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THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TO POLITICAL INFORMATION

Abstract:

The developments in knowledge and information technologies provide new opportunities for political corporations and political candidates. They are realizing the potential to give information and build relationships with public using social media. These features gain in importance in fast paced periods like election terms. The social media presents a vast amount of means for information seeking. And among young voters in particular, equipped with means of political information, serve to diffuse political campaign messages to other people. This survey which will be conducted two weeks before the March 30. 2014 local elections among students of the Selcuk University. It will be explored on the grounds of the uses and gratifications approach the motives of university students for using the social media in election periods. In this study will be investigated social media using habits and motives like information/guidances seeking, social escape, leisure/entertainment, and social utility.

Keywords:

social media, political information, young voters, motivations, uses and gratifications.

INTRODUCTION

One of the means of new communication technologies which has shine out in recent years beside internet is the social media. The means of social media which have been designed at the beginning for the interconnections between friends, afterwards, turned into means which provide online communication between private, public and non-profit making institutions and their target groups (Wigand, 2010: 563). Within that period, the political parties and their candidates also tended to benefit from social media means due to the benefits and opportunities provided by them.

By year-end of 2013, the number of internet users in the world reached to 2.3 billion. The number of internet users in Turkey is 36.7 million people. Totally, 50% of the country population is the internet user. Nearly all of the internet users are member of the social media. 31.25 million Internet users are the member of Facebook. According to this data, Turkey is in the 6.th position in the world while it is the first in Europe. Twitter has 7.5 million users and Turkey is the 11.th in the world with this member quantity. In our country, the social media users spend approximately one hour a day in Facebook (<http://www.farklibirbakis.com>). Nevertheless, a significant rise is seen in the quantity of mobile internet users. The number of mobile internet users in 2012 with 69.073 people reached to 141.637 people in 2013 with an increase of 105.05% (BTK Report, 2014: i). This data is important since it reveals the significant increase in the both stationary and mobile internet users when compared to the previous years and the majority of those users spend their time on social media. It strengthens the notion that the voters may benefit from the internet and social media means in accessing information related to the political parties especially during the election campaigns.

Political parties and candidates who realize the significance of social media in informing their voters and providing the interaction with them tended to utilize from those fields beside the traditional mass communication tools in order to reach their voters. In our country, the elections which social media is really used as a real effective tool is General Elections held on June 12, 2011. Social networks and video sharing sites were effectively used during the process of political campaign (Acar, 2012: 259). In the profile pages which were opened by the teams formed by the politicians; the voters may follow the politicians they support, convey their demands and criticize the politics and statements of politicians (Bilişim, 2010: 51). In addition to this, the political parties and candidates can respond the critics and they can share their solution offers for the problems of the country and the city they live. Moreover, they can transiently share the photographs and videos of their activities through social networks (Balci et al., 2013: 111-112).

With the purpose of obtaining political information prior to the Local Elections held in March 30, the level which university students use the social media means and the motivations which they utilize those means within the frame of the uses and gratifications approach were researched in the study and presented through the data of field research.

1. THE APPROACH OF USES AND GRATIFICATIONS

The first studies which are called classical age and related to the uses and gratifications include the studies carried out by Bureau of Applied Social Research in 1940's. During the second age which is called modern age, the preferences and responses of audiences towards the means of mass media during 1960's and early 1970's; the audience were regarded as a group who request and ask for explanation

without considering the effects of mass media instruments and numerous researches were carried out (McQuail and Windahl, 1997: 154-155).

The preferences of media audiences, obtaining the messages and their responded related to those messages are among the basic issues of the approach of the uses and gratifications. The model is based on an assumption stating that the audiences made motivated conscious choices through mass communication tools among the channels and contents considering their previous experiences (McQuail, 1994: 318). In other words, the approach of uses and gratifications focuses on the question "what do people do with media?" rather than the question "what do media do to people?" (Severin and Tankard, 1984: 250).

From this aspect, the approach of uses and gratifications brought the notion that audiences preferred their communication means and contents regarding their personal needs and they searched their effects themselves, namely, the theory of "active audience" (Erdoğan and Alemdar, 2002: 189).

Katz et al., (1974: 510) express the area of interest for the approach of uses and gratifications as follows: (1) social and psychological based, (2) required by the needs, (3) expectations, (4) in mass communication means or other resources (5) it directs to different patterns of media usage or other activities; and they lead to (6) need gratifications and (7) maybe unexpected results.

According to the approach of uses and gratifications, basically five elements have significance (Katz et al., 1995: 164-165; Fiske, 2003: 199-200):

- ✓ The audience is regarded as active. He chooses and uses the messages presented by the mass communication means regarding his purposes,
- ✓ The initiative for getting in touch during the process of mass communication requires most of the satisfactions and the choice of media belongs to the receiver. In other words, the receivers freely choose the media and the content to answer their needs,
- ✓ Mass communication means in a competing process with other satisfying resources. The needs which mass communication serves consist only one part among all the human needs. Of course, conveniently satisfaction of them through the consumption of mass media shows differences.
- ✓ From the point of methodology, the majority of the objectives of using mass media may be obtained from the receiving individuals. Namely, human beings are aware of themselves enough to express their interests and motivations which lead them to mass media means.
- ✓ While analyzing the receivers' tendencies, the value judgement of mass communication about the cultural significance of mass communication should be ignored.

In numerous researches since 1940's, the motivation and experiences of audiences in solving the problems and answering their needs were investigated. As a result of the researches, prominent media using motivations such as (1) learning and knowledge, (2) self-comprehension and personal identity, (3) social interaction (4) escape, (5) entertainment and (6) recreation (McQuail, 1994: 319). It can be said, from this point of view, that human beings who head for mass communication means utilized same mass communication messages for different purposes.

2. THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN POLITICAL INFORMATION

During the periods of electoral campaigns, the discussions about whether digital media would provide supportive contribution to the democracy through increasing political knowledge and political participation has been made since mid-1990's when the internet started to be used (Dimitrova et al., 2011: 1).

Young adults desire to be incorporated into the campaign process with a higher level of information in order to express their opinion, discuss the problems and share information during the election period (Kushin and Yamamoto, 2010: 624). With the emerging of new communication technologies, one of the fields which have become prominent from the point of political communication beside internet in recent years and the majority of the youth participate is social media. Nowadays, this environment which is preferred by political organizations in order to access the youth since it is used by 22 million young people (Bilişim, 2010: 51), is an important power for political organizations and candidates from the points of understanding the youth and expressing themselves. The thing which dynamizes the social media during the election periods is one of the characteristics it has as a field (Sütçü et al., 2013: 185-186):

(1) It provides an opportunity to appeal to larger crowds in shorter times, (2) The responses of voters may be obtained more easily and assessments can be made on them, (3) The opinions of the individuals may be expressed more easily through social media and responses may be written for the texts of the politicians, (4) The voters and politicians may interact 24/7 without physically being in the same environment.

Due to the advantages it provides to political organizations and candidates, the social media has become one of the important fields of communication campaigns. Although numerous researches related to this issue have been made, there is limited information from the points of using social media during the media from the point of political knowledge.

As a result of a field research they executed on 4010 voters between the ages of 18 and 74, Holt et al. (2013: 25-29), determined that young voters generally preferred social media for political purposes while old voters utilized traditional media in order to get information about political issues.

In another study, the effects of digital media on political knowledge and political participation during the electoral periods were investigated. At the end of the research, it was determined that the use of digital media had a weak effect on political knowledge while some digital media means were significantly effective on political participation (Dimitrova et al., 2011: 1).

Hao et al. (2014: 1) who determined there was a significant relationship between the consumption of news through internet and social network sites and online and offline political participation and political knowledge found a significant relationship between the consumption of written news and internet news and political participation and political knowledge. From this point of view, it can be concluded that the news obtained from social media besides the news of internet and newspapers were effective on voters from the points of both obtaining information about political events and their participation to the political field.

In a research carried out with 317 adolescences in order to determine the purposes of young people living in Korea in their tendencies to the traditional and new media related to the political knowledge (Kim and Kim, 2007: 351-353), it was determined that they headed for both traditional and new media within the frame of basic motivations such as guidance for political knowledge, observation, social benefits and entertainment. Television and internet were considered to be the better tools than newspapers and radios; a positive correlation was found between the variants of political obligations such as political interest, political speech, political knowledge and political participation.

In the study which the access to the profiles of political party candidates through social networks during the political campaign periods within the frame of the approach of uses and gratifications, three basic motivations such as social interaction, inquiring and guidance and entertainment were found to be effective on the use of MySpace by the social media users (Ancu and Cozma, 2009: 567).

3. METHODOLOGY

In order to determine the motivations of university students in utilizing social media during the electoral campaigns, a field research was carried out during the campaign period of the Local Elections to be held on March 30, 2014. In the choice of sampling, accidental sampling technique was applied. In the research, a face to face survey was applied to the participants and 400 surveys were applied for the analysis as a result of preliminary examination.

The field research was conducted in Selçuk University campus through face to face interviews with the participants between the dates of March 14, 2014 and March 29, 2014. The obtained data was processed in the electronic media through using SPSS 15.0 statistical package program. In order to find answers to the determined research questions, the data was processed with convenient statistical analysis.

Research Question 1: What are the motivations of university students in using social media during the electoral period?

Research Question 2: What type of a relationship is there between the motivations of using social media during the electoral period and socio-demographic characteristics of the participants?

Research Question 3: What type of a relationship is there between the motivations of using social media during the electoral period and the habits of participants in using daily media?

Research Question 4: What type of a relationship is there between the motivations of using social media during the electoral period and the frequency which the participants use the social media accounts of the party they desire to vote for?

4. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

4.1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

The distribution of socio-demographic characteristics of the university students who join the survey was intended to reveal through frequency analysis. Of the participants, 50,3% is male while 49.7 % is female. There is a balanced distribution when the gender of the participants is considered.

When the descriptive statistics of age distribution is analyzed, the lowest age to interview was found while the oldest participants were 29. The average age of the people who answer the survey questions was 21,8 and their standard deviation was found as 1.78.

When the descriptive results of monthly aggregate expenditure of the participants is considered, they have minimum income of TL 250 and the highest income of TL 2000. According to those results, average monthly expenditure of the 400 participants who has answered the survey questions is TL 529.08. The standard deviation of income level is 225.79.

When the distribution of university students according the their grades are considered, the 1.5% of the participants in preparatory classes, 21.8% of them are

1.st grade, 30.5% of them is the second grade, 19.8% of them were in the third grade, 26% of them were in the fourth grade and 0.5% of them were in the fifth grade.

4.2. Political Attitudes, Political Behaviors and Habits of Using Social Media

More than half of the university students who participate the research consist of individuals who are known to vote for before the elections. However, a significant part of them (28.0%) decide to vote according to the political candidates. When the results are analyzed, 54.0% of the voters who answered the research questions were the people who had previously decided whom to vote; 28.0% of them decided when the elections were decided and the candidates were determined; 7.0% of them decided in the middle of the electoral campaign; 3.0% of them reached to a conclusion a few days before the elections while 8.0% of them decided while voting.

In order to determine the attachment of the participants to their parties, a scale (1= too weak, 10= too strong) which the participants gave scores between 1 and 10 was formed. According to the responses contained from 400 people, it was determined that the participants had moderate attachment levels ($\bar{x} = 6.20$) to their parties.

The participants of the research were asked about their level of interest for political campaigns and issues during the electoral period and they were asked to give a score between 1 and 10 (1= I am not interested at all, 10= I am interests too much). When the descriptive statistics of university students related to the distribution of their interest levels are analyzed, they were found to be interested in the political campaigns and issues at moderate level($\bar{x} = 5.65$).

The university students were asked some questions in order to determine their habits of using social media and following findings were obtained. Accordingly:

When the university students were asked how long had they been using the internet; 2.8% of them replied as less than 6 months, 5% between 6 and 12 months, 23.0% 1-3 years, 46.5% 4-6 years and 22.8% more than 7 years. Almost half of the university students who attend the research (46.5%) stated that they had been using the internet for 4-6 years.

Of the university students, 3.8% of them stated that they were regularly connected to social media means once a week, 9.8% of them 2-3 days a week, 26.5% 4-5 days a week and 60% of them everyday.

Of the participants, 10.5% of them stated that they used the daily social media means less than one hour, 16.0% one hour, 31.0% two hours, 17.3% three hours, 12.0% four hours and 13.3% of them more than five hours in a day.

Related to the locations where the university students accessed to social media means, 34.0% of the participants stated that they connected to internet at home, 22.3% from at home and at school, 20.5% from mobile phones, 14.8% from

dormitory houses, 5.5% from internet cafes, and 1.5% from the houses or offices of a friend and 1.3% of them from school.

The university student participants were asked about the frequency of visiting social media accounts of the parties they intend to vote for. Accordingly, 14.8% of the visitors stated that they never visit, 16.5% of them rarely visited, 35.3% of them sometimes visited, 23.0% of them often visited and 10.5% of them visited very often.

4.3. The Motivations to the Use of Social Media during Electoral Periods

In accordance with the answers to 24 items organized through a likert scale in order to determine the motivations of the participants in using social media; a factor analysis was applied and four basic factor groups were found to be worth tackling. It was determined that the reliability rate of items included into factor analysis was (Cronbach's $\alpha = .872$) and explain the 48.03% of total variance in the motivations of using social media.

Table 1. The Results Factor Analysis Related to the Use of Social Media and Gratifications during the Electoral Periods

I Use Social Media during the Electoral Periods, Because.....	\bar{X}	SD	Factor Loading
Factor 1: Recreation / Entertainment			
In order to spend my free time when I get bored	3.56	1.14	.711
Recreation gives me alternative	3.51	1.09	.684
It amuses me when I have nothing to do	2.95	1.27	.629
Social media answers my need for entertainment	3.42	1.14	.608
Since using the social media is cheaper	3.35	1.23	.603
In order to play games	2.91	1.35	.497
It helps me to relax	3.20	1.18	.453
I am able to get what I want spending less effort through social media	3.55	1.10	.431
Factor 2: Information / Guidance			
It helps me to see what will the candidate do if he is elected	3.31	1.16	.741
It helps me getting conclusion about personal characteristics of the	3.27	1.18	.669
In order to find a definite political information I seek for	3.30	1.15	.644
Since it helps me in voting	2.79	1.32	.623
Since I learn numerous political development before other media	3.86	1.07	.595
In order to follow the activities of parties/candidates during electoral	3.46	1.29	.581
Factor 3: Social Interaction			
I like sharing in the social media	3.30	1.22	.662
In order to express my opinions and give advices to the others	3.33	1.16	.587
In order to communicate with others about the political information I	3.32	1.17	.583
Since I share information with other people	3.77	1.06	.570
Since I am able to connect to social media everywhere and every	3.54	1.15	.446
Factor 4: Social Escape			
In order to feel like a part of a group	2.55	1.22	.688
Since it made me feel less lonely	2.67	1.20	.646
It accompanies me when there is nobody to talk to	2.84	1.27	.569
In order to run away from my problems at least for a while	2.97	1.28	.481
KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy: .892; Barlett's Test of Sphericity: $X^2= 2485,1$; $df= 253$; $p=.000$ Cronbach's $\alpha = .872$			

The most important factor from the point of the use of social media among the university students who have answered the survey questions is *recreation/entertainment*. The eigenvalue of this factor which explains the 25.09% of total variance is 5.77 and reliability co-efficient is Cronbach's $\alpha = .768$. When the elements forming the factor is analyzed, those factors are as follows; in order to spend my free time when I get bored, since it provides me alternatives in recreating, since it amuses me when I have nothing to do, and since social media answered my needs for entertaining.

According to the results of factor analysis, the second important factor is *information /guidance*. This factor which gathers the items such as since it enables me see what will happen if a candidate is elected, since it helps me in reaching conclusions about personal characteristics of the candidate, in order to obtain a definite political information I have been seeking for, since it helps me in voting, since I have obtained numerous political developments before it takes place in the media explains the 13.71% of total variance. The eigenvalue of the factor of political interest was determined as 2.82 and its reliability co-efficient was determined as Cronbach's Alpha= .782.

Among the factors of political participation, *social interaction* comes into prominence as the third important factor. Those factors which gather the participation types such as since I like sharing in social media, in order to give my opinions and advices to the others, in order to make contact with others related to the political information I obtain, since I share information with other people which people mostly present their opinions explain the 10.43% of the total variance. The eigenvalue of the social interaction factor which consists of total four items was calculated as 1.38 and Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was .673.

The final factor to be determined related to the political participation is *social escape*. The factor of social escape which explains the 8.71% of total variance reveals that people head towards social media means even during the period of electoral campaigns. The eigenvalue of the factor is 1.06 and reliability coefficient is .692.

Table 2. The Findings of the Correlation Analysis between the Factors related to the Use of Media during the Electoral Periods and Gratifications (*Pearson r*)

	Recreation/ Entertainment	Information/ Guidance	Social Interaction	Social Escape
Recreation/ Entertainment	1	.219**	.445**	.567**
Information/Guidance	.219**	1	.522**	.337**
Social Interaction	.445**	.522**	1	.439**
Social Escape	.567**	.337**	.439**	1

Not: **p< .01

When the results of correlation analysis are analyzed from the point of describing the level of the correlation between the factors of using social media during the electoral period by the university students; it is seen to be between the factors of social interaction and information/guidance ($r = .522$, $p < .01$). In other words, the human beings who effectuate the items related to the *social interaction* from the point of the use of social media during the electoral periods also actualized the activities related to

information/guidance. On the other hand, a positive moderate significant relation was found between the factors of *recreation/entertainment* and *social escape* ($r = .567$, $p < .01$).

4.4. The Correlations between Motivations and Variants

In order to determine whether there is a difference between the factors of using social media during the electoral periods and the gender of the participants, the frequency of using social media, the frequency of visiting the social media accounts of the political party they intend to vote for, the period of visiting social media means a day, the level of their loyalty to the parties they intend to vote for and their level of interest to the political campaigns and issues; an Independent Sampling test, t-test, Anova and Correlation analysis tests were used. The findings obtained as a result of numerous analyses are given below.

The Motivation for Information/Guidance

When the information/guidance factor was evaluated regarding the genders of the participants, a significant differentiation ($t = 1.99$; $sd = 398$; $p < .05$) was observed. Male university students prefer social media with the purpose of information/guidance during the electoral periods more frequently than female students.

When the frequency of using social media and the people who utilize social media with the purpose of information/guidance is regarded, a significant differentiation was observed ($F = 4.70$; $sd = 3$; $p < .01$). According to the results of Tukey test which was applied in order to determine the source of differentiation, the people who regularly use the social media means everyday ($\bar{x} = 3.29$), those who use it 4-5 days a week ($\bar{x} = 3.51$) use social media in order to information /guidance more than those who visit social media 1 day a week ($\bar{x} = 2.72$).

A significant differentiation is observed between the period of daily visiting social media accounts by the university students who participate the research and the factor of using with the purpose of information/guidance ($F = 6.01$; $sd = 5$; $p < .001$). According to the results of Tukey test which was applied in order to determine the source of differentiation, the participants who spend two hours or more on social media than ($\bar{x} = 3.61$) use social media with the purpose of information/guidance more frequently than the other participants.

A significant differentiation was determined between the frequency of visiting social media accounts of the political party which the university students intend to vote for and using social media with the purpose of information/guidance during the electoral periods ($F = 14.80$; $sd = 4$; $p < .001$). According to the results of Tukey test which was applied in order to determine the source of differentiation, the people who frequently visit the social accounts of the political party they intend to vote for ($\bar{x} = 3.53$) use social media with the purpose of information/guidance in higher frequency than those who never visit ($\bar{x} = 2.67$).

When the results of correlation analysis were analyzed from the point of describing the level of the relationship between their loyalty for the party they intend to vote for and the factors of using social media; the more their level of loyalty for the party they intend to vote for increases the more the level of utilizing social media with the purposes of information/guidance during the electoral period increases. ($r = .154$, $p < .001$).

When the results of correlation analysis were analyzed from the point of describing the level of the relationship between the interest of university students to the political campaigns and issues and the factors of using social media; the more the level of interest

to political campaigns and issues increases, the more utilizing social media during the electoral periods with the purpose of information also increases. ($r = .245$, $p < .001$).

The Motivation of Recreation/Entertainment

When the recreation/entertainment factor is evaluated in accordance with the gender of the participants, no significant differentiation ($t = 1.20$; $sd = 398$; $p > .05$) was determined.

When the frequency of using social media by the university students who participate the research and the people who utilize social media with the purpose of recreation/entertainment is regarded, a significant differentiation is observed ($F = 15.34$; $sd = 3$; $p < .001$). According to the results of Tukey test which was applied in order to determine the source of differentiation, the people who regularly use social media means ($\bar{x} = 3.38$); use social media with the purpose of recreation/entertainment more frequently than those who use once a week ($\bar{x} = 2.20$) and who use it 2-3 days a week ($\bar{x} = 3.06$).

From the point of the duration of visiting daily social media accounts by the participants and the factor of using social media with the purpose of recreation/entertainment, a significant differentiation draws attention ($F = 5.59$; $sd = 5$; $p < .001$). According to the results of Tukey test which was applied in order to determine the source of differentiation, the people who spend daily five hours or more on social media means ($\bar{x} = 3.54$) use social media with the purpose of recreation/entertainment more frequently than those spend less than one hour ($\bar{x} = 2.84$).

From the point of the duration of visiting daily social media accounts of the parties they intend to vote for by the university students and the factor of using social media with the purpose of recreation/entertainment during the electoral periods, a significant differentiation was observed ($F = 3.38$; $sd = 4$; $p < .01$). According to the results of Tukey test which was applied in order to determine the source of differentiation, the people who frequently visit the social media accounts of the party they intend to vote for ($\bar{x} = 3.57$) use social media with the purpose of recreation/entertainment more often than those who visit it less frequently ($\bar{x} = 3.04$).

The Motivation of Social Interactions

When the factor of social interactions is considered regarding the gender of the participants, no significant differentiation ($t = .950$; $sd = 398$; $p > .05$) was observed.

When the frequency of visiting social media and the people and the people who utilize social media in the electoral periods with the purpose of social interaction, a significant differentiation ($F = 13.71$; $sd = 3$; $p < .001$) was observed. According to the results of Tukey test which was applied in order to determine the source of differentiation, the people who regularly visit social media means everyday ($\bar{x} = 3.55$), 4-5 day a week ($\bar{x} = 3.42$) and 2-3 days a week ($\bar{x} = 3.35$) use social media with the purpose of social interaction more frequently than those who use social media one day a week ($\bar{x} = 2.33$). Considering the findings; the more frequency of using social media increases, the more frequency of using social media with the purpose of social interaction increases.

From the point of daily visiting social media accounts by the university students who participate the research and the factor of using social media with the purpose of social interaction, a significant differentiation is observed ($F = 10.19$; $sd = 5$; $p < .001$). According to the results of Tukey test which was applied in order to determine the

source of differentiation, the people who spend five hours and more on the social media ($\bar{x} = 3.60$) use social media more often with the purpose of social interaction than those who spend less than one hour ($\bar{x} = 2.75$).

A significant differentiation was observed between the frequency of visiting the social media accounts of the party they intend to vote for by the university students and using social media during the electoral period with the purpose of social interaction ($F = 13.33$; $sd. = 4$; $p < .001$). According to the results of Tukey test which was applied in order to determine the source of differentiation, the people who frequently visit the social media accounts of the party they intend to vote for ($\bar{x} = 3.74$) use the social media more often with the purpose of social interaction than those who never visit ($\bar{x} = 3.05$) and rarely visit ($\bar{x} = 3.13$).

The Motivation of Social Escape

When the factor of social escape is evaluated in accordance with the gender of the university students, a significant differentiation ($t = 2.64$; $sd. = 398$; $p < .01$) is observed. Of the participants, males more frequently prefer social media during the electoral periods with the purpose of social escape than females.

When the frequency of using social media and the people who utilize social media during the electoral periods with the purpose of social escape are considered, a significant differentiation was observed ($F = 6.97$; $sd. = 3$; $p < .001$). According to the results of Tukey test which was applied in order to determine the source of differentiation, the people who regularly use social media means every day ($\bar{x} = 2.72$), 4-5 days a week ($\bar{x} = 2.91$) and 2-3 days a week ($\bar{x} = 2.85$) use social media more frequently with the purpose of social escape than those who use social media 1 day a week ($\bar{x} = 1.85$).

A significant differentiation is observed between the period of visiting the daily social media accounts by the university students who participate the study and the factor of using social media ($F = 2.32$; $sd. = 5$; $p < .05$). According to the results of Tukey test which was applied in order to determine the source of differentiation, the people who spend daily four hours on the social media ($\bar{x} = 2.92$) use social media more often with the purpose of social escape than those who spend less than one hour on the social media ($\bar{x} = 2.38$).

A significant differentiation was observed between the frequency of visiting social media accounts of the party which the university students intend to vote for and utilizing social media during the electoral periods with the purpose of social escape ($F = 5.71$; $sd. = 4$; $p < .001$). According to the results of Tukey test which was applied in order to determine the source of differentiation, the people who frequently visit the social account of the party they intend to vote for ($\bar{x} = 3.04$) use social media with the purpose of social interaction more often than those who never visit them ($\bar{x} = 2.51$) and visit them less frequently ($\bar{x} = 2.43$).

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This research intends to reveal the factors of heading for social media by the university students prior to the Local Elections held on March 30 from this point of view and the relationships between those factors and socio-demographic characteristics of the participants who join the survey. It was aimed, in the same time, to reveal the relationships between the aforementioned factors and various variants such as the periods of using social media means, the frequency of daily visiting social media accounts, the frequency of visiting the social media accounts of the party they intend to vote for and the level of interest to the political campaigns and issues.

As a result of field research, four factors which are effective on the use of social media by the university during the periods of electoral campaigns were determined. Those factors are recreation/entertainment, information/guidance, social interaction and social escape. Those factors explain an important part of the use of social media by the university students who participate the research about 48.03%.

According to a finding that becomes prominent in the research, male university students prefer social media more frequently with the purpose of information/guidance than the female participants. Again, the people who regularly use social media every day utilize social media more with the purpose of information/guidance than those who use it less. The university students who spend more often two hours a day on social media utilize social media fields with the purpose of information/guidance than the others. The university students who often visit the social accounts of the party they intend to vote for utilize social media with the purpose of information/guidance more than those who never visit. Moreover, it was determined that the more level of the loyalty of the university students to the party they intend to vote for increases the more often they head for social media with the purpose of information/guidance.

Although the motivation of information/guidance, among the motivation of using social media during the electoral period by the university students come after the motivation of recreation/entertainment motivation, it is important since it is the proof that social media is used as a source of information. Especially political parties and candidates who appeal to the young voters should call out from the field of social media field where majority of young people are included besides the traditional mass communication means. The social media accounts which party and candidates share contemporary information during the campaign period in appealing to the young people.

Nevertheless, the youth who remain distant from political developments and events should be encouraged to participate the activities in the political field instead of only executing the propaganda and announcement activities through social media means. Thus, young voters will be the transporters of political campaigns, in a sense, and the expressions of political parties and candidates will have a broad repercussion among a large mess, especially the youth.

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