

# Candidates' Use of New Media and Social Media as Technology Tools in the TRNC 2020 Presidential Election Process

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# Abstract

New communication technologies express the transformation of traditional communication technologies in parallel with technological development. New media tools, such as propaganda tools in political elections, have become widespread in recent years. The use of social media in political elections has gained significant importance in recent years. Social media platforms provide an environment where political campaigns, candidates and voters can interact, and information sharing occurs quickly and widely.

Candidates and political parties use social media platforms to deliver campaign messages, announce their policies, and communicate with voters. Through visual and written content, videos, live broadcasts and posts, candidates directly interact with voters and mobilize their supporters. Social media is an effective tool for spreading political propaganda and reaching large audiences with political information. Candidates and their supporters share various social media content to influence voters, defend their policies and persuade voters. Social media platforms gauge voters' opinions and preferences through surveys and feedback. Candidates and political parties seek feedback on social media to identify voters' expectations and concerns, shape their campaigns accordingly, and improve their policies.

TRNC 2020 Presidential Elections is an essential topic for political science and international relations thesis studies. These elections provide a rich source for examining the political atmosphere of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, the election process, competition between candidates, election results, and political transformations. By discussing the use of social media in the 2020 TRNC Presidential elections, this research examined how the candidates used social media channels and what the reflections were by revealing the political communication languages of the propaganda and the differences it created in social perception. Qualitative research methods and scanning models will be used in the research. The candidates' use of social media in the 2020 TRNC Presidential elections was examined with their propaganda languages and statistics obtained in new media.

**Keywords:** TRNC 2020 Presidential Elections, Social Media, New Media, Political Propaganda, Mustafa Akıncı, Ersin Tatar.

#### Introduction

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus plays a vital role in politics and democracy. The TRNC is a state established in 1983 with the support of Turkey and is located in the north of the island of Cyprus. Its political system is based on parliamentary democracy. The political structure in the TRNC is based on a multi-party system. Various political parties compete in elections, and the people's preferences form the government. Political parties may have different ideologies and policies. There are usually nationalist, left, right or center-oriented parties. Politics and democracy play an essential role in the TRNC. Elections are held with the participation of political parties and the public.

With the rapid development of the Internet and technology, modern technologies have started to develop and change (Doğan, 2017). The Internet has been the most critical element in the effective development of new communication technologies. The area that is fed the most from Internet technology is new media (Çakır, 2014). The concept of social media covers websites and online tools that allow people to interact with each other by sharing their opinions, interests and information. In addition, social media allows companies to reach target audiences they have difficulty accessing, spread their messages, and take action easily (Zeybek, 2016). Social media tools effectively make internal communication open and fast for participation.

The term new media, which is one of the crucial developments of the era and is gradually increasing in importance, has a reasonably broad scope. New media includes all of the latest communication technologies and is defined as" environments that" guide the interactive transformation of existing media into digital data in general and provide production, distribution and sharing through computers" (Taş, 2017). Wi" h the emergence of new media, all traditional media models have become integrated with digital technology. New media has provided accessibility



to a broad audience thanks to the partnership formed by its digital technology together with 0's and 1's. In addition, 1'song with digital technologies and the Internet, the circulation of images, voice, information and data has gradually accelerated (Güngör, 2018).

A social networking site or social network is "a place where users can make friends or communicate with their friends interactively, organize various events, share videos and pictures, and give personal news about themselves". Social network" ng networks are firstly GTalk, Messenger, e-mail (electronic mail communication), etc. he has created a virtual communication environment through applications such as. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Swarm, and other applications have made it possible to communicate and get together Decently in recent years (Çakır, 2014).

These virtual platforms, which have emerged thanks to the innovations brought by the Internet, have enabled individuals to come together with users on different profiles and share their common interests (Kalaman, Dec. 2019). Social media platforms have some features that are different from traditional media. Among several features of social media tools Dec; "immediacy, decent" realization, interactionism, the user instead of a follower, private space, the intricacy of production and consumption, grittiness of public space, intertwined virtual reality, disregard of hierarchical relationships, intertwined public spaces, economic formation" are included. O" e of the main features that distinguishes social media tools from traditional media is the interaction feature. The interaction feature of social media tools allows the internet user to communicate and share with different users on the interface by Decoupling them from a passive position (Özçetin, 2018). It may be possible for many other users to contribute to the production taking place on the social media network by adding comments.

This approach, which is a technological determinist, assigns entirely positive meanings to specialized tools (Gücdemir, 2017). Ignoring such issues as economic and social inequality and power structures Creates an equal future under the shadow of technological tools. However, another of the opportunities provided by the Internet is that it has a structure that is far from control, has a liberating effect, brings the person who is the information producer to the forefront and eliminates limitations such as time and space (Çakır, 2014). In other words, the Internet has a character that reverses traditional media's restrictive and top-to-bottom information flow.

On the other hand, the concept of a global village is finding a response thanks to the Internet and social media today (Bostanci, 2019). Due to the structural features of the Internet and social media, everyone is everywhere at any time, and people can be aware of each other as if they lived in a small village (Kalman, 2019). Marshall McLuhan states that electronic media provides equality with the global village conceptualization, reunites humanity, eliminates the phenomena of place and time and transforms them into a single state of consciousness. Electricity has also been very influential on the qualities of the media. Thanks to electricity, the press has gained features such as continuity and speed, making information accessible to everyone in the electronic age (Güngör, 2018).

The use of new media is essential in the 2020 TRNC Presidential elections. The Dec 2020 TRNC Presidential election was held to determine the TRNC President who will serve between 2020 and 2025. October 11, 2020, the election's first and second rounds were held on October 18, 2020. The election went to the second round after all 11 candidates were at most 50% of the vote. Ersin Tatar, who finished in first place with 32.3% of the vote, and Mustafa Akinci, who finished in second place with 29.8% of the vote, took part in the second round. In the second round, the Republican Turkish Party supported Akinci, the Democratic Party and the Rebirth Party supported Tatar. As a result of the presidential election, Ersin Tatar, who received 51.7% of the votes, was elected President. Mustafa Akinci ran as an independent candidate in the 2020 TRNC Presidential elections, while the National Unity Party candidate was Prime Minister Ersin Tatar. The other candidates in the election are Republican Turkish Party candidate Erhan Arıklı.

The ultimate goal of political advertising is to enable the target audience to work toward the ideological idea of the political party in question and to support that party (Kabasakal, 2019). Political ads have a significant place among the tools that political parties or candidates have used to convey to voters the promises they should state, their attitudes towards the issues on the agenda and the plans they want to implement. Thus, the voter, on the one hand, recognizes the political party or candidates through political ads, while on the other hand, he meets the need for political information. Parties prepare many formats and publish advertisements in various advertising generations while transmitting their ideologies to society during political elections. Therefore, the study aims to examine the Use of New Media in the 2020 TRNC Presidential Elections.

# The Use of New Media and Social Media as a Technology Tool

20. since the middle of the century, the world has experienced very significant advances in technological expression. Thus, technological advances have affected the information and communication world (Şengül, 2018). The Internet, one of the world's most independent and free communication systems produced due to a military operation, has provided essential services to humanity by influencing it in a social, institutional and personal sense and has entered a new change (Vardarlier, 2019). The Internet has Deconstructed the boundaries between local



and global and has paved the way for daily business to be online by opening new and different channels of communication and interaction.

The invention of new communication and media technologies has resulted from the advancement of computer technologies and their change in communication. The emergence of Internet technology into today's technology has been formed at the end of about 50 years (Özçetin, 2018). During this time, the main ideas of the Internet were first developed and started to be implemented together with software elements. At first, individuals using the Internet, which consists of fixed sites, were given one-way and one-device information and communication was provided to them. Selected pages on the Internet have been a feature of traditional media tools. The influence of the person using the Internet, along with interactive pages on technology, has led to the development of Web 2.0 (Doğan, 2017). With the existence of interactive pages, individuals have also turned to these pages.

New media, a concept that has affected our lives with the advances in communication and media technologies that have become quite important since 1990, has also become an important phenomenon that forms the structure of identity in a social sense (Eraslan, 2018). New media is explained as an active communication environment that sits based on a digital coding system, has the characteristics of modularity and hyper-textuality, and allows individuals to interact one-on-one (Ünal, 2020). New media is taking a step forward in the form of the most essential tool of the modern information age. The difference between new and convection/traditional media expresses digitized media, interacting and converging media, Internet networks, communication technologies and media. The new media concept includes social and social organizations that develop media and communication technologies using tools that increase communication skills with social associations and are formed around communication practices (Eraslan, 2018).

With the establishment of the printing press in communication, technological advances have reached so far with the telegraph, newspaper, radio, photography, film, television, satellites, Internet and communication networks (Hiksik, 2018). Castells emphasized that new technologies changed the mass communication universe in the 1980s. Castells also gave some examples of this situation: newspapers such as La Figaro, The New York Times and The International Herald Tribune can be printed in different parts of the world, and the device named Walkman turns a personally selected song into a standard audio medium, the thematic radio has changed the world of mass communication (Sengul, 2018). In addition, the spread of VCRs all over the world and becoming an alternative to official publications, the change in the one-way flow of images by people producing images on their own, the spread of video movies with video technology and the development of local broadcasting have also set an example for this change (Vardarlier, 2019). However, decisive progress has been made in the proliferation and increase of television channels.

Emphasizing that the essential feature of new media technologies is not new temporally, Başaran stated that it is unique because it has been put in front of mass communication technologies that have brought colour to new communication environments and caused the birth of an environment called communication, which has led to the grounding of areas such as sociology, political science, psychology (Kabasakal, 2019). It collects computers, networks, Internet, recorders, mobile phones, technology users and communicators, which are part of the body and soul, which are increasingly finding wide usage applications as part of everyday life, transforming them, increasing their use due to the requirements of social life, all digital and communication technologies in the concept of new media.

When we look at the research and studies on new media to date, it is seen that every concept has yet to be defined; different researchers and authors evaluate the subject from various aspects or highlight other qualities. Focusing on the idea of" new Media", Dilmen emphasized that it is expressed by thinkers and academics who conducted social, psychological, economic, political and cultural research in information and communication-based studies in the 1970s (Zeybek, 2016). However, the meaning stated in the 1970s gained a significant acceleration in the 1990s and became widespread with computer and Internet technology and various formats were accessed. During this period, the environments created by new communication technologies were ultimately called new media (Ünal, 2020). New media is a two-sided hybrid media system that includes computer-related practices on one side and forms specific to communication tools on the other. For this reason, the term new media describes the communication and media tools unique to our era.

# Social Media and Social Media Channels

Social media are digital platforms on the Internet where users can share content, interact and communicate with other users. Social media enables individuals, communities, brands and institutions to express their opinions, share information and experiences, follow the news and communicate (Şengül, 2018). Social media significantly impacts societies in terms of communication and interaction. People follow the news through social media, exchange ideas about current events, communicate with friends and share content (Güçdemir, 2017). In addition, social media platforms also play an essential role in enterprises' marketing strategies, political campaigns, and activism activities. Social media channels refer to various platforms on the Internet where users can share content, interact and communicate. Social media platforms offer the potential for political actors to spread their propaganda messages quickly and to a broad audience. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram allow politicians



to interact directly with voters and mobilize their supporter base. Propaganda messages can influence political views through viral content, impressive visuals and emotional stories (Odabaşı, 2020). The most widely used platforms worldwide and the most frequently used in political propaganda are YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Twitter (X), LinkedIn, Vimeo, and Vkontakte.

#### The Impact of Social Media on Political Communication

Social media is essential in shaping political behaviour (Kolektif, 2019). In particular, photos, videos and articles with political content shared on social networks such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube enable individuals to be interested in politics and gain knowledge in this field. Through this information, individuals can develop new political behaviours or re-evaluate their current political views and behaviours. For this reason, political leaders and their representatives are intensively sharing political information with party supporters on social media. Each piece of information aims to convey a convincing political message to the user, that is, to the voter (Hiktik, 2018). Social media has essential functions, such as increasing public support and positively influencing undecided voters. The most important feature of this is that it is interactive. Social media has shaped political communication by combining traditional communication tools with new technologies (Taş, 2017). It uses interactivity to create public support and provide support by providing the opportunity to communicate bi-directionally with the target audience.

**Reaching a Wide Audience:** Social media allows politicians and political groups to reach a broad audience. This allows political messages to spread to a wider audience and provide interaction.

**Interaction and Communication:** Social media encourages direct interaction between politicians and voters. Dec. This allows politicians to establish more direct and personal communication with voters (Vardarlier, 2019).

**Fast News Sharing:** Social media allows news to spread quickly. Politicians can soon inform voters by sharing about political events and developments.

**Campaign Management:** Social media enables the effective management of political campaigns. Politicians and political groups can create content that will interest voters, share campaign messages, and interact with their supporters.

Activism and Social Movements: Social media also contributes to the rise of social movements and activism (Yeniçıkdık, 2017). Users can share their ideas, make protest calls and interact with groups seeking support for social change through social media platforms.

#### Effects of Social Media Usage on Voter Behavior

Social media offers voters a comprehensive source of information. Individuals follow political news, analysis and interpretations today from social media platforms (Orall, 2014). Because social media channels allow voters to access information faster and faster, this effect helps voters make more conscious decisions on political issues. Social media encourages voters to interact and discuss political issues (Yeniçikti, 2017). Users can directly communicate with politicians and other voters, share their ideas, and participate in political discussions. This allows voters to understand different views and perspectives and helps them make more conscious decisions. Social media encourages voters to participate actively in political activism (Kalman, 2019). Users can express their demands for social change through social media platforms, participate in political campaigns and support them. Social media enables voters to be more involved in political processes and make their voices heard for political change (Gökşin, 2017).

# Method

Qualitative research methods and screening models were used in the research. The use of social media in the 2020 TRNC Presidential elections was examined with propaganda language and statistics taken in the new media. The qualitative research method is a research approach that aims to understand, interpret and conduct an in-depth analysis. Qualitative research is used in social sciences, Education, psychology and other disciplines. Qualitative research focuses on understanding the participants' views, attitudes, values, and behaviours to understand their meanings and experiences. Qualitative research examines complex phenomena, discovers people's thoughts, emotions and experiences, and understands society's cultural, social and behavioural aspects.

The screening model is a technique used to recognize critical information in a text or document, find specific concepts, or obtain information for a particular purpose. This method, called text scanning or scanning, allows computers to analyze large amounts of text data automatically. Scanning models are often used in areas such as text mining, information recall or information removal. These models use techniques such as language processing, natural language processing and machine learning to understand the content of texts. Scanning models can be used for many different purposes, such as automatic data extraction, information classification or trend analysis in



extensive text collections or websites. These models are valuable tools to analyze text data quickly and effectively and find important information. Reflections on social media in the 2020 TRNC Presidential Elections were carried out with Social Media Analysis Tools SMARARWEB, Google Analytics, Google Trends, Marketo Social Media Analytics, Buffer and Sprout Social vehicles.

# TRNC 2020 Presidential election process of candidates' propaganda process and analysis of reflections on social media

#### **2020 TRNC Presidential Elections**

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) was held on 2020 October 11 2020. This election was held to determine the President of the TRNC, the highest political task. In the first round, a candidate could be at most 50 per cent of the voting rate. In the second round, the two candidates who received the most votes, Ersin Tatar and Mustafa Akıncı, came across the voters. Ersin Tatar appeared as the winner in the second round and was elected as the new President of the TRNC.

#### Social Media Analysis of Candidates

#### Mustafa Akıncı

The TRNC presidential elections have been a process in which social media has played an important role. Mustafa Akıncı actively used social media during the election campaign. He shared his election promises, policies and vision through personal social media accounts and supporters. The campaign has targeted the active segment, especially young voters and digital platforms. Among the strategies of Akıncı on social media are:

**Content Diversity:** Akıncı shared content in different formats such as videos, visuals, and text. This aims to reach different audiences and attract their attention.

**Direct Interaction:** He interacted with his followers through social media accounts and answered questions and support messages. This is one of his essential moves to strengthen his ties with his supporters and establish personal communication.

**Using hashtags and trends:** It aims to create a sense of unity and solidarity between its supporters and followers by creating specific hashtags and campaign slogans. Although it provides more visibility on digital platforms than its competitors, the debate initiated on social media with some politicians in the AK Party administration hurt the election results.

Mustafa Akıncı's use of social media positively impacted its supporters, but the election campaign was unsuccessful. However, the election results usually occur due to the interaction of many factors. Social media shots of the politicians in the AK Party administration have determined the fate of the election.

Mustafa Akıncı, in the Turkish President's 2020 Presidential elections, carried out his election campaign with various strategies and messages. Akıncı has carried out a campaign under the main headings below during the election process:

**Peace and Solution-Oriented Approach:** Mustafa Akıncı focused on solving the Cyprus problem during the election campaign. He emphasized his efforts to ensure a permanent and fair solution on the island and stated that he would take steps towards the peace process. This message aims to mobilize supporters by emphasizing the candidate's commitment to peace and reconciliation.

**Economic Development and Employment:** Mustafa Akıncı also emphasized economic development and employment issues in the election campaign. Its policies emphasized strengthening the TRNC economy, encouraging investments and increasing job opportunities. In this way, it aims to raise hope in ensuring economic prosperity among voters.

**Participation and Education of Young People:** Mustafa Akıncı encouraged young people to have more active involvement in the political process and demonstrated the policies of young people to solve the problems of young people. Improvements in Education, providing more opportunities to young people, and creating platforms for them to make their voices heard have been focused.

**Social Justice and Social Inclusion:** Mustafa Akıncı emphasized the importance of the principle of equality and equality principle of ensuring social justice in the election campaign. It focused on issues such as preventing discrimination on the island, supporting disadvantaged groups and protecting human rights.

**Sustainable Environmental Policies:** Mustafa Akıncı also emphasized environmental protection and sustainability issues. Discourses were found on the protection of natural resources on the island, the implementation of environmentally friendly policies and the use of clean energy resources.



#### **Ersin Tatar**

Ersin Tatar's use of social media during the TRNC Presidential Elections was essential to the campaign strategy. He has been actively involved in social media platforms through his supporters and himself. Tatar's social media strategies include:

Policy -and Promise-oriented Communication: Social media accounts emphasized Tatar's political vision, promises, and policies. It aims to access voters directly through videos, graphics, and texts.

**Determination of the target audience:** It aimed to address different demographic groups in the TRNC. This included many voters, from young to old and from other social and economic groups.

**Criticism of the Opposition:** Criticisms of rival candidates or views of the opposition have also been frequently included on social media platforms. Tatar and its supporters shared content criticizing opposition on different platforms.

Hashtag and Campaign Slogans: It aims to create a sense of unity and solidarity among its supporters by creating unique hashtags and campaign slogans.

The effect of social media on the election results gave the name Tatar positive results. Using social media increased Tatar's visibility, motivated the supporter audience and had a particular impact. Ersin Tatar, in the Presidential Elections of the TRNC 2020, carried out his election campaign with various strategies and messages. Tatar has carried out a campaign under the following main headings in the election process:

**Emphasis on Nationalism and Identity:** Ersin Tatar emphasized Turkish Cypriot nationalism and identity during the election campaign. It has highlighted its policies to protect the rights of the Turkish Cypriot people, to protect national values and to strengthen their identity. This message aims to mobilize its supporters by addressing nationalist emotions among voters.

**Collaborative Approach:** Ersin Tatar emphasized its cooperation with Turkey in its election campaign and its support of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. It has demonstrated its policies on continuing solid relations with Turkey and deepening cooperation in economic and political fields. In this way, it aimed to emphasize the importance of addiction to Turkey and sympathy among supporters.

**Economic Development and Investment:** Ersin Tatar also emphasized economic development, investment and employment issues in the election campaign. It highlighted its policies on strengthening the TRNC economy, creating new job opportunities, and encouraging investments. In this way, it aimed to revive the hopes to ensure economic welfare among voters and solve the unemployment problem.

The superiority of justice and law: Ersin Tatar also focused on ensuring justice in the election campaign, protecting the rule of law and fighting against corruption, strengthening the justice system on the island, and ensuring transparency and determination in the fight against corruption.

Education and Health Services: Ersin Tatar stands out in improving Education and health services in the election campaign.

#### **Conclusions And Recommendations**

Social media provides direct communication and information sharing between political candidates and voters. Candidates can bring their political views and promises to a large audience through social media, interact with voters and answer questions. This enables political messages to spread rapidly and reach more people. Social media can affect the public by using political candidates and supporters. Candidates' policies, rallies and other events can be shared through social media, and discussions can be initiated. New communication technologies refer to the transformation of traditional communication technologies in parallel with the development of technology. Technology, which has been the dominant actor of transformations in social practices throughout history, has inevitably brought some transformations and innovations in the field of communication. These innovations include innovations that emerged due to an infrastructural transformation of traditional communication technologies and the concepts of computers and the Internet that occurred within the information society. Every technology that emerges temporally is considered new. The communication technologies that appear in the current period, which is called the information society, are also accepted as unused.



TRNC 2020 Presidential elections are a process in which social media plays an important role. Social media platforms have been used as practical tools for executing election campaigns and spreading messages by candidates and supporters. All candidates have carried out their election campaigns via social media. The official accounts and pages of the candidates have been actively used via popular social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Through social media platforms, candidates directly sent messages to voters, shared their policies and interacted. Candidates and supporters produced visual and video content for election campaigns and published it through social media. This content included images from the rallies, election trips, speeches and other activities of the candidates. Such content was used to show voters candidates' approaches, policies, and leadership skills. Social media platforms enable voters to interact with candidates and convey their feedback.

In the 2020 TRNC Presidential elections, social media has been a platform where discussions and polemics took place in the election process. The features of Mustafa Akıncı's supporters and conflicts are reflected in social media channels. In this process, there was an intense political debate and controversy on social media, and its effects were reflected in the election results.

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