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Communication for Politicians in 2014  
Local Elections in Turkey**

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## **Use of Twitter as a tool of Dialogical Communication for Politicians in 2014 Local Elections in Turkey**

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### **Abstract**

Turkey faced a very hard local election competition in March of 2014. After the social and civil war that was created inside the country by Gezi Occupy, these local elections turned its behavior to general elections. The Gezi Park actions that were lived in 2013 of June was a turning point on the politics of Turkey. After this occupy the opposition to AK Party which is the leader party from 2002 increased. The effects of this cold political war between AK Party and oppositions caused many things to be discussed. The war was so hard that some social platforms like Twitter and YouTube were banned by the government to public use. The local elections which were about selecting the municipality of cities had a hard competition within the municipality candidates. This competition was not only in traditional media but also in social media. The parties and municipality candidates tried to promote themselves and express their future city plans with different campaigns. The hardest competition was in İstanbul, the biggest city of Turkey. İstanbul which has a great importance in world politics for hundred years faced a hard local politic competition in local elections done in 30<sup>th</sup> of March 2014. The competition was between 26 politic parties but the main competition was between two parties: AK Party (the govern party) and CHP (the opposition party). The candidates of these two politic figures the current municipality president of İstanbul Kadir Topbaş (AK Party) and his opposite a popular politic figure Mustafa Sarıgül (CHP). This paper examines how these two parties and politicians used social media during this local election of Turkey in dialogical communication. The paper examines the way of these two politicians use Twitter from the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2014 till 30<sup>th</sup> of March 2014 (the election Day), during their local election campaign periods. All the tweets of these two politicians analyzed and there have been done some statistics for the Twitter usage of Kadir Topbaş and Mustafa Sarıgül. The paper made a content analysis to the tweets of these leaders according to dialogical approach and they were coded in term of main heads. The popularity of these two politicians in Twitter and the way of using Twitter for direct communication with their constituents were analyzed. The paper examines how these two politicians use traditional media and how they differed in social media in Twitter. There is a comparison of the Twitter trends of these candidates and the results are compared with the results of local elections done in 30<sup>th</sup> of March 2014. The winner of this hard competition was Kadir Topbaş (AK Party). The winner of these local elections was Topbaş, but how about Twitter? Who win the competition in Twitter? Topbaş or Sarıgül? The paper opens to discuss how does social communication effects politician's performance in real world and if there is a correlation between the votes and the Twitter campaign in term of dialogical approach.

**Keywords:** Twitter, Social Media, Politic Campaigns, Social Media Communication

## **Communication and Politics**

The origin of the word “communication” is “*communicare*” in Latin. Communication is the conveyance of attitudes, judgements, opinions and feelings that take place within a community (which is formed by people who inform each other about changes of the objects, events and facts, convey information about them, have similar feelings arising from similar life experiences towards the same facts, objects and issues and express them) or community life. Even though communication is defined as the conveyance of the message from the source to the receiver, this is one of the most inadequate definitions, because communication is the process of producing, conveying and interpreting information (Oskay, 2001:9)

Communication is the conveyance of information, opinions, feelings and abilities to another person via various symbols. These symbols form the messages and create social interactions. These social interactions are the products of the meaning-seeking efforts. It is a creative acquisition which is initiated by humans who try to distinguish and organise the stimuli in the way that would lead them and their surroundings and meet their changing needs. (Türkoğlu, 2004: 22-24).

As a result of today’s unprecedented pace of technological progress, the concept of communication has become easier. Considering the fact that communication takes place among humans, these type of technological advancements also facilitate communication between humans who are the actors of political life. The distance between the rulers and the ruled narrows through the use of the Internet and other new communication technologies. When considered from this point of view, new opportunities to establish communication between the rulers and the ruled arise and help direct democracy to gather strength. (Karagöz, 2013: 136).

Politics, on the other hand, is the activity of reconciliation of conflicting interests in a society. The concept of politics has always been needed since the beginning of humanity because of the fact that all humans are not equal. Humans, in order to live together, first needed to develop common rules and then required an authority to ensure these rules are obeyed. This situation brought out the concept of power which is the main issue of politics along with the struggle of power.

A power and the sharing of this power underlie politics. However, politics, being in our lives since the beginning of human existence, has advanced throughout time. According to Laswell’s definition, which is arguably the most accepted one in our day, politics is about who gets what (the sources and values in the community), when and how. (Türküne, 2005: 42).

Politics, refers to the process of the distribution of financial and socioemotional values in accordance with the authority. It is the struggle between political actors to prevent or try to prevent the choices of others, so that they could make their choices about the issues regarding the public accepted or implemented. Therefore, politics is a public phenomenon. The interaction of a large number of people, in other words, the interaction of a

society which is connected via various bonds, the struggle among them results in the birth of the politics.

### **The Concept of Political Communication**

Since the ancient times until today, from the most primitive societies to the most advanced ones, human communities have always had a political character. Even though politics is a type of power struggle between different groups and classes, at the same time it is a reconciliation. Different social groups within the community present different demands and try to make an impact on the political power through these demands. Although these demands are not accepted exactly as they are by the political power, political decisions come out more or less as a consensus as a result of the counterbalancing of the influence efforts that come from all directions. Undoubtedly, it is by virtue of communication that the parties know, understand and come to an agreement with each other. Politics is a process in which the society joins the power game and uses all kind technologies with the purpose of making maximum use of the resources that are obtained by the authority. Politics is usually shaped in accordance with the implementations which are in line with this definition. (Yolcu, 2011: 3)

The necessity of mutual communication between the ruler and the ruled generates political communication. Political communication is defined in different ways. Political communication has several different definitions due to the concept's wide scope. It is the mutual communication of political actors via various means of communication in order to establish certain ideological goals on certain groups, populations, classes and even on surrounding countries and other country and blocks that they are having relationships with and even to operationalize those ideological goals (Aziz, 2003: 3).

According to another definition, political communication involves a political view or organ's continuous efforts of one-way or two-way communication activities through different techniques depending on the time and conjuncture (such as advertising, propaganda and public relations) for the purpose of gaining public support and therefore coming to power within the political system. (Özkan, 2004: 38).

Political communicators have tried to communicate with their audiences through different methods throughout the time. In the past, when the concept of media has not been developed yet, soldiers went to towns on their horses with their drums in order to communicate with the public and read sultan's imperial orders. This form of communication has been shaped by the development of means of communication and the advancement of mass communication tools witnessed the development of political communication. The first political communication in the world was through communication apparatus that we call as the conventional media. Radio is the first medium which was used within this context. Radio was used first in USA for political communication (Aziz, 2007:57). In the continental Europe, radio was used with the purpose of

propaganda particularly during Hitler period (Bektaş, 2007:133). Another medium used for political communication is television which was introduced at New York World's Fair in 1939. Roosevelt's speech was broadcasted on TV (Briggs ve Burge, 2011:260). It was during the 1948 US Elections that the television medium was used for the first time in political communication campaigns (Özkan, 2004:76). The 1960 US Presidential elections has a significant importance in terms of the fact of advertising and the manipulative power of television (Genel,2012:24).

Political communication has gained a new dimension with the advancement of communication technologies. With the use of, first new media, and after that social media, political communication through traditional media has been replaced by the political communication through new media and social media. Political communication consultant Dick Morris mentioned that new media will have a significant impact on political communication and election campaigns and gathered his views under three main topics (Devran, 2011:11):

- The Internet will make the voting process easier therefore voter turnout will increase substantially.
- Since politics will use the Internet as the public platform more than the traditional media, Internet technologies will be promoting a better, a more interactive democracy.
- It will be possible to finance election campaigns with lower budgets, because political parties and candidates will be able to convey their messages to their target audiences without any cost or for reasonable prices via the Internet.

Today, by means of Internet technology, political parties are able to convey their messages via their web sites, publish their videos on sharing sites like YouTube, meet their constituents on virtual environments through platforms like Facebook and Twitter (Devran, 2011:12).

These are the consequences of the use of social media which has emerged with the development of web 2.0 technology. The concept of political communication 2.0 is used in order to define the new communication form that social media provided for political communication. The concept of political communication 2.0 has been formed with the intense use of social media in political communication. Under today's conditions, all political actors are aware of the power of social media and the political communication is turned toward to social media. Social media has become a medium for politicians to express themselves and for common citizens to become politicized. So much that, even citizens who prefer to stay away from the political life, depending on the state of the political environment, started to respond to the political events through social media. Since this new communication environment is centered around the Internet and social media, the concept of political communication is replaced by the concept of political communication 2.0. Bostancı made the

comparison of political communication through traditional media and social media based political communication 2.0 as follows (2014: 88):

**Table 1.** *Comparison of Traditional Political Communication and Political Communication 2.0*

| <b>Characteristics</b> | <b>Traditional Political Communication</b> | <b>Political Communication 2.0</b>                      |
|------------------------|--|---|
| Means of Communication | Traditional media                          | Social media  |
| Type of Communication  | Mass communication                         | Both mass communication and interpersonal communication |
| Form of Communication  | Propaganda                                 | Two-way Communication                                   |
|                        | One-way Communication                      | Dialogue  |
|                        | Monologue                                  |   |
| Message                | Mass                                       | Mass Personal   |
| Feedback               | Low  | High  |
| Cost of Communication  | High                                       | Low   |

The differences between political communication through traditional media and social media based political communication 2.0 are as follows (Bostancı, 2014: 89):

- *Means of Communication:* For political communication, traditional media, in other words television, newspapers and radio have a strategic importance whereas for political communication 2.0 media like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn that are known as social media platforms come to the forefront.
- *Type of Communication:* Political communication uses mass communication more often whereas political communication 2.0 prefers interpersonal communication as well as mass communication.
- *Form of Communication:* Political communication uses propaganda, one-way communication and monologue while political communication 2.0 uses two-way communication and dialogue.
- *Message:* In political communication, the message usually targets masses, whereas in political communication 2.0 it can be shaped according to the groups and individuals.
- *Feedback:* In political communication, the possibility and the level of feedback is low while in political communication 2.0 it is easy to receive feedback and the feedback level is high.
- *Cost of Communication:* In political communication, campaign and promotion costs are very high whereas political communication 2.0 provides low cost, or even cost-free campaign solutions.

Tunç indicated that social media has a positive impact on young voter turnout. Tunç said that especially young voters are activated by means of social media and according to him the most significant achievement of social media is that it put an end to the one-way message communication of the politicians (Sabah,2014a:14):

*The communication models of 20th Century are outdated. We are facing a new area of political dialogue. It provides a great environment for a healthy democracy that the citizens are able to reach their political representators directly, convey their complaints or support. The politician is able to convey his/her message through social media immediately and without needing an enormous budget.*

Polat emphasized the necessity of being careful about the information pollution on social media. He indicated that young generations are adopting new media very quickly and added that social media is an environment which could be drifted into chaos and manipulation easily. ‘ ... While serious claims are made, these claims are blatantly discussed and this is a threat...’ said Polat, still he states that social media will find its way to become an environment that the users trust and people share correct information (Sabah,2014b:15).

Bülent Keskin, Strategy Science Specialist and the founder of PH1 Istanbul, indicated that especially Twitter has become an election field for the politicians. Keskin said ‘technological developments and social sharing sites add new dimensions to it’ (Baş, 2014:9).

## **Dialogic Communication**

- ➔ *Mutuality*: Organizations and publics are inextricably tied together. Mutuality is characterized by an “inclusion or collaborative orientation” and a “spirit of mutual equality.” Collaborative orientation contributes to the professionalizing of public relations and the democratization of the society. The spirit of mutual equality indicates that there shouldn’t be power struggles among the parties.
- ➔ *Propinquity*: It is an orientation to a relationship. For organizations it means that publics are consulted in matters that influence them, and for publics, it means that they are willing and able to articulate their demands to organizations. Propinquity is created by three features of dialogic relationships which are immediacy or presence, temporal flow and engagement.
- ➔ *Empathy*: Empathy refers to the atmosphere of support and trust. Empathic communication is important because public relations practitioners might improve the communication by putting themselves into their publics’ shoes and thinking like them.
- ➔ *Risk*: It refers to the unpredictable situations or outcomes. Dialogue involves some risks along with the rewards for the participants. These risks



are vulnerability, emergent unanticipated consequences and recognition of strange otherness.

➔ *Commitment*: It refers to genuineness or authenticity, commitment to the conversation or interpretation and not to exploit the participants' weaknesses.

Dialogic communication approach is a two-way communication model where political actors not only express themselves, their promises and practices in their communication with the public. This model also allows them to consider public demands by establishing a mutual communication. The goal of dialogic communication is to assess problems, to examine and solve them and to prevent conflicts. Improving the competencies and including the stakeholders into the subject are among other goals. Dialogic communication approach uses dialogue to encourage participation by using interpersonal interaction intensively. Table 2 demonstrates monological and dialogic communication approaches (Gökgöz, 2013: 297):

**Table 2.** *Communication Models Comparison of Tute and Metafopulos*

|                                    | MONOLOGICAL COMMUNICATION   |   | DIALOGIC COMMUNICATION                |  |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|--|
|                                    | To Inform                   | To Persuade                                       | To Discover                           | To Strengthen                              |
| <b>PRIMARY GOAL</b>                | To increase awareness       | To encourage the change of attitude and behaviour | To assess the problems                | To improve the competencies                |
|                                    | To increase knowledge       |   | To examine                            | To include the stakeholders                |
|                                    |                             |   | To solve                              |  |
|                                    |                             |   | To prevent conflicts                  |  |
| <b>PRIMARY REFERENCE MODEL</b>     | One-way (monological)       | One-way (monological)                             | Two-way (dialogical)                  | Two-way (dialogical)                       |
| <b>PREFERRED METHODS AND MEDIA</b> | Extensive use of mass media | Extensive use of media                            | Intensive use of interpersonal method | Use of dialogue to encourage participation |

### **Dialogic Communication and Social Media**

Individuals express their political views in public spheres. Today, due to the developing technology, the Internet environment is also considered as a public sphere apart from the physically perceived public sphere. All activities that are carried out in traditional public sphere, now could also be carried out in the virtual environment.

As a result of the public sphere's adaptation to the technology, networks like Facebook and Twitter, which are called as social media, have gained the

character of a public sphere. Virtual public spheres are different than traditional public spheres and they have become environments where individuals can express themselves and their political views more comfortably. As a result of the extensive use of Facebook and Twitter in Turkey, these media are called as virtual/public spheres. (Çalışkan, 2013: 21-23)

Mainstream media follows a broadcasting policy in accordance with the dominant political power while social media represents a mixed public sphere and discourse since it involves people with various political stands and ideologies. This wide representativeness paves the way for an individual's personal and risk-free participation and enables the personalization of political expression. When considered from this point of view, it is a highly free environment where political actors and ordinary individuals can express themselves with ease and views, which are censored by mainstream media due to its broadcasting policy in accordance with the dominant political view, are appeared. On social media opinions appear not implicitly but openly which is contrary to the traditional media. There is no place for censorship and filtering. Therefore, since the dominant political view does not give them a life chance on mainstream media, for adversaries, social media is an exit from the popular culture, an alternative medium (Akçalı and Paker, 2013: 53).

Social media come to the forefront as the only way of reaching news which doesn't appear on traditional media due to its one-sided broadcasting policy. Therefore, social media is an environment where both the political power with the dominant view and the opposition can exist at the same time. Consequently, social media is an environment where individuals with different political views can express their political opinions and carry out political activities freely. When viewed from this aspect, social media, as an environment where political actors can convey their political views, promises and practices, provides an opportunity for a two-way communication. By virtue of this two-way communication opportunity, political communicators are able to benefit from dialogic communication while conducting PR activities on social media.

According to Grunig, with the two-way asymmetrical model, practitioners conduct scientific research to determine how to persuade publics to behave in the ways their client organizations wish. With the two-way symmetrical model, practitioners use research and dialogue to bring about symbiotic changes in the ideas, attitudes and behaviors of both their organizations and publics. Symmetry in public relations really is about balancing the interests of organizations and publics, of balancing advocacy and accommodation (2000:43). Without dialogue and change on policies, symmetrical communication could not be effective in political process for political parties and their leaders. Change following dialogue is the key instrument for the real symmetrical communication. Cutlip, Center and Broom also pointed that "successful government maintains responsive, mutual understanding based on two-way communication with citizens" (1994:76). Not for only governments, but for all the actors of political communication process, the two-way communication requires dialogue and listening. This process is the most

important tool of new communication model within the target audience and the politician.

According to Kent and Taylor, the Internet application should include five principles in order for web-based public relations activities to be dialogic. These principles are determined as dialogic feedback loops, usefulness of information, generation of return visits, ease of interface and conservation of visitors (Yağmurlu, 2013: 98):

▷ **Dialogic feedback loops:** It serves as a guide so that a symmetrical communication is established between the organization and publics. Therefore, certain people from the public relations departments of the organizations should be determined as the Internet contact persons and these people *should have* the necessary communication skills like answering difficult questions, explaining organizational policies and knowing about publics' priorities.

▷ **Usefulness of Information:** The structure of the website should enable dialogic communication. In order to establish dialogue, a structure through which publics can convey their questions and concerns should be built.

▷ **Generation of return visits:** The websites should be designed in order to make the public a part of the organization and in the manner that would generate return visits.

▷ **Ease of interface:** Interfaces should have a user-friendly structure which could easily be used by visitors.

▷ **Conservation of visitors:** The websites should contain features that make them attractive for repeat visits. They should be established with the purpose of interaction, not advertising and sales.

**Table 3.** *Dialogic Communication and Social Media (Yağmurlu, 2013: 102)*

| Dialogic Principles for Internet | Definition   | Twitter Interface Research Topics | Facebook Interface Research Topics |
|----------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Dialogic Feedback Loop           | Environment where organisation/publics mutually communicate        | Tweet                             | Update                             |
|                                  |  | Retweet                           | Comment                            |
|                                  |  | Mention                           | Like                               |
|                                  |  |                                   | Share                              |
| Usefulness of Information        | Information presented is attractive and useful for the publics     | Subject of tweets                 | Subject of updates                 |
| Generation of Return Visits      | Create the desire to make return visits in publics through updates | Frequency of tweets               | Frequency of updates               |
| Ease of Interface                | Easy to use interface  | Design                            | Design                             |
|                                  |  | Ease of use                       | Ease of use                        |
|                                  |  | Mobile option                     | Mobile option                      |
| Conservation of Visitors         | Attract visitors' attention and create loyalty                     | Number of followers Klout Index   | Number of followers                |

## **The Use of Social Media Platform Twitter in Political Communication in the world and in Turkey**

Twitter has become a visible and essential element of political communication, election campaigns and organization processes. Twitter is one of the main determinants of the current discussions and public issues not only on its own but also through its interaction with traditional media. Traditional media channels, reinforce the role of social media in affecting the agenda by making references to social media all the time and paying attention to the developments on social media as well as with the products, which are the combinations of traditional forms, they produce. The impact of Twitter and social media, with what is called as echo effect, reach even beyond their users. With Twitter, which is the most prevalent social network after Facebook, communication, distance and speed between the politician and the citizen change, the possibility for them to interact increase and the citizens acquire faster and more alternative information regarding politics. The politicians highlight their identities and the 'I' language, address the society in a causal, sincere language (Şener et al, 2014:318).

Considering the primary goals of Twitter, which are to provide that humans are informed about each other and each other's' opinions, to increase the conversation chances and to connect people more tightly, it could be seen that Twitter is a very important medium in terms of political communication. As a result of the increase in the popularity of Twitter and its becoming one of the main mediums of public political discussions and arguments, the politicians take Twitter seriously as they have never done before and get professional support for the use of this media.

As Graham exemplified in his study which was conducted in 2013, politicians in Great Britain used twitter to announce their messages, to make partisan attacks, to inform their followers/electorates and to thank them. Grant et al (2013), whose analysis is specific to Australia, determined that politicians use Twitter to inform about the campaign processes, to promote themselves and other party members and to criticize the political rivals. However they stated that, although politicians are noisier on Twitter than ordinary humans, this is due more broadcasting rather than conversing. Larsson and Moe (2013), in their research based on the 2011 Denmark elections, indicated that, although political communication on Twitter presents some participatory tendencies, representation plays a more important role (2011:741). The study on the Twitter use in the 2010 Swedish Election Campaigns, they stated that, even though discussions are increased quantitatively, since they took place between the elites of well-known journalists, the interaction with people was quite limited (Doğu et al. 2014: 82).

In case of Turkey, Şener indicated in his research that in Turkey, deputies have low levels of Twitter use and a vast majority of them opened their Twitter accounts during the 2011 Election Campaigns. He has determined that, there has been an increase in the number of accounts in April before the 2011 Elections and stated that a few number of deputies continued to use Twitter

actively after the elections. This indicates that deputies consider Twitter as a part of their election campaign strategies and opening accounts and being active in Twitter is a movement within the party politics rather than their own decisions (2013:322).

Genel, analyzed the tendencies of four political party leaders in their use of Twitter before the general elections held on 12<sup>th</sup> of June 2011 in Turkey. The research indicated that political leaders are not able to utilize social media enough. It was noticed that their Twitter accounts were closed to the messages of their followers, their following lists were very short or they weren't following anyone and they spend very short time on social media during the political campaign period. Besides, political party leaders considered social media as a "platform to make statements" and stayed away from interactions. It was also observed that the topics that political leaders discuss on social media were limited and it was determined that leaders focus on one or two topics (Genel, 2012:30).

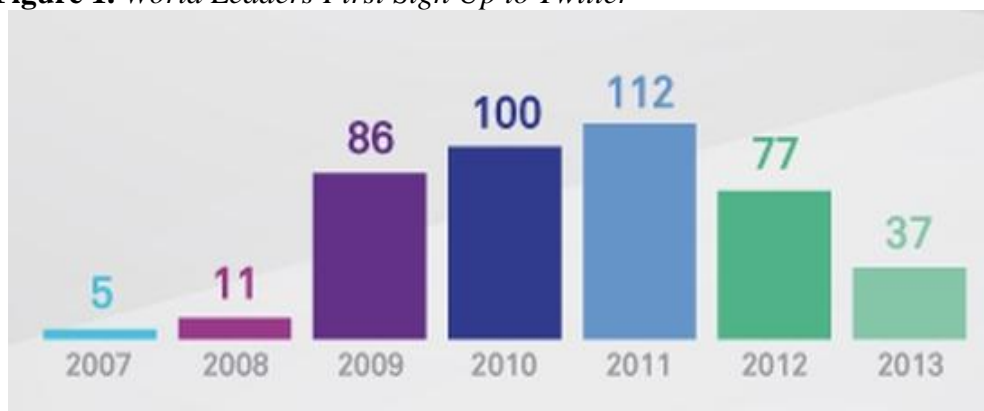
Özçetin grouped the tweets that the politicians sent on May 2013, in a very fiery political atmosphere in Turkey. It was seen that among 3673 tweets that were analyzed 1978 of them were retweets and conversations. In spite of the fact that more than half of the tweets are based on interaction, when the characteristics of the interactions were examined, it was observed that most of the politicians' retweets were their own statements and links of their interviews. Furthermore, it was seen that politicians' interactions were usually not with common citizens but with other politicians, famous broadcasters and journalists who are known as twitter elites. However, it was seen that at least they listened to common citizens (Özçetin, 2013:592).

Barrack Obama, who won the 2008 Presidential Elections and is still the president of the USA, pioneered politicians to use social media. The USA Presidential Primary Elections in 2008 witnessed the battle between Democrat Party's presidential candidate Barack Obama and the first woman presidential candidate Hillary Clinton. Obama, using the discourses with the themes of youth, change, hope and multicultural America, impressed more people than Hillary Clinton, the warrior, and confronted Republican presidential candidate John McCain as the presidential candidate of Democrat party. Obama, during his candidacy period, used internet efficiently along with mass communication tools. Obama used information and communication technologies efficiently and his superiority over McCain could also be understood from the statistics about the social networks. The number of Obama's Facebook friends, views of his YouTube channel and visitors of his web page is four times of those of McCain. Moreover, while McCain raised 201 million dollars, Obama collected around 650 million dollars. Consequently, Obama made a revolution in the use of information and communication technologies in political arena by utilizing them efficiently during his election campaign period (Kellner,2011:67). Following Obama's success in the efficient use of social media, all world leaders turn towards this area. This trend is also reflected on Turkey.

Twiplomacy, which feels the pulse of Twitter all around the world, published an infographic statistics by measuring world leaders' Twitter usage habits and their interactions on Twitter. According to the results, the most followed world leader is U.S. President Barack Obama, who used social media efficiently during the election period and also who is the owner of the most retweeted tweet in the history of Twitter among the politicians. There were 33,510,157 twitter followers of U.S. President Barack Obama in 2013. In 2014 this number reached to 47,782,949 (<https://twitter.com/BarackObama> Reached at 02.05.2014).

Politicians around the world started to use Twitter in 2007 and between the years 2009 and 2011 there was a dramatic increase in the number of politicians who sign up to Twitter for the first time.

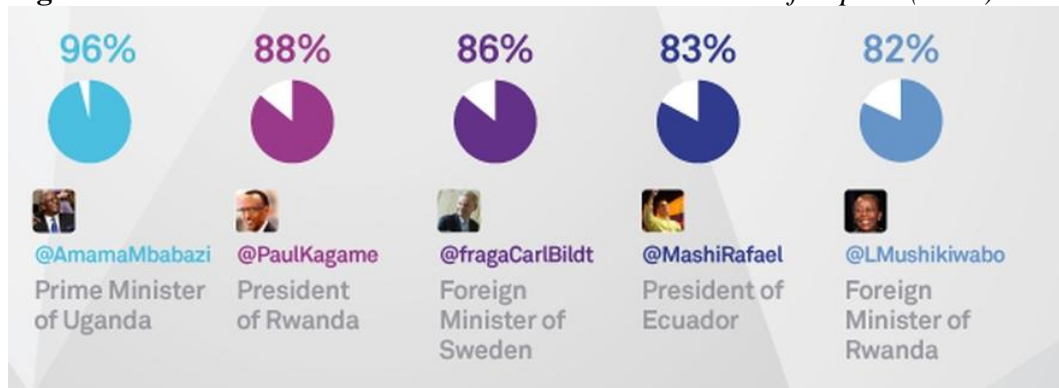
**Figure 1.** *World Leaders First Sign Up to Twitter*



In Turkey, the politician who is most followed is President Abdullah Gül with 4, 5 million followers. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is ranked as the second with 4, 2 million followers. Main opposition party – CHP – leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu has approximately 2 million, MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli has around 1 million and BDP leader Selahattin Demirtaş has about 300,000 followers.

Ugandan Prime Minister, Rwanda's President and Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt are among the leaders who use Twitter with conversational purposes and communicate via Twitter the most. They are followed by European External Action Service, Polish Foreign Ministry, UK Foreign Office and French Foreign Ministry. Ugandan Prime Minister Amama Mbabazi is the most conversational world leader with 96% of his tweets being replies to other Twitter users. His neighbour Rwanda's President Paul Kagame is ranked as the second with the reply rate of 88% (The Best connected World Leaders on Twitter, 2013):

**Figure 2. Most Conversational World Leaders and their % of Replies (2013)**



Venezuela’s President Nicolas Maduro is the world leader who has the most active Twitter account in 2013 with the average of 41.9 tweets each day. Dominican President Danilo Medina followed him with the average of 35.3 tweets per day. The top five world leaders who sent the highest number of tweets in 2013 are as follows (Twiplomacy 2013):

**Figure 3. Average Daily Tweets of the Most Active World Leaders in 2013**



A similar research was conducted by International Social Media Association (USMED) under the name of ‘Twitter Usage Report of the 24th Period Deputies’ in 2013 in Turkey. In the research, the data from March 2013 is evaluated. CHP Hatay Deputy Mevlüt Dudu, who set up an account on April 2009, is the first deputy who signed up to Twitter. In 2009, only 5% of the deputies opened accounts on Twitter. In 2010, this rate increased up to 23%. In 2011, nearly half of the deputies opened accounts. When it is considered that general elections were held during that period, it could be said that deputies opened Twitter accounts in order to use over the course of the election campaigns.

When the number of followers of the politicians are analyzed, it is seen that AKP deputies are placed on the top. AKP is followed by CHP, MHP and BDP consequently. This number is directly proportional with the percentage of the votes that the political parties won at the 2011 General and the 2014

Local Elections. AKP, who won the highest percentage of the votes in the last two elections, is the party with the highest number of followers on Twitter. By the year 2014, according to the number of deputies in the Turkish Grand National Assembly, AKP is on the first rank followed by CHP, MHP and BDP. This order is the same with the number of Twitter followers of the parties. When considered from this point of view, the rate of the Twitter followers and activeness of the parties give some clue about how much these parties are adopted by the masses and become a significant indicator for the election performance of these parties. In other words, political parties rating on Twitter is directly proportional to the percentage of votes in the elections.

**Table 4.** *Twitter Followers of Three Mass Political Parties in Turkey and Their Votes*

| Party Leader         | Political Party | Number of Followers | Number of Followers | 2014 Local Elections   |
|----------------------|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
|                      |                 | (March 2013)        | (May 2014)          | Percentage of Vote (%) |
| Recep Tayyip Erdoğan | AK Party        | 2.473.831           | 4.210.573           | 45,6                   |
| Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu   | CHP             | 1.125.140           | 1.987.814           | 27,8                   |
| Devlet Bahçeli       | MHP             | 473.52              | 984.074             | 15,2                   |

Twitter is not a one-way propaganda tool for politicians but one of the mediums by which politician-citizen interaction could be formed directly and a dialogue between them could be established. By way of the interaction with the followers on Twitter, the politicians may establish dialogues with the citizens consider them and respond to their problems and demands. Within the scope of the study, the potential of the deputies to affect the followers and the rates of interaction between the politicians and the followers are examined. Scoring over 12 points, deputies received the points below according to their replying behaviors: AK Party 3.61, CHP 3.38 and MHP 3.28. The rate of interaction between the politicians and their followers is 3.5. This data shows that deputies are involved in limited interaction with their followers (USMED, 2013).

### **The Aim and Method of Research**

The aim of this research is to make a determination on the usage of Twitter in political communication for the local elections held on 30<sup>th</sup> of March 2014 in Turkey. Within this context, Istanbul, which has the highest vote rate in Turkey, is chosen and the activities of two mayoral candidates for Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, Kadir Topbaş, the candidate of the ruling party and Mustafa Sarıgül, the candidate of main opposition party as a sample. Their use of Twitter over the course the election campaigns are analyzed. Research was conducted between the dates of 01 January and 30 March 2014, when the local



election campaigns were intense. The Twitter accounts of two candidates, @Kadir\_Topbas and @M\_Sarigul are observed. Dialogic approach of Twitter usage of two candidates is analyzed and messages written by these two politicians on Twitter are coded. The research has two reference points. The first one is the study conducted about Twitter usage at U.S. Congress and House of Representatives called as 'Twongress, The Power of Twitter in Congress' (Senak, 2010). In this research Twitter usage is examined under the topics of influence – signal – generosity – velocity and clout. The second reference point is Honeycutt and Herring's (2009) study of 'Beyond Microblogging: Conversation and Collaboration via Twitter'. In this study Twitter content analyses are examined in ten different categories:

- Polemics-Attacks: Targeting any political opponent without mentioning,
- Self-Party Promotion: Regarding politician's or party's activities (opening, party meetings and other promotional activities),
- Exhort: Suggestions to followers,
- Information: Quoting facts or informing the followers (laws, regulation info),
- Opinion: Declaring individual opinions regarding an issue,
- Political promise,
- Greetings: Greetings, condolences, remembering, celebrations,
- Aphorism: Sayings, poems, and such private lectures,
- Conversation: Direct communication with other user by using mention (@),
- Retweet: Retweeting the tweets of others.

In this research, tweets written by Topbaş and Sarıgül between the dates of 01 January -30 March 2014 are analyzed daily. These analyses are categorized under the topics below which are formed based on the categories in Honeycutt and Herring's (2009) study of 'Beyond Microblogging: Conversation and Collaboration via Twitter' and 'Two congress, The Power of Twitter in Congress':

1. Information about the party: Official information the politician gives to his followers. Corporate information given by the candidates about their parties are included in this category.
2. Event/Activity Information: Individual activities, speeches, meetings, visits etc. In this category, the candidates give personal information about themselves rather than their parties.
3. Message: Political messages, slogans about the elections or other issues
4. Polemics: Politician's discourses and messages toward other politicians, politician's dialogue/conversations with other politicians.

5. Public Dialogue: Use of (#) Hasthag in politician's tweets. His ability to establish a dialogue on the agenda of social media created by Twitter users
6. Interaction: Responses to the tweets written by the politician and the interaction they create on social media. Measuring the effects of dialogue that the politician tries to establish. The number of favorites he receives and the content of the tweets that receive the most interaction.
7. Retweet: At what rate does the politician receive approval and give approval in the conversation? Does the politician participate in the opinions of different users by way of retweeting? Are the politician's tweets retweeted?
8. Use of Multimedia: Politician's use of photography, video on Twitter

The questions to be answered within this research are as follows:

- Q1. How did the two candidates for the mayorship of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, Kadir Topbaş and Mustafa Sarıgül, use the social media Twitter?
- Q2. How did Twitter usage frequency of two candidates vary throughout the campaign period?
- Q3. Did Topbaş and Sarıgül use Twitter with a dialogic approach or were they engaged only in one-way communication?
- Q4. What are the contents of the Twitter messages of Topbaş and Sarıgül?
- Q5. Determining the Twitter usage statistics of Topbaş and Sarıgül
- Q6. Which arguments received the most interest from the constituents in the election campaigns of Topbaş and Sarıgül?
- Q7. Were the results of the local elections parallel to the increase in the Twitter access of two politicians?

### **Kadir Topbaş vs Mustafa Sarıgül and the 2014 Local Elections**

The 2014 Local Elections has been of vital importance for the political destiny of Turkey. Due to the protests that took place on June 2013 which are called as the Gezi events, two important topics were started to be discussed in Turkey. First one of them is the fact that social media plays an active role in Turkish politics and people can show political resistance by organizing themselves via the social media and Twitter. Both the ruling party and the opposition party saw for the first time during these protests that Twitter is a very important tool for communities to express their political discourses. As a consequence of the Gezi Events, the local elections held on 30 March 2014 took place in the atmosphere of a general election. Especially after June 2013, adversaries of AK Party government, claimed that AK Party would lose votes in these elections. Adversaries of the ruling party believed that AK Party,

which was the first party in the 2004 and 2009 Local Elections, would lose the election for the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality in 2014 and as a result of the battle between them and AK Party, these elections take place in the atmosphere of general elections. Istanbul conquest of which in 1453 by the Ottomans marked an end of a historical era. This city has a significance role not only for Turkey but also in the world history. Istanbul, as the connection point of Asia and Europe and the only city which is spread on two continents in the world, is an important political figure both in Turkey and world. Significant events that played an important role in the history of the world like the beginning of growth period of the Ottoman Empire, the disappearance of the Byzantine Empire, the change in the administrative center of the Orthodox Christianity, the fall of the Ottoman Empire with the occupation of the English during the First World War have all been centered around Istanbul. Istanbul is also important in the change of dynamics within Turkey. It is difficult for a political party which loses votes of the Istanbul to stay in power. In near past, Tansu Çiller and Right Path Party (Doğru Yol Partisi - DYP), Bülent Ecevit and Democratic Left Party (Demokratik Sol Parti – DSP) lost high level of votes in Istanbul and neither they nor their parties managed to enter the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.

The local elections held on 30 March 2014 was in the atmosphere of general elections because, the ruling party perceived these elections as a vote of confidence and the opposition wanted to take Istanbul from the ruling party to weaken its strength. The 2014 Local Elections has been one of the elections with the highest voter turnout. AK Party's candidate for Istanbul was Kadir Topbaş, who has been the mayor of Istanbul since 2004. Kadir Topbaş was born in Yusufeli, Artvin in 1945. He completed his primary and secondary education in Istanbul. He was graduated from Marmara University, Faculty of Theology and Mimar Sinan University, Department of Architecture. He earned his PhD degree from Istanbul University, Department of Art History and Archeology. Political life of Topbaş started when he became the Mayor of Beyoğlu in 1999. After that, he was elected as the Mayor of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality twice in the 2004 and 2009 Elections (<http://www.kadirtopbas.com.tr/Hayati> reached at 05.05.2014).

**Figure 4.** Advertising Campaign Visual of Kadir Topbaş



Mustafa Sarıgül was the candidate of the main opposition party CHP for the mayorship of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. Mustafa Sarıgül was born in Erzincan in 1956. He was graduated from Talatpaşa Elementary School, Şişli Secondary School, Zincirlikuyu Technical High School and Marmara University Faculty of Education. He continued his professional life at Kağıthane Municipality, İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality and IETT general directorate consequetively. He began his political life at youth branches of CHP and became a 18th Legislative Period SHP deputy from Istanbul. Sarıgül was elected as Şişli Mayor for the third time in the 2009 Local Elections (<http://www.mustafasarigul.com/> Reached at: 05.05.2014).

**Figure 5.** Advertising Campaign Visual of Mustafa Sarıgül



The local elections, held on 30 March 2014 and took place in the atmosphere of general elections, witnessed the competition between Kadir

Topbaş (AK Party) and Mustafa Sarıgül (CHP). Both candidates made different campaigns with different messages and used traditional media and social media in different ways.

Between the dates of 01-30 March 2014 it was Mustafa Sarıgül who advertised most in the printed media – the most important medium of traditional media. According to the ‘Election’s Media Report’ prepared by Media Monitoring Center (Medya Takip Merkezi), CHP’s candidate for the mayorship of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, Mustafa Sarıgül, was the candidate who used printed media ads the most. Mustafa Sarıgül was ranked as the first with 167 advertisements. On the other hand, Kadir Topbaş didn’t advertise on printed media (Medya Takip, 2014).

**Figure 6.** Kadir Topbaş and Mustafa Sarıgül’s Advertising Campaign Visuals Used on Traditional Media



Television was one of the mediums which was intensely used during the 2014 Local Elections. The research made by Medya Takip Merkezi between the dates of 1 and 28 March through 13 television channels, illustrated the extent to which political parties used visual media advertisements. AK Party, with 4,035 advertisements was the first political party, CHP was the second with 2,725 advertisements placed and MHP was the third with 136 advertisements placed (Aydınlık,2014:15).

Mustafa Sarıgül used the printed press, radio, television and outdoor media in terms of traditional media. Sarıgül used outdoor advertising, placed ads on printed press, and prepared TV spots. Sarıgül’s radio spot was broadcasted on

Number One Fm ve Number One Türk Fm the most. Sarıgöl's advertising campaign involved integrated marketing communications in traditional media. Kadir Topbaş didn't use the printed press and radio. He mostly used outdoor and television. The medium that Topbaş used the most was outdoor.

### **The March 30 Local Elections in Turkey and Social Media**

Turkey entered to the March 30 elections without Twitter. Presidency of Telecommunication and Communication (TIB) announced that, in response to complaints filed by some citizens, access to Twitter is blocked due to a court verdict on accusations regarding personal rights violations (<http://www.dunya.com/twitter-kapandi-222845h.htm> Reached at 04.05.2014). Even though Twitter was blocked ten days before the local elections, citizens continued to access their accounts by changing DNS settings. On the day of the local elections, 10.6 million tweets with political content was sent out, despite the fact that access to Twitter was blocked. According to research conducted by Somera, on 30 March 2014 which is the election day, 64% of all Tweets sent from Turkey contained messages about the elections and 36% of them were about the special election programs on television (Habertürk,2014a:8).

Onat and Kaan, in the research made between 10 February and 10 March 2014, stated that mayoral candidates were not utilizing social media. Ferah Onat indicated that there are 12 million Twitter users in Turkey and the messages sent out by mayoral candidates could have reached thousands of people in a very short period of time if they were retweeted by their followers. Onat said that the candidates were not able to make use of these advantages and actually their presence on social media was almost unwilling. Onat stated in this research that Kadir Topbaş sent out 154 tweets and was retweeted 28,484 times between the dates of 10 February – 10 March 2014 while Mustafa Sarıgöl sent out 358 tweet and was retweeted 63,337 times during the same period (Habertürk,2014b:17).

Another research showed that Kadir Topbaş has had a Twitter account since 2010 and he almost never engaged in conversations with his followers. According to this research, Topbaş used Twitter to make announcements and tell about the projects he realized. It is also stated that Mustafa Sarıgöl has also been on Twitter since 2010 and he usually sent out sloganize tweets to his followers (Sabah, 2014a:15).

For the local elections, AK Party's social media coordinator was Muhammed Burak Gültekin while Adem Melek, the owner of 23. Yüzyıl Dijital İletişim (23rd Century Digital Communication), was Mustafa Sarıgöl's social media consultant (Milliyet, 2014:5). Gültekin, when talking about the media strategy of AK Party, expressed that managing a political party social media account is like holding a fire in your hand. Gültekin, saying that even one mistake could lead to a big crisis, continued: 'Digital politics and digital PR are new concepts in politics. Social media started to become as essential as meetings, as election buses. I can say that the politician who is present both in

real world and the virtual world will win the election.’ Sarigül’s media consultant Meleke said ‘You can affect a politician’s 40 year career with only one tweet.’ Meleke underlined the fact that Twitter is now one of the most important mediums for politics and its significance is growing each day. Meleke stated: ‘It is important to use the right social media in the right time. For instance, we used Foursquare as a means of establishing policy for the first time. When Sarigül “checked-in” here, this created a tremendous impact on digital and classical media.’

### Findings of Research

Findings of the content analysis which is conducted on Twitter accounts of Kadir Topbaş and Mustafa Sarigül between the dates of 01 January 2014 and 30 March 2014 are presented in this part of the study.

**Table 5.** *Contents of the tweets written by Topbaş and Sarigül*

|                      | Topbaş       | Sarigül | Topbaş        | Sarigül | Topbaş     | Sarigül |
|----------------------|--------------|---------|---------------|---------|------------|---------|
| Tweet Content        | January 2014 |         | February 2014 |         | March 2014 |         |
| News about the party | 0            | 1,79 %  | 20%           | 0,63 %  | 6,22 %     | 0       |
| Event/Activity news  | 85,36 %      | 37,72 % | 66,20 %       | 31,36 % | 35,40 %    | 17,22 % |
| Message              | 14,63%       | 57,18 % | 13,80 %       | 48,09 % | 52,17      | 67,43 % |
| Polemics             | 0            | 3,29 %  | 0             | 19,92   | 6,21 %     | 15,35 % |

When tweets sent out by Kadir Topbaş and Mustafa Sarigül in the Istanbul mayoral battle are coded based on their content, the difference in the social media communication strategies of two politicians becomes clear. Majority of the tweets sent out by Sarigül were of personal content, whereas Topbaş wrote tweets both in personal nature and also with content that could be identified with his party, AK Party. Both politicians gave weight to the event news and personal messages, but, while Sarigül entered into arguments with his political rivals via Twitter, Topbaş tried to avoid it. When these two rivals were communicating with each other, Topbaş preferred to use a corporate expression whereas Sarigül used a more aggressive and offensive language.

When the dialogues of two candidates with their followers were analyzed, the findings obtained are as follows:

#### *January 2014*

Mustafa Sarigül informed via Twitter that he has been on the move all through the January and sometimes he visited three districts in a day. Sarigül, who has an aggressive attitude on social media, tried to create a meeting atmosphere everywhere he went and said that he had met great interest of citizens. His words ‘I’ll explain the corruption of the prime minister’ drew

intense attention of his target audience. Sarigül trusted that he would win the elections. He showed that he was pleased with his constituents' tweets. Opponents of Sarigül were making comments on Sarigül's tweets saying that Topbaş was 'okay' and that Sarigül shouldn't build castles in the air and sometimes they asked about his future projects for Istanbul.

Kadir Topbaş attended to election bureau openings for a few times throughout January. The tweets he sent out were about municipal operations and the meetings he attended (fair openings, Davos meeting etc.) in general. His followers wanted him to highlight what he accomplished and sent him tweets containing this message. Opponents of him replied to his tweets and told him that it was time for him to leave.

#### *February 2014*

Sarigül emphasized the fact that when they run Istanbul, they would serve everybody equally and that they wouldn't make any discrimination based on political choices. He asked for votes from the historical parts of Istanbul via his tweets. Since he pressed against government because of the corruptions rather than talking about his projects, it was as if he was in the race not to become the mayor of Istanbul but to become the prime minister of the country. His tweets were replied by impartial constituents who asked him to tell more about his projects. Opponents said that they wouldn't vote for him and asked the question: 'What was it that you did for Şişli that you'll do for Istanbul?' But his constituents were quite pleased and already in the spirit of victory.

Election campaign of Topbaş included opening AKP election bureaus in different districts and inaugurating places built/restored by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. By the end of February, he started to visit districts, made speeches and visited tradesmen. His opponents kept sending allusive tweets to Topbaş due to the corruption claims. His constituents reminded of the past problems of the city and accepted him as the architect of Istanbul and defended him via their tweets. The meetings Topbaş attended are usually big meetings that AKP District Presidencies held with various CSOs (civil society organizations).

#### *March 2014*

Mustafa Sarigül used Twitter actively as it was in January and February. He tweeted about almost everything on agenda. Sarigül started to announce his projects in March. After he announced them, he criticized the work done by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. He sent out many tweets against the ban on social media after 20<sup>th</sup> of March. He asked questions to the prime minister and also to Topbaş about the bans via his tweets but Topbaş didn't reply most of them. Topbaş broke his silence with this tweets he sent out on 17<sup>th</sup> of March. Beginning from this day, the number of Sarigül's followers started to increase due to his tweets about the social media bans.

Election campaign work of Kadir Topbaş involved organizing meetings at the districts with civil society organizations and inaugurating municipality services. He replied Sarigül only with the tweets he sent on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March.



Also, he told more about his projects in the tweets he sent on the same day. Topbaş said that there was so much more to do and showed his confidence for the elections. He didn't make any statements about the Twitter ban and also he didn't send any tweets after access to Twitter is blocked on 20<sup>th</sup> March.

**Table 6.** *Public Dialogues of Topbaş and Sarıgül on Twitter*

|                 | January 2014       |                | February 2014      |                | March 2014         |                |
|-----------------|--------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|
|                 | Number of Retweets | Use of Hashtag | Number of Retweets | Use of Hashtag | Number of Retweets | Use of Hashtag |
| Kadir Topbaş    | 0                  | 0              | 0                  | 0              | 0                  | 54             |
| Mustafa Sarıgül | 21                 | 21             | 14                 | 13             | 34                 | 71             |

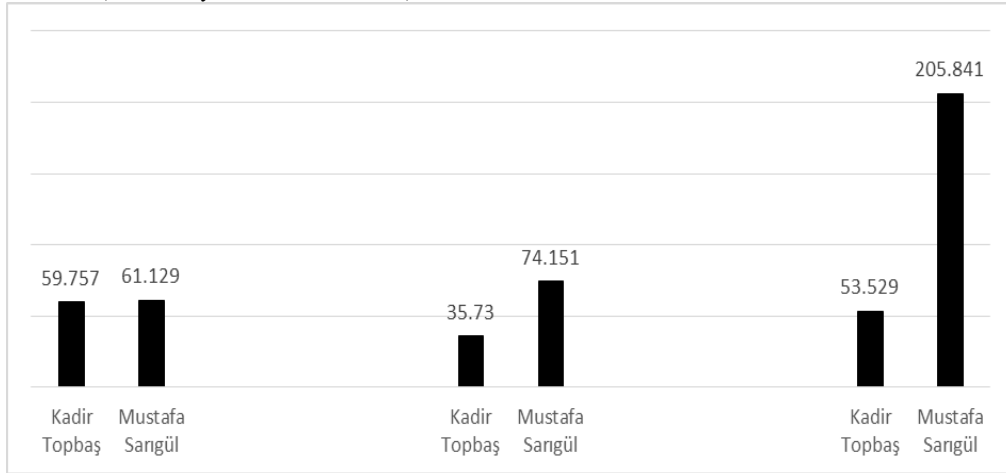
With the purpose of measuring the two politicians' participation in the public dialogue through Twitter, # hashtag and retweet activities were observed. In this research, which was conducted to measure the rate of expressing one's opinion about a subject on Twitter agenda, participating in the opinions of the communities and establishing dialogues with their opinions, it is seen that Topbaş used hashtag only in March, whereas Sarıgül used more hashtags compared to Topbaş but still he used a very limited number of hashtags. Another remarkable finding of the research is that both of the political leaders avoided retweeting. Both Topbaş and Sarıgül expected to be retweeted and didn't establish dialogue with their target audiences by retweeting the tweets they received.

**Table 7.** *The Change in the Twitter followers of Topbaş and Sarıgül*

| JANUARY 2014    |                          |                 |                  |
|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
|                 | Daily Increase (Average) | Weekly Increase | Monthly Increase |
| Kadir Topbaş    | 1.927                    | 13.493          | 59.757           |
| Mustafa Sarıgül | 1.971                    | 13.803          | 61.129           |
| FEBRUARY 2014   |                          |                 |                  |
|                 | Daily Increase (Average) | Weekly Increase | Monthly Increase |
| Kadir Topbaş    | 1.276                    | 8.932           | 35.73            |
| Mustafa Sarıgül | 2.648                    | 18.537          | 74.151           |
| MARCH 2014      |                          |                 |                  |
|                 | Daily Increase (Average) | Weekly Increase | Monthly Increase |
| Kadir Topbaş    | 1.726                    | 12.087          | 53.529           |
| Mustafa Sarıgül | 6.640                    | 44.48           | 205.841          |

It is seen that throughout three months of election campaign, Sarıgül increased the number of his followers more than Topbaş did. The difference between the increases in the number of followers grew bigger with each month. By March, Sarıgül gained 152.312 more followers than Topbaş on Twitter.

**Figure 7.** Monthly Follower Increase of Kadir Topbaş and Mustafa Sarıgül on Twitter (January – March 2014)



**Table 8.** Number of followers of Topbaş and Sarıgül on Twitter

|                 | January 2014 | February 2014 | March 2014 |
|-----------------|--------------|---------------|------------|
| Kadir Topbaş    | 558.363      | 594.093       | 647.622    |
| Mustafa Sarıgül | 213.799      | 287.950       | 493.791    |

When the number of followers of two candidates are considered, it is seen that at the beginning of the race, Topbaş had twice as much followers than Sarıgül. During the course of the election campaign, the number of followers of both candidates on Twitter were increased. Sarıgül, although the speed of the increase in the number of his followers was higher than that of Topbaş, could not outperform Topbaş in terms of the total number of followers.

**Table 9.** Number of tweets sent out by Topbaş and Sarıgül

|                 | January 2014 | February 2014 | March 2014 |
|-----------------|--------------|---------------|------------|
| Kadir Topbaş    | 66           | 211           | 176        |
| Mustafa Sarıgül | 366          | 533           | 826        |

Over the course of campaign, Sarıgül used Twitter more actively than Topbaş did. As the Election Day came closer, Sarıgül increased the number of tweets he sent and tried to establish a more intense dialogue with his target audience. The use of multimedia on the candidates' Twitter communication is shown on Table 10.

**Table 10.** *Multimedia use and interaction of tweets written by Topbaş and Sarıgül*

| Mustafa Sarıgül |       |           |         | Kadir Topbaş |       |           |         |
|-----------------|-------|-----------|---------|--------------|-------|-----------|---------|
| JANUARY         | Reply | Favourite | Retweet | JANUARY      | Reply | Favourite | Retweet |
| Link            | 31    | 6.462     | 1.656   | Link         | 4     | 273       | 960     |
| Photograph      | 211   | 34.644    | 28.038  | Photograph   | 46    | 2939      | 8.548   |
| Vine            | 1     | 39        | 59      | Text         | 16    | 1448      | 4.851   |
| Text            | 122   | 31.745    | 23.410  |              |       |           |         |
| Video           | 1     | 61        | 117     |              |       |           |         |

| FEBRUARY   | Reply | Favourite | Retweet | FEBRUARY   | Reply | Favourite | Retweet |
|------------|-------|-----------|---------|------------|-------|-----------|---------|
| Link       | 31    | 2.208     | 1.824   | Link       | 3     | 244       | 784     |
| Photograph | 252   | 43.514    | 52.793  | Photograph | 149   | 12097     | 31.003  |
| Vine       | 1     | 82        | 101     | Text       | 56    | 4752      | 12.463  |
| Text       | 244   | 58.428    | 73.487  | Video      | 3     | 301       | 951     |
| Video      | 5     | 573       | 1.590   |            |       |           |         |

| MARCH      | Reply | Favourite | Retweet | MARCH      | Reply | Favourite | Retweet |
|------------|-------|-----------|---------|------------|-------|-----------|---------|
| Link       | 24    | 4.533     | 5.717   | Link       | 15    | 880       | 2.098   |
| Photograph | 206   | 56.965    | 63.712  | Photograph | 74    | 7757      | 15.169  |
| Text       | 503   | 212.848   | 276.853 | Text       | 72    | 6700      | 15.352  |
| Video      | 93    | 10.319    | 13.972  | Video      | 15    | 1485      | 7.768   |

When the use of multimedia on tweets sent by the two candidates is analyzed, it is seen that Sarıgül uses multimedia more intensively. During the course of the three-month research period, Sarıgül shared plain texts and photographs whereas Topbaş preferred to share photographs in general. The rate and type of multimedia use of the two candidates are as follows:

**Table 11.** *Rate of Multimedia Use of Topbaş and Sarıgül on Twitter*

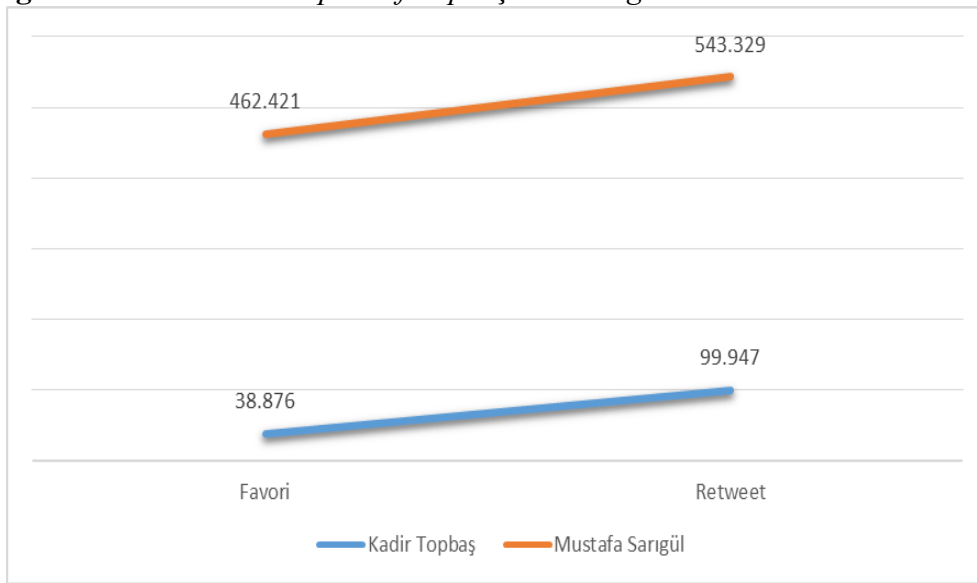
|              | Kadir Topbaş | Rate (%)   | Mustafa Sarıgül | Rate (%)   |
|--------------|--------------|------------|-----------------|------------|
| Link         | 22           | 4.85       | 86              | 4.99       |
| Photo        | 269          | 59.39      | 669             | 38.79      |
| Vine         | 0            | 0          | 2               | 0.11       |
| Text         | 144          | 31.79      | 869             | 50.38      |
| Video        | 18           | 3.97       | 99              | 5.73       |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>453</b>   | <b>100</b> | <b>1725</b>     | <b>100</b> |

When we look at the interaction two mayoral candidates received, it is seen that Sarigül was involved in more interaction with Twitter users. In spite of the fact that he had less followers, due to his new followers' activeness, Sarigül received more retweets and favorites compared to Topbaş. When interaction rates of the two candidates are analysed, it is seen that Sarigül got 11 times more favourites and 5 times more retweets than Topbaş.

**Table 12.** *Twitter Interaction of Topbaş and Sarigül (January-March 2014)*

|                 | <b>Favourite</b> | <b>Retweet</b> |
|-----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Kadir Topbaş    | 38.876           | 99.947         |
| Mustafa Sarigül | 462.421          | 543.329        |

**Figure 8.** *Interaction Graphic of Topbaş and Sarigül on Twitter*



The top five messages that Topbaş and Sarigül received the most interactions and the rates of interactions are as follows:

**Table 13.** *Top Five Messages of Kadir Topbaş that Received the most Interaction on Twitter*

| <b>Tweet</b>  | <b>Favourite</b> | <b>Retweet</b> | <b>Total Interaction</b> |
|---|------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Kadir Topbaş</b> 01.03.2014 14:40 Here is the new Kadıköy Square... <a href="http://t.co/GVbFHwHT7G">http://t.co/GVbFHwHT7G</a>  | 276              | 1.633          | 1.909                    |
| <b>Kadir Topbaş</b> 17.03.2014 14:15<br>#WeHaveSoMuchMoreToDo<br>ServingIstanbulIsHappiness. Project and service is our business... <a href="https://t.co/AmBOZjOZvE">https://t.co/AmBOZjOZvE</a> | 161              | 1.586          | 1.747                    |
| <b>Kadir Topbaş</b> 17.03.2014 13:25<br>#WeHaveSoMuchMoreToDo Serving Istanbul Is Happiness... <a href="https://t.co/AmBOZjOZvE">https://t.co/AmBOZjOZvE</a>                                      | 251              | 1.421          | 1.672                    |
| <b>Kadir Topbaş</b> 20.03.2014 10:19<br>Metro Gar Project at Büyükçekmece will be a first in Turkey... <a href="http://t.co/QXII49GXnw">http://t.co/QXII49GXnw</a>                                | 171              | 1.31           | 1.481                    |
| <b>Kadir Topbaş</b> 18.03.2014 11:38<br>#HousingForLowIncomersFromKIPTAS We are starting to build 1472 of 10000 council housings... <a href="http://t.co/E2awMAAtMcS">http://t.co/E2awMAAtMcS</a> | 102              | 1.188          | 1.290                    |

Kadir Topbaş informed about the work he did in most of the tweets he sent out during the election campaign period. Topbaş aimed to establish dialogue with his target audience through these tweets. All of the five messages of Topbaş that got the most interaction during the course of the three-month research period were about his accomplishments and operations. Topbaş established a dialogue with his constituents through the slogan ‘we have so much more to do’ and his five tweets that received the most interaction were written based on this concept.

**Table 14.** *Top five messages of Mustafa Sarıgöl that received the most interaction on Twitter*

| <b>Tweet</b>  | <b>Favourite</b> | <b>Retweet</b> | <b>Total Interaction</b> |
|---|------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Mustafa Sarıgöl</b> 20.03.2014 23:14<br>You are to ban Twitter. You are to wipe out Twitter. yav hee he @RT_Erdogan  | 20.217           | 31.678         | 51.895                   |
| <b>Mustafa Sarıgöl</b> 17.03.2014 13:45<br>Did we lose Haydarpaşa and Galatasaray because our fire department is as good as that of New York<br>@Kadir_Topbas ?                 | 5.133            | 8.438          | 13.571                   |
| <b>Mustafa Sarıgöl</b> 30.03.2014 17:55<br>Numbers are served with the purpose of manipulation. Let's not leave the election boxes until the results are finalised.             | 2.675            | 10.83          | 13.505                   |
| <b>Mustafa Sarıgöl</b> 30.03.2014 18:08<br>Precious friends, let's not leave the election boxes until the results are finalised. Let's not give credit to manipulative results. | 3.383            | 8.98           | 12.363                   |
| <b>Mustafa Sarıgöl</b> 20.03.2014 22:58<br>The ban on Twitter is a civilian coup on our democracy.  | 3.555            | 5.044          | 8.599                    |

The tweets that Mustafa Sarıgöl received the most interaction were the ones sent out in March. Sarıgöl, who was integrated with his followers in the fiercest days of the election race, got even more interaction especially due to his tweets about the claims of election day frauds. It was seen that, none of the tweets that received the high interaction contain anything about services or municipal work. Sarıgöl accused his competitor with a strategy similar to guerilla marketing and entered into arguments by mentioning (@) Topbaş and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. This discourse was responded positively by his target audience and received high interaction.

The most important difference between the discourses of tweets sent out by two candidates that got the most interaction is that while Topbaş wrote service-oriented tweets, Sarıgöl's tweets were based on 'competition and polemics'.

## **Conclusion**

The change in the communication technologies lead to the change in media. Changing and updating technological conditions reflected on the mass media and resulted in the birth of different communication models. Communication through traditional media was replaced first by new media and then, finally, by social media which has become prevalent due to the

advancements in web 2.0 technologies. The shift of communication from traditional media to social media reminded all markets that new communication methods should be used in order to reach out the consumers of new media. Political communication also got its share from these developments and a new approach, which utilizes social media intensively, is developed. This type of political communication is called as political communication 2.0.

The main difference between the traditional political communication and social media based political communication is that the latter one creates a dialogic communication. Kent and Taylor examined the literature in which the concept of dialogue is used and added dialogue to the theory of public relations. That's how dialogic communication is developed which has become the most important form of communication that social media provides. Twitter, as one of the most important mediums of social media, provided the necessary infrastructure and became a very important communication channel especially for politicians. The political communication approach, which was a one-way communication where messages were pushed out, has changed and gained a dialogic nature, enabling politicians to communicate with their target audiences directly by contacting them one-to-one.

Dialogic political communication was used by the President of the United States Barack Obama for the first time in the world and achieved a great success, which became a precedent for other politicians. They started to discover Twitter and opened their own accounts with the purpose of establishing dialogue with their target audiences. Many politicians signed up for Twitter between 2009 and 2011 for the first time. A similar situation occurred in Turkey, too. Majority of Turkish politicians opened their first Twitter accounts a few months prior to the 2011 General Elections and started to use Twitter in order to reach out to their target audiences.

It was indicated by the research conducted that politicians in Turkey are not using social media sufficiently actively. The politicians have used Twitter network the most among all social media that they started to use during the 2011 General Elections. Twitter was used just before the elections and after that, it was not used even that much. It was seen after the Gezi Events, which took place in June 2013, that social media occupies a significant place in the lives of people, especially in the lives of the new constituents known as the Generation Y. The Gezi Events demonstrated that use of social media and use of Twitter in particular, play an essential role in Turkish politics. This increased the significance of social media for the local elections held on March 2014.

The opposition against the ruling party of Turkey, AK Party, during the course of the Gezi Events had great repercussions especially on Twitter and became the agenda of the day. The opposition against AK Party leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan again through social media platforms like Twitter and YouTube caused serious polemics and created a general election atmosphere for the local elections held on 30 March 2014. On this sense, the 30 March Local Elections was subject to serious conflicts and tension between the

government and the opposites. These local elections were considered as a vote of confidence by the government while it was seen as an important step in the fall of the government by the adversaries. As a result of this, local elections turned to a battle, the country became polarized. A serious tension emerged between liberals and Republicans in Turkey. The 30 March 2014 Local Elections were one of the elections with the broadest participation. The most important part in this battle was winning the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. Istanbul has been managed by Kadir Topbaş and AK Party since 2004, the opposition nominated Mustafa Sarıgül, who has a very powerful political background and high popularity, as the mayoral candidate to take the city's key from AK Party. From the beginning of their election campaigns on January 2014 until the Election Day (30 March 2014), Mustafa Sarıgül and Kadir Topbaş engaged in a cutthroat competition. Both mayoral candidates campaigned on traditional media along with social media and Twitter, and used Twitter with the purpose of establishing dialogue with their target audiences and express themselves.

In this research, the ways that Topbaş and Sarıgül used Twitter throughout their three-month advertising campaigns and whether they used dialogic communication methods or not were examined. The conclusions obtained through the research findings are as follows:

- Topbaş mentioned his past accomplishments and future projects while Sarıgül used more of a critical discourse. Topbaş sent service-oriented, informative tweets and Sarıgül sent critical tweets.
- While Topbaş's attitude in establishing dialogue with his target audience was calmer, Sarıgül adopted a more aggressive attitude. Sarıgül wrote critical and argumentative tweets toward Topbaş and his attitude was rather personal. On the other hand, Topbaş tried to avoid all kinds of personal polemics until 17 March 2014.
- Sarıgül preferred to write tweets in personal nature while Topbaş's tweets were more corporate. Topbaş tried to demonstrate that he was working in coherence with his party through his messages about AK Party. Sarıgül wrote less tweets about his party CHP compared to his competitor.
- Even though the number of followers of Topbaş was more than that of Sarıgül in terms of the total number of followers, the speed of the increase in the number of Sarıgül's followers was higher than that of Topbaş.
- Both mayoral candidates were weak in terms of establishing public dialogue on Twitter. Neither of them use many (#) hashtags and by not retweeting their voters' tweets they didn't pay much attention to public dialogue.
- Mustafa Sarıgül's rate of interaction on Twitter was higher than Kadir Topbaş. His tweets were retweeted and favorite more than those of Topbaş.



- When use of multimedia in the candidates' communication with their audiences was analyzed, it was seen that while Sarıgöl used many multimedia tools including Vine (an android application), Topbaş usually shared photographs. The rate of photographs Topbaş shared was 59.39% whereas the rate of texts Sarıgöl shared was 50.38%.
- During the three-month research period, the contents of Topbaş and Sarıgöl's tweets were analyzed. It was seen that while Topbaş was writing about events and activities, Sarıgöl wrote personal messages, slogans and gave some information. Topbaş didn't send any tweets in January and February which could be subject to polemics, but tweets written by Sarıgöl all through these three months were highly argumentative. The content of Sarıgöl's messages were aggressive and the content of Topbaş's messages were informative.

Sarıgöl couldn't reach the number of followers that Topbaş had, although he gained more followers and received a higher interaction rate and was more active in social media compared to his competitor. While the difference between the number of followers of Topbaş and Sarıgöl was 344,564 on 1 January, by the end of the campaign this difference dropped to 153,831, when the number of Topbaş's followers was 647,622 and the number of Sarıgöl's followers was 493,791. Sarıgöl has been the victor of the Twitter battle that took place between Topbaş and Sarıgöl during the course of election campaign when the rates of growth and interaction on Twitter are considered. However, Kadir Topbaş won the elections with 47.8% of the votes and became the Mayor of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality for the third time. Sarıgöl won 40.1% of the votes in the local elections held on 30 March 2014 (Vatan,2014:11). The election was resulted in favor of Topbaş with a difference of 7.7%. Topbaş outpaced Sarıgöl in the elections as he did on Twitter. This indicates that the person and the institution with a higher number of followers on social media reflect this superiority on to the election results.

The Twitter Battle between Topbaş and Sarıgöl during the local elections period brings the effects of social media and Twitter campaigns (which became additions to the election campaigns through traditional media) up for discussion. In addition to these effects, the importance of style and content used in dialogic communication and their contribution to communication should also be discussed.

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