber & Green 2000; Michelson, 2003; Ramirez, 2005). Consequently, it would be wiser for politicians to choose a channel that will be more personal and make it possible to create a bond with voters to push them to be politically active. A group of scholars investigate the 2016 US Presidential Election regarding the possible impact of a candidate's social media use on voters' intention to vote (Macafee et al., 2019). The result of the study proves how political campaigns via social media can influence voter choice.

In the fewest possible words, the phenomenal growth of social media creates exciting new ways of political participation throughout the world. As Verba et al. (1995, p. 1) mention in their books called *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*, democracy means nothing if citizens are not entitled to decide which political entities will run the country. By integrating social media into the political campaign, political entities can reach out to the part of the society which is hard to communicate with; hence, it may result in increased mobility and a higher voter turnout rate (Bode & Dalrymple, 2016). Another critical claim about the impact of social media on political participation and expression is that it is relatively easier to share your opinions online and discuss with people whom you know or may not know (Lu et al., 2016; Yamamoto et al., 2015); hence, social media is an essential medium for political discussion to increase knowledge about the issues of the day. That is why the possible impact of politicians' social media marketing activities on voters' political participation should be studied in detail to understand

whether the campaign on social networking sites makes a difference or not. This relationship is important not just for theoretical but for managerial reasons since there is a limited time and budget to allocate for a social media marketing plan; that is why understanding the factors which trigger political participation is vital so that political campaigns can be conducted to yield the expected results.

In the subsequent sections, the social media marketing activities will be discussed in detail to reveal whether the political campaign on social media helps political entities to achieve their goals by affecting candidate image and political efficacy.

2.4. SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ACTIVITIES OF A CANDIDATE

With its increased popularity and various choices for marketers and communication experts, social media has created new opportunities for brands that would like to reach out to their target audience directly. Consequently, the medium has turned into a major marketing platform nowadays (Kapoor et al., 2018), and advertisements on social media have become a fundamental part of marketing communication plans (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). For this reason, users who go online on these platforms may bump into marketing campaigns (Hutter et al., 2013); however, the main idea behind the creation of social media is not developing a platform for brands to meet their marketing needs but to form an online sphere where people interact with each other (Fournier & Avery, 2011), that is why brands who try to take advantage of these platforms are called as “uninvited crashers of web2.0 party” (Fournier & Avery, 2011, p. 193). It is no doubt that political entities will also be considered as Beetlejuice on these platforms; however, saying their names three times cannot be used to get rid of them since the widely known social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have become unmissable political campaign platforms to share their campaign messages and connect with voters (Williams, 2017).

It came as no surprise that political communication has undergone revolutionary changes as a result of the developments in information and communications technology throughout the years since technology has the power to steer the future; consequently, the incorporation of social media into the political campaign has brought political communication into a totally different state (Gueorguieva, 2008; Towner & Dulio, 2012). The research conducted by The Pew Research Center, which reveals how the public learns about the 2016 US Presidential Election, shows that 44% of the US citizens used social media to follow information about the 2016 Presidential Election (The Pew Research Center, 2016). Another finding of the same research asserts that people aged 18-29 preferred social media as a source of information as opposed to the other age groups who preferred cable TV news at most (Gottfried et al., 2016); hence, politicians have no other options than going online to run their political campaigns. In a study that discusses what to expect in the next elections, it is predicted that political candidates will progressively use online tools to increase their presence in the upcoming years (Towner & Dulio, 2012), and the recent elections demonstrate the accuracy of this prediction by showing how essential social media is for election campaigns (Hobbs, 2017).

Social media marketing can be described as “company’s process of creating and promoting online marketing-related activities on social media platforms that offer values to its stakeholders” (Pham & Gammoh, 2015, p. 325); as “a process by which companies create, communicate, and deliver online marketing offerings via social media platforms to build and maintain stakeholder relationships that enhance stakeholders’ value by facilitating interaction, information sharing, offering personalized purchase recommendations, and word of mouth creation among stakeholders about existing and trending products and services” (Yadav & Rahman, 2017, p. 3); or “engaging with customers through SNSs...brings several benefits to companies, such as creating word-of-mouth, positively affecting customer equity, enhancing customer loyalty to the company, and increasing purchase intention of the company’s products or services” (Choi et al., 2016, p. 772). Since consumers are prone to look for information on social media (Mangolds & Faulds, 2009); the

traditional way of promoting products or services will be less effective compared to social media marketing (Bruhn et al., 2012; Frank & Watchravesringkan, 2016) that is why social media platforms are heavily used to promote information about brands (Khan, 2017). It is found out that consumers' purchase intention and brand preference are affected by advertising efforts because it has the potential to increase brand equity (Buil et al., 2013a, 2013b; Godey et al., 2016). Moreover, it is mentioned that the main outputs of social media marketing efforts are to establish and cherish a connection with customers and shape how customers perceive the brand image (Erdoğan & Cicek, 2012).

Even if traditional media is still a go-to platform to receive information about politics (Sydnor & Psimas, 2017); the new media has been heavily used as an alternative promotional platform for different kinds of campaigns (Gulati, 2004; Jackson & Lilleker, 2004; Tsai & Men, 2017), and candidates around the world intensively employ social media as a part of their political campaign communication (Cogburn & Espinoza-Vasquez, 2011; Johnson & Perlmutter, 2010). Even though it seems like politicians incorporate these platforms into their plans because of technological necessities, they are also prone to do so because of the tidbits of social media activities. Primarily, by employing social media as a political campaign tool, political candidates not only directly explain their promises and the policies they will implement when they are elected, but also, they may draft election narratives as they wish to shape voters' perception (Entman, 1993; Kreiss, 2012). Considering the importance of candidate image on voters' choices (Cwalina et al., 2010), integrating social media into political campaign plans helps politicians reach out campaign objectives (Housholder & LaMarre, 2015) by drawing the most suitable candidate images. Another benefit of social media for political candidates is to increase electorates' political participation (Enli & Skogerbø, 2013). In addition to that, social media also enables targeted communication which means the same subject can be communicated with different ads to different voter segments that is found as a more effective way of reaching out to the constituents (Tucker, 2014). Moreover, political content on social media creates opportunities

for political candidates because news items are more than content but tools to convey the people's feelings and judgments together with candidates' overall attitudes (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2018). Furthermore, since it is likely to be exposed to different opinions and recommendations on the same issue on social media platforms (Shah et al.; 2005), people who use social media are found to be more open-minded about different information or worldviews (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2018; Messing & Westwood, 2012). Besides, 7/24 communication possibilities from anywhere, interactive structure, instant intervention against disinformation, and not being at the mercy of gatekeepers are amazing opportunities that social media offers to political candidates (Ward & Vedel, 2017). What is more, social media can be employed by a candidate who either does not have enough budget to spend on a political campaign or s/he may have a less chance to be covered by traditional media for several reasons; that is why social media in political communication can be seen as "a political equalizer" (Hong & Nadler, 2012, p. 456) which potentially empower a lot of politicians which cannot be possible before the social media era. Last but not least, with the help of social media, politicians now have new tools to be employed to ask for donations, send out their political messages, and convince people to work for them during an election. Meanwhile, voters are exposed to the political candidates at the lowest cost possible (Gueorguieva, 2008).

By being an integral part of political communication, the role of social media has been escalated in the last decade as a response to the increased number of users and awareness regarding the advantages stated above; however, the main turning point was the 2008 US Presidential Election because social media has played a huge role in Obama's electoral success especially by mobilizing young voters (Miller, 2008; Stirland, 2008). President Obama has become the first presidential candidate who integrated social media into his political communication strategy, yielding increased mobilization (Smith & Rainie, 2008). Years later, social media platforms were heavily used once again in the 2016 US Presidential Election campaign (Enli, 2017). Especially since 2010, social media has a lot to offer with its new features including geolocation and data mining (Hannay & Baatard, 2011). Therefore, some

of the politicians do their homework very well and use these platforms professionally (Maarek, 2014), and the way they use these channels gets better every day because the world we live in necessitates so.

A study that focuses on the relationship between social networking sites and elections is getting popular (Langlois et al., 2009; Túñez & Sixto, 2011; Ward, 2008; Wills & Reeves, 2009). A study conducted in New Zealand reveals a small but positive relationship between the size of social networks and election results (Cameron et al., 2016). That is why it is proposed that candidates' attention should center on their social media strategies (Cameron et al., 2016). Even if there is a wave of social media in politics, some studies claim that digital media do not yield expected results in terms of increased participation. For example, Groshek and Dimitrova (2011) assert that social media did not affect users' voting intention during the 2008 US Presidential Election.

It does not come as a surprise that internet communication technologies have also transformed the nature of political communication in Turkey; therefore, Turkish politicians integrate social media tools into their political campaign methods to promote their agenda. Especially the increase in the number of social media users requires politicians to work on the dynamics of these platforms to craft the best possible strategy ever to reach out to the public. The first example is the November 3, 2002 Election in which the internet usage was pretty limited due to the nature of the technological enhancements (Okan et al., 2014). In 2007, the usage of internet-related tools to boost political marketing has become more sophisticated, and the role of social media in political campaigns was relatively higher than before (Okan et al., 2014); however, Bayraktutan et al. (2014), who study the Twitter accounts of political parties within the scope of the 2011 General Election in Turkey, find out that not only politicians but also political parties fail to benefit from the interactivity feature of social media accounts. Unfortunately, they prefer using these platforms as a bulletin board. At the local elections of the March 30, 2014, social media has turned into the most important tool to get in contact with the electorate (Okan et al.,

2014). Onat and Okmeydan (2015) conduct quantitative content analysis on candidates' Facebook and Twitter accounts during the March 30, 2014 Local Election and the August 10, 2014 Presidential Election. The findings suggest that the electorate is very much interested in politicians' social media accounts; that is why the engagement rates are high. Unfortunately, politicians abstain from establishing a dialogue with voters. Keskin and Sönmez (2015) investigate political party leaders' Twitter performance. The research result demonstrates that both leader identity and leader image matter, and leaders are at the forefront during the election. Akyol's (2015) focus is how two presidential candidates - Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu - use Facebook as a part of their political campaigns during the presidential election in 2014. The same pattern is also found here, and interaction on both candidates' accounts is low. A study, which investigates the Instagram usage of AK Party Chair Ahmet Davutoğlu and MHP Chair Devlet Bahçeli, demonstrates that political leaders have social media accounts; however, they do not use them effectively and benefit from Instagram's interactive feature (Çakır & Tufan, 2016). Ölçer (2016) examines Twitter usage of the leaders of four political parties within the scope of the November 2015 General Election in Turkey. The study shows that each leader concentrates on different social media usage aspects. One of the study's surprising findings is that the number of informative tweets to explain their political promises are found to be pretty low. A study conducted by Aydın and Gülsoy (2017) find that politicians' social media usage does not have a statistically important impact on young voters. The downside of this study is that it only applies to the students of Suleyman Demirel University, which is why the generalizability of the findings to the whole country is problematic. Another analysis of the political marketing activities of political parties in Turkey reveals that Turkish political parties benefit from digital platforms (Yalçınkaya, 2018). Tosyalı and Sütçü (2019) conduct content analysis on presidential candidates' Twitter accounts before the election held on June 24, 2018. Findings suggest that those accounts were used as the extent of traditional communication medium. In other words, candidates did not prefer two-way and interactive communication but a unidirectional announcement. Another important

finding is that candidates who were not covered by traditional communication mediums preferred social media more than their competitors, which helped them to increase their popularity and position their image in the minds of voters. Güz et al. (2019) work on the candidates' official Twitter accounts within the scope of the presidential and parliamentary elections held on the June 24, 2018, in Turkey. Findings reveal the importance of social media on political success. In the 2019 Local Elections, social media was also used by headman-to-be. The study reveals that the majority of candidates used Instagram as a political campaign tool, but female candidates and candidates between the ages of 45-79 have not adequately employed it (İnanç et al., 2020). Another study on candidates' Twitter usage in the context of the 2019 Local Elections found that candidates of two Metropolitan Municipalities – Ankara and İzmir – professionally used Twitter as a political communication tool (Kılıç, 2019).

The unending technological enhancements which paved the way for an extremely fragmented Turkish media environment than ever before have obviously changed the nature of political communication and the way Turkish people get information. In today's day and age, discovering the best ways to harness the possibilities of social media platforms to create value to voters is not an option but a crucial necessity for political entities as a result of the fact that the new media has drastically transformed the rules of a political game. Consequently, strategies are expected to be developed with measurable data which will better evaluate the results of strategies. Precisely because of that, it is very much needed to understand whether the exposure to social media activities of candidates and/or parties have some influence on voters or not because, as Gainous and Wagner (2014) put it, the most popular social media platforms may change in the future; however, the essence of social media which allow users to generate content will remain the same and the number of users of these platforms will be much more than today.

2.4.1. Social Media Marketing Activities and Political Participation

In the present times, social media has turned out to be the most prominent aspect of marketing plans since social media marketing activities perform better than traditional marketing communications in commercial marketing (Bruhn et al., 2012; Frank & Watchravesringkan, 2016) by virtue of the increased online information search habit (Mangold & Faulds, 2009); hence, social media marketing activities impact consumers' attitudes towards brands (Bruhn et al., 2012; Langaro et al., 2018) which respectively has a positive impact on purchase intention (Gautam & Sharma, 2017). For example, a study that looks at the importance of social media usage in the university sector finds out that interactive usage pattern is an important success criterion to increase universities' recruitment performance (Rutter et al., 2016). As might be expected, social media platforms are not only employed for commercial brands to make sure that consumers are exposed to the brand-related content but also used for people who are in need of personal marketing plan called human brands which can be described as a "well-known persona who is the subject of marketing communication efforts" (Thomson, 2006, p. 104). This concept has become stronger than ever before due to the growth of social media platforms, enabling engagement among users and content providers (Saboo et al., 2016). Being considered as human brands, politicians are also subjected to political marketing communication efforts; that is why it is necessary to reveal the possible impact of social media marketing activities on the election results if any.

Despite the rising popularity of the integration of social media into political marketing around the world, social media marketing is mainly studied in the marketing literature (Godey et al., 2016; Saridakis et al., 2016), and there is little empirical research conducted in political marketing which focuses on the outcomes of social media marketing activities (Hultman et al., 2019); however, the relationship between social media marketing activities of candidates and voters' political participation should be revealed.

The results of the early studies on new media's influence on individuals' political or civic participation show that there is an optimism – pessimism divide among scholars due to the fact that some studies reveal a positive relationship between these two (Zhang et al., 2010, 2013) while others' predictions are pretty negative due to the increased options for people who would like to choose entertaining content over information-based news content (Delli Carpini, 2000; Putnam, 2000). In response to this division in academia, Nam (2012) mentions that it is a wild-goose chase to come up with an explanation of the internet's impact on political participation since this impact can be diverse in different settings. The scholar comes up with the reinforcement and mobilization effect of the internet, which means not only the politically involved people's participation increase but also politically inactive people are also part of political activities thanks to the internet usage (Nam, 2012). Jiang (2016), who studied the relationship between internet use and political participation with the help of election interest and efficacy as moderator variables, also supports Nam's claims.

In the light of the research results mentioned above, it is crystal clear that technological enhancements facilitate new political participation ways and especially younger generations are way more active on these new platforms (Bode et al., 2014; Hargittai & Shaw, 2013). Plus, the relationship between online social network usage and probability of voting of young people are found positive (Kim & Geidner, 2008). Considering these findings, social media marketing activities make it possible to galvanize voters' participation which would not be possible otherwise (Bimber et al., 2015; Tufekci & Wilson, 2012). For this reason, it is vital to develop a social media marketing strategy to get the most out of the platform.

To be able to study the possible impact of social media marketing activities on the electorate's political participation within the scope of the June 2019 Istanbul Local Election, the first step should be to decide which variables will be employed to explain the social media marketing activities since the field is relatively new that is why the research model that scholars around the world agreed on has not been

developed yet. According to Kim and Ko (2012), interaction, entertainment, trendiness, customization, and word-of-mouth are the main attributes of social media marketing. Another study on social media marketing demonstrates the importance of persuasive messages with four important dimensions: argument quality, post popularity, post attractiveness, and users' attitude (Chang et al., 2015). Social media marketing is tested in the luxury industry (Godey et al., 2016); however, there is not enough research on its applicability within the scope of political marketing. Hultman et al. (2019) are one of the first group of scholars who work on social media marketing communication activities in political marketing, and they propose the following variables to study to understand social media activities: content, interaction, credibility, and word-of-mouth, which will also be used in this research.

2.4.1.1. Content

Social media metrics such as likes, retweets, or reposts are important to evaluate the performance; however, social media marketing is more than that, and content is at the heart and soul of the matter. Together with its visual and text-based features, content makes it possible to attract attention, enables ways to create engagement, and gets in touch with consumers. Based on Content Marketing Institute's definition, "content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action" (Content Marketing Institute, n.d.).

It is easier to said than done, but political entities need great content to be shared on their social media accounts to be able to mobilize the electorate to make them politically active. Their content consists of their promises and explanations regarding who they really are. Political information is perceived as "the currency of citizenship" (Delli Carpini & Keeter 1996, p. 8); thus, content really matters to voters who want to increase their political knowledge on the grounds that the more

knowledgeable citizens about political issues, the more politically active they are (McAllister, 2016; Milner 2007; Singh & Roy 2014). Past research highlights the value of media diet through newspapers which positively influences political participation including voting (Scheufele, 2002). In fact, when they really keep a beady eye on news content, the likelihood of voting at the election is found to be higher (Weaver & Drew, 2001). Exposure to online information positively relates to civic and political engagement (Chang, 2005; Tolbert & McNeal, 2003); that is why there will be more likely to change their attitudes if they are exposed to information online. The study about the 2000 Presidential Election in the USA reveals the importance of political advertisements, especially on undecided voters (Kaid, 2002). Due to its low-cost nature, voters can obtain political information on the internet in an efficient way (Tolbert & McNeal, 2003). As a result of the structural commonalities of the internet and social media, the same impact can be seen in social media as well. When political candidates and parties use social media as a part of their political campaigns, voters who use social media may have a chance to be exposed to the political campaign either directly from political actors as a consequence of following their social media accounts or from their networks who reshare the political content which is called incidental exposure (Pasek et al., 2009; Tang & Lee, 2013; Xenos et al., 2014) which may result in increased political participation (Kim et al., 2013). Dimitrova et al. (2014) study the relationship between digital media use and political participation and political knowledge. They find out that the use of social media and visiting political party websites impact people's political participation even if there are very weak effects of digital media usage on political learning. In addition to these, voters can come across political content while scrolling on social media due to the targeted advertising (Bimber, 2014). Exposing direct communication from politicians rather than some information on social media can have the potential to create an incentive for voters to become more politically engaged during election periods (Ohme, 2019); however, it is beneficial to keep in mind that not every single post has the power to increase voter's political participation owing to the fact that people may choose completely to shut down their doors to the agenda of the day and choose

entertainment over the news and this may lead knowing less about politics (Prior, 2005). As Prior (2005) argues, content preference is an important factor in increasing or decreasing voter turnout. Alternatively, even if they are interested in what is happening in the country, they may choose to be politically inactive since they may not want to pay the price for their actions, if any (Hirschman, 1978).

The measurement of voter behavior is the foundation of drafting a winning political campaign. New technologies' unprecedented opportunities should be harnessed to get to know the voters in-depth as much as possible. By looking at social media metrics, it is easy to map out which format or what kind of content works better since people's engagement patterns can be tracked down. Hence, by understanding how people react to different social media posts, it is possible to find a better formula to navigate their behavior by producing content accordingly. In this way, content that potentially encourages electorates' political participation can be created.

H1a: Content of the information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to offline political participation.

H1b: Content of the information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to online political participation.

2.4.1.2. Credibility

Although content is the backbone of the social media strategy; trust, which is described as “the willingness of the average consumer to rely on the ability of the brand perform its stated action” (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001, p. 82), should also be at the center of attention. It is expected that if voters evaluate the content and the content provider as untrusting, they will stop paying attention to any content because the credibility of information source influence people's consumption choices which eventually impact their level of participation (Kaufhold et al., 2010).

In acknowledgment of the role of credibility, which can be defined as “the objective and subjective components of the believability of a source or message” (Yaakop et al., 2013, p. 156), it is proposed that trust is associated with political participation including voting (Levi & Stoker, 2000) due to being one of the most important pillars of the democratic systems and vital component of all types of human interaction that anyone can think of (Tsfati & Cappella, 2003). Several studies look at the relationship between media trust and media consumption which reveal that the more people trust the source, the more they are prone to choose that source to get information (Kiouisis, 2001; Tsfati & Cappella, 2003; Wanta & Hu, 1994) as a result of the fact that human beings are risk-averse and use their limited cognitive capabilities to receive the most benefit by turning to the credible sources (Gaziano, 1988; Kiouisis, 2001). Kalogeropoulos et al. (2019) also focus on the relationship between media trust and media consumption and whether the distinctive types of news use have an impact on how people evaluate the credibility of the news. They find out that citizens are prone to trust media outlets that do not have various political or economic affiliations. That is why it is expected to observe low trust in media in countries where political or economic affiliations regulate media outlets. In addition to that, they discover that people choose to get information through the channels they trust regardless of the format of information sources such as TV news or digital new websites; however, logging in social media accounts for news is related to people’s low level of trust in news.

Since mainstream news sources are not the go-to place anymore, social media has become an important news source together with digital news sources such as digital newspapers and magazines (Newman et al., 2017). Even if the focus is on youth, more people of all ages use social media to get to know about what is going on in their countries (Newman et al., 2017). Studies focusing on the impact of Facebook on political participation show that the platform is positively related to the users’ political action if users are prone to consume political news and visit politicians’ Facebook pages (Dimitrova et al., 2014; Holt et al., 2013). If users review information they receive as wrong or one-sided, it is slightly hard to expect them to

engage in any actions with the help of that information (Ardèvol-Abreu et al., 2018). Consequently, political entities should have a trustworthy image and be careful about the credibility of the content they post; otherwise, people will stop paying attention to their social media accounts and will not be mobilized by content on their social media accounts.

H1c: Credibility of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to offline political participation.

H1d: Credibility of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to online political participation.

2.4.1.3. Interaction

Unlike Web 1.0, which only enables publishing some information, Web 2.0 has a lot to offer. According to the popular definition of Web 2.0 asserted by Tim O'Reilly:

“Web 2.0 is the network as platform, spanning all connected devices; Web 2.0 applications are those that make the most of the intrinsic advantages of that platform: delivering software as a continually-updated service that gets better the more people use it, consuming and remixing data from multiple sources, including individual users, while providing their own data and services in a form that allows remixing by others, creating network effects through an “architecture of participation”, and going beyond the page metaphor of Web 1.0 to deliver rich user experiences” (O'Reilly, 2005, p. 13, as cited in Von Korfleisch et. al, 2008, p. 74).

Inferring from this definition, Web 2.0 with all its features and applications permits users to produce and disseminate content beyond consuming what is already published. In addition, Web 2.0 enables social networking in a way which is not possible before. For this reason, Web 2.0 symbolizes “more human aspects of interactivity on the web” (Barsky, 2006, p. 33). Consequently, integrating Web 2.0 tools into the political campaign enables politicians to have increased visibility while bonding close relationships with the constituents (Vergeer, 2012).

On social media platforms, everyone who has been only considered as a consumer before also has an opportunity to be a producer and/or to communicate with the producer and the other consumers in real-time. This provides a basis for increased participation since it enables citizens to discuss the public and political issues with people in their network and with politicians (Jackson & Lilleker, 2009), which are not possible in the traditional media (di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006). This led to the birth of a new term: social media buzz, a jargon employed to explain people’s interaction about any viral marketing campaign on social networking platforms (Safiullah et al., 2017). It is crystal clear that social media platforms permit people to communicate with one another by exceeding physical and time limitations. This participatory culture is quite important for democracy because citizens are expected to be a part of governing process (Barner – Barry & Rosenwein, 1985).

Even if some study result indicates that citizens continue to be media consumers instead of focusing on interactivity features of the internet and producing content (Larsson, 2013); it is found out that citizens are way more politically engaged thanks to the fact that the more interactive nature of political communication makes it possible to reach out political entities for voters and convey the issues they care about (Tolbert & McNeal, 2003; Vreese, 2007). It is discussed that online expressive activities such as posting comments are way more influential than sending letters to journalists because online activities make it easier to reach out to a wider population with a minimum effort than offline activities (Gibson & Cantijoch, 2013). A wealth of studies also shows that the internet – but mainly

social media – causes the increased political engagement in the form of interpersonal discussion resulting from the fact that it enables online political talk (Gil de Zuniga & Valenzuela, 2010; Jung et al., 2011; Rojas & Puig-I-Abril, 2009; Shah et al., 2005; Tewksbury et al., 2001). In addition to these findings, research on interactivity shows that it has positively related to political involvement since citizens feel they have more close relations with politicians when online, interactive communication is possible (Kruikemeier et al., 2013) and it positively affects citizens' perception of candidates (Sundar et al., 2003). Another set of studies highlights that the interactivity feature of new technologies enables increased political knowledge, enhancing political engagement (Bakker & de Vreese 2011; Farrell, 2012). Bakker and de Vreese (2011) draw attention to how young people's political participation is positively impressed when they engage with interactive web features.

Bode and Dalrymple (2016), who investigate Twitter usage and its impact on political participation, mention that Twitter users are prone to positively approach political messages and engage with the content thanks to the interactive feature of the platform. Effing et al. (2011) claim that it is possible to foresee whether a political candidate will get more votes than their competitors by looking at the social media engagement rate. That is why politicians should have active social media accounts and produce content so that electorate will talk about those content.

H1e: Interaction on the candidate's social media positively relates to voters' offline political participation.

H1f: Interaction on the candidate's social media positively relates to voters' online political participation.

2.4.1.4. Word-of-Mouth

Consumers interact with each other to hear about others' experiences about any products or services before making a purchase decision. According to Buttle's (1998) review, Arndt (1967) is one of the first scholars who works on WOM and explains it as oral, person-to-person communication among people about all types of products. To understand fully, word-of-mouth communication is about passing a piece of information about anything to another person via different methods including face-to-face communication and any other communication platforms (Brown et al., 2005).

In the literature, the power of WOM on consumer's decision-making process is well established (Engel et al., 1969; Gilly et al., 1998; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955) since WOM stands for the information created and shared by actual users of the product who are seen as reliable (Feick & Price, 1987). It is asserted that consumers' love and continuous support to the brand is a driving force to increase revenue which is why WOM can be perceived as an added value to increase marketing efforts efficiency (Keller & Fay, 2012).

Technological enhancements paved the way to the birth of different ways of communication methods which increased the role of word-of-mouth on consumers' attitudes (Allsop et al., 2007). The nature of social media platforms makes it a perfect place for WOM since it is not only feasible to reach out to people who are perceived as credible but also it is possible to reach out to thousands of people whom you do not know in person. In the end, one thing matters the most: people easily exchange their experiences and opinions by freeing themselves from time and place restrictions (Chu & Kim, 2011). After the increased communication on social media platforms, it is found out that customers' online reviews shape consumer behavior and the company's respective future sales (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Senecal & Nantel, 2004). Like consumers, voters may also want to hear about other trusted voters' evaluations or need an extra explanation to

understand politicians' promises before deciding whom to vote to decrease the cost they will pay after the election.

Social media also enables users to easily share their opinions on the issues they care about in different formats which can be promptly consumed by other consumers worldwide (Lupia & Sin, 2003). Consequently, using social media as a platform for political expression has also become an important trend in the recent decade. It is known that the internet enables voters, who refrain from participating in political activities on the grounds of the high costs, actively participate in different forms of political participation such as voicing opinions online (Gil De Zúñiga et al., 2009). After youth has heavily started using social media and mobile technologies during the election periods (Smith & Duggan, 2012), the relationship between the usage of these technologies and youth political participation has become a hot topic to be investigated. It is uncovered that social media platforms positively affect political participation by enabling online political expression (Yamamoto et al., 2015). Zuniga et al. (2014) also support this finding by discovering that political expression on social media is positively related to political participation. Another important aspect of the possibility of political expression on social media is that "expression, not reception, may be the first step toward better citizenship," and "motivate exposure, attention, and elaboration of media messages" (Pingree, 2007, p. 447). One more issue regarding online conversation is that it may lead people to be exposed to different opinions and question their worldviews or make them more alert to any political content and be aware of different political participation methods (Beaumont, 2011).

Based on the findings above, it is expected that:

H1g: Word-of-mouth shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to voters' offline political participation.

H1h: *Word-of-mouth shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to voters' online political participation.*

2.5. CANDIDATE IMAGE

The candidate plays the same role that brands play in commercial marketing; that is why it is beneficial to conduct an in-depth analysis of the studies on brand image, consumer preferences, and consumer behavior to proceed on investigating candidate image. Being one of the most important intangible assets, brands are essential pillars to achieve successful market impact (Shankar et al., 2008). As a matter of course, brand identity and brand image influence consumers' preferences (Keller, 1993). In addition to that, brand image is positively related to satisfaction and purchase intention (Dash et al., 2021). The relationship between social media, purchase behavior, brand, and customer equity has been studied within the scope of commercial marketing (Chang & Liu, 2009); however, there is not enough research on its reflection in political marketing. To the researcher's knowledge, the study conducted by Hultman et al. (2019) lead the field by looking at the relationship between social media marketing activities and perceived candidate image in building voter–candidate relationship equity in the United Kingdom and find out that the relationship between social media marketing activities and candidate image is positive. Considering this limitation, marketing literature is a great place to start understanding the role of candidate image in politics.

Several concepts in marketing literature are helpful to start conducting analysis. One of them is a brand personality which is "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand" (Aaker, 1997, p. 347) and has been utilized and found its relevance in different settings including non-profit organizations (Voeth & Herbst, 2008), institutions (Watkins & Gonzenbach, 2013), and countries or cities (Lee & Suh, 2011). Back in 1969, it was introduced the fact that consumers were inclined to buy products that reflected their identity (Dolich, 1969) even if there were

research results that could not find evidence to support the correlation between personality and behavior (Brody & Cunningham, 1968).

The brand personality also has resonance in the political context (Gorbaniuk et al., 2015; Rutter et al., 2018; Schneider, 2004; Smith, 2009). According to Smiths (2009), a political party's brand personality is "an associative network of the human characteristics relating to that party, held in the memory and stimulated from the memory of voters" (p. 212). Just like consumers who look for brand personality while choosing one brand over another; voters also look for cues to believe in their words while deciding whom to vote since they cannot be sure about whether political entities will implement the promises they make once they win the election because of the nature of political service; hence, by symbolizing values, the personality of political parties can be used to reduce the risk of choosing wrong party or candidate (Caprara et al., 2006; Smith, 2009).

The political arena consists of mainly parties, candidates, campaign developers, and voters. The task every political entity should execute is to secure a position at elections. Crafting a political marketing plan has great importance in crowning the political campaign with success. A marketing plan to position candidate image in the minds of voters is developed in the same vein as the development of a marketing plan for a brand with the sole purpose: to ensure political victory (Newman, 2002). The election has always been portrayed as the door to Narnia for politicians; however, it is also quite critical for voters since elections are held at certain time intervals; thus, the price to pay in case of dissatisfaction with the election outcome is extremely high.

In their work to understand how voters decide whom to vote during the election, Newman and Sheth (1985, p. 179) came up with "a model of primary voter behavior". Based on their voter behavior model, seven items that influence voters' final decision regarding whom to vote are the followings: emotional feelings, issues and policies, personal events, current events, epistemic issues, social imagery, and

candidate image (Newman & Sheth, 1985). Being one of the most important determinants, candidate image is investigated by several scholars who found the relation between the candidate image and voter's opinion formation (Sherrod, 1971; Shama, 1975).

McGraw (2003) explains image as “an individual's construction of a mental representation - a cognitive structure stored in memory - consisting of knowledge and beliefs about another person” (p. 394), while Kinder (1986) clarifies image as “the cognitive categories at work in the minds of citizens” (p. 223). Campbell and his colleagues (1960) observe that voters pay attention to candidate personality traits in addition to his/her party and policy suggestions. They are even keen on candidate image while deciding whom to vote rather than their political stance in various subjects (Miller et al., 1986; Sheafer, 2008), but why is this the case, and do voters pay more attention to candidate characteristics? There are several explanations for this pattern. Sears state that (1969), “persons represent unusually simple stimuli, easily cognized and retained” (p. 364). Especially when the electorate is lazy and do not have an intention to strive for understanding political promises or have difficulty doing so (Lock & Harris, 1996); a candidate will be helpful for them to reach a final decision since exactly like the role of brands in the commercial world, the candidate image will be used as a heuristic cue to make a decision making process is less risky and easy (Gensler et al., 2013). Following this, political communication should place much more importance on how to shape candidate and/or party image in voters' minds (Reid, 1988). Furthermore, personality is considered steady over the years (Kinder, 1986), so that constituents perceive personality traits as the best indicator of whether the candidate can fulfill his/her promises once they are elected (Just et al., 1996). In other words, the electorate could interpret what candidates will possibly do in the future and be able to have stable expectations from the candidate's performance. Another fundamental point is that politics is more than policy offerings which are more about values because a political issue “is not merely a product to be merchandised, but a vibrant value symbol connect with an individual's sense of who and what they are. In such

cases, political views and decisions are part of the social self-construction of the individual” (O’Shaughnessy, 2001, p. 1049). Thereupon, candidate image is conceived as the best hint to be used by voters while deciding whom to vote. At this juncture, building a candidate image and affecting how the electorate perceives that image becomes more of an issue for political entities.

Candidate image has always been an important factor affecting voter’s decision-making behavior (Hacker, 1995); however, its importance in political communication has turned into a hot topic in academia in the last decades (Ohr & Oscarsson, 2011; Sheaffer, 2008) in consequence of the rising popularity of social media where images play a critical role. That is why political candidates are in the limelight of political campaigns more than ever before, which paves the way for the personalization of politics (McAllister, 2013). Especially by enabling direct communication between politicians and citizens, social media platforms pave the way for the personification of politics (Enli & Skogerbø, 2013; Karlsen, 2011, Kruike-meier et al., 2013). It is argued that depoliticization is the direct consequence of the personification of political communication; thus, image building will become one of the top priorities of politicians instead of discussing political issues to reach out to undecided voters (Maarek, 2014).

Despite the importance of election outcomes to the electorate’s life, every member of the society does not have the same level of political interest; however, the political candidate should find a way to engage attention to voters whose votes potentially can change the election outcome. Being one of the most important tools to actualize a marketing plan, political advertising will be carefully implemented to make sure to position candidate image in the minds of consumers as wanted (Kaid, 1981; Kaid, 1999) and media is an important platform for voters to be able to hold a view about candidate’s traits (Dimitrova & Bystrom, 2013); however, the role of social media on the perceived candidate image should be analyzed due to the fact social media platforms give political candidates opportunity to project an image as they wish (Muñoz & Towner, 2017) which is a great opportunity for political

candidates who try to portrait themselves as the best candidate option for the upcoming election to convince voters to vote for them. Therefore, some scholars focus on the role of Facebook and Twitter (Bode & Dalrymple, 2016; Goldbeck et al., 2010; Muñoz & Towner, 2017; Svensson & Larsson, 2016; Towner 2013), while some investigate the role of Instagram (Muñoz & Towner, 2017; Russmann & Svensson, 2017) to be able to come up with a detailed explanation. Several examples from different parts of the world can show the relationship between social media and candidate image. An investigation of the 2017 United Kingdom General Election shows the importance of integrating social media into political campaigns which help build authentic candidate image (Hobbs, 2017). After studying three elections held in Italy, Garzia (2013) comes to conclusion that Italians pay more attention to political candidates' personality traits while voting.

The fact that brand power lies in perception, which has a constantly changing and developing nature, is a reminder that the brand-building process should be given importance, and the investments to be made in this process will cause more consumers to prefer the brand and will have a positive effect on the brand's position in the market (Su & Tong, 2015). Like in the commercial market, branding is also such a powerful tool for political candidates since candidates give voters the opportunity to connect with themselves and do their best to attract their attention by showing that they have several characteristics in common (White & Chernatony, 2002). In other words, political candidates and political parties benefit from the brand personality which affects voters' preferences (Hoegg & Lewis 2011; Kaur & Sohal, 2020; Smith, 2009); but political human branding is way more complicated than branding in a commercial setting as a result of the fact that political figures may be in need of changing the way they speak and even their political stance in the face of new political developments as occasion requires (Speed et al., 2015).

Based on the extensive literature review, one of the outstanding characteristics that a candidate should possess appears to be competence (Aylor, 1999; Bean, 1993; Kinder et al., 1980; McCroskey & Jenson, 1975; McCurley & Mondak, 1995;

Mondak, 1995; Pancer et al., 1999) which is defined as “the ability to handle a job, an assessment of how effective the candidate will be in office” (Popkin, 1991, p. 61) since the abilities of candidates will determine voters’ expectation from them (Popkin, 1991). Other important characteristics are credibility and morality (Benoit & McHale, 2004; Kinder, 1994; Pancer et al., 1999). The juxtaposition of these characteristics creates more opportunities for political candidates to get more votes compared to his/her competitors.

Taken together, just like consumers in the pre-purchase stage who try to gather information as much as possible to lessen the possibility of coming up against problems (Mattila & Wirtz, 2000), voters are also engaging in the same activity. With the increased usage of social media, consumers have started to follow or like the official brand pages which eventually turn social media into an unmissable communication platform for brands to increase brand success (Bruhn et al., 2012). By acknowledging this, political candidates should also focus on their social media marketing activities to be able to effectively communicate with voters.

2.5.1. Social Media Marketing Activities and Candidate Image

Political marketing has been transforming itself by importing concepts from its founding fathers which are politics and marketing (Speed et al., 2015). The importance of brand in consumer behavior and politics show similarities. Brands aid consumers by making purchasing decisions easier by operating as a consumer behavior heuristic (Park & Lessig, 1981) and impacts consumer behavior (Zhang, 2015); so does candidate image.

Brand image is defined as “consumer perceptions of and preferences for a brand, as reflected by the various types of brand associations held in consumers’ memory (Keller, 2009, p. 143), or “the way of thinking by a consumer about the brand and the feelings the brand arouses when the consumer thinks about it” (Roy & Banerjee, 2008, p. 142). Given these definitions, building a strong brand image is a major step

to running effective marketing communication activities throughout different platforms. One of the important methods to build a candidate image is an advertisement that helps constituents to get to know candidates (Cwalina et al., 2000).

As a result of the increased popularity of social media platforms, social media activities play an enormous role in shaping candidate image since social media platforms can be used as an additional way to manage their images in the eyes of the public by enabling uploading pictures or video-format content (Munoz & Towner, 2017). Furthermore, running a political campaign on social media not only enables to reach out to the young electorate together with the older ones (Hobbs, 2017; Winchester et al., 2014) but also make one candidate different from the rest of the candidates in the eyes of voters (Hobbs, 2017).

2.5.1.1. Content

Bill Gates wrote an interesting article called “The Content is King” back in 1996 (Webarchive.org, 1996). This famous headline has turned into a tagline used by marketing professionals throughout the world. It probably has popped up in every single marketing meeting around the world since then. Even if it does not feel like twenty-five years, the article is still valid, and the production of relevant content to be distributed via several mediums which requires different technical details to make sure the increased visibility is at the core of the marketing function.

Regardless of the brand and service types, the goal of all marketing communication activities is to provide information to the consumer to motivate them to prefer the brand's products and services (Keller, 2009). In addition to that, consumers will be more likely to pay attention to and remember the brand messages if the advertised brand is powerful (Keller, 2009); hence all marketers should expand their energy on building a strong brand with the help of advertising (Whitelock et al., 2013).

Undoubtedly, this is also frankly relevant in political marketing. While social media platforms continue to have an important place in anyone's lives, what political content to be shared on these channels by politicians can be a game-changer. Since politicians are also considered human brands, social media content can be a powerful tool to create the bond between political entities and the electorate. Not every single content on social media has the same dimensions: entertainment, argument quality, and attractiveness (Chang et al., 2015; Kim & Ko, 2012). Argument quality of any content on social media is directly related to the usefulness which has an impact on how users behave (Chang et al., 2015); that is why the content should be carefully crafted to lead users. While creating content, politicians should always bear in mind that content should be "entertaining, current, and likely to stimulate engagement and interaction" (Godey et al., 2016, p. 8) that is why besides the importance of the content quality of social media posts, the focus should be on entertainment as a result of the fact that entertaining content can be a pull factor which will attract people to use different social media platforms (Godey et al., 2016; Muntinga et al., 2011; Park et al., 2009). Muntinga et al. (2011) also state that "consuming brand-related content, it covers the motivations enjoyment, relaxation, and pastime" (p. 28).

Based on the findings gathered, content shared on social media affects consumer response by influencing brand equity (Godey et al., 2016). A study conducted in Malaysia (Raji et al., 2019) reveals that advertising content used on social media greatly influences the brand image. The same relation is also found in politics (Hultman et al., 2019); that is why it is proposed that

H2a: Content of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to candidate image.

2.5.1.2 Credibility

Drafting content that will possibly increase engagement and interaction is quite important; however, one of the variables of social media marketing activities that may hinder the whole communication process is credibility. People are more interested in political content especially during election periods since the election decision is way different from other consumption decisions. At this point, the voters who seek information will be after credible content which is conceived as an incentive to follow the account or can be the reason to believe what is said on those platforms. In other words, the creation of believable and trusted content plays an enormous role here since when consumers are in doubt of the credibility of the messages they receive or the source of information, they will reorient their approaches to the source and all the information that is disseminated (Yaakop et al., 2013). If people do not trust the source together with the content itself, they will likely stop paying attention to anything on that platform (Bhattacharjee & Sanford, 2006; Harrop, 1990; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002; McCroskey & Teven, 1999). Plus, they may choose to abandon that source and look for another source to be informed, or they may feed up with and do not want to engage in trust problems anymore so that they may decide not to receive any kind of advertising messages at all (Obermiller et al., 2005).

There are different alternatives to mainstream media such as different social media platforms and endless options of online new websites; hence, it is more likely to be able to find a credible source of information in this day and age. Based on the paper which reviews whether the message source credibility has an impact on the way people behave, it is found out that the decision regarding the use of high or low credibility source may vary based on the situation; hence it is necessary to evaluate each situation in its own context (Pornpitakpan, 2004). For example, Bode and Dalrymple (2016) state that users of different social networking sites have different motivations, and interest in politics is an important factor behind using Twitter.

People who chose to use Twitter also question mainstream media's credibility and are in search of alternative platforms to follow the agenda of the day.

Together with the quality of argument, source credibility is important to shape consumers' perception and attitude towards any issues (Bhattacharjee et al., 2006). It is also proved that the credibility of information shared on politicians' social media accounts relates to candidate image (Hultman et al., 2019); that is why it is proposed that

H2b: Credibility of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to candidate image.

2.5.1.3. Interaction

Interacting with human brands without being interrupted by anyone; customers perceive the human brands as more accessible (Thomson, 2006). Interaction is one of the unique features of social media platforms where users can share their ideas and communicate with other users without any time and place restrictions (Godey et al., 2016). That is why the relationship among brands and customers have turned into "two-way direct communication" (Kim & Ko, 2012, p. 1480) which paves the way for a more intimate relationship with the brand (Kim & Ko, 2012). Another important aspect of interaction on social media platforms is that consumers can meet with people who hold similar views and join a conversation about a specific brand (Muntinga et al., 2011). Previous studies also demonstrate that the interaction on social media increases trust and intention to buy (Hajli, 2015).

Interactivity has also played a very critical role in politics. In a similar vein, the increased popularity of social media platforms has also changed the nature of election communication to two-way, interactive communication which enables the creation of a closer bond between politicians and their supporters (Kruikemeier et al., 2013; Stanyer, 2005). Thanks to the possibility of firsthand communications,

politicians not only gain the advantage of battling against misinformation by integrating social media into their communication strategies but also increase its worth (Kim & Ko, 2012). Another research result claims that interactivity affects the way citizens positively evaluate candidates (Sundar et al., 2003) and positively influences perceived candidate image (Hultman et al., 2019). By improving someone's political knowledge, interactivity ensures voters get to know politicians better (Sundar et al., 2003; Warnick et al., 2005).

H2c: Interaction on the candidate's social media positively relates to candidate image.

2.5.1.4. Word-of-Mouth

Social media is an excellent crossroad for those who are wondering some tips. Harrison-Walker (2001) explains word-of-mouth as “informal, person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver regarding a brand, a product, an organization or a service” (p. 63). It is also described as the information that people exchange among themselves which will potentially change the other's attitude towards products and eventually their consumption patterns (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955).

In the marketing literature, the power of word-of-mouth on consumer decisions has been acknowledged (Gilly et al., 1998). The important pillar of word-of-mouth is the fact that people's willingness to share their experiences and reach out to other people even if there is no economic incentive to do so. In other words, ordinary people do not get paid by brands to share their experiences regarding any product or services, that is why it is not a surprise that consumers pay more attention to WOM than a company-initiated product review (Chu & Kim, 2011), and WOM has an enormous impact on the brand image (Yavas & Shemwell, 1996). The same relationship is found in the political marketing literature stating that WOM positively influence the perceived candidate image (Hultman et al., 2019).

Before the advent of the internet and integration of social media, the people's sphere of influence was narrow since the number of people anyone can interact with daily was low; however, it is theoretically very much easy to reach out to millions of people with one message on different platforms in today's social world. As a consequence of technological enhancements, EWOM, which is "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet" (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004, p. 39), has become a reality in everyone's lives.

Before buying any products or services, social media is a go-to place to gather information before making any decisions (Naylor et al., 2012). For example, it is well-known fact that customer rating is an important indicator of the hotel's quality, which directly impacts consumers' preferences (Verma & McCarthy, 2012). In their work, İsmail and Spinelli (2012) investigate the relationship between brand love, brand personality, brand image, and word-of-mouth. They discover the importance of word-of-mouth to increase the number of brand users, increasing the profits.

The conventional value of WOM in consumer literature is a substantial reference point for political marketing. EWOM is the most important aspect of earned media since consumer-driven content attracts attention and is shared by other consumers even if politicians try hard to gather pieces of thought to formulate careful social media messages (Towner & Muñoz, 2018). WOM is also found to be one of the most influential factors on candidate image (Hultman et al., 2019).

H2d: Word-of-mouth shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to candidate image.

To illustrate the relationship among social media marketing activities of candidates and the electorates' political participation, the researcher took the liberty of

investigating the relationship among two important concepts: candidate image and political participation.

2.5.2. Candidate Image and Political Participation

Political campaigns consist of carefully planned messages with the purpose of convincing voters to be politically active to ensure the continuation of a healthy political life. One of the most important aspects of political campaigns is undoubtedly candidate image since the political promises and plans are embodied in the politicians' bodies. Before the election, voters realize that they face an important decision to make which is about whom to vote. To make up their minds, voters may look for information and/or evaluate the information that somehow managed to reach out to them. In addition to several factors, candidate image is perceived as one of the most important elements which impact voters' political participation and voting behavior (Hacker, 1995; Miller et al., 1986; Newman & Sheth, 1985; Rarick et al., 1977; Shama, 1975; Sheafer, 2008; Sherrod, 1971).

To reveal the role of candidate image, it is a good start analysis with focusing on marketing literature since it has a wealth of information that can be very helpful to build political marketing literature. Brands, which are an accumulation of different aspects such as names or symbols helping identify goods or services from the competitors, have incredible disruptive power which has an enormous impact on consumers' evaluation of products or services (de Chernatony et al., 2000). It is inevitable that the usage of brand concept in political marketing has been accepted (French & Smith 2010; Harris & Lock 2010; Lock & Harris 1996), and the role brands play in a commercial setting has also been observed in politics (YouGov, 2006, as cited in Smith, 2009); that is why candidate image holds a game-changer power on voters' political participation.

Brand image can be defined as “a set of beliefs held about a particular brand” (Kotler & Armstrong, 1996, p. 197) or “perceptions about a brand as reflected by

the brand associations held in consumer memory” (Keller, 1993, p. 3). On the other hand, a political brand is defined as “an associative network of interconnected political information, held in memory and accessible when stimulated from the memory of a voter” (French & Smith, 2010, p. 462). As it can be seen in the definitions above, candidate image is also voter’s very own evaluations about candidates that is why conveying candidate image is located at the center of a political campaign since it has a massive impact on voter’s evaluation regarding whom to vote for during an election (Brown, 1992; Miller et al., 1986). Some scholars even state that candidate image is an important predictor of voting behavior (Boyd, 1969; Nimmo & Savage, 1976; Stamm et al., 1985) and mention that issues do not determine the election result (Stamm et al., 1985). Some even claim that candidate image is the most effective persuasive factor (Brooks, 1967). Acknowledging the fact that candidate image has an impact on electorates’ political participation, there has been criticism on the grounds that the carefully crafted candidate image aims to “manipulate the public's perceptions by emphasizing traits with special appeal to the voting audience” (Miller et al., 1986, p. 522).

To the researcher’s knowledge, the effect of candidate image on political participation was measured mainly in the voting framework; however, political participation is not restricted to voting but more of a year-long activity for those who are interested in politics. Previous studies in the marketing literature show that brand image affects consumer choices (Bennett & Koudelova, 2000; Keller, 1993; Martínez & de Chernatony, 2004; Watson et al., 2015) which means it is possible to motivate consumers to change their brand preference and their final decision regarding which product to buy (Zembick, 2015). In the light of the findings of previous studies, it is presumed that

H3a: *Candidate image positively relates to offline political participation.*

H3b: *Candidate image positively relates to online political participation.*

One last chapter before bidding adieu to the literature review is political efficacy which is an essential hallmark of a healthy democracy (Craig et al., 1990).

2.6. POLITICAL EFFICACY

Laying different factors affecting voting such as adult roles (Highton & Wolfinger, 2001), age, parenthood, and partisanship (Plutzer, 2002) aside, extensive research has been conducted throughout the years to reveal the relationship between political efficacy and political behavior. It is found out that political efficacy has a prominent impact on political behavior (Craig et al., 1990; Niemi et al., 1991). The popular concept can be described as a “feeling that political and social change is possible and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change” (Campbell et al., 1954, p. 187). In his book called *Political Life*, Robert Lane (1959) suggests conceptualizing political efficacy as external and internal. On the one hand, external efficacy is manifested as “beliefs about the responsiveness of governmental authorities and institutions to citizens’ demands” (Niemi et al., 1991, p. 1408). On the other hand, internal political efficacy relates to “beliefs about one’s own competence to understand, and to participate effectively in politics” (Niemi et al., 1991, p. 1407).

By acknowledging the importance of political knowledge on citizens’ political participation (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Jennings, 1996), it is vital to understand the role of different information sources that have impacted voters’ level of political efficacy (Kaid et al., 2007). Especially with the born of new information sources such as social media, the weight information sources carry has become a new puzzle for scholars.

Political knowledge is described as “the range of factual information about politics that is stored in long-term memory” (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996, p. 10). Based on the previous studies, it is known that exposure or access to news from traditional sources including newspapers, TV, and radio has a positive impact on turning out

to vote (Gil De Zúñiga et al., 2012; Smets & Van Ham, 2013). In addition to these, online campaigns (Drew & Weaver, 2006; Kenski & Stroud, 2006; Xenos & Moy, 2007) and online newspapers (Dalrymple & Scheufele, 2007; Drew & Weaver, 2006; Groshek & Dimitrova, 2011) are positively related to political knowledge, and voters' political efficacy is directly related to being exposed to political campaign messages online (Tedesco, 2011). An important finding from several studies claims that internet use to get political information has positively correlated to increased political efficacy together with community engagement (Kenski & Stroud, 2006; Shah et al., 2001a; Shah et al., 2005). The impact of Internet use during elections on citizens' levels of political efficacy, knowledge, trust, or engagement was also explored mostly in the USA (Hansen & Pedersen, 2014; Kenski & Stroud, 2006). Even if the news media are still the main source of political information for a considerable number of voters (Massanari & Howard, 2011); the impact of social media should always be at the center of attention on the grounds that even if there is a tendency to evaluate social media as a platform to have fun (Hutton & Fosdick, 2011); some consumers are also looking for political information on social media instead of traditional news platforms (Van Erkel & Van Aelst, 2020). In her study, Bode (2015) investigates whether people learn from social media or not. It is found out that a remarkable number of users can memorize the political information that they are exposed to. While studying the relationship between the attention to social media for campaign information and political efficacy in the 2008 US Presidential Election, Kushin and Yamamoto (2010) discover that there is no significant relevance among those two concepts.

On the one hand, the availability of political content on different platforms does not necessarily mean that the audience will actively pay attention to it because new media platforms also offer users the opportunity to filter the content they do not want to see (Goyanes et al., 2021) and refrain from all the fuss. On social media platforms, users are equipped to filter the content they receive; however, users of social networking sites, in general, can come across the news from opposing views (Bakshy et al., 2012; Kim, 2011), which means it is not hundred percent possible

to protect yourself from being exposed to the content that you may not like. On the other hand, it is also expected that users may not only consume political information but also put some efforts to spice the political discussion online by publishing political content (Bode, 2015) since Web 2.0 liberated political communication by enabling each citizen to produce political content and allowing them to interact with other citizens to discuss political issues (Moy et al., 2012). The status quo requires politicians to use social media more effectively to send out their messages since even if citizens do not show much interest in the content produced by politicians at a certain period of time, they are expected to learn that content as a result of constantly seeing the same content (Chaffe & Kanihan, 1997). Another important issue is that there is a substantial amount of people on social media who do not actively look for political news, but they think that they will end up being informed via their networks. To explain this phenomenon, Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2017) came up with a news-will-find-me concept which means that users of the internet assume that they do not need to follow the news to get to know what is happening in the country because what their friends share on the social media will be enough for them to get to know the agenda of the day. To put it another way, those people who are scrolling through social media platforms believe that they happen to be exposed to the necessary information to know public issues thanks to their networks without consciously looking for information (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2013). Finally, another important way of gathering political knowledge during election time is political debates. The study about the 2004 campaign in the USA reveals that exposure to political debates is an important factor in citizens' political efficacy level (McKinney & Chattopadhyay, 2007). Previously, political debates could only be broadcasted on televisions, and it was one-directional; however, people can share their opinions while watching a debate through their social media accounts in the age of Web 2.0 (Courtois & d'Heer, 2012). Politicians are also equipped to share their messages simultaneously on their own social media accounts while they are on television.

2.6.1. The Social Media Marketing Activities and Political Efficacy

It is accepted that political knowledge and how politicians communicate with voters affect the electorate's level of political efficacy. With its rising popularity, social media has become an indispensable part of political campaigns; that is why it is essential to study the relationship between the political efficacy and social media marketing activities of a candidate.

2.6.1.1. Content

The previous section explains that how political knowledge plays a key role in determining the voter's level of political efficacy, and there is a strong correlation between the two. As Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) assert, the most important characteristic of constituents is their level of knowledge that is why, regardless of the political campaign methods, the exposure to political content results in increased political efficacy (Banwart, 2007; Kaid et al., 2007; McKinney & Chattopadhyay, 2007).

In representative democracies, elections are held periodically; hence, citizens are expected to go through the political promises of candidates and cast their votes with the help of the information they gather (Carpini & Keeter, 1996). At this juncture, media plays an incredible role by distributing information about the elections and affairs of state which will increase the level of political efficacy voters possess (Pinkleton & Austin, 2001).

Research indicates that political advertisements are important tools to increase the voters' level of knowledge regarding candidates and political issues (Brians & Wattenberg, 1996). Some studies also support this finding by showing the reason behind voters' abstention from politics is the lack of knowledge which results in decreased political efficacy (Delli Carpini, 2000). For example, a study conducted in the United States in 1996 and 2000 reveals that the reason behind a nonvoting

political pattern of young citizens is their perceived lack of knowledge about the candidates and issues (Kaid et al., 2000).

Even if some scholars want to draw attention to campaign-related information's negative impact on voters such as increased apathy and cynicism (de Vreese & Elenbaas, 2008; Jackson, 2011); others claimed that their research results show the very opposite of those findings and state that exposure to political information has a significant impact on voters' political efficacy and knowledge, which shapes voters' political activation (Eveland & Hively, 2009; Kenski & Stroud, 2006). Quintelier and Vissers' (2008) research result also shows that some internet activities including reading news online, have a positive impact on young voters' political participation. Another study shows that if voters have access to the internet and online news, the voter turnout is going to be higher during the 1996 and 2000 elections (Tolbert & McNeal, 2003). Based on these findings, it can be inferred that those political entities should provide essential information to increase the electorate's level of political efficacy which will cause a higher possibility of political participation. Since political advertising help voters to collect the necessary information to take an action during election times (Brians & Wattenber, 1996), politicians should spend efforts to craft good content on social media to hit the jackpot; so that voters will be au courant thanks to political advertising (Brians & Wattenberg, 1996).

With the increased usage of social media platforms, it has become an important political information source for the electorate who is looking for details and/or evaluations of candidates' election promises to decide whom to trust to deliver the best political outcomes. To inhibit electoral abstention, it is vital to reach out to voters and give them great content so that they will think that they know what is going on and what politicians stand for; hence, they will find the inner power to be part of political life. In addition to that, it is known that users may have different social media usage motivations, and citizens who do not prefer to be exposed to political content may refrain from following politician's social media accounts;

however, reaching out to the maximum number of voters is at the heart of successful political campaigns. That is why by producing content on social media to be reshared, politicians would like to communicate to those users with the help of their networks' reshare of the content supplied by politicians.

Based on the findings above:

H4a: Content of the information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to internal political efficacy.

H4b: Content of the information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to external political efficacy.

2.6.1.2. Credibility

It is a well-known trend that there are more political entities to use social media every single day to reach out to voters and convince them to vote for them on the election day than before. This means that social media has become an integral part of a political campaign to disseminate messages to increase political mobilization. So far, it is seen that knowledge is an important part of people's political efficacy. Content matters, and how this content is delivered is way more important in the age of disruptive technological changes; however, credibility is a powerful determinant of users' attention level to the content.

When it comes to discussing credibility, it can be either the credibility of the platform or the credibility of the source. Source credibility is defined as "judgements made by a perceiver concerning the believability of communicator" (O'Keefe, 2015, p. 188) which means that it is more of a consumer perspective. Based on some factors such as trustworthiness and expertise, the receiver judges the source as credible or not (Metzger et al., 2003). Most of the studies regarding credibility focus on the platform side of the research (Johnson & Kaye, 2004;

Johnson et al., 2007); however, the credibility of political candidates is also studied (Hultman et al., 2019).

As expected, people are prone to judge the credibility of content based on their worldview which means the content is seen as credible if it does not contain challenging information and approve their worldview (Johnson & Kaye, 2009). Another significant finding suggests that sources that are labeled as credible can change consumers' approach to the advertisement content (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989; Ohanian, 1991). Just as importantly, the frequency of media channel usage is the determinant of the perceived credibility of that media channel (Johnson & Kaye, 2000).

Considering the information provided above, if people evaluate the political content and the producer as untrusting, they choose the opt-out option and avoid political content. From that time onwards, all the efforts will be for nothing. The perception that the content is credible will enable the voters to take this information into account. Plus, the information obtained will serve to ensure a democratic society, as it has repeatedly mentioned before, by affecting the electorates' level of political efficacy.

Based on the findings above,

H4c: Credibility of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to internal political efficacy.

H4d: Credibility of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to external political efficacy.

2.6.1.3. Interaction

Interaction is one of the greatest attributions of social media technologies since “the communication foundation of the network society is the global web of horizontal communication networks that include the multimodal exchange of interactive messages from many to many both synchronous and asynchronous” (Castells, 2007, p. 246).

As Boulianne (2009) mentions in her meta-analysis, online news has the strongest effect on engagement compared with other internet uses. This impact will be expected to be higher on social media since the interactive feature of social media enables political candidates to have a conversation with voters on an ongoing basis. This interactive communication feature yields an important result: the electorate feels heard and valuable. In this way, voters feel that they are part of the political discussion. Once they think that their political ideas are important, they will have more incentive to be a part of political communication (Kaid et al., 2007) so that interactivity affects political efficacy.

The level of political efficacy that users, who look out for social media, have will be expected to be high thanks to diverse applications with different information dissemination techniques on social media by making an impression of increased engagement with political entities (Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010). To put it another way, two-way communication methods make voters think that they are capable of navigating politics with the help of the information they learn via social media platforms, and they have an appetite for more (Anim et al., 2019). Compared to other age groups, young people are prone to heavily use social media and the internet (Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008); hence, these platforms fundamentally helpful for reaching out to youth and making them politically active by increasing their level of political efficacy.

Based on the findings above,

H4e: Interaction on the candidates' social media accounts positively relates to internal political efficacy.

H4f: Interaction on the candidates' social media accounts positively relates to external political efficacy.

2.6.1.4. Word-of-Mouth

Numerous information sources are employed by candidates with the aim of mobilizing voters and affecting their political behavior. Word-of-mouth communication which can be described as “a group phenomenon—an exchange of comments, thoughts, and ideas among two or more individuals in which none of the individuals represent a marketing source (Bone, 1992, p. 579)” is also considered as one of those promotional tools (Elberse & Eliashberg, 2003). Hence, this concept is very much related to circulating knowledge and experience regarding any brand (File et al., 1994).

WOM is found to be more effective than newspaper ads, direct sales, and radio advertising (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955) and seen as a better tool to impact consumers' attitudes rather than advertisements (Day, 1971). Another study also claims that WOM has more effective than advertising since people are looking for recommendations and opinions of other people (Morin, 1983). Looking at more recent research results, it can be deduced that WOM/EWOM is the most convincing marketing method that any brand can wish for (Keller & Fay, 2012).

When it comes to political marketing, social media with its WOM feature is the new political discussion place enabling political socialization which is “a developmental process by which adolescents acquire cognitions, attitudes, and behaviors relating to their political environment” (Atkin & Gantz, 1978, p. 184). One of the most

important features of social media platforms is that it enables users to produce and share content in different formats which turn the platform into a public space for “political deliberation” (Papacharissi, 2002, p. 11). It is expected that people who are interested in politics visit politics-related websites to discuss political issues; however, it is also observed that those groups are relatively small and homogenous (Wojcieszak & Mutz, 2009); that is why it is hard to flourish democracy in such an environment because comments based on the same worldview will be circulating there. Another surprising finding is that users are more exposed to different political viewpoints when they enter entertaining groups online (Wojcieszak & Mutz, 2009), just like in face-to-face settings (Wyatt et al., 2000).

A study investigating the attitude change of young voters in the United States found out that interpersonal communication is the most preferred way to collect political information (Jasperson & Yun, 2007). Interpersonal reasoning via political conversation and messaging can increase the possible impact of a political campaign, resulting in increased political knowledge and participation (Cho et al., 2009). Thus, young electorates’ level of political efficacy is shaped by socialization agents (Muralidharan & Sung, 2016) since their main preferred source to keep up with the political agenda is a political discussion with others even if they follow news on different platforms (Wells & Dudash, 2007).

An increased number of people will talk about either politicians or their campaigns during election periods. Therefore, people will have a higher chance of seeing the political content circulating on social media when they go online, even if they are not purposefully looking for political content. A study conducted in Turkey reveals that word-of-mouth is highly used by voters during election periods to not only share information about candidates and their parties but also to exchange views regarding their campaigns (Argan & Argan, 2012).

Evolving with the advances in technology, WOM, which “is probably the oldest means of exchanging opinions on various goods and services offered by markets”

(Goyette et al., 2010, p. 6), increases the flow of information and makes it accessible while being more reliable by nature, attracts more attention from the voters. Whether face-to-face or online, word-of-mouth has led people to look for more information online (Parmelee & Perkins, 2012).

Based on the findings above,

H4g: Word-of-mouth shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to internal political efficacy.

H4h: Word-of-mouth shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to external political efficacy.

2.6.2. Political Efficacy and Political Participation

Every single effort within the scope of a political campaign is made to make sure that the electorate feels equipped to actively participate in politics since "democratic values are in essence participatory values. At the heart of democratic theory is the notion that people should get involved in the process of governing themselves" (Barner – Barry & Rosenwein, 1985, p. 59). More importantly, democracy is not robust. That being the case, the ballot box is not enough to create a powerful checks and balances system to protect the fragile nature of democracy all around the world; that is why political participation should not be limited to voting at all.

Political participation is described as an "activity by private citizens designed to influence government decision-making" (Huntington & Nelson, 1976, p. 3); as "actions of private citizens by which they seek to influence or support government and politics" (Milbrath & Goel 1977, p. 2); as "all voluntary activities by individual citizens intended to influence either directly or indirectly political choices at various levels of the political system" (Kaase & Marsch, 1979, p. 42); or as "action by citizens which is aimed at influencing decisions which are, in most cases, ultimately

taken by public representatives and officials” (Parry et al. 1992, p. 16). To put it simply, all behaviors and actions taken by citizens to direct the political process can be evaluated as political participation (Conway, 1991). At the end of the day, citizens around the world use the available tools to affect the decisions made by different levels of state positions.

One of the most cited typologies which show the dimensions of political participation is developed by Verba and Nie (1972). They mentioned four dimensions: voting, campaign activity, contacting public officials, cooperative, and communal activities (Verba & Nie, 1972, p. 56 - 63). Another typology developed by Teorell et al. (2007, p. 341 - 343) is way more extensive than the previous one: *Voting, consumer participation* including donating money to political organizations or signing petitions; *party activity* including being a member of a political party; doing voluntary work or donating money to a political party; *protest activity* including taking part in demonstrations or other protest activities, and *contacting* including contacting organizations, politicians and/or civil servants. With the technological improvements, online political participation has become a phenomenal activity that was previously seen as the same as offline political participation with the one exception: it takes place in an online context (Brady, 1999; Verba et al., 1995).

Based on “the belief that one has the skills to influence the political system” (Zimmerman, 1989, p. 554), the importance of political efficacy as a trigger for people to participate in politics is repetitively mentioned as the backbone of the healthy democracy as a result of the fact that if people do not think that their actions will yield any impact on the decisions taken by political entities, it is highly possible that they will look for another way – possibly not legitimate – to have a say (Sulitzeanu-Kenan & Halperin, 2013). In addition to that, if they think that they do not have enough political knowledge, this situation may lead to political alienation and apathy (Sulitzeanu-Kenan & Halperin, 2013).

A magnitude of previous studies reveals that political efficacy happens to be one of the most influential factors on political participation (Beaumont, 2010; Becker, 2004; Gastil & Xenos, 2010). A high level of political efficacy positively relates to various forms of political participation including voting (Becker, 2004), contacting public officials (Hirlinger, 1992), performing political activism (Paulsen, 1991). Numerous studies are conducted to reveal the power of political efficacy to increase the electorates' participation (Campbell et al., 1954; Kenski & Stroud, 2006; Verba et al., 1995). Some of them proved that internal political efficacy positively relates to voters' political participation (Condon & Holleque, 2013; Krampen, 2000, Reichert, 2016; Vecchione et al., 2014). When it comes to the external political efficacy, the findings are mixed. Some say external efficacy has positively related to political participation (Finkel, 1985, 1987). Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) state that external political efficacy is strongly related to increased voter turnout. Others fail to find a relationship between participation and external efficacy (Dyck & Lascher, 2009; Green & Shachar, 2000; Valentino et al., 2009). Another set of studies employs political efficacy as a mediator variable to explain the relationship between digital media use and political participation (Jung et al., 2011; Tian, 2011).

Voting is seen as one of the most essential ways of political participation in democracies because less voter turnout is diagnosed as a democratic problem. That is why some studies only focus on voting as a form of political participation. In a study to test the effect of general self-efficacy on the voting behavior of young adults, it was found out that increased self-efficacy will increase the probability of voting (Condon & Holleque, 2013).

H5a: Internal political efficacy positively relates to offline political participation.

H5b: Internal political efficacy positively relates to online political participation.

H5c: External political efficacy positively relates to offline political participation.

H5d: *External political efficacy positively relates to online political participation.*

CHAPTER THREE

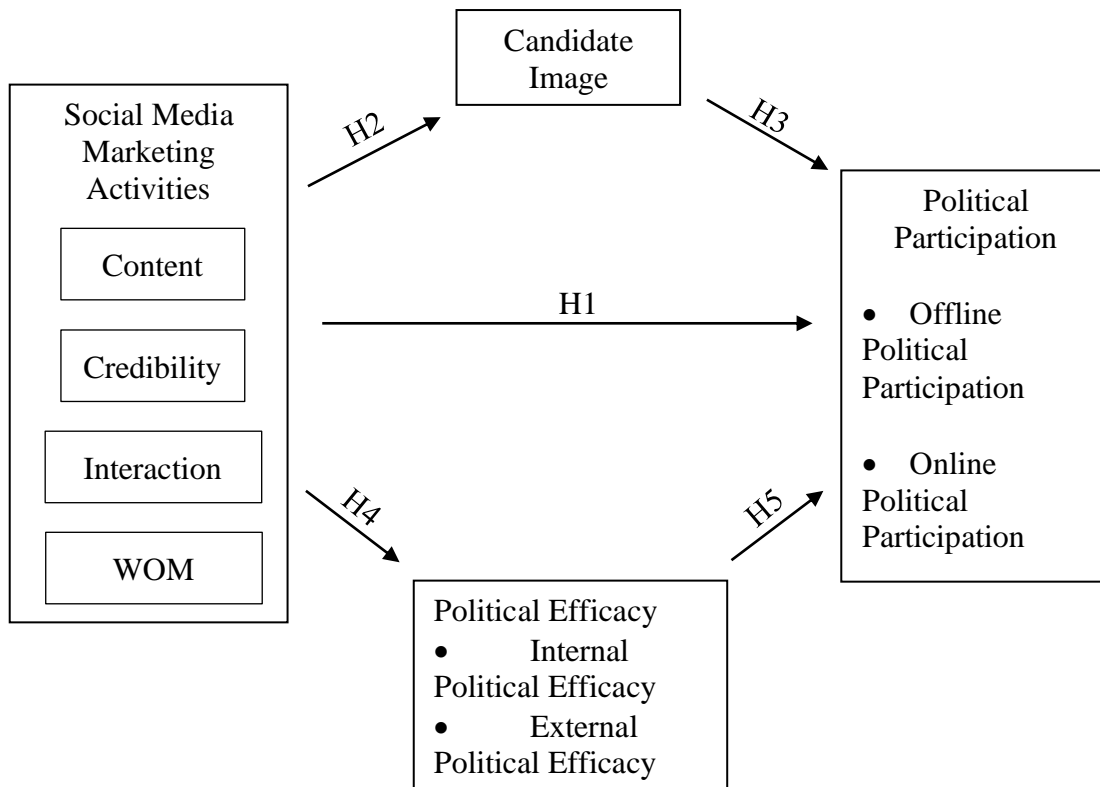
PROPOSED MODEL and RESEARCH DESIGN

Based on the academic literature discussed in the former chapters, this chapter proposes a conceptual model which generates several hypotheses. In the beginning, the proposed model is shown, and hypotheses are listed. Then, the next sections demonstrate the objectives and the importance of the research, the research design, and the operationalization of variables. Subsequently, questionnaire development and design, questionnaire administration and data collection are presented. Finally, sampling and data analysis methods are discussed.

3.1. PROPOSED MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

To better understand the effects of social media marketing activities of a candidate on voters' political participation, the model below is put forward. Research indicates that a candidate's social media marketing activities may directly impact voters' political participation. Plus, it may affect candidate image and political efficacy, and these, in turn, may also have an influence on political participation. Based on these assumptions, the proposed model for this thesis is presented in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1. Proposed Model



In line with the proposed model above, the following hypotheses have been generated:

H1a: Content of the information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to offline political participation.

H1b: Content of the information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to online political participation.

H1c: Credibility of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to offline political participation.

H1d: Credibility of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to online political participation.

H1e: Interaction on the candidate's social media positively relates to voters' offline political participation.

H1f: Interaction on the candidate's social media positively relates to voters' online political participation.

H1g: Word-of-mouth shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to voters' offline political participation.

H1h: Word-of-mouth shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to voters' online political participation.

H2a: Content of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to candidate image.

H2b: Credibility of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to candidate image.

H2c: Interaction on the candidate's social media positively relates to candidate image.

H2d: Word-of-mouth shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to candidate image.

H3a: Candidate image positively relates to offline political participation.

H3b: Candidate image positively relates to online political participation.

H4a: Content of the information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to internal political efficacy.

H4b: Content of the information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to external political efficacy.

H4c: Credibility of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to internal political efficacy.

H4d: Credibility of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to external political efficacy.

H4e: Interaction on the candidates' social media accounts positively relates to internal political efficacy.

H4f: Interaction on the candidates' social media accounts positively relates to external political efficacy.

H4g: Word-of-mouth shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to internal political efficacy.

H4h: Word-of-mouth shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to external political efficacy.

H5a: Internal political efficacy positively relates to offline political participation.

H5b: Internal political efficacy positively relates to online political participation.

H5c: External political efficacy positively relates to offline political participation.

H5d: External political efficacy positively relates to online political participation.

3.2. RESEARCH TOPIC AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

Being described as “a consumer of a service offered by a politician; and similar to consumers in the commercial marketplace” (Newman, 2002, p. 162), it is not a straightforward task to understand the reason behind their political participation choices; however, finding out how they decide on whom to support and what makes them politically mobilized are fundamental. If political entities find a way to affect voters’ preferences and uncover the mystery of how they respond to specific campaigns and how to mobilize them, it would be easier to design and execute effective political campaign to accomplish political aims which is winning the election in the first place.

As a response to the developments in technology that eventually impact every aspect of daily life, not only political marketing has experienced changes, but also voters have evolved in the meantime. One of the doyens of marketing, Kotler and his colleagues introduce the concept of marketing 4.0 (Kotler et al., 2017) and suggest that the focus in marketing should be digital in today’s day and age (Kotler et al., 2017). This is also essential and valid for politicians to zero in digital while developing political marketing and communication plans. As Scammell (2003) expresses “there are parallels in the development of consumer and political markets. Just as the consumer is empowered through increased choice and vastly expanded resources of information, so too is the political consumer” (p. 17).

By being mainstream internet service (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012), the popularity of social media in political marketing has been on the rise around the world, that is why the relationship between social media and political participation should be revealed. Nair (2011) defines social media “as online tools where content, opinions, perspectives, insights, and media can be shared... At its core, social media is about relationships and connections between people and organizations” (p. 45). Political entities both taking advantage of various social media sites to introduce their policy plans that they will implement after the election without risking any

misrepresentations by editors, journalists, or television presenters but also try to contact to their constituents to strengthen engagement (Mangolds & Faulds, 2009). On the other hand, social media not only enables consumers to produce and disseminate content in different formats (Szabo & Huberman, 2010) but also empower them to organize their feed by customizing content preferences and reaching out to others from all over the world (Chung, 2008); hence social media is quite different from traditional media.

This research aims to clarify the relationship between social media marketing activities of political candidates and voters' political participation. Beyond that, the researcher intends to investigate whether candidates' social media marketing activities increase the levels of political efficacy among İstanbulites and whether voters' perception of political candidate image will be impacted with the exposure of political candidates' posts on social networking sites. An additional significant purpose of the study is to examine the impact of candidate image and political efficacy on political participation. Consequently, it is anticipated to discover whether campaigning on social media is positively relates to İstanbulites' political participation within the scope of the June 2019 Local Election held in İstanbul.

3.3. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Being the first under Turkey's new presidential system, the 2019 Local Elections were a one-of-a-kind local election in the Turkish political history since political parties contested the elections in many provinces under party alliances. The governing Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) came together and formed the People's Alliance. Correspondingly, the Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Good Party (İYİ) formed the Nation Alliance to enter some races together throughout the country ("The 2019 Municipal Elections", 2019). However, the main discussion about the local election was about who will be the next Mayor of İstanbul wherever you went across the country on account of the importance of İstanbul local election due to the fact that 20% of

Turkey's population live there and Istanbul is one of the biggest wheels of Turkish economy ("Istanbul and its significance", 2019). The People's Alliance candidate Binali Yıldırım, who was a former Prime Minister from 2016 to 2018, was an eminent figure in the Turkish political history. His opponent Ekrem İmamoğlu, who was backed by Nation Alliance, was a mayor of the district of Beylikdüzü in İstanbul. Not only he did not have national fame, but also most of Istanbulities did not know him very much. According to the survey conducted before the election, there were just 14% of the Istanbul population knew him (Özkan, 2019) which was obviously not a good start for someone who was racing against the nationwide-known politician backed by the ruling party; however, Ekrem İmamoğlu received 4,169,765 votes, 13,729 votes ahead of his opponent Binali Yıldırım on March 31th ("Local Election 2019", 2019). Despite all, the outcome of the mayoral race results was canceled by Turkey's Election Board on May 6 based on the allegations, and the rerun of the Istanbul election was held on June 23th ("Outcry as Turkey orders rerun", 2019). Once again, Istanbul voters chose Ekrem İmamoğlu as a mayor who received more than 800,000 votes over his opponent ("Istanbul voters pick", 2019).

Both İmamoğlu and Yıldırım have used social media as a part of their political campaigns from the first day onwards (Dilekli et al., 2021). As it was repetitively highlighted in the literature review section, political candidates and parties have integrated social media into their political campaigns and social media has especially become a crucial platform-to-be to influence the younger population's political habits. As it can be inferred from the studies mentioned in the extensive literature review section of this thesis, there is a need to study the relationship between candidates' social media marketing activities and their impact on the electorates' political participation since knowledge is the key and social media is an important platform to gather information. Two important studies show that voters who happen to encounter political news tend to be more politically mobilized (Bimber et al., 2014; Ksiazek et al., 2010); thus, it is reasonable to assume that one of the reasons behind Imamoğlu's success was his social media marketing activities which are expected to influence voters' political participation.

To the best of the author knowledge, there is no enough research to date which investigates how candidates' social media marketing activities impact voters' political participation during elections; hence, this study not only deepens the understanding of the impact of politicians' social media activities on political participation but also show how the candidates at the local election should incorporate social media into their political campaign design. The result of the research will light the way for political entities to make sure that they maximize the efficiency of their campaign budgets to achieve political dreams.

3.4. RESEARCH DESIGN

From this section onwards, necessary information to understand how this research is conducted will be provided. In addition to that, this section is a guide to evaluate whether the results of this study are valid or not (Blanche et al., 2006).

To begin with, the deductive approach was preferred to develop a conceptual model to find an answer to the research question on the grounds that the deductive approach is chosen when a researcher would like to work on existing literature and fill the void in the gap found in the literature.

Choosing the research method to answer the research question is a highly vital decision to make since this directly affects the choices which will be made in the next steps of the research including the size of the research group, ways to collect and analyze data (Blanche et al., 2006). For this research, the quantitative method is chosen to collect data and then analyze them accordingly because it allows researchers to turn variables into numbers and work on them statistically (Blanche et al., 2006) with the help of programs such as Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, in short SPSS.

Survey is selected as the most suitable way to gather data to accomplish the aims of this study. The questionnaire was prepared and distributed online via Google

Form. The reason for this choice is simple: conducting an online survey is easy because it is possible to reach out to a large number of participants with the lowest cost possible (Sato, 2005).

3.5. OPERATIONALIZATION OF VARIABLES

This section will provide how variables in the model are turned into measurable concepts which are quite important to increase the reliability and objectivity of this scientific research. If variables are not operationalized rigorously, the data set will not be good enough to assert reliable research results (Andrade, 2021). Since single-item scales are associated with low reliability (Churcill, 1979), multi-item scales are employed in this thesis.

Most variables are measured using a seven-point Likert-type scale except for demographic and screening questions. To test the hypothesis stated above, survey measures were carefully chosen and constructed based on an extensive literature review. In other words, all variables and measurement items can be found in previous studies in related disciplines. How each variable is measured will be listed in detail in the next section.

3.5.1. Social Media Marketing Activities

With its ever-growing popularity since its launch, social media platforms have turned into an indispensable marketing tool. For the very same reason, politicians have also widely used social media platforms to deliver their elaborated messages sending to the target audience. Social media marketing activities were measured with the help of the following constructs: content, interaction, credibility, and word-of-mouth. These constructs were developed by Hultman et al. (2019). Content was measured using items provided by Kim and Ko (2012) and Bhattacharjee and Sanford (2006). Social media interaction was based on items developed by Kim and Ko (2012). Items gathered from Bhattacharjee and Sanford (2006) and Chang et al.

(2015) were employed to measure social media credibility. The last construct word-of-mouth was measured by incorporating items from Van Vaerenbergh and Holmqvist (2014) and Balaji et al. (2017). Respondents state their opinions about candidates' social media marketing activities with 7-point Likert 1= "I strongly disagree" and 7= "I strongly agree". These items are demonstrated in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. Operationalization of Social Media Marketing Activities

Statements	Source
Content	Hultman et al. (2019), Kim and Ko (2012), Bhattacharjee and Sanford (2006)
"Content of the candidate's social media(accounts) seems interesting."	
"The information provided on candidate's social media was informative."	
"I believe the candidate's social media accounts are effective in helping me make my decision."	
Interaction	Hultman et al. (2019), Kim and Ko (2012)
"The candidate's social media enable information-sharing with others."	
"It is easy to provide my opinion through the candidate's social media."	
"Conversation or opinion exchange with others is possible through the candidate's social media accounts."	Bhattacharjee and Sanford (2006),
Credibility	

“Information shared on the candidate’s social media accounts was credible.	Chang, Yu, and Lu (2015), Hultman et al. (2019)
Information shared on the candidate’s social media accounts was trustworthy.”	
“Information shared on the candidate’s social media accounts was reliable.”	
“Information shared on the candidate’s social media accounts was believable.”	
Word-of-Mouth	Hultman et al. (2019), Van Vaerenbergh and Holmqvist (2014), Balaji, Roy, and Lassar (2017)
“I would speak positive things about the candidate’s social media accounts.”	
“I would recommend the candidate’s social media accounts to my friends.”	
“If my friends are looking for information regarding the current election or current social/political issues, I would tell them to have a look at the candidate's social media accounts.”	

3.5.2. Political Participation

There are different ways of political participation ranging from offline to online. To be able to fully understand this variable, items are drafted with the help of several studies (Bakker & De Vreese, 2011; Kim et al., 2017; Towner & Muñoz, 2018). The respondents were asked to indicate the frequency of the following activities that they engaged in before the June 2019 Local Election. In this table, the lowest score is 1, “Never”, and the highest score is 7, “Every time”. These items are manifested in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2. Operationalization of Political Participation

Statements	Source
“I have talked to many people and try to show them why they should vote for or against one of the parties or candidates.”	Towner and Muñoz (2018), Bakker and De Vreese (2011), Kim, Russo, and Amnå (2017)
“I have gone to any political meetings, rallies, speeches, dinners, or things like that in support of a particular candidate.”	
“I have worn a campaign button, put a campaign sticker on my car, or placed a sign in my window or in front of my house.”	
“I have worked for one of the parties or candidates.”	
“I have given an offline donation to a candidate or political party.”	
“I have signed an e-mail or web petition.”	
“I have forwarded a political e-mail to another person.”	
“I have talked to many people and try to show them online why they should vote for or against one of the parties and candidates.”	
“I have contacted a government official via e-mail, website, or social network.”	
“I have followed or became a fan of a political candidate on a social network.”	
“I have posted a comment or weblink on a blog, social network, or website to express a political opinion.”	

“I have participated in online discussions or chat groups about politics.”	
“I have given an online donation to a candidate or political party during this election year.”	
“I have reacted online to a message or article on the Internet.”	
“I have participated in internet-based protests or boycotts related to politics or public issues.”	
“I have written about politics or societal issues on my own social media accounts.”	
“I have shared political content on my social media accounts.”	

3.5.3. Candidate Image

After the personalization of politics is made ground, the candidate image looms large in the electorate’s political participation. Candidate image, which was a second-degree formative construct, were developed by Hultman et al. (2019) by gathering constructs from different studies (McCroskey & Teven, 1999; Moulard et al., 2015; Yuan et al., 2016;). Trustworthiness, attractiveness, candidness, morality, originality, and competence were used as first-degree constructs to constitute candidate image. Respondents were asked to evaluate candidate image on a 7-point Likert scale where 1= “I strongly disagree”, and 7= “I strongly agree”. These items are illustrated in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3. Operationalization of Candidate Image

Statements	Source
Dimension: Trustworthiness	Hultman et al. (2019), Yuan, Kim, and Kim (2016), McCroskey and Teven (1999), Moulard, Garrity, and Rice (2015)
“The candidate is trustworthy.”	
“The candidate is ethical.”	
“The candidate is genuine.”	
“The candidate is authentic.”	
Dimension: Attractiveness	Hultman et al. (2019), Yuan, Kim, and Kim (2016)
“The candidate gives his/her party an attractive image.”	
“The candidate is attractive.”	
“The candidate pleases people.”	
Dimension: Candidness	Hultman et al. (2019), Moulard, Garrity, and Rice (2015)
“The candidate is known for being straightforward.”	
“The candidate is known for being honest.”	

Dimension: Morality	Hultman et al. (2019),
“The candidate cares about me.”	McCroskey and Teven (1999),
“The candidate has my interest at heart.”	Moulard, Garrity, and Rice (2015)
Dimension: Originality	
“The candidate is unique in his/her own ways.”	Hultman et al. (2019),
“The candidate has distinctive characteristics.”	Moulard, Garrity, and Rice (2015)
“The candidate has something about him/her that makes him/her stand out.”	
Dimension: Competence	
“The candidate is an experienced politician.”	Hultman et al. (2019),
“The candidate has extensive knowledge of current social and political issues.”	Yuan, Kim, and Kim (2016),
“The candidate is a skilled politician.”	McCroskey and Teven (1999)
“The candidate is competent.”	
“The candidate is intelligent.”	

3.5.4. Political Efficacy

Political efficacy, which is vital to understand political participation, is a multi-dimensional variable. To assess the two dimensions which are internal and external efficacy, respondents were asked to rate sentences provided by Gastil and Xenos (2010) on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. These items are shown in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4. Operationalization of Political Efficacy

Statements	Source
Dimension: Internal Political Efficacy	Gastil & Xenos (2010)
“I consider myself well qualified to participate in politics and community affairs.”	
“I think I am better informed about politics and government than most people.”	
“I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country.”	
Dimension: External Political Efficacy	Gastil & Xenos (2010)
“People like me don’t have any say about what the government does.”	
“Under our form of government, the people have the final say about how the country is run, no matter who is in office.”	
“There are many legal ways for citizens to successfully influence what government does.”	

3.6. QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN

Designing a questionnaire to measure the variables has utmost importance since the way questions are formulated will have an impact on the results (Sato, 2005). While working on questionnaire design, several issues must be carefully handled. Initially, it is essential to list the questions in a way that respondents can easily understand what is asked. Therewith, the questionnaire should not be hard to complete and boring to make sure that respondents who start answering questions complete the survey. Lastly, every precaution should be taken before starting data collection to minimize the possible errors (Malhotra, 2010).

After conducting an extensive literature review, a reliable and valid questionnaire was developed. The survey questionnaire was used to collect data to test the validity of hypotheses and the researcher's own construct model. Prior to the main data collection, a preliminary study was carried out amongst the Istanbul Bilgi University Ph.D. students that were eligible to vote in Turkey to tweak the questionnaire. They were asked to evaluate whether the instructions and survey questions are clear or not. With their positive feedback stating that everything was clear, and the questionnaire was easy to complete, all the questions were kept in the final questionnaire.

There were 65 questions in total. The online questionnaire was started with the question "Did you vote in the 23 June Local Istanbul Election in 2019?" to prevent any misunderstanding by reason of the rerun of the election. The researcher wanted to make it possible to attend a survey for those who could not vote for several reasons. That is why participants were also asked whom they would vote for if they could. Before working on variables, a screening question was also added to the questionnaire to prevent those who were not familiar with political candidates' social media account from attending the survey on the grounds that the main aim of the research was to understand the role of social media marketing activities of candidates on voters' political participation during the election period.

Subsequently, respondents were asked to answer several questions regarding social media marketing activities, candidate image, political efficacy, and political participation. Then, respondents were asked six questions about demographic information.

Most of the questions were rating scale which means respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statements. The questions in the survey were totally structured questions that is why respondents had to choose an answer from one of the given sentences. The questionnaire is prepared in Turkish and can be found in Appendix A.

3.7. QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTRATION AND DATA COLLECTION

The questionnaire form was prepared with the help of Google Form. Afterward, the questionnaire was distributed online to reach out to a more representative sample. Even if there are critics of distributing online surveys because it is hard to form a random sample, it is admitted that it is a powerful way to collect data (Johnson & Kaye, 2002).

In the consent form attached at the beginning of the survey, all participants were informed that the study was on a voluntary basis, and that information provided would be kept confidential. Between 10-15 minutes were required to complete the questionnaire. The data were collected over two months period between January 2021 and March 2021.

3.8. SAMPLING

Even if the larger sample is associated with more information and increased validity, a sample should be selected on the grounds that it is not feasible to reach out to every related case due to the time and budget limitations. That is why it is preferred to form a representative sample to generalize the findings to the larger

population. Snowball sampling which is the method to ask respondents to find other respondents to take the survey (Taherdoost, 2016) was chosen. In alignment with the purpose of this study, only respondents who were older than 18 were included in the study since Turkish citizens are entitled to vote when they turn to 18. After the younger population was excluded, 10.560.963 citizens were eligible to vote in the 2019 Istanbul Local Elections ("İstanbul'da oy kullanacak", 2019). To provide an adequate level of confidence in this study with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin error, a sample size of 384 respondents was targeted, and 394 questionnaires were administrated between January 2021 and March 2021. There were not incomplete responses since the respondents were required to answer the current question before proceeding with the rest of the survey; however, 279 (70.8%) were suitable for the study after those who were not familiar with the candidates' social media accounts were discarded.

3.9. DATA ANALYSIS METHOD

After the collection of survey responses from an online questionnaire, the SPSS version 28.0 was used to analyze the data. At the first stage, descriptive analysis was conducted to analyze the demographic profiles of respondents. Then, the data set was subjected to factor analysis and reliability analysis to ensure the validity and reliability of each construct. Subsequently, the data were subjected to correlation analysis. At last, regression analysis was applied.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSES AND RESULTS

In this chapter, the findings of survey data will be examined in depth. It begins with an analysis of respondents' voting status, social media account awareness, and voting preferences. Then, the demographic profile of the survey respondents is discussed. Thereafter, the chapter proceeds with the factor and reliability analyses of each variable. Finally, results obtained from correlation and regression analyses are investigated to be able to support or reject the proposed hypotheses which were generated in line with the model.

4.1. VOTING STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS

The survey starts with a question that aims to understand whether the respondents voted on the June 2019 Istanbul Local Election since the focus of the research is the Istanbul Local Election. Answers provided by respondents can be found in Table 4.1. According to the research results, 275 respondents, which equates to 69.8% of all respondents, voted on June 2019 Istanbul Local Election.

Table 4.1. The Analysis of Respondents' Voting Status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	275	69.8	69.8	69.8
	No	119	30.2	30.2	100.0
	Total	394	100.0	100.0	

4.2. VOTERS' SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS AWARENESS

As the focus of this research is to unfold the impact of social media marketing activities of political candidates on voters' political participation, it is significant to know whether voters were aware of political candidates' social media accounts or not. That is why respondents were asked whether they were familiar with the candidate's social media accounts whom they voted for, or they have voted for in case they could have voted for. Thus, voters who were not informed about political candidates' social media accounts were prevented from continuing taking the survey.

Out of 394 respondents, 279 respondents, which equates to 70.80% of total participants, said that they were knowledgeable about political candidates' social media accounts, while 115 respondents, which equates to 29.2% of total participants, mentioned that they were not familiar with the candidate's social media accounts. Consequently, 29.2% of total respondents were removed from the data set.

Table 4.2. The Analysis of Social Media Accounts Awareness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	279	70.8	70.8	70.8
	No	115	29.2	29.2	100.0
	Total	394	100.0	100.0	

4.3. VOTING PREFERENCE OF THE RESPONDENTS

After the elimination of respondents who were not aware of political candidates' social media accounts from the data set, an analysis was conducted to understand the voting preference of respondents to be able to comment on the possible impact

of political campaigns on the election result. That is why respondents were asked about which candidate they voted for in the June 2019 Istanbul Local Election. In summary, 201 respondents, which equates to 97.1% of all respondents, voted for Ekrem İmamoğlu, while 5 respondents, which equates to 2.4% of all respondents, voted for Binali Yıldırım. One respondent neither voted for Ekrem İmamoğlu nor voted for Binali Yıldırım. The results can be found in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3. Voting Preference of the Respondents Who Voted in June 2019 Istanbul Local Election

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ekrem İmamoğlu	201	72.0	97.1	97.1
	Binali Yıldırım	5	1.8	2.4	99.5
	Others	1	.4	.5	100.0
	Total	207	74.2	100.0	

The respondents who stated “No” to the previous question were asked to answer which candidate they would have voted for in case they could have voted. In brief, 64 respondents, which equates to 88.9% of all respondents, mentioned that they would have voted for Ekrem İmamoğlu. 5 respondents, which equates to 6.9% of all respondents, stated that they would elect Binali Yıldırım. 3 respondents out of 72 respondents declared that they preferred to vote for other candidates. The results are shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4. Voting Preference of Respondents Who Could Have Voted in June 2019
Istanbul Local Election in Case They Would

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ekrem İmamoğlu	64	22.9	88.9	88.9
	Binali Yıldırım	5	1.8	6.9	95.8
	Others	3	1.1	4.2	100.0
	Total	72	25.8	100.0	

Along with the increasing role of social media in political marketing, both these questions are very critical as the aim of the research is to understand whether the social media marketing activities of the candidates influence voters' political participation or not.

4.4. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

The demographic variables, consisting of gender, age, income, education level, job status, and marital status were measured by a categorical format. In the section below, the demographic qualities of the sample which are not directly connected with the proposed model in this thesis are discussed in detail.

4.4.1. Gender

There were substantially more female participants (74.2%) than male participants (24.7%). 1.1% of the total respondents identified themselves as others.

Table 4.5. The Analysis of the Respondents' Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Woman	207	74.2	74.2	74.2
	Man	69	24.7	24.7	98.9
	Others	3	1.1	1.1	100.0
	Total	279	100.0	100.0	

4.4.2. Age

The age groups of respondents were divided into five categories. It starts with 18-24 age group which is 19% of all participants. The most crowded group of the survey, 49.1% of respondents, is composed of 25-34 age group. 35-44 age group constitutes 22.2% of all respondents. The age groups which are the least populated are 45-54, and 55 and more, which have 6.1% and 3.6%, respectively. It appears that more than half of the survey participants were GenZ and Millennials, and there were very few older participants.

Table 4.6. The Analysis of the Respondents' Age Distribution

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-24	53	19.0	19.0	19.0
	25-34	137	49.1	49.1	68.1
	35-44	62	22.2	22.2	90.3
	44-54	17	6.1	6.1	96.4
	55+	10	3.6	3.6	100.0
	Total	279	100.0	100.0	

4.4.3. Education Level

Of the survey respondents, most of them were highly educated. 63.4% of the respondents got a bachelor's degree, and 26.2% of the respondents hold a master's degree. 2.5% of the respondents also got a Ph.D. While 0.7% of respondents stated that they completed a secondary degree, 7.2% mentioned that they graduated from high school.

Table 4.7. Analysis of the Respondents' Education Level

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Secondary	2	.7	.7	.7
	High School	20	7.2	7.2	7.9
	Bachelor's Degree	177	63.4	63.4	71.3
	Master's Degree	73	26.2	26.2	97.5
	PhD	7	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	279	100.0	100.0	

4.4.4. Income Level

In terms of monthly income levels, 20.1% of the respondents have earned 2999 Turkish Liras (TRY) or less. 21.1% of the respondents have had between 3000 TRY and 4999 TRY. 24.4% of the respondents reported their incomes between 5000 TRY and 6999 TRY. 14.3% of the respondents have had income level between 7000 TRY and 8999 TRY. 20.1% of respondents stated that they have made 9000 TRY and more on a monthly basis. More than half of all respondents seem to earn

less than 7000 TRY which is meaningful because more than half of the survey participants are young.

Table 4.8. Analysis of the Respondents' Income Level

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2999 TRY and below	56	20.1	20.1	20.1
	3000 TRY -4999 TRY	59	21.1	21.1	41.2
	5000 TRY -6999 TRY	68	24.4	24.4	65.6
	7000 TRY -8999 TRY	40	14.3	14.3	79.9
	9000 TRY and above	56	20.1	20.1	100.0
	Total	279	100.0	100.0	

4.4.5. Working Status

The survey also asked the respondents' working status. Nearly half, 50.5% of the respondents were in the private sector. 11.8% of the respondents were working in the public sector, while 10.8% of the respondents were self-employed. Another outstanding finding is that 15.1% of the respondents were students. 2.2% of respondents were housewives, whereas 4.7% of the respondents were retired. Of the survey respondents, 4.3% of the respondents were unemployed, while 0.7% marked others option.

Table 4.9. The Analysis of Respondents' Working Status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Public Sector	33	11.8	11.8	11.8
	Private Sector	141	50.5	50.5	62.4
	Self-Employed	30	10.8	10.8	73.1
	Housewife	6	2.2	2.2	75.3
	Retired	13	4.7	4.7	79.9
	Student	42	15.1	15.1	79.9
	Unemployed /Looking for a job	12	4.3	4.3	99.3
	Others	2	.7	.7	100.0
	Total	279	100.0	100.0	

4.4.6. Marital Status

The last question about the demographic profile of the respondents was their marital status. 66.3% of the respondents were single, while 28.7% reported that they were married. 3.2% and 1.1% indicated “divorced” and “widowed”, respectively. 0.7% of the respondents chose the “others” option. In sum, most of the survey respondents were single.

Table 4.10. The Analysis of Respondents' Marital Status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single	185	66.3	66.3	66.3
	Married	80	28.7	28.7	95.0
	Divorced	9	3.2	3.2	98.2
	Widowed	3	1.1	1.1	99.3
	Others	2	.7	.7	100.0
	Total	279	100.0	100.0	

4.5. EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS AND RELIABILITY

By being one of the most applied statistical techniques in social sciences, factor analysis was chosen to work on the data gathered to test the research model which was developed after the review of the literature. At its simplest, factor analysis is used to decrease the number of variables by turning them into factors (Williams et al., 2010) to be able to comprehend the data set and easily analyze the relationship between variables (Yong & Pearce, 2013). In addition, it also helps to check the validity of the research (Williams et al., 2010). To be able to run factor analysis, the number of sample matters. Some stated that there must be minimum 300 participants to perform factor analysis (Comrey & Lee, 1992). On the other hand, Hair et al. (2010) asserted that there must be at least 100 respondents in the survey. There were 394 respondents in the survey prepared for the thesis; however, 279 of them were fit for the study after those who were not familiar with the candidates' social media accounts were discarded. Eventually, this thesis met this condition.

There are two factor analysis techniques: Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (Williams et al., 2010). Since EFA helps researchers, whose main aim is to work on developing a theory (Yong & Pearce, 2013) by

examining the dataset and checking the hypothesis (Child, 2006), it is chosen as the way to start with analyzing the data set.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett tests are used to evaluate whether the data is suitable for factor analysis or not (Williams et al., 2010). The KMO index should be at least 0.50, and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity should be less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) for factor analysis (Hair et al., 2010; Tabachnick et al., 2007). While determining how to extract factors, Kaiser's criteria (eigenvalue > 1) was applied (Kaiser, 1960), and a correlation matrix was chosen. To be able to extract factors, rotation is used; therefore, the selection of rotational method matters. In this thesis, varimax rotation was chosen.

Items should have at least 0.50 factor loadings to be able to be kept in the data analysis (Hattie et al., 1989). In addition to that, the diagonals of the anti-image matrix should be more than 0.50 (Durmuş et al., 2018). After conducting factor analysis, reliability analysis was carried out. Cronbach's Alpha was used to forecast the reliability of factors. It is proposed that the minimum level should be 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994); however, the minimum Cronbach's Alpha acceptable level can be 0.60 when there are few questions (Durmuş et al., 2018).

4.5.1. Factor and Reliability Analysis of Content

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test of sampling adequacy was 0.642 which was above the suggested limit (Hair et al., 2010).

The results of the tests are $KMO = 0.642$, χ^2 Bartlett's test = 110.985, $df=3$, $p < 0.001$. As a result of the factor analysis, it was found that the questions asked were collected in a single dimension.

When reliability test was performed, Cronbach's Alpha was found to be 0.611. Since there were only three questions, this level is acceptable. The total variance of these three questions was 58.601%.

Table 4.11. Factor and Reliability Analysis of Content

Items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Variance Explained
SMMA_Content2	.803	.611	58.601
SMMA_Content1	.773		
SMMA_Content3	.718		
Kaiser Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy			0.642
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		Approx. Chi-Square	110.985
		Df.	3
		Sig.	<.001

4.5.2. Factor and Reliability Analysis of Credibility

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test of sampling adequacy was 0.831. The results were adequate (KMO= 0.831; χ^2 Bartlett's test: 1169.422; df=6; p<.001).

Based on the result of the factor analysis, it was retrieved that credibility has consisted of one dimension. Then, reliability test was conducted. The total of four questions' Cronbach's Alpha was found to be .931. The total variance was 83.991%.

Table 4.12. Factor and Reliability Analysis of Credibility

Items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Variance Explained
SMMA_Credibility3	.958	.931	83.991
SMMA_Credibility4	.946		
SMMA_Credibility2	.944		
SMMA_Credibility1	.809		
Kaiser Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy			0.831
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		Approx. Chi-Square	1169.422
		Df.	6
		Sig.	<.001

4.5.3. Factor and Reliability Analysis of Interaction

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test of sampling adequacy was .703. The results produced satisfactory results (KMO=.703; χ^2 Bartlett's test=344.538; df=3; p= <.001).

The factor analysis shows that interaction has one dimension. The results of reliability test were also satisfactory since Cronbach's Alpha was found to be .834. The cumulative variance explained by these three questions was 75.362%.

Table 4.13. Factor and Reliability Analysis of Interaction

Items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Variance Explained
SMMA_Interaction2	.893	.834	75.362
SMMA_Interaction3	.889		
SMMA_Interaction1	.820		
Kaiser Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy			.703
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		Approx. Chi-Square	344.538
		Df.	3
		Sig.	<.001

4.5.4. Factor and Reliability Analysis of WOM

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test of sampling adequacy for the factor analysis is 0.724. The results were acceptable (KMO=0.724; χ^2 Bartlett's test=381.700; df=3; p=<.001).

The results of the factor analysis showed that word-of-mouth happened to have only one dimension.

The result of reliability test proved that the scale has good consistency because Cronbach's Alpha was found to be .848. The total variance explained was 77.837%.

Table 4.14. Factor and Reliability Analysis of WOM

Items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Variance Explained
SMMA_WOM2	.905	.848	77.837
SMMA_WOM1	.871		
SMMA_WOM3	.870		
Kaiser Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy			0.724
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		Approx. Chi-Square	381.700
		Df.	3
		Sig.	<.001

4.5.5. Factor and Reliability Analysis of Political Participation

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity were executed. The results were (KMO=.861; χ^2 Bartlett's test=1571.138; df=66; $p < .001$). Then, the anti-image correlations were performed and the scores of all items were above 0.5; hence, all items in the data set were used in the factor analysis. Then, component analysis together with varimax rotation was carried out. Based on the literature review, it was expected to have two factors; however, there were three factors having eigenvalue more than 1. Items related to making donation were loaded under the new factor; that is why the new factor was named as donation. During the factor analysis, the PP6, PP7, PP8, PP9, and PP12 items were removed because they were almost evenly distributed among different factors. Even if the factor loading of P1 was found to be low, it was kept in the data set since some researchers assert that having a factor loading above 0,50 is acceptable (Durmuş et al., 2018). The total variance explained was found to be 66.960%.

Then, reliability test was performed to check the consistency of the scale. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of offline political participation was .761. The

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of online participation and donation were .881 and .846, respectively. The reliable factors and items are demonstrated in Table 4.15 below.

Table 4.15. Factor and Reliability Analysis of Political Participation

Factor Name	Items	Factor Loading	Variance Explained	Cronbach's Alpha
Online PP	PP17	.863	31.001	.881
	PP16	.825		
	PP15	.796		
	PP14	.757		
	PP11	.661		
	PP10	.639		
Offline PP	PP2	.825	20.808	.761
	PP4	.803		
	PP3	.754		
	PP1	.570		
Donation	PP5	.885	15.150	.846
	PP13	.870		
Total			66.960	
Kaiser Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy				.861
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity			Approx. Chi-Square	
			1571.138	
			Df.	66
			Sig.	<.001

4.5.6. Factor and Reliability Analysis of Candidate Image

At the beginning, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity were performed. The results were desirable (KMO=.959; χ^2 Bartlett's test=5671.790; df=153; p=.000). Then, the anti-image correlations were conducted and the scores of all items were above 0.5; hence, all items in the data set were used in the factor analysis. Then, component analysis together with varimax rotation was carried out. In the total variance explained table, there were only two factors having eigenvalue more than 1. That means there were two factors of candidate image. During the factor analysis, the results of the rotated component matrix were analyzed. CI_originality3 item was removed because the factors loadings under the different factors were so close to each other. Then, factor analysis was conducted once more, and no problems appeared when the analysis was repeated.

Candidate image was expected to be the sum of its six indicators; however, the analysis showed two dimensions. One of them is labeled as competence since all items related to competence were loaded under the same factor. The other factor was labeled as attractiveness + honesty because items related to trustworthiness, morality, originality, candidness, and attractiveness were loaded under the same factor.

Following these measurements, reliability analysis was conducted to understand whether the scale has good internal consistency or not. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the constructs displayed in Table 4.16 were found .965 and .947. The total variance explained is 75.009. The reliable factors and items are shown in Table 4.16 below.

Table 4.16. Factor and Reliability Analysis of Candidate Image

Factor Name	Items	Factor Loading	Variance Explained	Cronbach's Alpha
Attractiveness + Honesty	CI_Trustworthiness4	.849	45.002	.965
	CI_Trustworthiness2	.800		
	CI_Trustworthiness1	.795		
	CI_Trustworthiness3	.787		
	CI_Morality2	.751		
	CI_Originality2	.747		
	CI_Attractiveness3	.743		
	CI_Candidness2	.742		
	CI_Morality1	.737		
	CI_Attractiveness1	.699		
	CI_Originality1	.684		
	CI_Candidness1	.669		
	CI_Attractiveness2	.661		
	Competence	CI_Competence3		
CI_Competence2		.848		
CI_Competence5		.795		
CI_Competence1		.793		
CI_Competence4		.733		
Total			75.009	
Kaiser Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy				.959
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity			Approx. Chi-Square	
			5671.790	
			Df.	153
			Sig.	.000

4.5.7. Factor and Reliability Analysis of Political Efficacy

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity were conducted. The results were (KMO=.643; χ^2 Bartlett's test=605.795; df=10; $p<.001$). Then, the anti-image correlations were carried out and the scores of all items were above 0.5; hence, all items in the data set were used in the factor analysis. Then, component analysis together with varimax rotation was performed. In the total variance explained table, there were two factors having eigenvalue more than 1, in line with the expectations based on the literature review. During the factor analysis, the results of the rotated component matrix were analyzed. The factor loading of EPE1 item was .520 which was low; however, it met the lowest acceptance level which is .50 that is why the item was kept in the analysis (Durmuş et al., 2018)

Then, reliability test was performed to check the consistency of the scale. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of internal political efficacy was .838. When analyzing the reliability of external political efficacy, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were found to be .632 for external political efficacy. EPE1 item was removed because Cronbach's Alpha coefficient generated a higher score when it was deleted. Based on the analysis, it is found out that the scale has good internal consistency with Cronbach's Alpha equals to .842. After the removal of the item, factor analysis was conducted once more, and no problems appeared when the analysis was repeated. The total variance explained is 80.726. The reliable factors and items are presented in Table 4.17 below.

Table 4.17. Factor and Reliability Analysis of Political Efficacy

Factor Name	Items	Factor Loading	Variance Explained	Cronbach's Alpha
Internal Political Efficacy	IPE2	.916	45.876	.838
	IPE1	.847		
	IPE3	.846		
External Political Efficacy	EPE2	.928	34.850	.842
	EPE3	.924		
Total			80.726	
Kaiser Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy				.643
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity			Approx. Chi-Square 605.795	
			Df.	10
			Sig.	<.001

The new hypotheses emerged according to factor and reliability analyses are demonstrated in Table 4.18.

Table 4.18. New Hypotheses

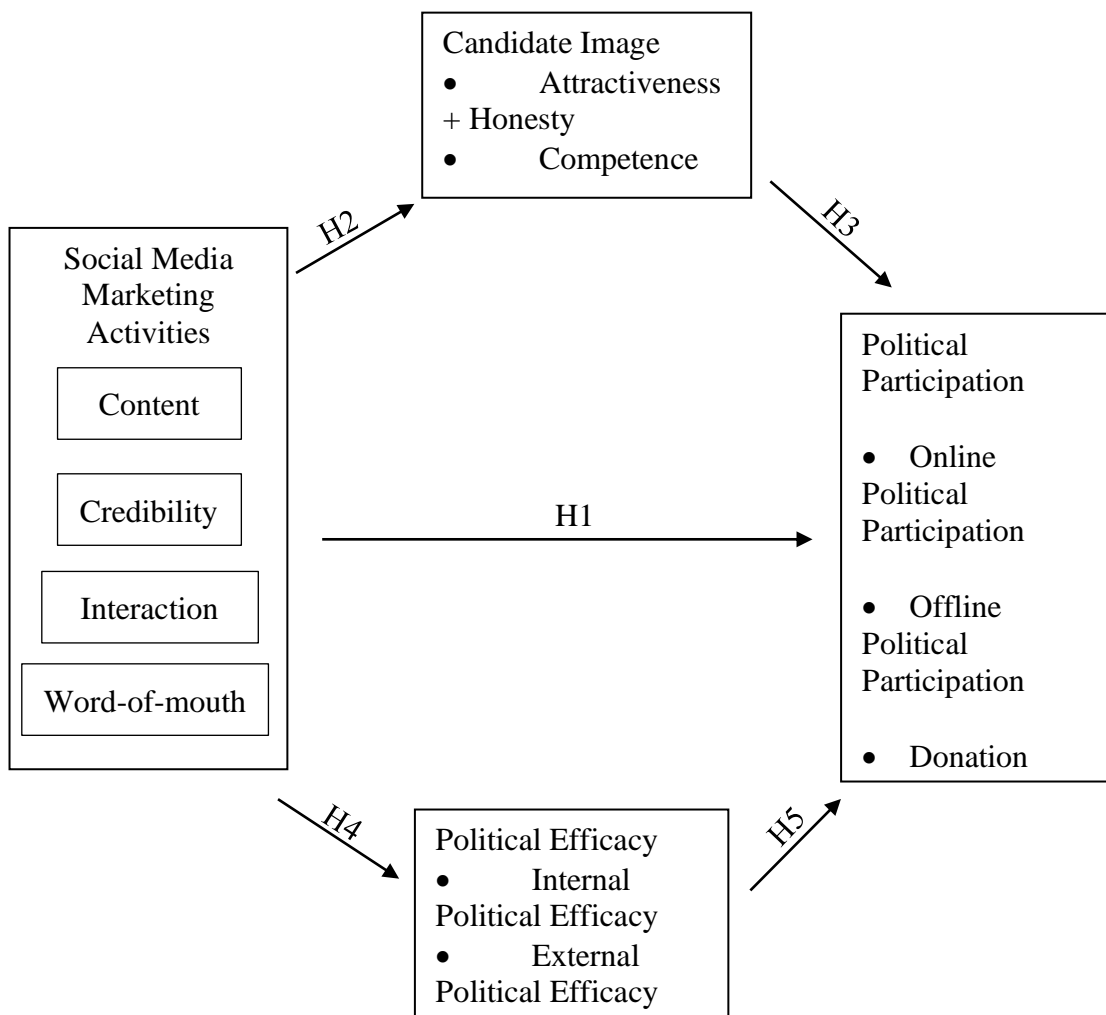
H1a: Content of the information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to offline political participation.
H1b: Content of the information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to online political participation.
H1c: Content of the information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to donation.

H1d: Credibility of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to offline political participation.
H1e: Credibility of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to online political participation.
H1f: Credibility of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to donation.
H1g: Interaction on the candidate's social media positively relates to voters' offline political participation.
H1h: Interaction on the candidate's social media positively relates to voters' online political participation.
H1i: Interaction on the candidate's social media positively relates to donation.
H1j: Word-of-mouth shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to voters' offline political participation.
H1k: Word-of-mouth shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to voters' online political participation.
H1l: Word-of-mouth shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to donation.
H2a: Content of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to attractiveness + honesty.
H2b: Content of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to competence.
H2c: Credibility of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to attractiveness + honesty.
H2d: Credibility of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to competence.
H2e: Interaction on the candidate's social media positively relates to attractiveness + honesty.
H2f: Interaction on the candidate's social media positively relates to competence.

H2g: Word-of-mouth shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to attractiveness + honesty.
H2h: Word-of-mouth shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to competence.
H3a: Attractiveness + Honesty positively relates to offline political participation.
H3b: Attractiveness + Honesty positively relates to online political participation.
H3c: Attractiveness + Honesty positively relates to donation.
H3d: Competence positively relates to offline political participation.
H3e: Competence positively relates to online political participation.
H3f: Competence positively relates to donation.
H4a: Content of the information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to internal political efficacy.
H4b: Content of the information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to external political efficacy.
H4c: Credibility of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to internal political efficacy.
H4d: Credibility of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to external political efficacy.
H4e: Interaction on the candidates' social media accounts positively relates to internal political efficacy.
H4f: Interaction on the candidates' social media accounts positively relates to external political efficacy.
H4g: Word-of-mouth shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to internal political efficacy.
H4h: Word-of-mouth shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to external political efficacy.
H5a: Internal political efficacy positively relates to offline political participation.

H5b: Internal political efficacy positively relates to online political participation.
H5c: Internal political efficacy positively relates to donation.
H5d: External political efficacy positively relates to offline political participation.
H5e: External political efficacy positively relates to online political participation.
H5f: External political efficacy positively relates to donation.

Figure 4.1. Revised Model After Factor and Reliability Analyses



4.6. CORRELATION ANALYSIS RESULTS

Correlation analysis is applied to reveal the relationship between at least two variables (Gogtay & Thatte, 2017). It not only helps to understand the strength of this relationship but also find out the direction of the variables (Durmuş et al., 2018). A correlation coefficient value which is shown as r , is always between -1 and +1 (Durmuş et al., 2018). The r values are expected to be more than 0,70 to ensure a strong relationship among variables (Tryon, 1929).

The results of the Pearson correlation are demonstrated in Table 4.19.

Table 4.19. Correlation Analysis Results

		CONTENT	CREDIBILITY	INTERACTION	WOM	ATTRACTIVENESS_HONESTY	COMPETENCE	INTERNAL_PE	EXTERNAL_PE	ONLINE_PP	OFFLINE_PP	DONATION_PP
CONTENT	Pearson Correlation	1	.576**	.632**	.598**	.534**	.476**	-.266**	.128*	.090	.120*	.113
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	.032	.133	.046	.059
	N	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279
CREDIBILITY	Pearson Correlation	.576**	1	.536**	.715**	.747**	.660**	.332**	.064	.203**	.138*	.101
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	.290	<.001	.021	.093
	N	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279
INTERACTION	Pearson Correlation	.632**	.536**	1	.704**	.495**	.397**	.217**	.199**	.164**	.223**	.064
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	.006	<.001	.290
	N	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279
WOM	Pearson Correlation	.598**	.715**	.704**	1	.674**	.591**	.303**	.181**	.171**	.230**	.084
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001	.002	.004	<.001	.161
	N	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279
ATTRACTIVENESS_HONESTY	Pearson Correlation	.534**	.747**	.495**	.674**	1	.820**	.364**	.120*	.170**	.185**	.153*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001	.046	.004	.002	.010
	N	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279
COMPETENCE	Pearson Correlation	.476**	.660**	.397**	.591**	.820**	1	.393**	.130*	.152*	.147*	.104
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001	.030	.011	.014	.082
	N	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279
INTERNAL_PE	Pearson Correlation	.266**	.332**	.217**	.303**	.364**	.393**	1	.214**	.214**	.254**	.213**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279
EXTERNAL_PE	Pearson Correlation	.128*	.064	.199**	.181**	.120*	.130*	.214**	1	-.018	.169**	.073
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.032	.290	<.001	.002	.046	.030	<.001		.768	.005	.223
	N	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279
ONLINE_PP	Pearson Correlation	.090	.203**	.164**	.171**	.170**	.152*	.214**	-.018	1	.461**	.408**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.133	<.001	.006	.004	.004	.011	<.001	.768	1	<.001	<.001
	N	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279
OFFLINE_PP	Pearson Correlation	.120*	.138*	.223**	.230**	.185**	.147*	.254**	.169**	.461**	1	.369**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.046	.021	<.001	<.001	.002	.014	<.001	.005	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279
DONATION_PP	Pearson Correlation	.113	.101	.064	.084	.153*	.104	.213**	.073	.408**	.369**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.059	.093	.290	.161	.010	.082	<.001	.223	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279	279

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

4.7. REGRESSION ANALYSIS

To explore the relationship between variables, regression analysis is employed (Skyles, 1993). The results of regression analyses will be used to test the hypotheses previously developed.

4.7.1. A Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Offline Political Participation and Social Media Marketing Activities

A multiple linear regression analysis was carried out to understand whether candidates' social media marketing activities have positively related to offline political participation. VIF and tolerance values were also computed to check multicollinearity.

Offline political participation as the dependent variable and content, credibility, interaction, and WOM as the independent variable, a multiple linear regression analysis was performed. As reflected in Table 4.20, the analysis show there was no significant relationship between content and offline political participation, credibility and offline political participation, and interaction and offline political participation. The only meaningful relationship was found between WOM and offline political participation and 5.3% of offline political participation can be explained by WOM.

Table 4.20. Model Summary of Regression Analysis Between Offline Political Participation and Social Media Marketing Activities

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.230 ^a	.053	.049	1.32498

Predictors: (Constant), WOM

The results from ANOVA findings are shown in Table 4.21. The overall explanatory power of this model was 5.3% ($R=.230^a$; $R^2=.053$; $F=15.444$; $p<.001^b$).

Table 4.21. ANOVA Results of Regression Analysis Between Offline Political Participation and Social Media Marketing Activities

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	27.112	1	27.112	15.444	<.001 ^b
Residual	486.295	277	1.756		
Total	513.408	278			

a. Dependent Variable: OFFLINE_PP

b. Predictors: (Constant), WOM

The coefficients results are shown in Table 4.22. VIF values were below 10, and the tolerance measure was acceptable. In this model, content, credibility, and interaction were not statistically significant since significance values were bigger than 0.05.

Table 4.22. Coefficients of Regression Analysis Between Offline Political Participation and Social Media Marketing Activities

Model	Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	VIF
(Constant)	.904	.387		2.339	.020	
WOM	.257	.065	.230	3.930	<.001	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: OFFLINE_PP

Considering the hypotheses finalized after the factor analysis, it is found out that H1j was supported; however, H1a, H1d, and H1g were rejected.

4.7.2. A Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Online Political Participation and Social Media Marketing Activities

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to study whether social media marketing activities have positively related to online political participation. VIF and tolerance values were also examined to check multicollinearity.

Online political participation as the dependent variable and content, credibility, interaction, and WOM as the independent variable, a multiple linear regression analysis was carried out. The model summary of the multiple linear regression is demonstrated in Table 4.23. Since the analysis shows that there was no significant relationship between content and online political participation, interaction, and online political participation, and WOM and online political participation, they were removed from the table. The only hypothesis supported was the relationship between credibility and online political participation and 4.1% of online political participation can be explained by credibility.

Table 4.23. Model Summary of Regression Analysis Between Online Political Participation and Social Media Marketing Activities

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.203 ^a	.041	.038	1.75186

a. Predictors: (Constant), CREDIBILITY

The results from ANOVA findings are displayed in Table 4.24. The descriptive power of this model was 4.1% ($R=.203^a$; $R^2=.041$; $F=11.882$; $p<.001^b$).

Table 4.24. ANOVA Results of Regression Analysis Between Online Political Participation and Social Media Marketing Activities

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	36.465	1	36.465	11.882	<.001 ^b
Residual	850.114	277	3.069		
Total	886.578	278			

a. Dependent Variable: ONLINE_PP

b. Predictors: (Constant), CREDIBILITY

The coefficients results are presented in Table 4.25. VIF values were below 10 and the tolerance measures did not create multicollinearity problem. In this model, content, interaction, and WOM were not statistically significant since significance values were bigger than 0.05.

Table 4.25. Coefficients of Regression Analysis Between Online Political Participation and Social Media Marketing Activities

Model	Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	VIF
(Constant)	1.295	.602		2.152	.032	
Credibility	.337	.098	.203	3.447	<.001	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: ONLINE_PP

As a result of the multiple linear regression analysis, H1e was supported; however, H1b, H1h, and H1k were rejected.

4.7.3. A Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Donation and Social Media Marketing Activities

A multiple linear regression analysis was carried out in which donation is the dependent variable and content, credibility, interaction, and WOM are the independent variables.

Table 4.26. Model Summary of Regression Analysis Between Donation and Social Media Marketing Activities

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
(Constant)	.124 ^a	.015	.001	1.53940

a. Predictors: (Constant), WOM, CONTENT, CREDIBILITY, INTERACTION

The results from ANOVA findings are shown in Table 4.27. The descriptive power of this model is 1.5% ($R=.124^a$; $R^2=.015$; $F=1.065$; $p<.374^b$).

Table 4.27. ANOVA Results of Regression Between Donation and Social Media Marketing Activities

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	10.096	4	2.524	1.065	.374 ^b
Residual	649.314	274	2.370		
Total	659.410	278			

a. Dependent Variable: DONATION_PP

b. Predictors: (Constant), WOM, CONTENT, CREDIBILITY, INTERACTION

As shown in Table 4.28, no significant relationships have been found between the social media marketing activities and donation since all the since significance

values are higher than 0.05. Based on the analysis result, H1c, H1f, H1i, and H1e were rejected.

Table 4.28. Coefficients of Regression Between Donation and Social Media Marketing Activities

Model	Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	VIF
(Constant)	.644	.563		1.145	.253	
Content	.135	.116	.097	1.159	.247	1.935
Credibility	.081	.128	.056	.634	.526	2.204
Interaction	-.039	.100	-.036	-.392	.696	2.301
WOM	.014	.130	.011	.107	.915	2.929

a. Dependent Variable: DONATION_PP

4.7.4. A Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Attractiveness + Honesty and Social Media Marketing Activities

To prove the hypotheses generated regarding the relationship between attractiveness + honesty and social media marketing activities, a multiple linear regression analysis was applied. VIF and tolerance values were also analyzed to ensure that there is no multicollinearity.

The model summary of the multiple linear regression is shown in Table 4.29. The variance of the dependent variable was found to be 59.8%. Since the analysis found out that there was no relationship between content and attractiveness + honesty, interaction, and attractiveness + honesty, they were not shown in the table below.

Table 4.29. Model Summary of Regression Analysis Between Attractiveness + Honesty and Social Media Marketing Activities

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.747 ^a	.557	.556	.69360
2	.773 ^b	.598	.595	.66251

a. Predictors: (Constant), CREDIBILITY

b. Predictors: (Constant), CREDIBILITY, WOM

The results from ANOVA findings are displayed in Table 4.30. The descriptive power of this model is 59.8% ($R=.773^b$; $R^2=.598$.; $F=204.893$; $p<.001^c$).

Table 4.30. ANOVA Results of Regression Analysis Between Attractiveness + Honesty and Social Media Marketing Activities

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	167.739	1	167.739	348.668	<.001 ^b
	Residual	133.261	277	.481		
	Total	301.000	278			
2	Regression	179.860	2	89.930	204.893	<.001 ^c
	Residual	121.140	276	.439		
	Total	301.000	278			

a. Dependent Variable: ATTRACTIVENESS + HONESTY

b. Predictors: (Constant), CREDIBILITY

c. Predictors: (Constant), CREDIBILITY, WOM

The coefficients results are shown in Table 4.31. Both VIF values and tolerance measures did not yield multicollinearity. Based on the standardized regression

coefficients, the relative importance of the predictive variable on attractiveness + honesty was credibility ($\beta=.541$) and WOM ($\beta=.287$).

After the examination of significance levels of factors in the model, credibility and WOM have been found to have a positive impact on attractiveness + honesty, while content and interaction failed to support the hypotheses. In sum, H2c and H2g were supported, while H2a and H2e were rejected.

Table 4.31. Coefficients of Regression Analysis Between Attractiveness + Honesty and Social Media Marketing Activities

Model	Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	VIF
1 (Constant)	1.606	.238		6.742	<.001	
Credibility	.723	.039	.747	18.673	<.001	1.000
2 (Constant)	1.389	.231		6.003	<.001	
Credibility	.524	.053	.541	9.905	<.001	2.047
WOM	.246	.047	.287	5.255	<.001	2.047

a. Dependent Variable: ATTRACTIVENESS + HONESTY

4.7.5. A Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Competence and Social Media Marketing Activities

To check whether there was a significant relationship between social media marketing activities and competence, a multiple linear regression analysis was executed. Both VIF and tolerance values were checked to prevent multicollinearity.

The model summary of the multiple linear regression is exhibited in Table 4.32. The variance of competence was 46.4%.

Table 4.32. Model Summary of Regression Analysis Between Competence and Social Media Marketing Activities

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.660 ^a	.436	.434	.73703
2	.682 ^b	.464	.461	.71931

a. Predictors: (Constant), CREDIBILITY

b. Predictors: (Constant), CREDIBILITY, WOM

The results from ANOVA findings are presented in Table 4.33. The descriptive power of this model was 46.4% (R=.682^b; R²=.464; F=119.694; p=<.001^c).

Table 4.33. ANOVA Results of Regression Between Competence and Social Media Marketing Activities

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	116.194	1	116.194	213.898	<.001 ^b
	Residual	150.472	277	.543		
	Total	266.666	278			
2	Regression	123.861	2	61.931	119.694	<.001 ^c
	Residual	142.805	276	.517		
	Total	266.666	278			

a. Dependent Variable: COMPETENCE

b. Predictors: (Constant), CREDIBILITY

c. Predictors: (Constant), CREDIBILITY, WOM

The coefficients results are illustrated in Table 4.34. VIF values were below 10 and the tolerance measures were measured. Both VIF values and tolerance measures did not yield multicollinearity. As a result of the standardized regression coefficients,

the relative importance of the predictive variable on competence was credibility ($\beta=.487$) and WOM ($\beta=.243$). After the evaluation of the significance level of the factors in the model, it was found out that only credibility and WOM were positively related to competence. Consequently, H2d and H2h were supported; however, H2b and H2f were rejected.

Table 4.34. Coefficients of Regression Analysis Between Competence and Social Media Marketing Activities

Model	Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	VIF
1 (Constant)	2.486	.253		9.819	<.001	
Credibility	.602	.041	.660	14.625	<.001	1.000
2 (Constant)	2.313	.251		9.209	<.001	
Credibility	.444	.057	.487	7.721	<.001	2.047
WOM	.196	.051	.243	3.849	<.001	2.047

a. Dependent Variable: COMPETENCE

4.7.6. A Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Candidate Image and Offline Political Participation

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to assess the relationship between candidate image and offline political participation. VIF and tolerance values were also controlled to inhibit multicollinearity.

The model summary of the multiple linear regression is demonstrated in Table 4.35. 3.4% of offline political participation can be explained by attractiveness + honesty.

Table 4.35. Model Summary of Regression Analysis Between Candidate Image and Offline Political Participation

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.185 ^a	.034	.031	1.33788

Predictors: (Constant), ATTRACTIVENESS + HONESTY

The results from ANOVA findings are shown in Table 4.36. The descriptive power of this model was 3.4% (R=.185^a; R²=034, F=9.832; p<.002^b).

Table 4.36. ANOVA Results of Regression Analysis Candidate Image and Offline Political Participation

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	17.598	1	17.598	9.832	.002 ^b
Residual	495.809	277	1.790		
Total	513.408	278			

a. Dependent Variable: OFFLINE_PP

b. Predictors: (Constant), ATTRACTIVENESS + HONESTY

The coefficients results are exhibited in Table 4.37. VIF values were below 10 and the tolerance measures did not create a multicollinearity problem. The result of the analysis showed that attractiveness + honesty was positively related to offline political participation; that is why H3a is supported; however, competence failed to have an impact on offline political participation; hence, H3d is rejected.

Table 4.37. Coefficients of Regression Analysis Candidate Image and Offline Political Participation

Model	Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	VIF
(Constant)	.944	.469		2.014	.045	
Attractiveness + Honesty	.242	.077	.185	3.136	.002	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: OFFLINE_PP

4.7.7. A Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Candidate Image and Online Political Participation

A multiple linear regression analysis was administered to check the assumption about the relationship between candidate image and online political participation. VIF and tolerance values were also investigated for the possibility of multicollinearity.

The model summary of the multiple linear regression is demonstrated in Table 4.38. 2.9% of online political participation can be explained by attractiveness + honesty.

Table 4.38. Model Summary of Regression Analysis Between Candidate Image and Online Political Participation

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.170 ^a	.029	.025	1.76310

a. Predictors: (Constant), ATTRACTIVENESS + HONESTY

The results from ANOVA findings are shown in Table 4.39. The descriptive power of this model was 2.9% (R=.170^a; R²=.029; F=8.210; p<.004^b).

Table 4.39. ANOVA Results of Regression Analysis Between Candidate Image and Online Political Participation

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	25.519	1	25.519	8.210	.004 ^b
Residual	861.059	277	3.109		
Total	886.578	278			

a. Dependent Variable: ONLINE_PP

b. Predictors: (Constant), ATTRACTIVENESS + HONESTY

The coefficients results are demonstrated in Table 4.40. VIF values were below 10 and the tolerance measures showed that there was not a multicollinearity problem. Based on the outcomes, attractiveness + honesty was positively related to online political participation; that is why H3b was confirmed. On the other hand, result of the study showed that there was not significant relationship between competence and online political participation; thus, H3e was rejected.

Table 4.40. Coefficients of Regression Analysis Between Candidate Image and Online Political Participation

Model	Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	VIF
(Constant)	1.594	.618		2.582	.010	
Attractiveness + Honesty	.291	.102	.170	2.865	.004	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: ONLINE_PP

4.7.8. A Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Candidate Image and Donation

A multiple linear regression analysis was implemented to support or reject the hypothesis about candidate image and donation. VIF and tolerance values were also analyzed to ensure that no multicollinearity issue.

The model summary of the multiple linear regression is demonstrated in Table 4.41. 2.4% of donation can be explained by attractiveness + honesty.

Table 4.41. Model Summary of Regression Analysis Between Candidate Image and Donation

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.153 ^a	.024	.020	1.52465

a. Predictors: (Constant), ATTRACTIVENESS + HONESTY

The results from ANOVA findings are shown in Table 4.42. The descriptive power of this model was 2.4% ($R=.153^a$; $R^2=.024$; $F=6.673$; $p<.010^b$).

Table 4.42. ANOVA Results of Regression Analysis Between Candidate Image and Donation

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	15.511	1	15.511	6.673	.010 ^b
Residual	643.899	277	2.325		
Total	659.410	278			

a. Dependent Variable: DONATION_PP

b. Predictors: (Constant), ATTRACTIVENESS + HONESTY

The coefficients results are depicted in Table 4.43. VIF values were below 10 and the tolerance measures did not yield any multicollinearity problem. Given the analysis, attractiveness + honesty was positively related to donation; that is why H3c was supported. Conversely, there was no significant relationship between competence and donation; consequently, H3f was rejected.

Table 4.43. Coefficients of Regression Analysis Between Candidate Image and Donation

Model	Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	VIF
(Constant)	.381	.534		.714	.476	
Attractiveness + Honesty	.227	.088	.153	2.583	.010	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: DONATION_PP

4.7.9. A Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Internal Political Efficacy and Social Media Marketing Activities

To investigate whether internal political efficacy was influenced by social media marketing activities, a multiple linear regression analysis was carried out. VIF and tolerance values were also part of the investigation.

The model summary of the multiple linear regression is given in Table 4.44. 11% of internal political efficacy could be explained by credibility.

Table 4.44. Model Summary of Regression Analysis Between Internal Political Efficacy and Social Media Marketing Activities

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.332 ^a	.110	.107	1.42146

a. Predictors: (Constant), CREDIBILITY

The results from ANOVA findings are shown in Table 4.45. The descriptive power of this model was 11% ($R=.332^a$; $R^2=.110$; $F=34.289$; $p<.001^b$).

Table 4.45. ANOVA Results of Regression Analysis Between Internal Political Efficacy and Social Media Marketing Activities

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	69.282	1	69.282	34.289	<.001 ^b
Residual	559.691	277	2.021		
Total	628.973	278			

a. Dependent Variable: INTERNAL_PE

b. Predictors: (Constant), CREDIBILITY

The coefficients results are provided in Table 4.46. Not only VIF values, but also the tolerance measures are great to prevent multicollinearity issue. The results of the regression analysis showed that only credibility was positively related to internal political efficacy. Therefore, H4a, H4e, and H4g were rejected, while H4c was supported.

Table 4.46. Coefficients of Regression Analysis Between Internal Political Efficacy and Social Media Marketing Activities

Model	Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	VIF
(Constant)	2.155	.488		4.413	<.001	
Credibility	.465	.079	.332	5.856	<.001	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: INTERNAL_PE

4.7.10. A Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of External Political Efficacy and Social Media Marketing Activities

To study whether social media marketing activities affect external political efficacy, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. VIF and tolerance values were also included into the analysis to see whether there was a multicollinearity problem or not.

The model summary of the multiple linear regression is given in Table 4.47. 4% of external political efficacy could be explained by interaction.

Table 4.47. Model Summary of Regression Analysis Between External Political Efficacy and Social Media Marketing Activities

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.199 ^a	.040	.036	1.95852

a. Predictors: (Constant), INTERACTION

The results from ANOVA findings are shown in Table 4.48. The descriptive power of this model was 4% ($R=.199^a$; $R^2=.040$; $F=11.463$; $p<.001^b$).

Table 4.48. ANOVA Results of Regression Analysis Between External Political Efficacy and Media Marketing Activities

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	43.971	1	43.971	11.463	<.001 ^b
Residual	1062.520	277	3.836		
Total	1106.491	278			

a. Dependent Variable: EXTERNAL_PE

b. Predictors: (Constant), INTERACTION

The coefficients results are displayed in Table 4.49. Both VIF values and the tolerance measures were acceptable. The outcomes of the regression analysis showed that only interaction was positively related to external political efficacy. Consequently, H4b, H4d, and H4h were rejected, while H4f was supported.

Table 4.49. Coefficients of Regression Analysis Between External Political Efficacy and Social Media Marketing Activities

Model	Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	VIF
1 (Constant)	2.534	.457		5.543	<.001	
INTERACTION	.284	.084	.199	3.386	<.001	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: EXTERNAL_PE

4.7.11. A Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Political Efficacy and Offline Political Participation

To reject or support to hypothesis about the relationship between political efficacy and offline political participation, a multiple linear regression analysis was performed.

The model summary of the multiple linear regression is given in Table 4.50. The variance of offline political participation is 7.9%.

Table 4.50. Model Summary of Regression Analysis Between Political Efficacy and Offline Political Participation

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.254 ^a	.065	.061	1.31661
2	.280 ^b	.079	.072	1.30924

a. Predictors: (Constant), INTERNAL_PE

b. Predictors: (Constant), INTERNAL_PE, EXTERNAL_PE

The results from ANOVA findings are shown in Table 4.51. The descriptive power of this model was 7.9% ($R=.280^b$; $R^2=.079$; $F=11.760$; $p<.001^c$).

Table 4.51. ANOVA Results of Regression Analysis Between Political Efficacy and Offline Political Participation

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	33.242	1	33.242	19.177	<.001 ^b
Residual	480.166	277	1.733		
Total	513.408	278			
2 Regression	40.316	2	20.158	11.760	<.001 ^c
Residual	473.092	276	1.714		
Total	513.408	278			

a. Dependent Variable: OFFLINE_PP

b. Predictors: (Constant), INTERNAL_PE

c. Predictors: (Constant), INTERNAL_PE, EXTERNAL_PE

The coefficients results are illustrated in Table 4.52. In addition to that, VIF values and tolerance measures were investigated to check whether there was a multicollinearity issue or not. Based on the analysis results, it was found out that both internal political efficacy ($\beta=.207$) and external political efficacy ($\beta=.082$) have a significant and positive effect on offline political participation. Therefore, H5a and H5d were supported.

Table 4.52. Coefficients of Regression Analysis Between Political Efficacy and Offline Political Participation

Model	Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	VIF
1 (Constant)	1.249	.273		4.582	<.001	
INTERNAL_PE	.230	.052	.254	4.379	<.001	1.000
2 (Constant)	1.035	.291		3.558	<.001	
INTERNAL_PE	.207	.053	.229	3.866	<.001	1.048
EXTERNAL_PE	.082	.040	.120	2.032	.043	1.048

a. Dependent Variable: OFFLINE_PP

4.7.12. A Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Political Efficacy and Online Political Participation

A multiple linear regression was performed to assess the relationship between political efficacy and online political participation.

The model summary of the multiple linear regression is given in Table 4.53. The variance of online political participation was 4.6%.

Table 4.53. Model Summary of Regression Analysis Between Political Efficacy and Online Political Participation

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.214 ^a	.046	.042	1.74770

a. Predictors: (Constant), INTERNAL_PE

The results from ANOVA findings are shown in Table 4.54. The descriptive power of this model was 4.6% ($R=.214^a$; $R^2=.046$.; $F=13.257$; $p<.001^b$).

Table 4.54. ANOVA Results of Regression Analysis Between Political Efficacy and Online Political Participation

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	40.493	1	40.493	13.257	<.001 ^b
Residual	846.085	277	3.054		
Total	886.578	278			

a. Dependent Variable: ONLINE_PP

b. Predictors: (Constant), INTERNAL_PE

The coefficients results are mentioned in Table 4.55. It is found out that there was no multicollinearity issue after checking VIF value together with the tolerance measures. The findings revealed that online political participation was influenced by internal political efficacy, thus, H5b was supported; however, there was no significant relationship between external political efficacy and online political participation. As a result, H5e was rejected.

Table 4.55. Coefficients of Regression Analysis Between Internal Political Efficacy and Online Political Participation

Model	Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	VIF
1 (Constant)	2.076	.362		5.739	<.001	
INTERNAL_PE	.254	.070	.214	3.641	<.001	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: ONLINE_PP

4.7.13. A Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Political Efficacy and Donation

A multiple linear regression analysis was carried out to explore the relationship between political efficacy and donation.

The model summary of the multiple linear regression is presented in Table 4.56. The variance of donation was 4.5%.

Table 4.56. Model Summary of Regression Analysis Between Political Efficacy and Donation

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.213 ^a	.045	.042	1.50741

a. Predictors: (Constant), INTERNAL_PE

The results from ANOVA findings are shown in Table 4.57. The descriptive power of this model was 4.5% ($R=.213^a$; $R^2=.045$; $F=13.197$; $p<.001^b$).

Table 4.57. ANOVA Results of Regression Analysis Between Political Efficacy and Donation

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	29.987	1	29.987	13.197	<.001 ^b
Residual	629.424	277	2.272		
Total	659.410	278			

a. Dependent Variable: DONATION_PP

b. Predictors: (Constant), INTERNAL_PE

The coefficients results are presented in Table 4.58. The analysis results showed that there was not a multicollinearity issue. The given table below shows that internal political efficacy positively related to donation; hence, H5c was supported. On the other hand, the analysis showed no significant relationship between external political efficacy and donation; thus, H3f was rejected.

Table 4.58. Coefficients of Regression Analysis Between Political Efficacy and Donation

Model	Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	VIF
1 (Constant)	.655	.312		2.099	.037	
INTERNAL_PE	.218	.060	.213	3.633	<.001	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: DONATION_PP

4.8. RESULT OF THE ANALYSES AND FINAL MODEL

The results of the analyses about the proposed hypotheses are presented in Table 4.59.

Table 4.59. Results of the Analyses

Hypotheses	Results
H1a: Content of the information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to offline political participation.	REJECTED
H1b: Content of the information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to online political participation.	REJECTED
H1c: Content of the information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to donation.	REJECTED

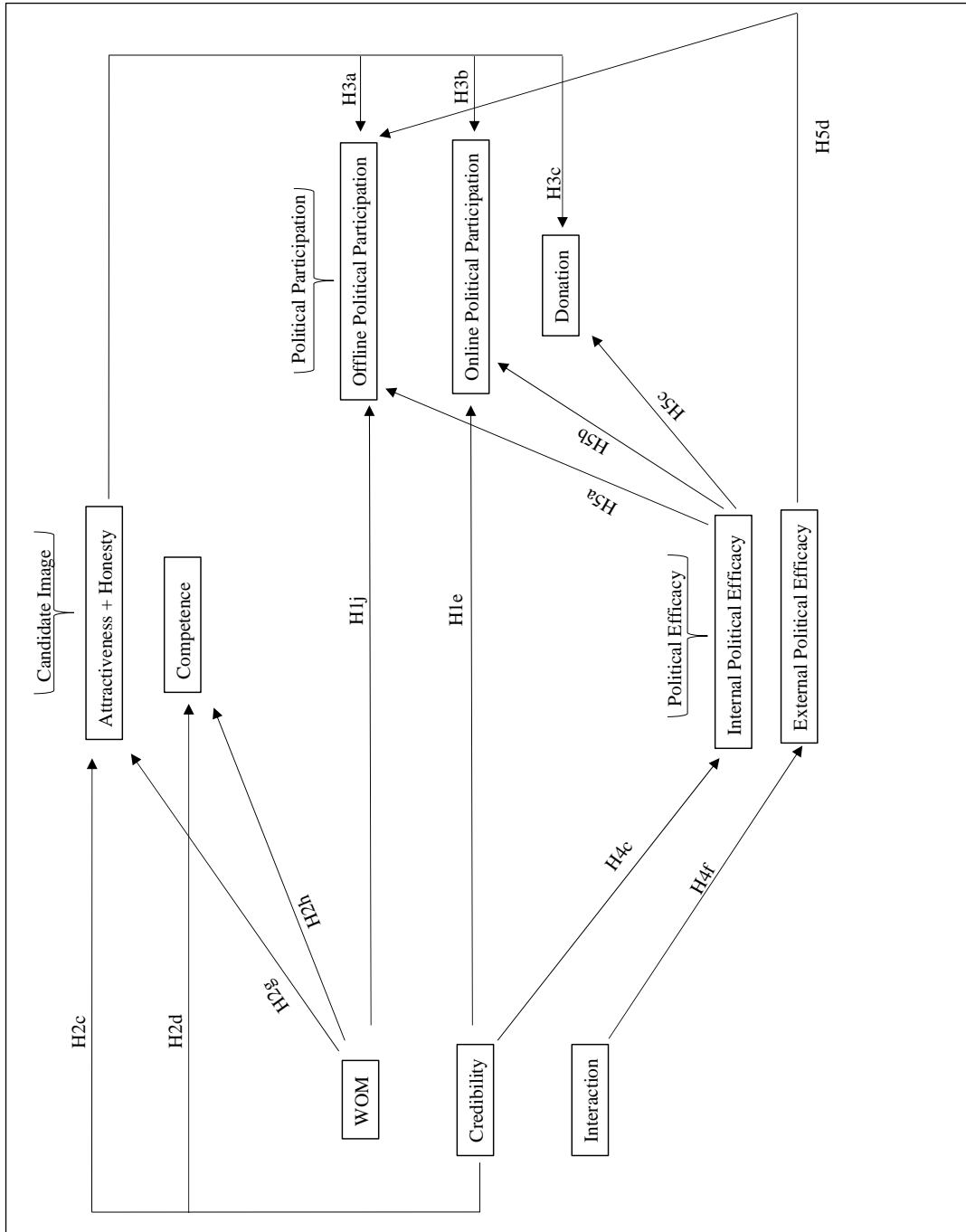
H1d: Credibility of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to offline political participation.	REJECTED
H1e: Credibility of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to online political participation.	SUPPORTED
H1f: Credibility of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to donation.	REJECTED
H1g: Interaction on the candidate's social media positively relates to voters' offline political participation.	REJECTED
H1h: Interaction on the candidate's social media positively relates to voters' online political participation.	REJECTED
H1i: Interaction on the candidate's social media positively relates to donation.	REJECTED
H1j: Word-of-mouth shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to voters' offline political participation.	SUPPORTED
H1k: Word-of-mouth shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to voters' online political participation.	REJECTED
H1l: Word-of-mouth shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to donation.	REJECTED
H2a: Content of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to attractiveness + honesty.	REJECTED
H2b: Content of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to competence.	REJECTED
H2c: Credibility of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to attractiveness + honesty.	SUPPORTED

H2d: Credibility of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to competence.	SUPPORTED
H2e: Interaction on the candidate's social media positively relates to attractiveness + honesty.	REJECTED
H2f: Interaction on the candidate's social media positively relates to competence.	REJECTED
H2g: Word-of-mouth shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to attractiveness + honesty.	SUPPORTED
H2h: Word-of-mouth shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to competence.	SUPPORTED
H3a: Attractiveness + Honesty positively relates to offline political participation.	SUPPORTED
H3b: Attractiveness + Honesty positively relates to online political participation.	SUPPORTED
H3c: Attractiveness + Honesty positively relates to donation.	SUPPORTED
H3d: Competence positively relates to offline political participation.	REJECTED
H3e: Competence positively relates to online political participation.	REJECTED
H3f: Competence positively relates to donation.	REJECTED
H4a: Content of the information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to internal political efficacy.	REJECTED
H4b: Content of the information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to external political efficacy.	REJECTED
H4c: Credibility of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to internal political efficacy.	SUPPORTED

H4d: Credibility of information shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to external political efficacy.	REJECTED
H4e: Interaction on the candidates' social media accounts positively relates to internal political efficacy.	REJECTED
H4f: Interaction on the candidates' social media accounts positively relates to external political efficacy.	SUPPORTED
H4g: Word-of-mouth shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to internal political efficacy.	REJECTED
H4h: Word-of-mouth shared on social media as a part of political marketing activities positively relates to external political efficacy.	REJECTED
H5a: Internal political efficacy positively relates to offline political participation.	SUPPORTED
H5b: Internal political efficacy positively relates to online political participation	SUPPORTED
H5c: Internal political efficacy positively relates to donation	SUPPORTED
H5d: External political efficacy positively relates to offline political participation.	SUPPORTED
H5e: External political efficacy positively relates to online political participation.	REJECTED
H5f: External political efficacy positively relates to donation	REJECTED

The final research model of this thesis, which was drawn after the interpretation of factor, reliability, and regression analyses, is illustrated in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2. Final Model After Regression Analysis



CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

In this final chapter of the thesis, the results of the research are discussed in-depth, together with their theoretical and practical implications. In addition to that, recommendations for future studies along with the limitation of the research are presented as a final phase.

5.1. DISCUSSION

Every passing year, the number of social media users in Turkey is increasing (Datareportal, 2021). Not only commercial brands but also human brands would like to benefit from this trend; that is why they keep an eye on social media to learn about the newest trends and employ these channels as inclusive as possible. Studies demonstrate that social media is a fantastic platform for connecting with the consumer and positively impacting business growth (Kim, 2020). Political entities seeing an opportunity on these platforms make them a part of their campaigns all over the world. Turkish politicians have also been using social media as a medium to reach out to the electorate since the 2002 elections (Okan et al., 2014). Inevitably, the role of this medium in the political campaign is increasing day by day with the increased popularization of this medium. The research on political entities' usage of social media for their political campaigns, mainly composed of content analyses, is not enough to evaluate whether the campaign plan successfully mobilizes and persuades voters to increase their political participation and affect their voting choice. Social networking sites, as a paradigm shift in political marketing communication, demands in-depth investigation of the relationship between social media marketing activities of political candidates and voters' political participation.

The latest local election was proof that political candidates actively used social media in the election process (Muratsalman.net, 2019). Ekrem İmamoğlu, whom

Istanbulities barely knew before his nomination, managed to win the election against a very-well known politician Binali Yıldırım. Although it is not proper to explain the political success with a single factor, the impact of the candidate's social media marketing on voter behavior is believed to be significant. For this reason, this quantitative study examined the effect of the candidates' social media marketing activities on the electorates' political participation within the context of the June 2019 Istanbul Local Election while considering the possible impact of candidate image and political efficacy.

To accomplish this study, 394 answers were collected with the help of an online survey. Since the study's main aim was to reveal the role of social media marketing activities on voters' political participation, a question about social media awareness was used as a screening question. In other words, respondents who were not familiar with the candidates' social media accounts were removed from the data set. Another important note regarding the data set is that respondents who did not vote at the June 2019 Istanbul Local Election but stated that they could have voted if they would, were also included in the analysis. Using SPSS, version 28.0, the hypotheses generated after conducting the literature review were tested. This quantitative research employed factor, reliability, correlation, and regression analyses.

While distributing any message as they wish, candidates are empowered to craft a narrative that portrays himself/herself as the best possible option ever. The unique feature of social media not only makes itself is a go-to place to reach out political information primarily for the younger cohort (Baumgartner & Morris, 2010) but also makes it is a platform that enables different types of political participation (Weaver et al., 2011). Downs (1957) claims that one of the first jobs a voter does during the election period is to assemble political information about candidates. The impact of social media usage on voters' political participation has mixed results. On the one hand, some say social networking sites effectively mobilize voters (Williams & Gulati, 2013), and others claim the opposite. Online platforms are today's prominent way of gathering information, and it is found out that when users

rely on online platforms to gather information, they are more likely to be politically active (Skoric et al., 2015). Another set of studies also reveals that the usage of mobile devices to reach out to news items is also related to offline political participation (Rojas & Puig-i-Abril, 2009; Yamamoto et al., 2015; Yoo et al., 2015). In other words, mobile-based news consumption is an important factor behind the decision to be politically active. Another interesting study that investigates the relationship between messaging apps, political knowledge, and participation finds that mobile messaging apps are positively related to offline and online political participation (Yamamoto et al., 2018). Despite these findings, some politicians use social media channels as if they were traditional media platforms. For example, Filimonov et al. (2016, p.8) look at the Swedish parties' activities on Instagram during the 2014 elections. The study reveals that Instagram is used more like a "virtual billboard" to disseminate information rather than mobilizing voters. Another study on Bahraini candidates' mobilization strategy on Instagram also shows that candidates' posts are about an "invitation into their campaign tents" where they can talk about their election promises (Eldin, 2016, p. 252).

Social media marketing activities were composed of four different items: content, credibility, interaction, and WOM. After applying factor and reliability analyses, it is found out that political participation has three factors: offline participation, online participation, and donation. Despite the predictions in the research model, content, credibility, and interaction did not have any impact on offline political participation. The only important factor which influenced offline participation was WOM. Another finding states that online political participation was only positively related to credibility; hence, content, interaction, and WOM did not have any impact on online political participation at all. Lastly, it was found out that social media marketing activities were not positively related to donation.

Based on the analyses of candidates' social media accounts, it is obvious that social media has been used as an additional platform to distribute campaign messages to mobilize voters to be politically active and convince them to vote for them at the

election. That is why it was probable that campaign managers were carefully planning the content which was shared on social media accounts; however, it was unexpected to find out that content failed to mobilize Turkish voters within the scope of the June 2019 Istanbul Local Election.

While investigating the previous research regarding the elections in Turkey, it was found out that Turkish politicians failed to benefit from the interactivity feature of social media (Akyol, 2015; Bayrantutan et al., 2014; Çakır & Tufan, 2016; Tosyalı & Sütçü, 2019). The results also strengthen this finding since it had nothing to with political participation in the local election.

Since credibility and word-of-mouth were related to different types of political participation, the primary responsibility of any campaign strategist should be to ensure that electorate considers the information shared on the candidate's social media accounts as credible, trustworthy, reliable, and believable. Just like in the commercial world, the information passed by one citizen to another seems positively related to offline political participation; hence, considering that each voter is also a potential marketing expert, it would be useful to establish a relationship with them and organize the campaign accordingly. As things turn out, not all variables of social media marketing activities directly caused a high level of political participation; hence, the contribution of Ekrem İmamoğlu's social media campaign strategy to his success should be carefully approached even if it could have some impact on the election result.

It is hypothesized that social media marketing activities shape candidate image. After conducting factor and reliability analyses, it was discovered that there were two factors of candidate image: attractiveness + honesty and competence. When regression analyses results were analyzed, it was obvious that both credibility and WOM were positively related to attractiveness + honesty and competence. In other words, it can be deduced that political candidates running in the local election benefited from the credibility of their messages on social media and informal,

person-to-person discussions to shape their perceived candidate image in the electorate's minds. In other words, while creating any messages on social media to shape the perceived candidate image in the electorates' minds, candidates should pay attention to the credibility of their content and the virality of their posts. The previous research also shows that WOM is positively related to brand image and candidate image (Hultman et al., 2019; Yavas & Shemwell, 1996); this thesis also supports these findings; hence, politicians should take into consideration how one voter may impact other voters' decision-making process. The research failed to find a statistically significant relationship between content and attractiveness + honesty; content and competence; interaction and attractiveness + honesty; interaction and competence; hence, the impact of candidates' social media marketing activities on candidate image was limited even if previous work found a very strong relationship between the two (Hultman et al., 2019).

Following, the relationship between candidate image and political participation was analyzed since candidates used opportunities provided by social media platforms to communicate their campaign messages in the June 2019 Istanbul Local Election. After the factor analyses, it was revealed that political participation was composed of three factors: offline, online, and donation. Generally, donation has appeared as an online or offline political participation method, depending on the way the donation is made; however, it was the sole factor in this thesis. By using social media accounts, candidates not only be able to craft the messages as they wish but also can build a winner image. A study that investigated voters' attitudes and voting intentions before the 2016 US Presidential Election found out that politicians' use of social media had an impact on voters' intention to vote (Macafee et al., 2019). On the one hand, attractiveness + honesty positively impacted offline political participation, online political participation, and donation. On the other hand, the research failed to support the relationship between competence and three dimensions of political participation; however, it could be concluded that candidate image is still an influential factor in voters' political behavior and the relationship between candidate image and political participation was once again confirmed and

in line with the previous research results (Hacker, 1995; Miller et al., 1986; Newman & Sheth, 1985; Rarick et al., 1977; Shama, 1975; Sheaffer, 2008; Sherrod, 1971). By looking at these relationships, it could be deduced that respondents were not interested in how much experience the candidate had while deciding whom to support. In sum, candidate image continues to be an effective component of the electorate's political participation. That is why campaign developers should craft the catchy candidate image as much as possible to win the election.

Afterward, the relationship between social media marketing activities and political efficacy was tested. Political efficacy has been demonstrated as one of the key factors behind citizens' political behavior. As expected, political efficacy turned out to have two factors: internal and external political efficacy. Since social media marketing activities are an indispensable part of marketing (Felix et al., 2017), which is reshaping the landscape of political life, it was anticipated that it is positively related to political efficacy. Research findings show that the credibility of information shared on social media is the key factor behind the increased internal political efficacy. Since internal political efficacy is about voters' perception of their competence in understanding of political issues and the system, the credibility of information shared on candidates' social media accounts made them feel confident about their knowledge; hence, candidates should convince voters regarding the reliability of the information in their accounts to make sure that the electorate will be willing to be a part of political life. The result of the analysis between interaction and external political efficacy was also meaningful since voters could directly communicate with political candidates through social media accounts and had a conversation with them which made them believe that they were heard, at some point, they may have believed that their views were taken into consideration which is all about external political efficacy. Another important finding is that interaction has positively related to external political efficacy which makes sense since external political efficacy is about the responsiveness of politicians and the political system; hence, interacting with the voters on social media made them think

they are heard, and it is possible to reach out and maybe convince politicians to listen to their advice and requests.

Lastly, the relationship between political efficacy and political participation was tested. The level of political efficacy any voter possesses is a valuable indicator regarding whether they think of themselves as competent to understand political issues, campaigns, and politicians' promises, and believe that they can change something in their countries. Along with the previous findings (Condon & Holleque, 2013; Krampen, 2000; Reichert, 2016; Vecchione et al., 2014), internal political efficacy was related to all dimensions of political participation. Consequently, political candidates should make sure to increase the level of political efficacy of their constituents to mobilize them in the upcoming elections. Concerning external political efficacy, the only meaningful relationship was between external political efficacy and offline political participation. The reason behind this finding could be related to respondents' perception regarding Turkish political status quo.

The study conducted by Hetherington (1996) reveals that the way voters evaluate the national economy, and their voting preferences change when they follow the news about the presidential campaigns. Bartels (1993) also supports this finding and states that voters who are more exposed to the news change their perceptions about a candidate's presidential campaign as opposed to the ones who do not consume election news a lot. Becoming an indispensable part of any political campaign, both the role and importance of social media are unequivocal. Even if not all SMM variables are directly related to political participation, candidate image, and political efficacy within the sample of this research, the findings demonstrate that it is critical to supply information through social media to the voters to leave an impact on their behavior and shape their perception. That is why political candidates should continue using every single platform to distribute their messages and communicate with the electorate as much as possible.

5.2. THEORETICAL AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The number of SNS users and the average time spent on social media are increasing in Turkey (Datareportal, 2021). Plus, SNSs are employed by political parties and politicians to interact with constituents. As it was mentioned above, a wealth of scholars shows different aspects of social media, political participation, candidate image, and political efficacy; however, after conducting an in-depth analysis, it has been found out that the research on the relationship between social media marketing activities of political candidates and election results was scant. That means there was a void in the literature regarding whether the political campaign on social media had an impact on the electorate's political participation or not within the Turkish context. This thesis contributes to the current literature on political marketing by applying the insights from social media marketing studies developed within the scope of marketing literature by considering the increased role played by social media in a political campaign. That is why this study which was developed with the purpose of addressing the current gap in the political marketing studies, represents a significant step further.

Considering the findings mentioned in the previous sections, this study offers theoretical and practical implications. Regarding theoretical implications, by bridging the literature on marketing-oriented studies and political science studies in this thesis, it is believed that this study has become an important milestone in political marketing studies. Even if the model presented at the beginning of the research was not fully supported after the data analyses, it is shown that the study should be conducted immediately after the elections held around the world where political entities employ social media as a political campaign tool to check the validity of the research model.

Second, this thesis provides valuable insights to strengthen social media marketing variables by applying the approach developed by previous researchers (Hultman et al., 2019). Unfortunately, social media marketing is mainly studied in the marketing

literature (Chang et al., 2015; Yuan et al., 2016), and its applicability in political and human brands is scarce (Hultman et al., 2019); hence, it is believed that this thesis helps using social media marketing variables in those areas. It is known that political campaign is a marketing issue (Denton, 1988); hence, campaign strategists must reach a complete understanding of the effectiveness of social media marketing activities of political candidates on voters' political participation and its relationship with candidate image and political efficacy to formulate winning political campaign strategies. From a marketing perspective, this thesis endeavors to rationalize how one candidate overcomes an opponent during heavily contested elections with the help of a carefully crafted political campaign strategy that employs social media.

In terms of practical implications, political candidates are encouraged to employ several social media platforms, if not all, to spread their campaign messages since citizens are using the very same platforms to be able to reach out information regarding political candidates and their promises. Even if political information availability has dramatically expanded as consequences of the internet and technological changes over the past decades; it should be kept in mind that the information availability must not mean the revolutionary changes since the information is only available to those who are interested in it; therefore, whoever is keen to learn about politics will attempt to have knowledge of politics (Kenski & Stroud, 2006).

Since it is not possible to imagine people's daily lives without social media, the importance of studies about the role of social media on election results has become priceless for political entities to plan efficient political campaign; that is why the findings of this study will help political campaign strategists to develop better strategies for the 2023 election. The 2023 election will be very important in Turkey's history since it will be the year Turkish people celebrate the 100th birthday of the country. Another important fact about the next election in Turkey is that almost 10% of the total voter population will be composed of GenZ ("Seçimin kaderini Z kuşağı mı belirleyecek?", 2021). As opposed to the views stating how

inappropriate to apply the concept of marketing to politics, the researcher believes that the successful integration of marketing techniques to politics will be helpful to elevate the political process in Turkey and enables a more inclusive way of executing politics.

5.3. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Even though there are several prominent theoretical and managerial contributions of this study, its findings should be interpreted with caution due to a few limitations.

First, snowball sampling was chosen as a sampling technique to operationalize data collection on the grounds that it is easy and cost-effective; however, it would be fair to say that it may not generate a random sample because there is a high possibility that respondents and their friends whom they asked to take the survey had common traits and worldviews. That is why it is better to keep in mind that the generalizability of the results could be limited.

Second, even if respondents were asked to answer questions related to demographics, variables were not directly related to the research model; consequently, the analysis could not be performed by looking at the difference between different age cohorts; however, it may be a genial thought to include demographic variables into the model which future researchers should take into consideration since the young population will be an important part of the upcoming elections in Turkey.

Third, the timing of the study could be interpreted as a potential threat to the internal validity of this study since the data was conducted one-and-half years later after the election was held; however, not only Ph.D. students who participated in the pre-study nor the respondents stated that they experienced any difficulty to recall that period. Even so, it may be a good idea for future research to conduct the survey within six months after the election is held.

Another fundamental issue is that the study was conducted within Turkey, and there was no research that employed the same model before in another country to the knowledge of the researcher; hence, there is not cross-cultural data to compare with each other. Consequently, further research is encouraged to inquire about the same model around the world to check the applicability of the findings and the research model.

Even though social media was not developed yesterday, there is a void in literature that investigates its role in political campaigns. As mentioned earlier, most scholars conducted a content analysis of how political entities use social media platforms; however, social media marketing should be addressed from different angles. Leaving aside the fact that this thesis is an excellent starting point, future studies should compare diverse social media platforms for controlling whether the same impacts can be found or not which is amazing information for campaign developers to effectively allocate their budget and efforts.

Lastly, despite the indispensability of social media in political campaigns and the importance of platform-specific studies, researchers should be cautious about interpreting the impact of social media marketing activities on political participation. With its increased popularity, scholars may tend to exaggerate the impact of social media, that is why scholars may add different variables to the researcher's model. For example, Lee (2020) states, the social network site usage determinants, which are need to belong, perceived ease of use, and perceived usefulness, should be closely examined while drafting political social media plan; that is why these factors can be added to the future research model. Since partisanship is found as an important variable which impacts voters' evaluation of political campaigns (Chang, 2003), future research may employ it as a variable. As Winchester et al. (2014) offer, information seeking, and voter involvement can be a part of the research model. Another set of studies can also employ social ties, political discussion, trust, people's motivation to use social media platforms, and political sophistication to decode the role of social media in political marketing.

5.4. CONCLUSION

Throughout history, the most popular marketing tools have constantly changed because of technological developments. With its increasing number of users and the different opportunities it can offer with its ever-growing nature, social media has turned into a vital marketing and communication platform for every industry. As might be expected, having a social media presence is not enough. Today's conditions necessitate to develop special strategies for social media by taking into consideration the characteristics of each social media tool and the target audience. What is more important than developing tailor-made strategies for each different social media tool is testing assumptions and understanding the role of actions taken to create an impact. In this way, it is possible to develop effective strategies and allocate the budget accordingly.

Since digital natives are ready to conquer the electoral arena (Moeller et al., 2014) and there will be six million voters who will vote for the first time in the upcoming elections which will equate to almost 10% of the whole voters in Turkey ("Seçimin kaderini Z kuşağı mı belirleyecek?", 2021), it has become nothing but an absolute necessity to understand the role of social media. The way they collect information, the way they engage in any content, what motivates them to be politically active should be analyzed, so that campaign developers can effectively allocate the limited time and budget to reach political aims.

Social media has been used by Turkish politicians since 2002, and it has been revealed that the way they incorporate social media in their political campaign strategies has become way more sophisticated throughout the years. In line with this, there is numerous research about the way political entities made a presence on social media; however, measuring the impact of any actions on these channels only by conducting content analysis will not be enough. Since the main aim of politicians is to mobilize voters to make their dreams come true, the relationship between social

media marketing of political candidates and voters' political participation should be analyzed.

Research results demonstrate that all SMM variables are not directly related to political participation, candidate image, and political efficacy. It is also found out that the relationship was indirectly shaped via candidate image and political efficacy. Attractiveness + honesty, which is a dimension of candidate image, has emerged as a strong factor affecting voters' political participation. In other words, it can be inferred that candidate image is an important asset in the Turkish political arena. By being another important variable that affects political participation, the relationship between internal political participation and different kinds of political participation was found positive, while external political efficacy was only related to offline political participation. That is why political candidates should pay attention to whether they are good at impacting the level of political efficacy that their constituents have for the sake of increasing their political participation.

This thesis, which is believed to facilitate a productive discussion in the academic field with its findings, has simultaneously generated very valuable insights regarding the issues that all political entities should consider when planning their future endeavors.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: THE QUESTIONNAIRE IN TURKISH

Bilgilendirilmiş Onam Formu

Sayın Katılımcı,

Bu çalışma, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Pazarlama Bölümü yüksek lisans bitirme tezi kapsamında Türkiye’de yürütülen akademik bir araştırma için hazırlanmıştır. Araştırmanın amacı, siyasi adayların sosyal medya pazarlama aktivitelerinin seçmenin siyasi katılımına olan etkisini anlamaktır. Takip eden sayfalarda çeşitli konularda görüşleriniz sorulacaktır ve soruların doğru veya yanlış cevapları yoktur. Katılımcıların kendi bakış açılarına göre cevaplama beklenmektedir.

Bu çalışmaya katılımınız tamamen isteğe bağlıdır. Katılmayabilirsiniz veya herhangi bir noktada bırakabilirsiniz. Araştırma kapsamında isminiz istenmeyecektir ve cevaplarınız isimsiz olarak bilgisayara kaydedilecektir. Cevaplarınız akademik araştırma dışında asla kullanılmayacaktır.

Anketin doldurulması yaklaşık 15 dakikanızı alacaktır.

Katılımınız için şimdiden teşekkür ederim.

Herhangi bir sorunuz olduğunda bana aşağıdaki mailden ulaşabilirsiniz.

burcu.gunal@bilgiedu.net

1. 2019 İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Haziran seçiminde oy kullandınız mı?

Evet	Hayır

2. 2019 İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediye Başkanlığı adaylarından hangisine oy verdiniz?

Binali Yıldırım	Ekrem İmamoğlu	Diğer

3. 2019 İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediye Başkanlığı Haziran seçimlerinde oy verebilseydiniz hangi adaya oy verirdiniz?

Binali Yıldırım	Ekrem İmamoğlu	Diğer

4. Oy verdiğiniz ya da oy verebilseydiniz seçeceğiniz adayın sosyal medyasına 2019 yerel seçim dönemi de dahil olmak üzere aşına mısınız?

Evet	Hayır

Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadelere katılım düzeyinizi ("1=Kesinlikle katılmıyorum", "2=Katılmıyorum", "3=Kısmen katılmıyorum", "4=Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum", "5= Kısmen katılıyorum", "6=Katılıyorum", "7=Kesinlikle katılıyorum") şeklinde işaretleyiniz.

Aşağıdaki ifadeleri 2019 İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediye Başkanlığı adayları arasından oy verdiğiniz aday üzerinden ya da oy verebilseydiniz oy vermeyi tercih edeceğiniz aday üzerinden cevaplandırınız.

5. Adayın sosyal medya hesaplarının içeriği ilginç görünüyor.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

6. Adayın sosyal medya hesaplarında yer verilen içerikler bilgilendiricidir.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

7. Adayın sosyal medya hesaplarının, karar vermemde yardımcı olduğunu düşünüyorum.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

8. Adayın sosyal medya hesapları, başkalarıyla bilgi paylaşmama fırsat sağlıyor.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

9. Adayın sosyal medya hesapları aracılığıyla fikirlerimi ifade etmem kolay oluyor.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

10. Adayın sosyal medya hesapları aracılığıyla başkalarıyla konuşmak ya da fikir alışverişi yapmak mümkün oluyor.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

11. Adayın sosyal medya hesaplarında paylaştığı bilgiler ikna ediciydi.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

12. Adayın sosyal medya hesaplarında paylaştığı bilgiler dürüsttü.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

13. Adayın sosyal medya hesaplarında paylaştığı bilgiler güvenilirli.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

14. Adayın sosyal medya hesaplarında paylaştığı bilgiler inanılırdı.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

15. Adayın sosyal medya hesapları hakkında olumlu şeyler söylerim.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

16. Adayın sosyal medya hesaplarını arkadaşlarıma öneririm.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

17. Eğer arkadaşlarım güncel seçim ya da sosyal/siyasal olaylar ile ilgili bilgi arıyorsa adayın sosyal medya hesaplarına bakmasını söylerim.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

18. Aday güvenilirdir.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

19. Aday etikdir.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

20. Aday içtendir.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

21. Aday özgündür.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

22. Aday partisine çekicilik katmaktadır.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

23. Aday çekicidir.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

24. Aday insanları memnun eder.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

25. Aday açık sözlü olarak bilinmektedir.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

26. Aday dürüst olarak bilinmektedir.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

27. Aday beni önemser.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

28. Aday benim çıkarlarımı göz önünde bulundurur.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

29. Aday kendi yöntemleriyle benzersizdir.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

30. Adayın kendine özgü özellikleri vardır.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

31. Aday, kendisini öne çıkaran özelliklere sahiptir.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

32. Aday tecrübeli bir politikacıdır.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

33. Aday, güncel sosyal ve siyasi konular hakkında kapsamlı bir bilgiye sahiptir.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

34. Aday, yetenekli bir politikacıdır.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

35. Aday işinin ehlidir.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

36. Aday zekidir.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

37. Kendimi siyasete ve kamu işlerine katılabilecek donanımda görüyorum.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

38.Siyaset ve hükümetle ilgili olarak çoğu insandan daha çok bilgi sahibi olduğumu düşünüyorum.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

39. Ülkemizin karşı karşıya olduğu önemli siyasi konuları oldukça iyi bir biçimde anladığımı hissediyorum.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

40. Benim gibi insanlar hükümetin yapacakları üzerinde söz sahibi değildir.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

41. Bizim yönetim şeklimizde seçimi kim kazanırsa kazansın, ülkenin nasıl yönetileceği konusunda son söz halkın elindedir.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

42. Vatandaşların, hükümetin yaptıklarını başarıyla etkilemesinin birçok yasal yolu vardır.

Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 1	Katılmıyorum 2	Kısmen katılmıyorum 3	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4	Kısmen katılıyorum 5	Katılıyorum 6	Kesinlikle katılıyorum 7

Lütfen 2019 İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi seçim döneminde aşağıdaki aktiviteleri ne sıklıkta yaptığınızı (1" = Hiçbir zaman, 7= Her zaman") şeklinde işaretleyiniz.

Bu aktiviteleri oy verdiğiniz aday (ya da oy verebilseydiniz seçeceğiniz aday) ve adayın bağlı olduğu partiyi göz önüne alarak cevaplandırınız.

43. İnsanlarla konuştum ve onlara neden partilerden veya adaylardan birine veya aleyhine oy vermeleri gerektiğini göstermeye çalıştım.

Hiçbir zaman 1	Nadiren 2	Fırsat buldukça 3	Bazen 4	Sık sık 5	Genellikle 6	Her zaman 7

44. Siyasi toplantılara, mitinglere, konuşmalara, yemeklere ya da adayı destekleyen etkinliklere gittim.

Hiçbir zaman 1	Nadiren 2	Fırsat buldukça 3	Bazen 4	Sık sık 5	Genellikle 6	Her zaman 7

45. Kampanya rozeti taktım, arabama çıkartma yapıştırdım ya da pencere/evimin önüne desteklediğim aday ya da parti ile ilgili işaret koydum.

Hiçbir zaman 1	Nadiren 2	Fırsat buldukça 3	Bazen 4	Sık sık 5	Genellikle 6	Her zaman 7

46. Partilerden ya da adaylardan biri için çalıştım.

Hiçbir zaman 1	Nadiren 2	Fırsat buldukça 3	Bazen 4	Sık sık 5	Genellikle 6	Her zaman 7

47. Bir adaya ya da partiye çevrimdışı (internet ortamı dışında) bağışta bulundum.

Hiçbir zaman 1	Nadiren 2	Fırsat buldukça 3	Bazen 4	Sık sık 5	Genellikle 6	Her zaman 7

48. Bir e-mail imzaladım ya da internet üzerinden dilekçe imzaladım.

Hiçbir zaman 1	Nadiren 2	Fırsat buldukça 3	Bazen 4	Sık sık 5	Genellikle 6	Her zaman 7

49. Bir politikacıdan gelen maili başka birine yönlendirdim.

Hiçbir zaman 1	Nadiren 2	Fırsat buldukça 3	Bazen 4	Sık sık 5	Genellikle 6	Her zaman 7

50. İnsanlarla çevrimiçi (internet ortamında) olarak konuştum ve onlara neden partilerden veya adaylardan birine veya aleyhine oy vermeleri gerektiğini göstermeye çalıştım.

Hiçbir zaman 1	Nadiren 2	Fırsat buldukça 3	Bazen 4	Sık sık 5	Genellikle 6	Her zaman 7

51. Devlet memuru ile e-mail, websitesi ya da sosyal ağlar aracılığıyla iletişime geçtim.

Hiçbir zaman 1	Nadiren 2	Fırsat buldukça 3	Bazen 4	Sık sık 5	Genellikle 6	Her zaman 7

52. Sosyal ağlarda siyasi bir adayı takip ettim ya da taraftarı oldum.

Hiçbir zaman 1	Nadiren 2	Fırsat buldukça 3	Bazen 4	Sık sık 5	Genellikle 6	Her zaman 7

53. Bir blog, sosyal ağ ya da websitesine siyasi fikrimi beyan etmek için bir yorum ya da internet linki bıraktım.

Hiçbir zaman 1	Nadiren 2	Fırsat buldukça 3	Bazen 4	Sık sık 5	Genellikle 6	Her zaman 7

54. Siyaset hakkında çevrimiçi (internet ortamında) tartışmalara veya sohbet gruplarına katıldım.

Hiçbir zaman 1	Nadiren 2	Fırsat buldukça 3	Bazen 4	Sık sık 5	Genellikle 6	Her zaman 7

55. Bu seçim yılında bir adaya veya siyasi partiye çevrimiçi (internet ortamında) bağışta bulundum.

Hiçbir zaman 1	Nadiren 2	Fırsat buldukça 3	Bazen 4	Sık sık 5	Genellikle 6	Her zaman 7

56. İnternetteki bir mesaja veya makaleye çevrimiçi (internet ortamında) tepki verdim.

Hiçbir zaman 1	Nadiren 2	Fırsat buldukça 3	Bazen 4	Sık sık 5	Genellikle 6	Her zaman 7

57. Siyaset veya kamusal meselelerle ilgili internet tabanlı protestolara veya boykotlara katıldım.

Hiçbir zaman 1	Nadiren 2	Fırsat buldukça 3	Bazen 4	Sık sık 5	Genellikle 6	Her zaman 7

58. Kendi sosyal medya hesaplarımda siyaset ya da toplumsal konular hakkında yazdım.

Hiçbir zaman 1	Nadiren 2	Fırsat buldukça 3	Bazen 4	Sık sık 5	Genellikle 6	Her zaman 7

59. Sosyal medya hesaplarımda siyasi içerik paylaştım.

Hiçbir zaman 1	Nadiren 2	Fırsat buldukça 3	Bazen 4	Sık sık 5	Genellikle 6	Her zaman 7

Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadelerden sizi tanımlayan ilgili öğeyi seçiniz.

60. Cinsiyet

Kadın	Erkek	Diğer

61. Yaş

18 ve altı	18 – 24	25 – 34	35 – 44	45 – 54	55 yaş ve üstü

62. Gelir

2999 TL ve altı	3000 TL – 4999 TL	5000 TL – 6999 TL	7000 TL – 8999 TL	9000 TL ve üzeri

63. En son kazanılan eğitim seviyesi

İlkokul	Ortaokul	Lise	Lisans	Yüksek lisans	Doktora

64. Güncel çalışma durumu

Kamuda ücretli	Özel sektör ücretli	Serbest meslek	Ev hanımı	Emekli	Öğrenci	İşsiz/iş arıyor	Diğer

65. Medeni Durum

Bekar	Evli	Boşanmış	Dul	Diğer

APPENDIX B: ETHICS BOARD APPROVAL

Ethics Board Approval is available in the printed version of this dissertation.