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A Comparison of Turkish and Greek Leaders Recep Tayyip
Erdoğan and Alexis Tsipras Twitter Management**

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# Communication of Politics through Social Media: A Comparison of Turkish and Greek Leaders Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Alexis Tsipras Twitter Management

## ABSTRACT

The technological change that was faced in the world caused many changes for every market. Especially the improvement of Web 2.0 created a new way of communication which was called as Social media. Social media first accepted by the common people, in the second step the companies start using social media for their corporate reputation. The final step was the use of countries, the governments, the politicians and politic institutions. These three steps caused social media platforms to be accepted officially by the world. The politics adapted to social media very quickly. They start using it not only for elections in their marketing campaigns but in their common life as a communication tool. After politics started using Facebook and Twitter which are the most popular social media platforms in the world the communication of politicians had a turn point. Especially in the 2010s the usage of social media had a tremendous increase around the world. The number one social media platform Facebook, increased its reach to billion, Twitter became the second most important global social media platform in the world. This paper made a descriptive research on the social media usage of Turkey and Greece with a comparison of two countries most popular Facebook and Twitter platforms. The paper will give a look to the social media term and its global usage through politicians for Facebook and Twitter in the first part. In the second part of the paper there will be a research about the most popular Facebook and Twitter accounts of Turkey and Greece. The research will include the quantitative analysis of the highest ten accounts of two countries by June 2018. The second part of the paper which is the main part of the research made an analysis for the Greek leader Alexis Tsipras and Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's way of communication on their Twitter accounts. There would be a content analysis for the two leaders Twitter accounts for May 2018 and interpretations will be made.

Keywords: Social Media, Politics, Facebook, Twitter, Tsipras, Erdoğan, Turkey, Greece

## Introduction

The period in which the Internet literally came into our lives can be called the Web 2.0 period. In this period, the content creators has begun to create contents considering preferences and opinions of the target groups resulting a significant increase in the number of internet users. These increases have also attracted the attention of political parties that want to influence the target groups, and the Internet has begun to become one of the important channels of political marketing.

The importance of political marketing through social media emerges at the point of communicating information fast and establishing interactive communication with a large number of people in summary, with the important advantages offered by the Internet as well as other factors.

Among the micro-blog services that allow users to identify their current situations with text messages, Twitter is probably the most popular and well-known one. Twitter has become one of the most important tools of political communication and political marketing among social media channels.

In this research, it is aimed to make an evaluation on the use of social media in political communication and its effects. In this context, firstly the concept and scope of political campaign and then social media usage in the political campaign process have been conceptually examined. In the last section, which constitutes our main field of study, the usage of social media, specific to Twitter, by politicians and politic campaign relations have been evaluated. The aim of the research is to find an answer to the question of how Tsipras and Erdogan, two leaders of two neighbouring countries, Turkey and Greece, are giving messages to the society through Twitter.

## Definition, Scope and Development of the Concept of Political Marketing

In general, there are many similarities between marketing principles and political marketing. However, the main difference between these two phoneme is that the marketing has been uninterruptedly continuing its activities for consumers and there are product variety in the market, while in the political communication marketing, persuasive studies on voters are carried out within the political system at certain periods. Political marketing with a broad perspective is "all of the techniques used to get the number of votes required to win a campaign with the minimum of means, to ensure the suitability of a candidate for his/her potential voters, to ensure that the candidate is known by the highest number of electorate and every voter in that electorate, and to create the candidate's difference with his/her opponents and rivalries." (Kahraman, 2014: 42).

The consumer, who is the most important variable in terms of marketing and marketing mix, appears as a voter in political marketing. The role of the consumer in marketing commercially is also valid for voters in political marketing (Ekinci, 2014 16). Political marketing, which is the activities carried out by political institutions in order to fulfill and support the services and programs that people need, consists of the implementation of marketing concepts and techniques by

political actors and organizations to achieve their goals. With political marketing, marketing activities are implemented in politics and it is desired to provide the voter satisfaction in this way (Üste, Yuksel and Caliskan, 2007: 215).

Political marketing is concerned with communicating with voters, as well as party members, the media and possible sources. Having multiple target groups means for public and non-profit organizations that they have a common point with marketing (Lock and Harris, 1996: 14).

According to Vankov (2013: 75), political marketing as an academic discipline functions at two levels. According to this, firstly there are explanations for political marketing activities by political actors and secondly researches based on change or interaction for explaining the political field on its own. Specifically, political marketing researches are concerned with democracy topics and topics that can be measured by political marketing management and underlying concepts such as voter focus or market orientation.

In the literature, concepts of political marketing and political communication can be substituted with each other in certain situations. Although this substitution occasionally leads to conceptual confusion, according to Mutlu (20003 304), political communication represents the academic field that deals with the relations between political processes and communication processes on a wider frame. Political communication is one of the most important fields of journalism and mass communication as a multidimensional concept. Riaz (2010: 161-162) emphasizes the usage of media of governments and political parties in political communication in order to receive support of the public at election times or at other different times, and draws attention to the relationship between political communication and political science and mass communication.

Political marketing has expanded from election campaigns to becoming a way of governance. The idea of a permanent campaign means that political marketing is constantly taking place in each stage, not only through the election campaigns. Durmaz and Direkci (2013: 32) point out that the political organization must constantly communicate with the public and adopt the principles of relationship marketing also for this reason. In the light of this information, it should be noted that political marketing is handled not only as an election process, but also as a governing tool. To be successful in political marketing, it is necessary for the political organization or candidate to be sensitive to its/his/her voters.

A political party, a person/candidate or an ideology can be seen as a political product in political marketing. The success of the product depends mostly on the personal image, the background of the candidate, or the party itself. By the multifaceted nature of political product, it can be said that a "political concept" can be used in favour of a "political product" in political marketing. With the expression of Durmaz and Direkci (2013: 33), since the same marketing techniques are used in the marketing of a political product as in the marketing of a traditional product, the political product term is usually included in the literature.

Political marketing is acts related to presentation and promotion of persons being in the line to fulfil the needs and expectations of voters or their programs and, in one respect, it is the marketing of ideas. In this context, Kilicaslan (2013: 33-34) summarizes the political marketing principles as follows:

- First, the target group of political marketing must be identified. This target group is voters.
- The political market is made up of people with common interests and expectations.
- The effectiveness in political market depends on good and correct segmentation.
- Any means of communication should be used to reach the target group.
- The products of political parties must have a life cycle. Every political idea should be regarded as a different product, and it should be thought that each idea will have a life time.
- In political marketing, election campaigns based on donation and voluntary work are important.
- In order for values adopted by candidates, parties and leaders to be able to be approved by voters, expectations of voters must be predictable.
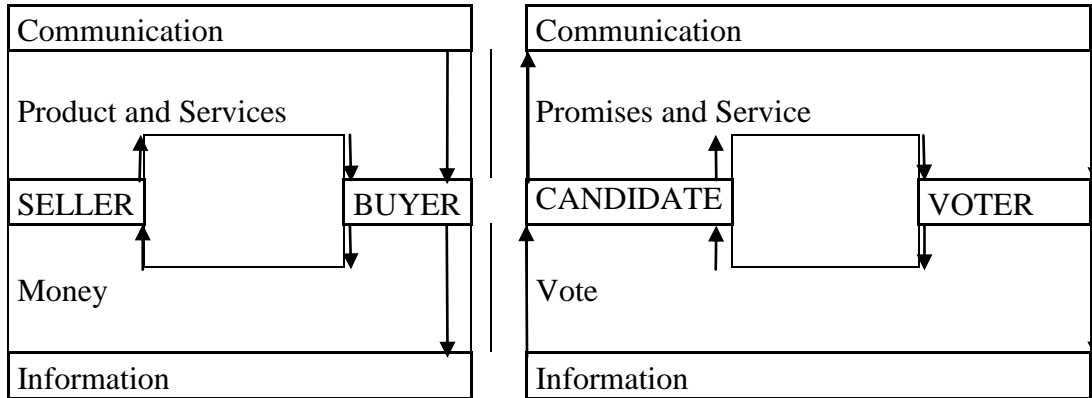- Distribution channels and promotional activities are important in political marketing.

Political marketing refers to the use of marketing means, techniques and methods in the political process. With the expression of Menon (2008: 1), political marketing is the association between marketing and politics. As an activity and method, it reflects the influence of the political field through marketing. Political marketing generally uses methods such as political advertising, participation of professional consultants and campaign managers, online campaign, cell phone promotion, segmentation, micro-targeting. Lock and Harris (1996: 15) have identified seven fundamental differences between classical and political marketing. These are (Kolovos and Harris, 2010: 4-5):

- Unlike purchasing decisions, all voters make their own choices on the same day. In addition, while there are similarities between surveys and monitoring methods of brand-shares, the first one is based on real purchasing decisions while the latter is based on hypothetical results.
- Unlike other purchasing decisions, voting preference is not directly or indirectly dependent on individual personal costs.
- Voters have to live with election results, even if they are not their preferences.
- Especially in countries where electoral systems like the one of the United Kingdom are available, winner takes everything.
- Political parties and candidates are complex abstract products that voters cannot distinguish and will have to decide on the sum of the package.
- It is very difficult to create a new and successful party in many countries.
- In the majority of main marketing options, brand leaders tend to remain on the frontline.

Political marketing is a two-way communication process, and the actors of political marketing consist of items such as politicians, voters, trade unions, non-

governmental organizations. Duman and Ipeksen (2013: 119) also emphasize that these items vary according to the political system applied. Therefore, any kind of communication activities carried out by political parties, which are organized groups that have come together to govern the people, are evaluated in the field of political marketing.

**Table 1.** *Comparison of Traditional Marketing and Political Marketing*

| Communication | | Communication | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Product and Services | | Promises and Service | |
| SELLER | BUYER | CANDIDATE | VOTER |
| Money | | Vote | |
| Information | | Information | |

A. Marketing                                    B. Political Marketing

Political marketing aims to develop leaders, transform the activities into votes, as policy-making process in accordance with political preferences, especially expectations of voters and involves to tell voters the promised, the promised but not realized or to be realized activities, using various marketing techniques. In addition to these, political marketing also includes activities to establish and maintain relations with media and party members (Uste, Yuksel and Caliskan, 2007: 216).

**Political Marketing in the New Media**

In recent years, the rise of Web 2.0 technologies has further increased the interest of the Internet with political communication. With the adoption of social software as support for more participation and democracy, the studies and practices in this field have increased. The third era of political communication refers to the simple transmission of messages through media technologies or media organizations; it also emphasizes that political institutions have become increasingly dependent on the mass media. However, as Brants and Voltmer (2011: 3) emphasize, the issue of how the media dependence and adaptation to their operating logic have gradually affected the political process and institutional structure and to what extend they have affected political outputs of the political decision-making mechanism has continued to be discussed.

In recent years, new media-social media channels have been added to mass media used in political marketing works. In addition to traditional mass communication channels, the new media has also become an important tool in

reaching the target group. In this process, especially the political parties are able to make propaganda as they desire through websites and social media channels, benefiting from easy reachability of the Internet and fastness from traditional media channels. Thanks to the developing technological and communication possibilities, the Internet is not only a means just used in election periods, but also creates an environment where people are involved in the governing issues and communicate their own feelings, thoughts and opinions out of election period as well and communicate one-to-one with the governing staff (Fidan and Ozer, 2014: 212). In the age that we live in, the Internet and politics have become inseparable; in a sense, have removed the obstacles that prevented free flow of information between political decision-makers and the public. While the traditional forms of media are still an integral part of the political campaign strategy, the Internet offers numerous opportunities for politicians.

While the 2008 Obama campaign in the United States of America is often seen as an ever-increasing pressure of the Internet as a political means as the 'beginning of a new period for the use of the Internet in political campaigns', Miller states that political communication instruments have various limitations and the new media is not only a less costly alternative to a traditional campaign (Roginsky, 2014: 102).

The intense use of new media in the printed press is evaluated as the increase in political independency in the pre-election period (Sezgin, 2014: 213). The Internet provides users with cheapness and geographical infinity. Today, it is possible to open a site on the internet with a very low cost and to use this site as an accessible and followable media anywhere in the world. Distributing or spreading information with other technologies requires a very high cost. For example, broadcasting the image of any candidate or party on a television channel requires a very high cost and the broadcast image is limited to the geographical location where the audience watching that television channel are existing. However, it is possible to publish any image in a web site created at a relatively low cost, and to view the broadcast image anywhere with internet access.

In Turkey, it is accepted that the Internet has entered our political lives and election campaigns especially with the 3 November 2002 elections. As in some new technologies, the Internet technology has also been used to a limited extent in election campaigns until today, and a large majority of the parties created sites before the 2002 elections, but only ANAP concentrated on its activities at the party's website, in particular. Nowadays, political parties or candidates are able to convey their party programs and propaganda political messages to their target groups through their websites and, thus giving a new dimension to their political campaign activities (Balci 2003: 143). As emphasized by Sezgin (2014: 212), a noteworthy aspect of the use of the new media in the political communication process is that it ensures continuous communication between political actors and their voters not only in election periods, unlike traditional media and political communication studies, but also in every period thanks to its use in every period.

The most important dimension of political marketing in terms of new media is undoubtedly social media platforms. The successful use of social media, especially in Barack Obama's US presidential campaign, shows that these means have

become indispensable in terms of political marketing. Some analysts have attributed Obama's victory largely to his on-line strategy and have shown the importance of the website in terms of base movements in the campaign's success (Tumajsan et al., 2010: 402).

Within the political landscape, there is a common belief that with the social media's transformative potential, the new media instruments have a strong impact on the digital media channels for government transparency, public participation and intergovernmental and intersectoral collaboration. Inspiring creation of concepts such as Democracy 2.0 and Government 2.0, there are also various theoretical frameworks written about bringing communicative and political ideas together (Bryer and Zavattaro, 2011: 325-340).

Social media is referred to as an instrument effective for political communication and affecting the quality and effectiveness of political message transmissions and election campaigns in everyday life.

Above all, social media offer voters a ground where they can easily communicate with their political representatives, effectively manage their voting rights, and increase their participation in political matters. Secondly, other platforms have been shifting their communicative resources from the traditional to the new media, which in turn will influence political actors and encourage them to create an appropriate interactive democratic framework within the system. Thirdly, all organizations created by political parties need political communication processes such as daily messages, communicative practices, public relations, political campaigns and election campaigns. They will need less budget than the necessary one to use the traditional media. This is also an important opportunity for political parties because this technology provides them with reaching more peoples and interact with them to receive support and vote in simpler and cheaper ways (Devran, 2011: 11-12).

Social media technology gives political parties the ability to disseminate and communicate the messages they have created for their supporters through online channels. For example, political actors can share their videos and visual messages their leaders carry through YouTube, meet their supporters, followers and voters on Facebook and Twitter, and create an online platform and chat with them.

In addition, parties and participants can transmit their messages they want to give their groups and their followers through fast and free communication channels. In this context, party representatives, leaders or secretaries, as well as party institutions, are at the forefront because in this system, every component of an infrastructure has become an important intermediary for communicative activities. With the use of social media, political parties can quickly reach their target groups, send mass messages to various voters, obtain financial resources through digital channels, and create volunteer campaign participants. Most importantly, they can get quick feedback on their works in order to improve communication techniques that enable them to reach more people and receive more support.

Social media instruments are also advantageous for political marketing because they have a free media for message transmission. Political actors are limitless when promoting themselves or the legal entities they represent, and there

are no language restrictions (other than harmful content) to try to persuade voters. Social media's messaging and sending instruments increase the speed of communication while enabling fast updates in every context. Since each individual has access to these technologies, both broadcasters and receivers have the opportunity to receive rapid feedback. What's more, social media instruments like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube can easily be linked to each other, messages reach a wide range of people through online media, and the number of viewers and people sharing information on other networks greatly increases. In this sense, social media is an unlimited means of communication (Aziz, 2011: 66-72).

In general, different opinions about the role of the Internet in politics are presented in the literature. On the one hand, according to Stieglitz, Brockmann and Xuan (2012: 2), according to the democratization thesis, transformational changes will be experienced with the Internet's interactive potential, while, according to another point of view, no changes arising from the Internet are anticipated in the main political inequalities of the current system. There are also opinions that the role of the Internet is more complementary than taking the place of the traditional media.

**The Use of Social Media in Political Marketing: Twitter Marketing**

This part of the study will include information on Twitter, which is the platform with the highest number of users in the social media after Facebook, its importance and features in terms of political marketing, as well as academic studies related to the use of social media in political marketing.

*The Importance of Twitter in Terms of Political Marketing*

Twitter is a micro-blog social media platform that users read and type millions of short messages on various topics every day. Twitter is an online social networking service and microblog service that allows users to send and read text-based posts up to 280 characters, known as "tweets." Providing a fast, simple, and convenient form of communication, microblogs provide users with new opportunities such as real-time information share and rapidly disseminated flow of information. These opportunities provided by microblogs have gained more power, especially with the development of mobile communication technologies. The most preferred application among microblogs, which can also be used over mobile devices and is an effective social media tool, is Twitter.

Established by Jack Dorsey in March 2006, Twitter has entered into service in July 2006 and then, has gained worldwide popularity. As of 2012, Twitter has reached 3.1 billion users and about 500 million tweets are sent a day in the social networking system.

Because of the ability to send instant messages from computers and even from mobile devices, Twitter is also defined as the Internet's SMS. Between September and October 2010, the company shifted to the "New Twitter" concept, a completely revamped edition of social media site. As of November 1, 2010, the

company has confirmed that the "New Twitter experience" has been launched for all users' applications. On March 21, 2012, Twitter celebrated its sixth birthday and explained that it has 140 million users and has witnessed 340 million tweets in a day. The number of users has increased by 40 percent since September 2011 with the effect of the Arab Spring.

Twitter has become a popular platform for spreading news quickly and ensuring communication of users with each other, especially with its social networking feature in the form of microblog service. Today, many newsbreaks are spreading more quickly on Twitter than any other media types. In the international arena, the biggest media companies like CNN, New York Times or Time are reaching millions of people over Twitter and use Twitter as part of traditional media like newspapers, television, and radio. Twitter is not only popular among companies, but also among journalists and columnists. Fitton, Poston, and Dorsey (2009: 12-14) stated that some features of Twitter are decisive in its adoption by individuals. According to this, many people prefer this platform to connect and become part of the community while a group uses it only to be heard. Some users prefer Twitter to take notes about their lives. These users use Twitter in conferences, events, daily routines, or to remind themselves later of an event happened. Some users use Twitter to share their thoughts, what they read or what they know with others.

Users can share links to important articles or interesting texts, or their original thoughts, ideas, clues and tips by tweeting. Some tweets may include shares from conversations or lessons, while others may carry parts from their own internal monologues. Family members and long-term friends can use Twitter to keep in touch. Twitter allows users to send open or private messages to their friends, and keep all messages.

As for political communication and political marketing, the Internet has been a part of campaigns especially since the 1996 US presidential election. In this period, however, the Internet was not used to interact with voters, but only to transfer offline materials of their campaigns online (Drukman, Kifer and Parkin, 2007: 425).

The first and most important example of political communication with Twitter is presidential elections held in the United States of America in 2008. Barack Obama's campaign strategy during the 2008 presidential election has quickly incorporated social media into the field of political communication. Using social media in his campaign, Obama has managed to reach his target group by a method never seen before in the history of political campaigns.

Obama's success in the 2008 US Presidential election has convinced many candidates from other countries to believe that they can succeed through social networks. In 2016, the US Presidential Election once again showed the social media's role in election campaigns. According to a research, candidates of the 2016 elections used social media even more than candidates of the 2012 Presidential Election. What's more, Trump's public-specific interest on Twitter is distinct from other the 2016 candidates, as well as distinct and intensive than past presidential campaigns. According to the research, 44 percent of US adults received information from the social media about the 2016 Presidential Election.

This rate is more than the percentage specified for local or national printed newspapers or for candidates' websites and emails. In addition, 24 percent of respondents indicated that they received news and information from Donald Trump's and Hillary Clinton's social media posts.

Twitter, which allows instant and interactive communication, has become one of the social media instruments coming into the forefront with its ability to access millions of users with a single tweet in a short time in terms of political communication and political marketing. With these qualities, it will be able to be said that Twitter has influenced today's political communication in three basic areas (Eren, 2015: 22-28):

> *Equal Opportunity*: Twitter provides an equal opportunity without prerequisite in participation in social life. More specifically, it is possible to access many areas where politics is included with an internet connection and a Twitter account. Twitter, providing a media that enables not only those with opportunities like education, money, status, but also everyone being 'online', say the least of it, speak up, helps to create the equal opportunity. The facts that there are no prerequisites for participation such as age, gender, socio-economic status; it is easy to use and transparent; those who want to speak up can reach auditor; and it can bring people sharing similar ideas together have enabled Twitter to contribute to participatory democracy and these features of Twitter can be considered as examples of equal opportunity.
>
> *Organizing Power*: Bringing together similar groups of thoughts, Twitter ensure these groups organize quickly. As a communication media that makes individuals, who do not directly participate in the action, feel the emotion of doing something and offers them the opportunity to contribute and feel valuable, Twitter makes it easier to organize. As a result, organized masses meeting by use of Twitter, bring along them the creation of a culture of the revolutionary support related to revolutions and campaigns around the world.
>
> *Monitoring and Data Power*: Twitter is an effective media to provide citizen participation in the public arena as well as an experimental communication instrument that can be used for monitoring and reporting with its statistical data, reaction measurement, feedback opportunities. Using Twitter as a social media monitoring instrument in terms of participatory democracy, monitoring political campaigns using Twitter and directing campaign strategies using the obtained data increase the chance of success. The measurement of public opinion before and after the messages given is a golden opportunity for politics. Numerous tangible data such as number of followers, retweet number of sent posts and mentioning can be used for target group communication, and communication strategies can be more accurately determined in the light of this data. In addition to these, numerical data such as positive/negative responses to the contents of posts, re-tweets, favourites, quotes can be considered as a feedback to the strategy.

One of the unique features of the social media is the relative inclusion of sounds from various opinions into the system. This is especially evident on Twitter

due to its features enabling following in a chronological flow, following tweets outside the network with a hashtag or keyword, and seeing tweets from the media, political actors and other members of the community. Twitter gets more attention from political and media elites because it is a centre of event. In this way, Twitter is not only a means of political communication but also enables communication information to be transmitted at the same time, but in different ways by all parties. As an instrument for political communication, Twitter allows political elites to create narration to campaigns, journalists and allows the people to share their views on candidates and processes (Shannon, Mourão and Molyneux, 2017: 2).

*Previous Researches on Twitter Marketing in Political Marketing*

Many studies are carried out in Turkey and the world on the use of Twitter, which has become an effective platform for social media since the mid-2000s, in terms of political marketing.

Tumasjan et al. (2010) conducted the content analysis of more than 100,000 messages containing references to a political party or politician using the text analysis method in their researches in which they investigated whether Twitter is used as a forum for political negotiations and whether online messages in Twitter are reflecting political sensitivity. Researchers claim that it is possible to predict the result of the election by examining the relative frequency of tweets of political parties during the German election campaign. On the contrary, however, Jungherr et al. (2013) have shown that results of elections cannot be predicted with the tweets posted. Even on Twitter, there is no relationship with high-level interaction and high vote-sharing.

Larsson and Moe (2011) have founded a clear relationship between election debates in political use and political events such as summits during the 2010 Swedish general elections.

According to Kim (2011), the basic use of Twitter during the election campaigns is listed as information, entertainment and social benefits. While in the 2010 Korean elections people use Twitter for different reasons; the use of Twitter during the 2008 Presidential Election is often mentioned as the first election campaign to the decisive effect can be observed in.

Jaidka and Ahmed (2015) have shown that political parties use Twitter to publicize online.

In his master's thesis titled "Use of Social Media As A Political Communication Instrument: Twitter Example for General Elections of June 7, 2015", Gokgul (2016) examined the use of Twitter, which is a social media instrument, by political actors in Turkey, especially during election periods. 10 deputy candidates analysed according to the findings are selected from 2,365 candidates from the AK Party, CHP, MHP, HDP and independent candidates. It is found that 1,605 of these 2,365 candidates, namely 67.86 percent of them, have a Twitter account, among them, with 90.19 percent, the AK Party has most candidates with a Twitter account.. In the research, it is seen that by sharing posts mostly in the visits category, candidates are using Twitter as a diary in which they

share their everyday works, instead of using it as a propaganda or campaign instrument.

In the research examining Twitter accounts of leaders of political parties in Turkey before the 2015 General Elections, Sacak (2017) has compared the leaders' behaviour, statements and leading styles on Twitter with ones of each other in many ways. According to this, it is seen that the leaders are not tweeting about science, art or economics; they often focus on celebration and condolence. Leaders do not process the issues they handle in traditional media, in social media. In addition, all leaders want to influence the people with emotional expressions. However, when the use type of accounts are compared, it is seen that in Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Kemal Kilicdaroglu manage their accounts more balanced and sustainable when compared to other leaders, Devlet Bahceli, the leader of MHP, sometimes tweet so many and sometimes none and, Selahattin Demirtas, the leader of HDP, uses the platform almost never. In, however, it has been determined that the platform has not been used at all. Every situation, from self-expression styles of leaders in the research, to their statements, to their close-to-communication structures not interacting with anyone in the social media, is examined one-by-one and when their approaches to events experienced in the period's political atmosphere are examined, authoritarian approaches are observed in all leaders.

In the research on the use of Twitter by women candidates in the 2014 Turkey local elections, Ordulu (2017) has revealed primarily quantitative findings, then discussed findings on technical specifications of Twitter and eventually, discussed issues that politicians share on Twitter. According to the findings, it is seen that some candidates really trust the social media. However, there are a few common points that are mentioned a lot in their tweets. First of all, each of the candidates in 49 examples states that, in relation to his/her political party, thinks to receive votes from the party's supporters. Secondly, it is seen that all candidates use Twitter to spread news about themselves and their electoral regions, as well as they share links to other media platforms when they are related to the candidates' agenda such as what they did for voters, what they would do if they are elected, public meetings, and so on. In general, topics that are posted in Twitter in the 2014 local elections by politicians are announcements for a public meeting or a traditional media program that their followers will participate.

In their research where they examine messages of 1011 Twitter users related to the June 2015 Parliamentary Election of Tukey and try to determine their political trends, Toker, Erdem and Ozsarlak (2017) try to find out changes in political trends by analysing again messages of 1011 Twitter users in November 2015 Election. With the findings, political trends of 68.2 percent of the sample is determined in the June 2015 Election. Therefore, researchers have stated that Twitter may become an alternative to public opinion surveys and political trend determinations in the future.

In the research by Celik and Aktas (2017), it is analysed that how and for which purposes do the parties, elected as a result of the November 1, 2015 General Elections, use Twitter in line with political purposes before and after the election and what are the contents of tweets posted in this period. According to the

findings, it is revealed that the parties used this media especially for the news and announcements.

**The Aim and Method of the Research**

The purpose of this research is to conduct a descriptive research on how Twitter, one of the world's most widely used social media platforms, is used in political communication. In the research, seeking an answer to the question that "how the politicians use the social media platform Twitter in their communications strategies", Twitter accounts of the Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and the US president Donald Trump are examined for a month and analysed comparatively. The research covering the Twitter accounts of leaders of the three countries is examined and recorded on a daily basis between 01-30 April 2018. The recorded tweets are examined both qualitatively and quantitatively. In the qualitative research conducted, content analysis of the three leaders' tweets are conducted while in the quantitative research, the interactions, accesses, usage frequency and usage patterns in Twitter accounts of the three leaders are expressed numerically. Findings in the research are recorded in SPSS 21.0 statistical software and the quantitative part of the research is performed through this software.

*Findings*

Analysis for Alexis Tsipras' Twitter Use

In the research, it is seen that the Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras has two different accounts on Twitter. One of these accounts is a personal account, and the other is his international political account officially used. In the research, the account https://twitter.com/tsipras_eu of the leader is examined.

**Figure 1.** *The Twitter Account of Alexis Tsipras*

Between 01-30 April 2018, when the research is conducted, Tsipras has gained 118 followers, and the average number of followers gained per day is four. The biggest increase in the number of followers is on April 12, 2018, with 55 followers.

**Table 2.** *Alexis Tsipras' Follower Increase in Twitter Account*
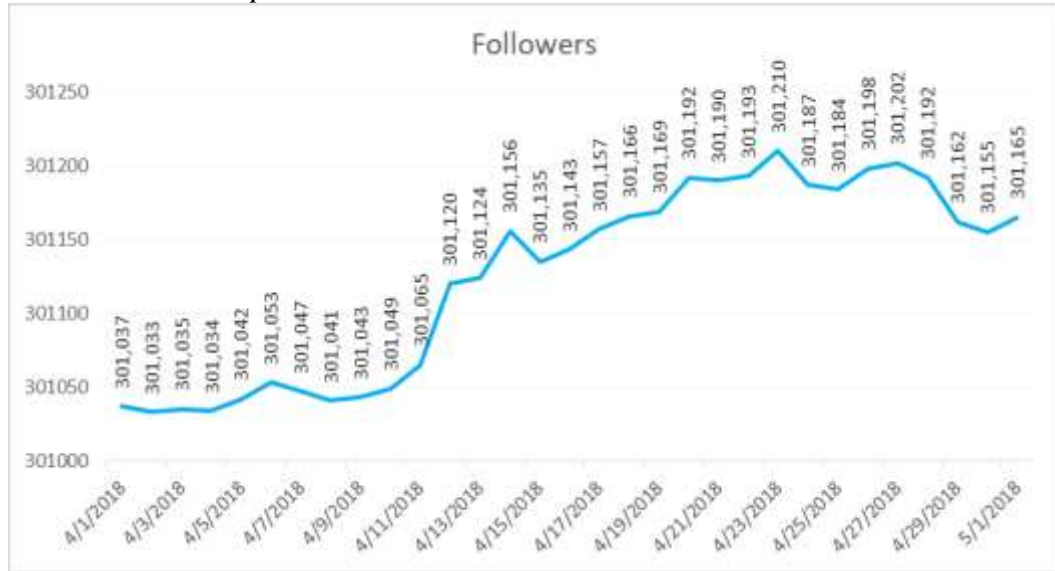


In Tsipras's tweets, photos are used at the rate of 60 percent, links 20 percent and texts 20 percent.

**Figure 2.** *The Multimedia Usage in Tsipras' Tweets*
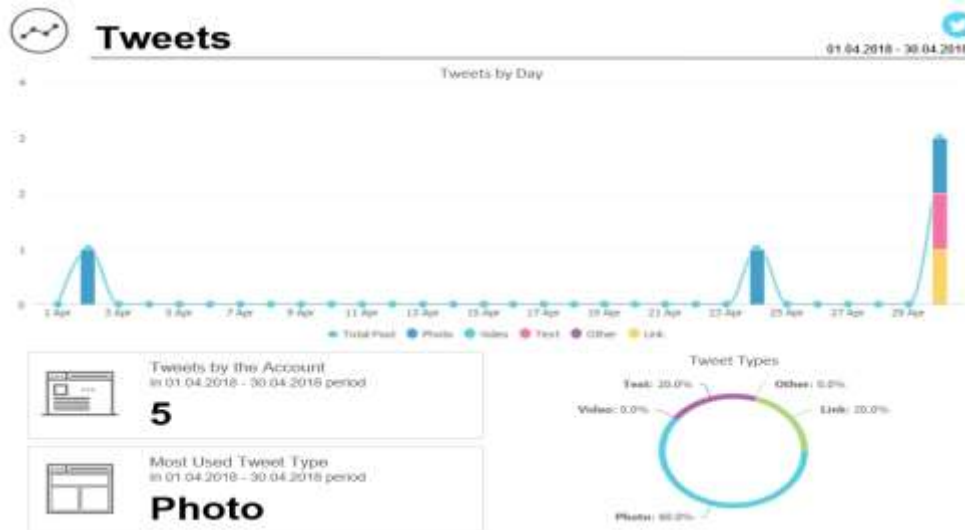


Throughout the research period, Tsipras's tweets have received a total of 428 likes and 144 retweets. The five interacting tweets of Tsipras are listed as follows:

**Figure 3.** *The Top 5 Interactive Tweets of Alexis Tsipras*



In the research period, five tweets with the most interaction of Tsipras are shown in Figure 3. When the contents of these messages are examined, it is seen that three of them are tweets about the economic situation of Greece and saying that the economy is in the tendency of improvement, while two of them are related to Greece's relations and negotiations with the EU. Tsipras, who wrote five tweets during this period, wrote three of these messages between 19:00-20:00, one between 18:00-19:00 and one between 14:00-15:00. Tsipras wrote four of the five tweets he wrote in April on Monday while he wrote one of them on Tuesday.

**Figure 4.** *Times Periods of Alexis Tsipras's Tweets*
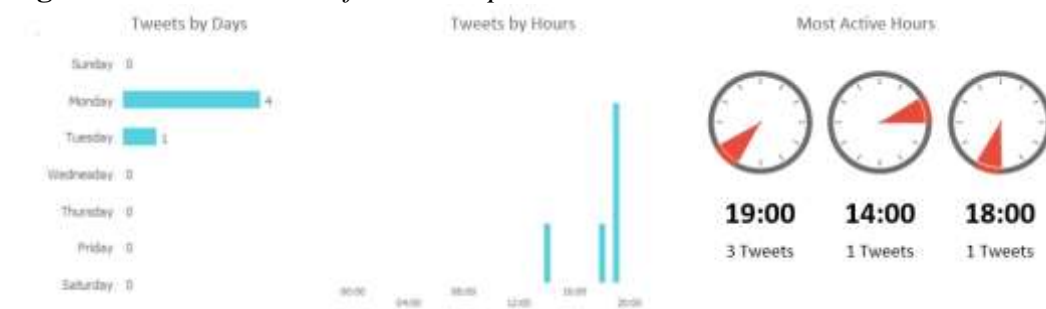


Analysis for Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Twitter Use

Unlike Tpiras, the Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has one Twitter account and shares his all the personal and political messages through this account. In the research, Erdogan's account https://twitter.com/RT_Erdogan is examined.

**Figure 5.** *The Twitter Account of Recep Tayyip Erdogan*



Between 01-30 April 2018, when the research is conducted, Erdogan has gained 154,978 followers. Daily follower increase rate is 5,166. The date on which the account gained most followers is April 24, 2018. On this date, the account has gained 7,393 followers.

**Table 3.** *The Increase in Number of Followers in Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Twitter Account*
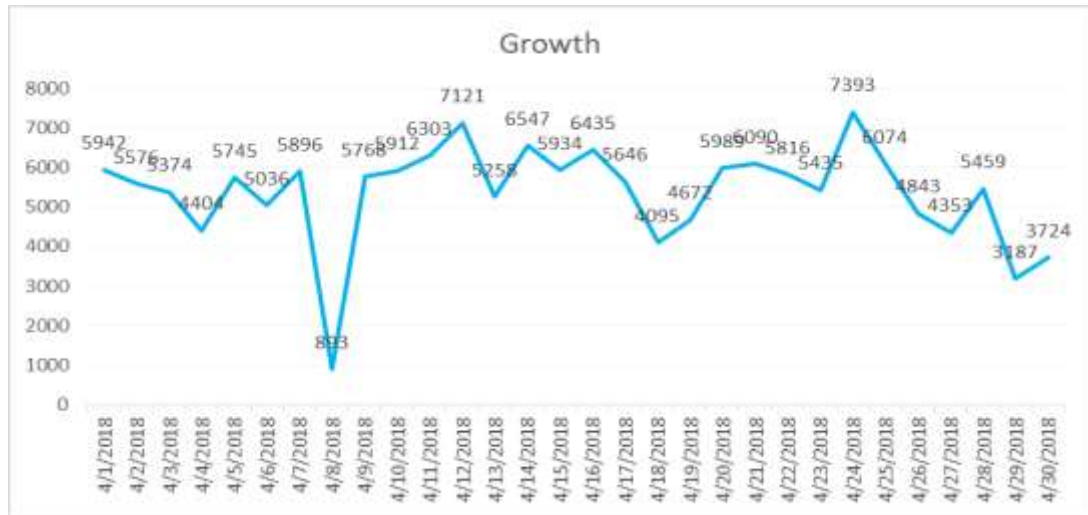


Erdogan mostly used photos in his posts. 38.9, 2.9, 8.3 and 50 percent of the tweets include texts, videos, links and photos, respectively.

**Figure 6.** *The Multimedia Usage in Erdogan's Tweets*
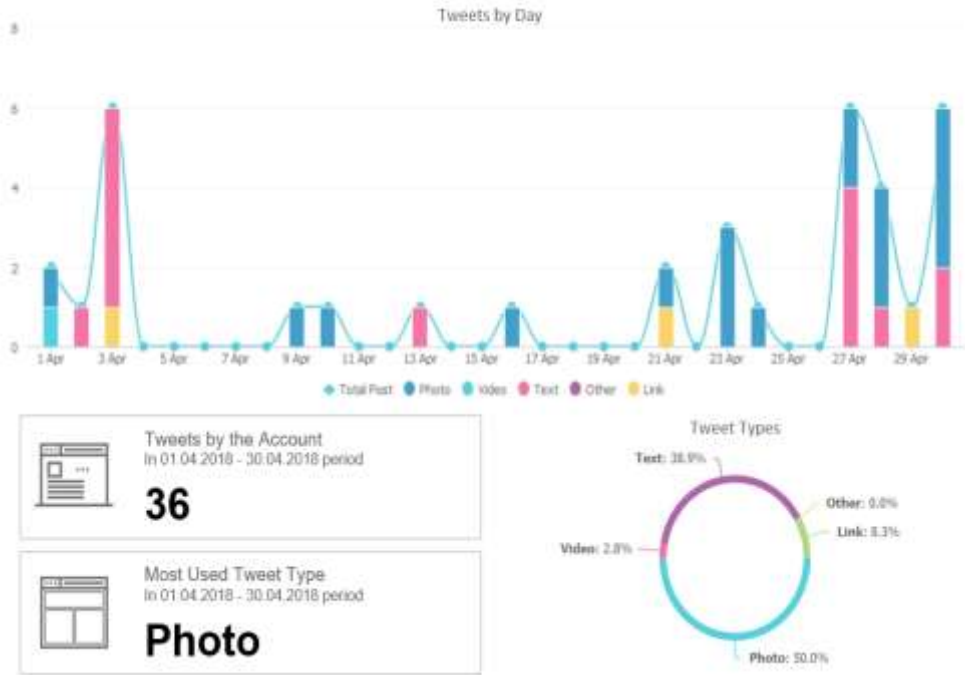


During the research period, Erdogan received 714,624 likes and 155,655 retweets. His most interacting messages are tweets with photos. Erdogan's most interacted five tweets are in the figure 7:

**Figure 7.** *The Top 5 Interactive Tweets of Recep Tayyip Erdogan*



| | | Like | Retweet | Total Engagement |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 01.04.2018 19:21:01<br>Oğulpınar Sınır Karakolu, Hatay... | 65,258 | 13,734 | 78,992 |
| | 01.04.2018 23:53:08<br>Şerefiyle tarih yazan tüm kahramanlarımıza... | 46,034 | 13,094 | 59,128 |
| | 23.04.2018 21:55:38<br>23 Nisan... | 42,505 | 6,793 | 49,298 |
| | 02.04.2018 23:03:23<br>Yarın, Rusya Devlet Başkanı, kıymetli dostum Vladimir Putin ile birlikte Türkiye'nin ve Türk-Rus ilişkilerinin geleceği için önemli bir adım olan 20 milyar dolarlık dev yatırım Akkuyu Nükleer Santrali'nin temellerini atacağız. #NükleerEnerjiGüçlüTürkiye | 36,303 | 8,824 | 45,127 |
| | 03.04.2018 17:22:58<br>Ülkemizin 30 yıllık hayali olan Akkuyu Nükleer Güç Santrali, Türkiye'nin kalkınması ve Rusya ile enerji iş birliğimiz adına tarihi bir yatırımdır. | 34,759 | 8,771 | 43,530 |

| |
|---|
| Tweet 1. Border Post of Ogulpinar, Hatay… |
| Tweet 2. To our all heroes writing history with honour… |
| Tweet 3. 23rd April… |
| Tweet 4. Tomorrow, together with my esteemed friend Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia, we will lay the foundations of Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant, which is a great investment amounted to 20 billion dollars and an important step for Turkey's and Turkish-Russian relationships' future. #NuclearEnergyPowerfulTurkey |
| Tweet 5. Being the 30-year dream of our country, Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant is a historical investment for development of Turkey and our energy cooperation with Russia. |

When top 5 interactive tweets are examined, it is seen that two messages are related to the terrorism, one message is related to the national holiday, the two to meeting of Erdogan and Putin within the scope of Turkey's foreign relations.

Erdogan texted all the messages on Twitter after 17:00. The leader texted most messages between 20:00-24:00. Erdogan texted most messages on Mondays. Erdogan, who texted a total of 12 tweets on Mondays, did not text any messages on Wednesdays and Thursdays throughout the research period.

**Figure 8.** *Time Periods of Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Tweets*
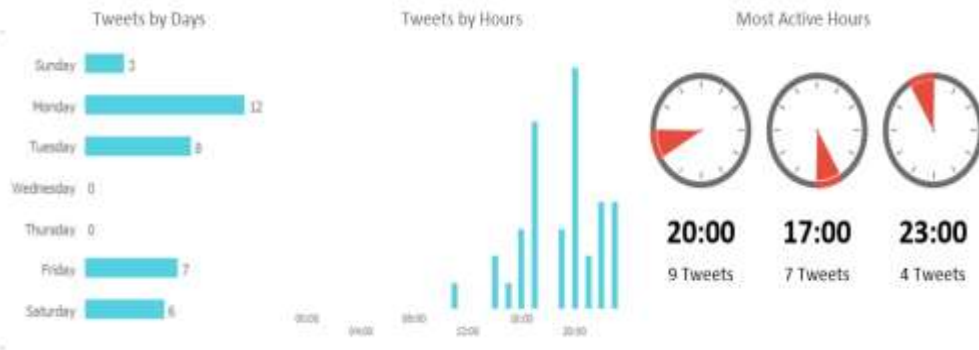


When Alexis Tsipras' and Recep Tayyip Erdogan's use of the social media platform Twitter are compared, it is seen that Tsipras gave his political messages by using his international account for this purpose while Erdogan used his personal account for all purposes. When the activeness of the two accounts are examined, it is seen that Erdogan shared more messages than Tsipras. Erdogan wrote 7 times more tweets than Tsipras. Both leaders mostly used photos in their tweets. When the most interactive tweets of the leaders are examined, it is seen that Tsipras' tweets on economy and Erdogan's tweets on terrorism were interacted mostly. This shows that the most forefront national issues of the two countries are highly interacted. While Greece's most important national issue is "economic crisis", Turkey's national issue that was on the agenda mostly during the research is "terrorism." When tweets of the two leaders are examined, it is seen that the two leaders texted tweets about their negotiations with the international leaders, tweets about the country's improvement at the economic level, and tweets celebrating national and religious festivals. Tsipras' and Erdogan's Twitter contents have common features in this respect. Both leaders did not response to any tweets.

Erdogan has retweeted the official Twitter accounts of the AK Party, for which he is the General President, his wife Emine Erdogan and the Presidency office.

While Tsipras used only English language on his political Twitter account, Erdogan used languages such as Turkish, English, Uzbek, Korean, Russian in his personal account.

Analysis for Donald Trump's Twitter Use

Donald J. Trump has one passive and one active account. The account named Potus, https://twitter.com/POTUS, opened in January 2017 retweets only tweets from Trump's official account. Donald Trump continues to use his personal account https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump, which he opened in March 2009. In the research, this account is examined.

**Figure 9.** *The Twitter Account of Donald J. Trump*
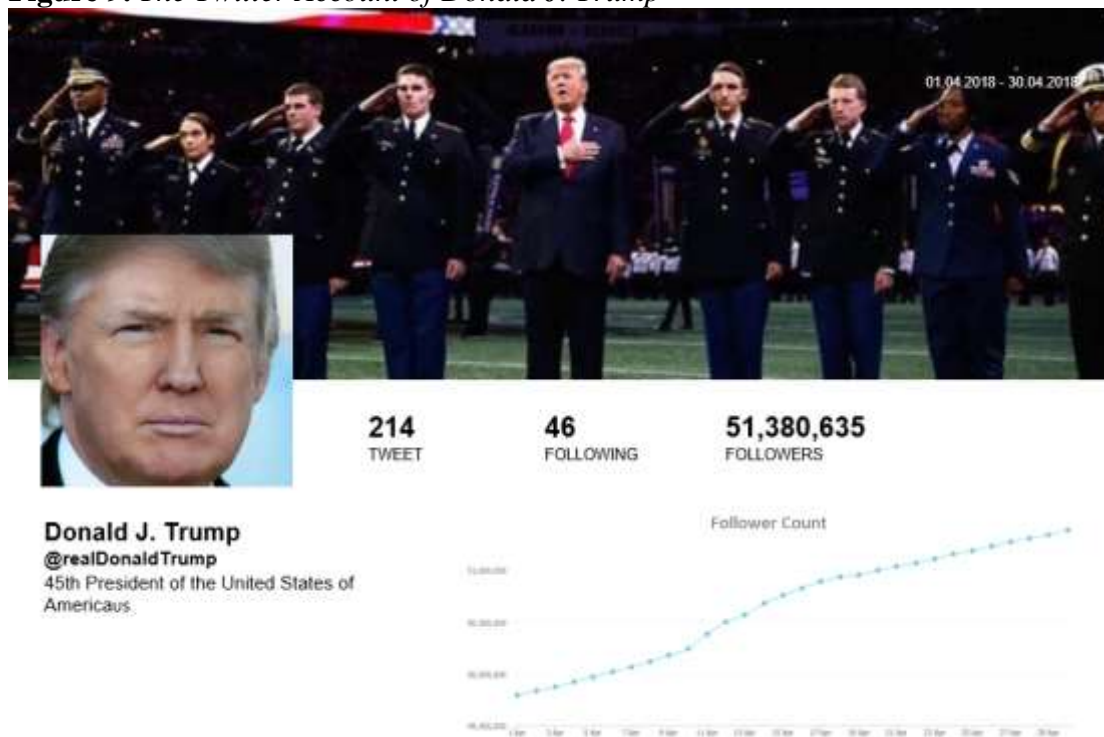


Trump's Twitter account gained 1 million 590 thousand 162 followers during the period of 01-30 April 2018. This corresponds to an average of 53,005 followers per day. The most follower increase was realized on April 11, 2018 with 140,016 people.

Trump mostly used plain texts in his messages. Trump wrote 214 tweets during the research period of which 78% is plain text, 8.7% video content, 7.3% photo and 6% link.

**Figure 10.** *The Multimedia Usage in Trump's Tweets*
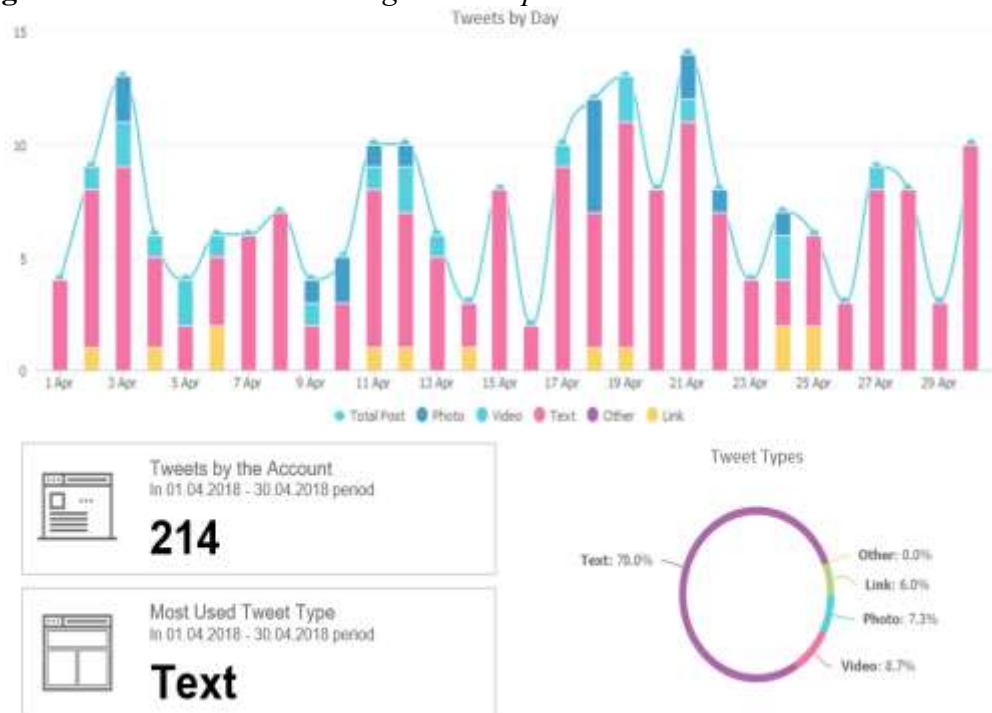


During the research period, Trump's tweets received a total of 19,654,399 likes and 4,608,423 retweets. Trump's top five interacting tweets are as shown in Figure 11.

**Figure 11.** *The Top 5 Interactive Tweets of Donald J. Trump*

| | | Like | Retweet | Total Engagement |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 25.04.2018 22:33:07<br>Thank you Kanye, very cool! | 360,738 | 107,651 | 468,389 |
| | 26.04.2018 00:18:51<br>MAGA! | 232,114 | 59,591 | 291,705 |
| | 01.04.2018 15:27:02<br>HAPPY EASTER! | 207,165 | 40,592 | 247,757 |
| | 14.04.2018 15:21:00<br>A perfectly executed strike last night. Thank you to France and the United Kingdom for their wisdom and the power of their fine Military. Could not have had a better result. Mission Accomplished! | 198,012 | 42,758 | 240,770 |
| | 11.04.2018 13:57:30<br>Russia vows to shoot down any and all missiles fired at Syria. Get ready Russia, because they will be coming, nice and new and "smart!" You shouldn't be partners with a Gas Killing Animal who kills his people and enjoys it! | 171,388 | 65,124 | 236,512 |

When Trump's five most interactive tweets are examined, it is seen that Trump tells his feelings and thoughts in direct messages and aggressively. His most interacted tweet is about the black rap artist Kanye West. While this tweet also concerns racism, Trump congratulated the rap singer for his work on racism. Trump's second most interacted tweet is his message containing the text "MAGA!". MAGA is abbreviated as "Make America Great Again". His third most interacted tweet is the one he celebrates the Christians' Easter feast. Three of the five tweets most interacted contain social messages, while the other two tweets contain messages related to foreign policy. Trump sent a message to England and France in the first of these two tweets and to Russia in the second. His most interacted fifth tweet is his tweet texted in a threating manner, criticizing Russia about Syria.

When we look at Trump's tweets, it is seen that they contain shorter and sharper contents and plain texts. Using a more aggressive language than Tsipras and Erdogan, Trump has used Twitter more actively than both leaders. During the research period, Trump tweeted 42 times more than Tsipras and 5.9 times more than Erdogan. As a result of Trump's use of Twitter so active, the number of followers he gained monthly is also very high. Trump gained followers 13 thousand times more than Tsipras and 10 times more than Erdogan.

When the communication type with followers on Twitter, it is seen that Erdogan and Tsipras established the same kind of communication with their followers and used a similar official language. It is seen that Erdogan, who is one of the two leaders, was promoting and marketing more than Tsipras and Tsipras was a little more passive. Trump used fewer official languages in his Twitter posts. Using a direct and unofficial language, Trump gave his messages on Twitter with a more aggressive tongue than Tsipras and Erdogan.

When days and time zones of Trump's tweets are examined, it is seen that he mostly texted afternoons. It is seen that he texted most tweets between 16:00-17:00, followed by 15:00-16:00 and 14:00-15:00. Tsipras and Erdogan texted more tweets in the evenings while Trump mostly texted his tweets between 14:00-17:00. Trump, who tweets in all days, tweeted mostly on Sundays and Wednesdays. He tweeted at the least on Mondays.

**Figure 12.** *Time Periods of Donald Trump's Tweets*
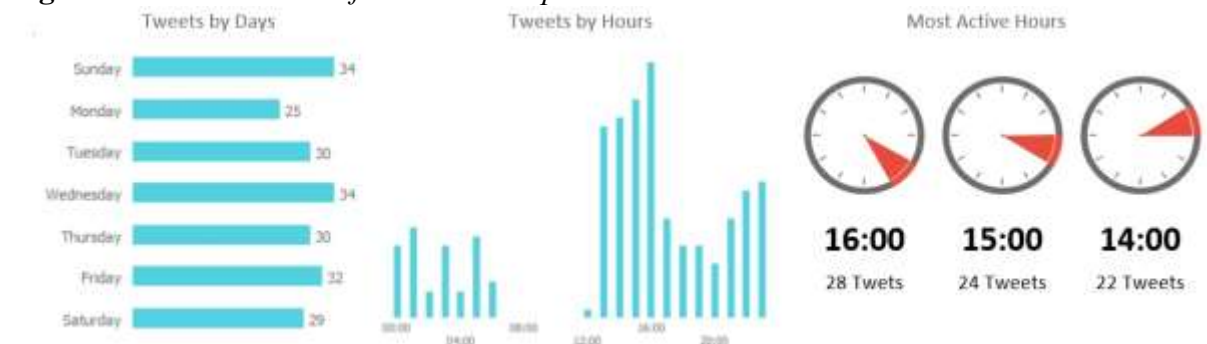
**Conclusion**

In political campaigns, the importance of social media has been increasing rapidly. A large proportion of active politicians now use at least one social media instrument to communicate their views and opinions about general or everyday political issues. These messages, and more importantly, issues such as which specific message forms are to be transmitted in social networking sites, have been creating stronger impacts on the target group. So, the social media has become more active in political campaigns than in the past. As discussed in the study, Twitter is a platform on which communication between politicians and voters is easier than other platforms, based on the idea of exchanging views and media with millions of active users. The increasing use of Twitter in the campaigns of candidates and political parties has led to intensification of research on this issue.

In this research, in the comparison of the use of Twitter between the Greece's Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and the Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, it is seen that Erdogan is more active on Twitter than Tsipras. The number of followers Erdogan gained during the research period, who tweeted more, is also more than of Tsipras. While both leaders mostly shared photos on Twitter, Erdogan shared his messages more often at evening time and Tsipras in the afternoon and evening times. The two leaders are also compared to the US President Donald Trump's use of Twitter. In comparison, Trump is seen using Twitter more than both Erdogan and Tsipras. Trump also used more text in his tweets than Erdogan and Tsipras. Trump shared his tweets after 14:00.

Researchers from many different fields, such as political scientists, communication specialists or computer scientists, address questions about the role of Twitter in election campaigns. These researchers approach the subject from different point of views with a wide range of different methods and discuss their results. It is difficult to make a general conclusion because many researchers conducted until today handle the subject with it many different dimensions. The diversity of research on Twitter's use during election campaigns has led to revealing a variety of methodological approaches and a wide range of approaches for data collection and data selection on Twitter. This is another field where research on Twitter's political uses grows mature. As mentioned above, Twitter has also been becoming a determining factor in terms of political communication and political marketing as well as in other social media platforms. For this reason, parties and candidates will still continue to act with voters from around the country in the future in the context of political campaigns. Because the value of face-to-face interaction is not diminished. Political campaigns will continue to use traditional means to reach voters, such as TV, radio, telephone calls, and so on, but social media will continue to offer a cheap and effective alternative to delivering campaigns to founders.

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