Political Party Leaders' Use of Social Media in North Cyprus During Parliamentary Elections 2018

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ABSTRACT

Social media is an important arena in political communication especially in electoral campaigns. This study aims to find about politicians' use of social media as a means of political communication during the general election campaign in 2018, in North Cyprus.

In this study, content analysis used as a reseach method. Leaders of six political parties' Facebook and Twitter posts were analyzed over a month and a half period, starting from 07.12.2017 until 22.01.208, covering the period of a month earlier to the election day (07.01.2018) and two weeks after the election day. A coding sheet was used to analyze, and its reliability was .75 according to Cohen's formula.

This study was conducted to answer three questions. (1) How did political party leaders use social networking sites (Facebook or Twitter) during the election campaign?, (2) What were the main themes in their SNSs' posts? and (3) Is there any difference within the politicians' use of SNSs in pre-election and post-election periods?

The findings of the study show that utilization of social media as a means for political communication in election campaigns with a professional sense is not a main issue in North Cyprus. Alongside of using social media to reach voters, politics still rely mostly on traditional ways such as campaign trail visits throught the country in order to have face-to-face relationship with voters.

Keywords: Political Communication, Election Campaigns, Facebook, North Cyprus

ÖZ

Sosyal medya özellikle seçim kampanyaları döneminde siyasal iletişim açısından önemli bir konumdadır. Bu çalışma, 2018 genel seçimleri vesilesiyle Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta bir siyasal iletişim aracı olarak sosyal medya kullanımını araştırmayı hedeflemektedir.

Araştırma methodu olarak içerik analizi kullanılmıştır. Mecliste temsiliyeti bulunan altı siyasi parti liderinin 07.12.2017 ile 22.01.2018 tarihlerini kapsayan ve seçimlerden bir ay öncesini ile seçimlerden iki hafta sonrası olamk üzere yaklaşık bir buçuk aylık bir süre boyunca yapmış oldukları Facebook veya Twitter paylaşımları incelenmiştir. Analiz için kodlama tablosu hazırlanmış olup Cohen'in formülüne göre .75 ile uygulanabilirliği kanıtlanmıştır.

Çalışma üç araştırma sorusuna cevap bulmak için yapılmıştır. (1) Seçim kampanyası süreci boyunca siyasal parti liderleri Facebook veya Twitter'ı nasıl kullandı?, (2) Paylaşımların ana teması ne idi? ve (3) Siyasal parti liderlerinin yapmış olduğu paylaşımlarda seçim öncesi ile seçim sonrası arasında herhangi bir değişiklik oldu mu?

Araştırmanın sonucuna göre Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta seçim kampanyası döneminde sosyal medyanın profesyonel bir şekilde siyasal iletişim aracı olarak kullanımının söz konusu olmadığı ortaya çıkmıştır. Seçmenlere ulaşmak adına sosyal medyayı kullanıyor olsalar dahi, siyasilerin daha çok seçim ziyareti ve yüz yüze görüşme gibi geleneksel yöntemlere önem verdikleri anlaşılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Siyasal İletişim, Seçim Kampanyası, Facebook, Kuzey Kıbrıs

DEDICATION

To My Beloved Mother Fezile Kılgın

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem of the Study

The rise of the internet regarding the technological advancements has touched and changed nearly every aspect of our lives. That is why, in the world of politics, internet has also become an important concept as it offers a new medium for political communication. E-campaigning was first introduced within Web 1.0 technology during 1990s and has flourished within Web 2.0 technology which includes social media and SNSs concepts that offered interactive communication. Politics featured speeches, election campaign meetings, the handshake, billboards, TV ads, and campaign offices are considered as traditional election campaigning practices (Wattal et al, 2010). Technological advancements, however, have changed the nature of election campaigns and make them more technology oriented. Political parties and candidates have started to adopt this new technology within the aim of reaching vast majority of voters. In other words, Web 2.0 applications, social media and SNSs offer a new medium for political communication and enable political parties and candidates to reach a wide range of voters and to disseminate their messages and content at very low cost. That is why in recent years, besides traditional campaign practices, political parties and candidates in Northern Cyprus, as elsewhere in the world, have also started to use these technological advancements. Within these aspects, this study analyzes;

How did political party leaders use social networking sites (Facebook or Twitter) during the election campaign period?, What were the main themes in their SNSs posts? within the framework of the 2018 General Elections in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. This present study tries to figure out whether politics' use of SNSs, especially Facebook is effective in creating a favorable public opinion towards politics during the election campaign period.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the use of social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter by political party leaders running for the 2018 Early General Elections in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Within this regard, the main purpose of this study is to determine how Turkish Cypriot political party leaders adopt social networking sites in the 2018 Early General Election Period, which topics and specific terms have been emphasized by the political party leaders in their official accounts on SNSs and also to find out whether there is a difference between before and after the election period in leaders' use of social media.

1.3 Significance of the Study

Media within the technological advancements leading to introduction of social media have become "extensions of man" ever more so in the 21st century than when the term was first proposed by McLuhan in 1964.

Like every aspects of our lives, internet has affected the political sphere as well and changed the way politics conduct their election campaigns as it offers new vehicle for political campaign activities. In 1996, it was first time in history that U.S candidates used websites for their election campaign, then in 1998, for contacting with voters this time emails were used and in 2003 blogs came out as an important element of politics

online election campaign activities (Cornfield & Rainie, 2006). The above-mentioned practices of internet are considered as non-interactive informational websites which belong to Web 1.0 technology. Then social media was introduced within Web 2.0 technology which is interative in nature and includes blogging, social networking, and media sharings. In other words, technological advances have resulted in the development of social media and political communication has gained a new dimension as it switched from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0. Using social media as a means of political communication tool for election campaigns is considered as a new phenomenon and was introduced on Facebook during the 2008 US presidential elections (Vesnic-Alujevic, 2012). US Former President Obama's extensive use of social networks in 2008 Presidential Election has changed the way we consider social media tools as a part of election campaigns (Güneyli et al., 2017). This has acknowledged that social media can offer relatively low cost or no cost method for political promotion (Gueorguieva, 2008). Within social media, politics produce and promote their own content and be able to convey these customized messages for their targeted voters (Pena-Lopez, 2011).

Politics growing rate of adoption of SNSs, and its influence on election campaigning has been studied by numerous researches around the world. In Northern Cyprus, however, there has not been any conducted study on politics use of SNSs during the election campaigning period. In Turkey, Özselçuk (2014) conducted a research on the usage of social media in the process of election campaigns and a view to Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus general elections-28 July 2013. This research analyzed social media strategies of only two political parties Republican Turkish Party (Cumhuriyetçi Türk Partisi [CTP]) and National Unity Party (Ulusal Birlik Partisi

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[UBP]). At the end of this study, Özselçuk (2014) found that although there were some differences among both political parties in the use of social media, both political parties' strategy on social media was partial and not necessarily made use of two-way of communication benefit of social media. Thus, in this regard, current study sheds light on the use of SNSs by Turkish Cypriot political party leaders during the 2018 Early General Election campaigning period.

1.4 Research Questions

The present study sets out to explore how politics use SNSs during election campaign period with respect to the research questions listed below:

(1) How did Political Party Leaders Use Social Networking Sites (Facebook or Twitter) during the election campaign period?

(2) What were the main themes in their SNSs posts?

1.5 Limitations of the Study

This present study limited only to leaders of six political parties which joined the 2018 Early General Elections in Northern Cyprus that was held on 7 January 2018, and had chance to be represented in Parliament[1]: Republican Turkish Party (Cumhuriyetçi Türk Partisi [CTP]), Demokrat Parti (Demokrat Parti [DP]), People's Party (Halkın Partisi [HP]), Communal Democracy Party (Toplumcu Demokrasi Partisi [TDP]), National Unity Party (Ulusal Birlik Partisi [UBP]) and Rebirth Party (Yeniden Doğuş Partisi [YDP]). In this study, Facebook posts by Tufan Erhürman (CTP), Serdar Denktaş (DP), Kudret Özersay (HP), Cemal Gürsel Özyiğit (TDP) and Erhan Arıklı (YDP) have been taken as the sample of the study covering the period of December 20,2017-January 26, 2018 which involves two weeks before and two weeks after the

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[1] It is worthed to mention that the names of the political parties are arranged in Turkish Alphabetical order in every part of this thesis and are as follow: CTP, DP, HP, TDP, UBP and YDP.

election day. Official Facebook accounts of four political party leaders have been analyzed except National Unity Party (UBP) leader Hüseyin Özgürgün who does not have a Facebook account. Instead of Facebook account, Twitter account of Özgürgün has been employed for the study which would be considered as limitation to study. Facebook was chosen for this study since it is the leading SNS across the world with 2,196 million users[2] (as of July, 2018). Similarly, comparing to other SNSs, Facebook also is in the leading position in North Cyprus. Another limitation of the study is that it covers time period between December 20, 2017 and January 26, 2018.

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[2] Retrieved from Statista database

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Social Media: The New Way of Communication

"Today, after more than a century of electronic technology, we have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both space and times as far as our planet is concerned" (McLuhan, 1964, p. 3). Nearly after fifty years that McLuhan put this idea forward a then-new concept, social media, has opened a new door to our way of communication in a way that it was not experienced before.

2.1.1 Social Media Defined

Social media is a web-based interactive technology which allows people to communicate in a way they have never involved before. The concepts of "time" and "space" are no more limitations within social media as it enables instant connection between users allowing them to update their social media profiles instantly in their daily lives with photos, audios or videos, if desired. These features easily make social media an inseparable part of our daily lives.

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), before defining social media, two concepts, Web 2.0 and User Generated Content, should be understood fully. Web 2.0 is a term first used in 2004 and refers to a technology shifting the Web into a participatory platform by providing people not only consume content (via downloading) but also contribute and produce new content (via uploading). Web 2.0 is also a platform with applications and files stored on the Web where software is a service (and often a free

service) rather than a product (Darwish, A., & Lakhtaria, K. I., 2011, p. 204). In other words, Web 2.0 functions as a platform in which content and applications are not only created and published by individuals, but also all users are able to modify in a participatory and collaborative fashion (Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. , 2010, p. 61). User Generated Content (UGC) is an another concept that is related to social media and according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2007), there should be three basic criteria for UGC in order to be considered as such:

(1) It needs to be published either on a publicly accessible website or on a social networking site accessible to a selected group of people

(2) It needs to show a certain amount of creative effort

(3) It needs to have been created outside of professional routines and practices.

Based on above-mentioned clarifications on the concepts of Web 2.0 and UGC, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, p.61) define social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological foundations of Web 2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of user generated content" (p.61). Within this definition, it is highlighted that social media reflects the interactive nature of Web 2.0 technologies which provides users a great level of creativity.

Scott and Jacka (2011) defined social media as a "set of web based broadcast technologies that enable the democratization of content, giving people the ability to emerge from consumers of content to publishers". This definition of social media emphasizes that the traditional media tools differ from social media, which resulted in the change of users' position from consumers of content to publishers within these interactive broadcast technologies.

Television, radio, newspapers and magazines are traditional media tools where publishers and advertisers decide on content and in case of any disagreement consumers are not provided with an instant feedback or a chance for a protest, however, at this point, social media reveals its trademark feature as it makes it possible for two-sided exchange of information where users can exchange their ideas and content, get a feedback and express their opinions (Zarrella 2009; Sokolova 2013). In other words, traditional communication media disseminate information and leave impressions (Quarterman, J., 1993, p. 48) whereas Web 2.0 technologies and social media are interactive in nature and can be used for actions.

Safko and Brake (2009) stated "Social media refers to activities, practices, and behaviours among communities of people, who gather online to share information, knowledge and opinions using conversational media. Conversational media are web-based applications that make it possible to create and easily transmit content in the form of words, pictures, videos and audios." Social media is an online sphere where content can easily be created and transmitted by people who would like to share information, knowledge and opinions. Thus, social media provided by Web 2.0 technologies has added a new dimension to our lives and open a new window into communication.

2.1.2 Social Networking Sites (SNSs)

Social networking sites (SNS) are the most commonly used form of social media. SNSs are services that enable users to create an online profile about themselves with the aim of connecting with other people and being "findable" (Zappavigna, 2012).

Social networking sites (SNSs) attract a great number of users, many of whom use these SNSs intensively as a part their daily life practices. This situation leads to

progressively attracting the attention of academic researches. boyd and Ellison (2007, p.211) define social networking sites as web-based services that allow individuals to;

(1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system,

(2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection,

(3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

Here it is worth mentioning that boyd and Ellison (2007) made a distinction between the concepts "social network site" and "social networking sites". According to body and Ellison (2007, p.211) the concept of "social networking sites" emphasizes initiation of relationship, often between strangers while the concept of "social network sites" highlights articulating and making visible of social networks that already exists. Participants of many of SNSs tend to communicate with people within their extended social network, rather than "networking" or looking to meet new people (boyd and Ellison 2007, p.211). That is why body and Ellison (2007) label these sites as "social network sites".

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) stated that social networking sites allow users to interact by creating personal information profiles, inviting friends and colleagues having access to those profiles, and sending e-mails and instant messages to each other (p.63).

boyd and Ellison (2007, p.211) stated that although SNSs' have variety of technical features, their backbones include visible profiles that show an articulated list of "friends" who are also users of the system. After joining the SNSs, users are asked to fill out forms including some questions, which generate the profile page. These questions are composed of descriptors such as age, location, interests, and an "about

me" section. Most SNSs also motivate users to upload a profile picture. Some SNSs enable users to add multimedia content or to modify their profile's look. Some SNSs, such as Facebook, even allow users to add modules ("Applications") on their profile pages. On SNSs, the visibility of profile page varies by site and it can be managed by user discretion. The list of friends on many SNSs is visible to anyone within some exceptions such as MySpce, Facebook and LinkedIn, in which it is users who decide whether their friend list can be publicly seen or not. On many SNSs, there is also a mechanism for users to leave messages or comments on their friends' profile pages. In addition, most SNSs have a private messaging feature (boyd and Ellison 2007, p. 213). Alongside these features, SNSs have some other features that vary from site to site such as photo-sharing or video-sharing capabilities, blogging or instant messaging technology. There are mobile-specific SNSs (e.g., Dodgeball) but some web-based SNSs also support mobile interactions (e.g., Facebook, MySpace, and Cyworld). Many SNSs aim people from specific geographical regions or linguistic groups, some SNSs however are designed for people from specific ethnic, religious, sexual orientation, political, or other identity-driven categories in mind and even there are SNSs for dogs (Dogster) and cats (Catster), in which their owners manage their profiles (boyd and Ellison 2007, p. 214).

Zappavigna (2012, p.5) also stated that there are a number of basic functions that most SNSs have in common such as: profile creation, the ability to generate a list of affiliated users who are often referred to as "friends" (e.g. Facebook friedns) or "followers" (e.g. Twitter followers).

2.1.2.1 A Brief History of Social Networking Sites (SNSs)

The concept of "six degrees of separation" is considered as an important concept for understanding the insight of the social networks on the Internet (Kolbitsch, J., & Maurer, H. A., 2006, p. 202). The concept of "six degrees of separation" relies on a hypothesis which suggests that any two random strangers can be linked with each other by a chain of about six individuals.

The concept of "six degrees of separation" dates back to the "small world experiment" which was carried out by American psychologist Stanley Milgram in 1967. Milgram set up the "small world experiment" in which sixty volunteers in Kansas got letters from him and they were asked to forward these letters using hand-delivered packages through friends or friends of friends. At the end of experiment, the six degrees of separation was confirmed, although results were disputed (see https://web.archive.org/web/20090301152432/http://www.uaf.edu:80/northern/big_world.html)

First social networking site was SixDegrees.com that launched in 1997. SixDegrees attracted millions of users before closing in 2000. The main reason why SixDegrees failed was that apart from accepting Friend request, there was little offered within the site which got complaint from users. Beside, meeting strangers also did not seem interesting for most users (boyd & Ellison, 2007).

The second wave SNSs began in 2001 when Ryze.com was founded by Adrian Scott in San Francisco. Ryze.com introduced a new aspect to the previous SNSs as it offers new service for people who would like to expand their business networks. Following Ryze.com, Friendster was founded in 2002 by Jonathan Abrams within the aim of

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being social complement to Ryze.com. Three groups of early adopters-bloggers, attendees of the Burning Man arts festival, gay men-helped the site to gain attraction and by the May 2003, it had reached 300,000 users. Later on, however, Friendster faced with some technical and social difficulties. Friendster's rapid growth could not be handled within its serves and databases thus the site began to restrict the activities of users which has lead users to replace the site with other alternatives (boyd & Ellison, 2007). From 2003 onward, the number of SNSs has begun to grow in number and more and more users has begun to enroll on these sites. Among these sites, Facebook and MySpace are the ones that took the most attention. A great number of teenagers enrolled MySpace in 2004, aiming to connect with their favorite bands.

Early 2000s were the years that witness the early stages of SNSs. From this point forward, SNSs has come one after another and got massive boost by technological developments. Table1 below shows number of the most prominent SNSs' active users (in millions) around the world.

Table 1: Important Aspects of Some Major SNSs

SNS	Foundation Year	Founder	Focus Point	Number of Active Users[3]
Facebook	2004	Mark Zuckerberg, Eduardo Saverin, Dustin Moskovitz, Andrew McCollum & Chris Hughes	• Platform enabling people to connect with their friends, family members, colleagues and acquaintances • Users can customize their personal profiles with personal information	2,196 million
YouTube	2005	Chad Hurley, Steve Chen & Jawed Karim	• Video sharing site • Enable users to upload, tag, and share personal video	1,900 million
Instagram	2010	Kevin Systrom & Mike Krieger	• Users can share images & videos	1,000 million
Twitter	2006	Jack Dorsey, Noah Glass, Biz Stone & Evan Williams	• Microblog • Allows up to 140 characters • Messages referred as "tweets"	336 million
LinkedIn	2002	Reid Hoffman	• Business and employment-oriented service	294 million
Pinterest	2009	Ben Silberman, Evan Sharp & Paul Sciarra	• Enable users to create collections of images on events, hobbies, clothing and their own choice of interest	200 million

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[3] Number of active users (in millions) around the world as of July 2018 retrieved from Statista database (https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/)

2.1.2.2 Facebook

Facebook, compared to other SNSs, is the most prevalent one around the world that holds a great number of users. Facebook was launched in February 2004, as a Harvard-only SNS (Cassidy, 2006). Harvard students who used the service could post photographs of themselves and personal information about their lives. Then students from other prestigious schools, such as Yale and Stanford universities, were also allowed to join. By the year June 2004, more than 250,000 students from 34 schools had enrolled to the site, and that same year major coorporations such as the credit-card company MasterCard started paying for exposure on the site. In September 2004, Facebook introduced a new feature and added the Wall to a member's online profile. This feature let a user's friends post information on their Wall and became a key element in the social aspect of the site. By the end of 2004, Facebook had reached one million active users. In 2005, Facebook has introduced completely new concept by enabling users to "tagging" people in photos that were posted to the site. By tagging, people identified themselves and others in images that could be seen by other Facebook friends. Then in 2005, Facebook approved high-school students and students at universities outside the United States to join the site. By end of the 2005, it reached six million monthly active users. Later, in 2006 Facebook expanded its users' scale by allowing membership beyond students to anyone over the age of 13. Facebook has also paved the way for advertisers by enabling them to create new and effective customer relationships. More companies began using the social network for marketing and advertising as Facebook has introduced a new way of company and customer relationship that had not been possible before.

2.1.2.3 Twitter

Twitter is a microblog that was launched in 2006. Twitter allows its users to use 140 characters in one message. These messages are referred as "Tweets". Users should create a profile. Twitter also consists of an interface that enables users to post new tweets, configure various settings , such as privacy, manage their list of followers and search historical tweets (Zappavigna, 2012). Users are allowed to post links to news stories, share and discuss topics instantaneousl (Park, 2013).

Jose van Dijk set down the reasons for using Twitter as follows (cited in Bayraktutan et al., 2014, p.5):

> (1) The conversation and dialogue feature (similar to short messaging on the telephone,   but not dependant on a single person or web page)
>
> (2) The fact that it enables solidarity and change (with certain users)
>
> (3) The fact that it enables self-expression and self-communication (similar to blogging)
>
> (4) Status update and control
>
> (5) Sharing of information and news
>
> (6) Maketing and advertisement (depending on location, area of interest and connections.)

Twitter is considered as an important tool for political communication as it provides a suitable environment for opinion leadership formation by providing an easy communication tool that allows any user to send and share information about their activities, opinions and status (Honeycutt and Herring, 2009; Park, 2013). There are a number of studies (Hwang and Shim, 2010; Java et al., 2007; Mischaud, 207; Zhao and Rosson, 2009) that offered various motivations for using Twitter as follows: social

participation through information exchange, information seeking and distribution, everyday conversation, checking public opinion, entertainment, and private expression. Park (2013) has conducted a research on the role of opinion leadership on Twitter and found that opinion leadership on Twitter makes an important contribution to individuals' involvement in political processes, while motivation of Twitter use does not assist individuals' political engagement. Tumasjan et al. (2011) has done a research with aim of investigating whether microblogging messages on Twitter reflect the political landscape off-line and can be used to predict election results. Conducting an analysis of over 100,000 messages including a reference to either a political party or a politician, results show that Twitter is used as a platform for political deliberation and only a mere number of tweets reflects the election results which lead Tumasjan et al. (2011, p.414) to came up with the results that Twitter can be considered valid indicator of the political landscape off-line.

2.2 Social Media and Political Communication in Election Campaigns

The importance of political communication dates back to when people settled down, although the concept was not known as "political communication" at that time (Tokgöz, Siyasal İletişimi Anlamak, 2008). The concept of political communication as a scientific phenomenon and process has been emerged within the past 50 years. The emergence and using practices of political communication dates back to Ancient Greece, where statesmen and rulers use "political communication" tools and techniques for ruling societies, even though, not mentioning the name of "political communication" at that time (Aziz, 2003, p. 1).

One of the earliest definition of political communication has been made by Ithaiel de Sola Pool in 1968 as:

> Political Communication is a category that includes a large proportion of all deliberative and hortatory activities that take place outside of the household. An international ultimatum or the speeches of a candidate are, of course, political communications; but so, by this definition, are an employee's request that his superior address him as "Mr." rather than by his first name, or a letter from a club to its members telling them that the dues are to be raised.

de Sola Pool's definiton of political communication suggests that it is an inevitable part of our everyday life. Steven Chaffee (1975), as cited in Tokgöz (2008, p.84), stated that political communication is the "role of communication in the political process". Later on, Doris Graber (1981) links political communication with political language and by suggesting the term of "Political Language" and he stated that Political Communication is not all about rhetoric but also include paralinguistic elements. Doris Graber's (1981), as cited in Tokgöz (2008) definition as follows: "Political Language comprises not only rhetoric but paralinguistic signs such as body language, and political acts such as boycotts and protests".

Another definition made by Denton and Woodward (1990), as cited as Tokgöz (2008, p. 84) in which political communication defined as follows: "Pure discussion about the allocation of public resources (revenues), official authority (who is given the power to make legal, legislative and executive decision), and official sanctions (what the state rewards or punishes)."

Political communication has flourished over the course of time and faced with some changes due to increase in populations, progress in societies, developments in technology and diversity in cultures. The messages along with their content have also changed practices that are used by rulers within their relations with those who ruled.

The terminology and methods of political communication has begun to emerge thus it has been widely regarded as sub field of social science (Aziz, 2003, p. 1).

Political campaigns are organized by political actors, presidents, national assemblies, governments, political parties and local authorities within the aim of doing politics. All kinds of political campaigns target community members and their voting decisions. Thus this feature determines the content and nature of the messages as well. Although content may differ from campaign to campaign, every campaign aims to be approved by community members and target to affect their voting habits. Political parties and candidates use variety of techniques and means in order to win an election. Thus competing political parties and candidates are the key concepts of election campaigns. Informing voters about the campaign and persuading them to vote for a particular candidate or political party are the main target of the election campaigns (Aziz, 2003).

In today's world, the relation between social media and political communication are inevitable. "Wherever there are communities of people, politics follows" (Quarterman, J., 1993, p. 48) and "New technology offers great potential for expanding the horizons of political communication" (Barnett, 1997, p. 193) are the two early suggestions that give insights about how social media and political communication are inseparable concepts for today's politics. Uslu's (1996) definition of political communication also gives insight about political communication and its relationship with other elements (as cited in Alp, 2016, p.12):

> Political communication is an effort of communication, either one or two-way, made by a political view or political organ using the techniques of advertising, propaganda and public relations according to the requirements of the time and particular state of affairs on a continuous basis in the political system, in which it operates and carries out political activities, in order to build and maintain the trust, confidence and support of public opinion and accordingly to come to power.

Uslu's (1996) definition of political communication highlighted that requirements of the time have an impact on the political communication. Globally growing rates of adoption of social media also leads politics to use that medium as a tool for their political communication strategy. In recent years, social media is being increasingly used in context of political communication with having the potential for increasing political participation (Stieglitz, S., & Dang-Xuan, L. , 2013). In addition, social media is also important concept for the political communication as it paves the way for evaluation and assessment of political developments.

Since social media provides citizens with new ways by making them to discuss and debate politics and engage in the democratic process (Best, M. L., & Meng, A. , 2015). In the digital public sphere, the manifestation of speech-act activism leads to the development of citizenship culture where social media has a key role. Social media becomes an important media tool for political parties and leaders for expressing, reinforcing and spreading their political preferences (Bayraktutan, et al., 2014, p. 3).

2.2.1 Before Web 2.0 Technologies: Election Campaigns and the Internet

Internet is a new medium that has linked the world through a shared, virtual space which adds a new meaning to McLuhan's (1964) conceptualization of the global village. In other words, Internet enhances communication opportunities that has not been experienced before. It is worth mentioning here that the Internet also affect the way political communication has been conducted. Tedesco (2004) stated that there are a number of research area spanning interpersonal, organizational, mass, intercultural, and international communication focus on the role of internet and political communication are among them.

The Internet has changed the way individuals, organizations, political institutions, and governments communicate and negotiate political information and political roles (Tedesco, 2004, p. 507). The internet offers the opportunity for a two-way communication feedback loop and named as "master medium" (Selnow, 1998) as it is a hybrid of the one-directional print, audio, and video media. Tedesco (2004) stated that another important aspect of the Internet is that it is in lack of print and broadcast media characteristics of information control structures and gatekeeping. The internet differs from traditional print and broadcast media as it offers ordinary citizens unrestricted access and ability to voice their political agenda to a worldwide audience.

Political candidates and political organizations make use of the internet since it offers a source-controlled form of communication and much less expensive option than advertisements (Tedesco, 2004, p. 510). Tedesco et al., (1999) stated that the Internet offers an unlimited space to articulate completely policy positions, biographical information, speech texts, press releases, and a variety of other important political information to candidates, citizens, and political groups.

There are a number of studies conducted on Web campaigning within Web 1.0 technologies (Kluver et al., 2007; Norris, 2001, 2003; Tedesco, 2004). The Web 1.0 technologies are hierarchical and disseminate information directly from the politican and the party to the citizens by standard technology (predominanyl html).

Barber et al., (1997), researchers at Rutgers University, following the 1996 presidential election, conducted a comprehensive analysis of the content of political Web sites and presented the following structural possibilities for electronically enhanced democracy (Barber et al., 1997):

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(a) inherent interactivity;

(b) potential for lateral and horizontal communication;

(c) point-to-point and non-hierarchical modes of communication;

(d) low costs to users (once a user is set up);

(e) rapidity as a communication medium;

(f) lack of national or other boundaries;

(g) freedom from the intrusion and monitoring of government

Similarly, Sparks (2001) made some additions to structural advantages that were put forwarded by Barber et al. (1997). Sparks (2001) considered anonymity of social actors, discursive requirements, and search mechanisms as advantages of the Internet. Sparks (2001) sees anonymity as an advantage since it removes socially identifiable criteria such as age, sex, race, and accent that might cause prejudice or exclude a participant's contribution to political dialogue (as cited in Tedesco, 2004). Those advantages that mentioned previously belong to Web 1.0 technologies[4] in which there are some technical limitations and low user-friendliness of Web 1.0 when compared to Web 2.0 technologies[5]. Vergeer and Hermans (2013) stated that interactive applications in political websites were about to emerge in 2004 U.S. presidential elections (Vaccari, 2008) and in 2005 UK parliament elections (Jackson, 2006). Then in 2007, a research conducted by Foot, Schneider, and Doughert revealed that there were elements of connecting and mobilizing on the political websites during the 2004 US congressional elections. They predicted that use of interactive applications provided by new technological developments will increase in future elections. There are some studies (Gulati &Williams, 2007; Jackson & Lilleker, 2010) however

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[4] "Web 1.0" includes non-interactive informational websites (Wattal et al., 2010)
[5] "Web 2.0" includes blogging, social networking, and media sharing (Wattal et al., 2010)

showed that politicians use websites in a one-way mostly for transmiting information to website visitors.

Vergeer and Hermans (2013) stated that new web applications, Web 2.0 apps, are considered to increase political participation. Wattal et al (2010) stated that there are some new advantages offered within the Web 2.0 technologies; and these new online tools (e.g. Facebook, YouTube and etc.) lead content to be disseminated instantaneously and continously at very low cost. Those political candidates and political organizations who ignore these new technologies are more likely to face the disadvantages of becoming irrelevant to next-generation voters (Wattal et al., 2010).

Similar to those mentioned above, new channel within the Internet, including blogs and websites, create new forms of personalized content where the message is textual rather than only oral (Wattal et al., 2010). As also mentioned above, the Internet has an impact on political communication as citizens and political candidates have adopted the channel in large numbers.

The political campaign in which the Internet used is the 1992 Clinton campaign. Within this political campaign, speech texts were distributed over the Internet (Whillock, 1997). It was in the year 1996 that all serious presidential candidates, the majority of U.S. congressional candidates had established an online presence. Thus the Internet has become an important means for political campaigning. In 2000, it was first time that the Internet was used in political campaigns. In 2004, political parties, candidates, and other organizations made use of the Internet in order to mobilize voters and to promote candidates' campaigns. Until the 2004 national U.S. presidential election, use of the Internet (web sites or informational e-mail messages) was in one-

directional structure. After, some political candidates however shifted from one-directional structure within the introduction of Web 2.0 technologies. In the 2008 presidential elections, Obama made history within the use of social media which led him to the White House. Although social media was not the only reason for Obama's victory in the elections but there is no doubt that the use of social media made a huge impact on his campaign and it was first time that the rise of new medium had such an effect on the elections.

Here there is a related point to consider that the impact of the Internet on political communication should be considered before and after the Web 2.0 era. Before the Web 2.0 era, there is Web 1.0 era in which communication patterns are in one-directional structure. Web 2.0 technologies offer active participation and the integration of different media. Some scholars (Chadwick, 2009; Cormode & Krishnamurthy, 2008; O'Reilly, 2005) considered that Web 2.0 characterized by technological innovations such as rich user experience, Web as platform; collective intelligence which make it easy for people to engage directly and interactively with others on the Web. Key words that associated within the concept of Web 2.0 are as follow: sharing of content, online collaborating between people, socializing among people, networking, and user-generated content (Vergeer & Hermans, 2013).

The impact of the Internet on political campaigns has been subjected by several studies. Parties, politicians and candidates have started to use blogging, social networks sites, and sharing sites within the introduction of Web 2.0 technologies (Parl & Jankowski, 2008; Lilleker & Malagon, 2010). Then there was an another study that has been conducted as if there is a relation between the politics' adoption of new campaign style and if so, how it differs from the professional campaign style (Gibson

& Römmele, 2001). Another study on Web 2.0 technologies within the examples of Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, that lead politicians to individualize and personalize their campaigning style was conducted by Vergeer, Hermans and Sams (2013).

Vergeer and Hermans (2013) stated that the Web provides the party, the politician and candidate greater autonomy, within more direct and intense communcation as opposite to traditional media which constitutes an important benefit. The Web offers politicians and candidates to operate individually and relatively autonomously of the party within online communication and on a personal level with people from several background (potential voters), bypassing party channels (p. 401).

2.2.2 Social Networking Sites (SNSs) as a Political Communication Tool in Election Campaigns

Social Networking Sites are primarily not established as political tools however politicians and political groups quickly grasp the potential of these sites (Borah, 2016) which has led academics to conduct studies on this area since there are number of studies that were conducted on SNSs role in political communication during election campaigns both from perspective of politics and SNSs users.

Individuals' using SNSs during election campaigns have been studied several times. Robertson et al., (2010) carried out a research on participation of individuals in the political dialogues on the Facebook walls of three major 2008 U.S. Presidential candidates and they found out that individuals' participation in these political dialogues create Habermasian public sphere[6]. They also claimed that SNSs make it

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[6] According to Habermas, public spere is a mediating space between the state and the civil society. Thus communicative action based on equality in the communication process is a prerequisite in Habermasian public sphere (Robertson et al., 2010). Social media within its

possible for public sphere discourse for those who wish to enter the online "salons" of political candidates. Tumasjan et al., (2011) conducted a research on use of Twitter in the 2009 federal election of the national parliament in Germany and they analyzed Twitter's role in forecasting the election results by studying the content of Twitter messages. They studied over 100,000 Twitter messages in which parties and politicians mentioned prior to the German federal election 2009. They conclude that Twitter is used as a platform for political deliberation and can be considered as an indicator of the political landscape off-line. Another research was done by Kasmani et al., (2014) on the usage of Twitter in the 2013 Malaysian general election focusing on people's finding and sharing information about events on Twitter within what kinds of viewpoints are they exposed to? At the end, in line with previous study (Gurevitch et al., 2009) they found that users of social networking sites are not active and responsible members of political communities where rumour, attack, or a cynical game becomes part of political discussion.

Politics use of SNSs during election campaigns has also been researched in the context of political communication. Vergeer et al., (2011) done a research on the SNSs use of politics who run for the European Parliament (EP) in 2009 and how they adopted these SNSs when communicating and connecting with citizens. They found out that ordinary people can become a member of the inner social circle of the political candidates within the opportunity provided by SNSs. Citizens's proximity to politics decreases and become more close to political environments. This relationship between politics and citizens in the realm of SNSs can sometimes be not reciprocal. Bayraktutan et al., (2013) done research on the politics' twitter use in the 2011 general elections in

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interactive nature provides great opportunity for equality in the communication process and offers best option for Habermasian public sphere.

Turkey. At the end of the study, they concluded that the political party that has the highest representation in the parliament also has the largest presence in Twitter and claimed that offline rhetoric of political party leaders has reflection on their online activities. They also found out that the political parties that use SNSs in an effective way also had used Web 1.0 technologies as a means of political communication. Vergeer and Hermans (2013) carried out a research on how political candidates use Twitter during the 2010 Dutch general elections. They found that candidates' accession to these SNSs enable them to campaign at an individual level which affects parties' campaign strategies. They also claimed that politics' use of SNSs turn elections campaigns into individualized campaigns and lead a new trend in which politics and candidates are personalized and presented as regular people. Özselçuk (2014) has done a research on the usage of social media in the election campaign within the framework of 2013 general elections in North Cyprus by analyzing two political parties CTP and UBP. Özselçuk (2014) found that although these two political parties had some differences in social media usage where CTP was more active on social media than UBP. Özselçuk (2014) however concluded that still both parties' political communication strategies on social media was partial in 2013 general elections. Borah (2016) made a research on political use of Facebook in the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections by examining the content in candidates' pages and analyzed purpose and focus of the posts within the framework of emotional appeals which was also used for traditional campaigns. Lappas et al., (2016) conducted a study and examined the SNSs use of candidates who were running for the 2014 Greek Municipal Elections and results show that candidates rely mostly on traditional campaigns methods rather than using SNSs so there was a low adoption rate. This study also indicates that candidates in large cities have more tendency to use SNSs as a means of political marketing.

Results of this study also show that candidates using SNSs got more vote rates than the ones who did not adopt any SNSs. Güneyli et al., (2017) carried out a research in which Twitter posts of six political party leaders in Turkey were analyzed during the election campaign time period between July and November 2015 within the framework of political discourse. In this study, researchers focused on posts that were related to terrorism and at the end of the study it is found out that the politics' use of Twitter is extensive in Turkey as a tool for political communication. The results also suggest that politics' use of Twitter as a mean of political communication in Turkey can compete with the United States. Leaders' Twitter posts reflected the agenda of Turkey and each leader targeted to manipulate the public opinion and the concept of "terrorism" received special importance from leaders although they differed from each other in their approaches towards terrorism.

2.2.2.1 Political Discourse of Social Media

Political discourse is identified by politicians where the text and talk of professional politicians or political institutions, such as presidents and prime ministers and other members of government, parliament or political parties, both at the local, national and international levels are the main issue (Van Dijk, 1997). Van Dijk (1997) also suggested that defining political discourse is different from other discourses. The reason is that political discourse involves people as citizens and voters, members of pressure and issue groups, demonstrators and dissidents, and so on and many of whom are actively involved in political discourse. Thus the term "political discourse" can only be defined by identifying all participants in the political process (Verba et al., 1993; Van Dijk, 1997).

Web 2.0 technologies has change the production and reception of web-based genres, texts and discourses. Within the Web 2.0 technologies users become co-creative participants who consume and (re)produce new texts, discourses and genres (Lister et al., 2009; Boyd 2014). Recently, social networks' turning into digital public sphere also lead politics to develop and disseminate their political discourses (Güneyli et al., 2017). Maireder and Ausserhofer (2014) stated that SNSs such as Twitter facilitate the social connectivity and broaden the public debate by promising for a reconfiguration of the structure of political discourses. They carried out a research on practices and patterns of political tweeting in Austria and they described discourses from three perspectives as follows (p.1):

> (1) networking topics in terms of the inclusion of information, interpretation, and views into a debate;
>
> (2) networking media objects, driven by hyperlinking practices and resulting in a reconfiguration of web spheres; and
>
> (3) networking actors, driven by @mentioning practices, resulting in new patterns of interaction between political actors and citizens that reshape the participation structure of the public sphere.

Maireder and Ausserhofer (2014) claimed that above-mentioned perspectives give insight about the use of Twitter as a SNS and how does it shape the involvement of citizens in political information and participation. At the end of the study, they found out that political meaning is gradually being constructed from the mass media system to a networked public sphere (Benkler, 2006; Maireder and Ausserhofer, 2014).

2.2.2.2 Utilization of Facebook In Election Campaigns

Alongside the SNSs, Facebook offers unique experience for both political candidates and community members. In election campaigns, opinion polls considered as the only way to obtain feedback from the public (Westling, 2007). In this respect, the importance of internet for obtaining feedback from the public was first realized by political strategists with the Howard Dean campaign in 2004. As a new social networking site, Facebook provides campaigns within new opportunities which enable campaign organizers to organize and communicate with supporters in a very efficient way. Facebook also act in a reciprocal way as it enables citizens to voice their opinions and organize independently (p. 2).

Westling (2007) reviewed the features of Facebook within the framework of political communication and its effectiveness for political actors and community members in the article "Expanding the Public Sphere: The Impact of Facebook on Political Communication" in which he made a statement on importance of successful political communication as follow:

> A community that exemplifies good political communication requires participation from political actors, the media, and the public. Politicians should be able to get their message to community members both directly and through mediated sources. At the same time, the news media should be acting to bring information to the public, as well as providing a check on government by investigating and validating that information. Community members should take an active role in the media as well by questioning sources, responding to journalists, and passing along relevant stories to their peers.
>
> If a community member would like more information on a topic of public policy, it should be relatively easy to acquire that information. Community members should have an opportunity to respond to their representatives at times and places outside the polling booth. Representatives should ideally then respond to that input" (p. 3).

Westling (2007) emphasized that in order to succeed a successful political communication there should be mutual communication between politics and community members and media act as a facilitator element in that regard. Thus Facebook, which offers interactive communication, can create a valuable opportunity for politics to communicate with community members in order to realize political communication. Westling (2007) stated that "politicians can use Facebook to communicate with community members who are willing to listen, but they cannot actively impose their messages on anyone. At the same time, community members have the means to express their opinions to political actors and organize to create their own voice if they feel no candidate yet represents their stance" (p. 4). Thus Westling (2007) stated that "Facebook may be a better means of achieving a true public sphere than anything that has come before it, online or otherwise. The sheer fact that over half the student population at most universities is part of the network as well as millions of other people around the world demonstrates the utility of Facebook as an arena for communication. There is no other online community that connects members of real-world communities (geographical, ideological, or otherwise) in such an effective way" (p. 4).

Westling (2007) stated that although Facebook offers many opportunities for political communication, it does not necessarily mean that it is the only possible way to realize political communication. Rather Facebook only acts as a supplement existing real-world communities, real-word political issues and real-world news stories. The big portion of information come from outside to Facebook, which act as a means to share that information through a single network (p. 4). At this point, Westling (2007) made a relation between Facebook and Jürgen Habermas's concept of the public sphere.

Habermas's concept of the public sphere offers a place where public opinion formed by community members within the removal of the government or economy. According to Westling (2007) although Habermas's concept of the public opinion offers a good opportunity of political communication amogn citizens, however, it fails to explain that how politicians and organizations should fit into the mix. Westling (2007) argued that more inclusive community needed for a successful political communication and Facebook builds an important existence in that regard (p. 2). Thus Westling (2007) stated that Facebook has a potential within the regard of expanding the concept of the public sphere by enabling community members to be a part of political action whether or not within the campaigns (p. 2).

2.2.2.2.1 The Example of Barack Obama's 2008 Presidential Election Campaign

There are a number of studies that have been conducted on the Obama's utilization of social media during the 2008 election campaigns (Metzgar and Maruggi, 2009; Robertson, Vatrapu & Medina, 2010; Wattal, Schuff, Mandviwalla & Williams, 2010; Hendrick and Denton, 2010; Kenski et al., 2010; Cogburn and Espinoza-Vasques, 2011; Borah, 2016). Academics are highly interested in that topic since social media, a new medium at that time, provided a great opportunity for the political candidate, then-president Barack Obama, to win the presidential elections. Qualman (2011) stated that in 1960 U.S presidential election, Kennedy was helped by television, new medium at that time, Obama's campaign also was greatly helped by a new medium which was social media (as cited in Sokolova, 2013). Similar to Qualmann's (2011) statement, Yağmurlu (2011) also stated that General Eisenhower was considered the President of radio, John F. Kennedy was the President of television and Barack Obama was the President of the Internet (as cited in Güneyli et al., 2017).

Although Obama was not the first political candidate that used social media while running for the presidency, however he reached the mastered level of utilization of social media which made a huge impact on political communication within the framework of social media. In 2008 presidential elections still the major focus of communication was traditional media yet Obama chosed social media as his major positioning platform. Sokolova (2013) listed the reasons set by Qualmann (2011) for Obama to choose social media as a major communication tool as follow (p. 13):

(a) Attempting to dominate newspaper, television and radio would have been a tactical error against well-known Hilary Clinton, who was his competitor in the race for the Democratic nomination.

(b) Secondly, Obama had great appeal to younger audience, which were more likely to get the news from social media and not traditional media.

(c) And last of all, Obama had limited funding from the start and had to look for cheaper alternative ways to get his campaign going. Obama chose to use social media not only for positioning, but also for fundraising, just like Howard Dean four years earlier.

Above-mentioned statements had huge impact on Obama's way to White House. Obama's social media utilization contributed his election campaign in an effective way as his followers and supporters were growing each day. This made Obama president of the social media as he initiated a new step in the internet fundraising.

2.3 Election Rhetoric of Politics

The use of rhetoric dates back to Aristotle. Rhetoric is the use of symbolism and language to ensure that a message is encoded in the way desired by the communicator. Rhetorical communication is intentionally persuasive, is central to propaganda, and is

used to encourage a change in an audience member's behaviour (Lilleker, D. G., 2006, p. 249). In rhetorical communication, it is important to make sure that the interpretation of a message is uniform, at least among a majority. That is why, language is at the heart of the rhetoric, which is a central element of election campaigns. In an election, the main goal of politicians is to get elected and they need to communicate their views for achieving that goal (Håkansson, 1997). Potential voters demand information, and thus to provide and to receive information can only be possible by means of language (p. 82). That is why, language is an important instrument in terms of election campaigns. Håkansson (1997) stated that communication -the symbolic exchange of meaning- is a fundamental part of political activity, since in some sense politics is "doing by saying".

Lilleker (2006) stated that rhetorical conversation is considered as a key concept in a democratic society as it builds consensus by binding the people around ideas and issues. Thus, Lilleker (2006, p.250) set out the key features of rhetorical conversation as follow;

> (a) rhetorical conversation legitimises, by justifying distribution of power within a social ideology,
>
> (b) it orients society behind common goals through a narrative of community;
>
> (c) it resolves conflict through identifying common goals;
>
> (d) it mobilises, through activation and organization.

Rhetoric should be designed within a complex understanding of the audience, their social norms, values and fears, and will speak to these directly in order to be succeed (Lilleker, 2006). There are five stages that followed by designers of rhetorical communication (pp. 250-251):

(a) identify and define the problem;

(b) identify the audience required to solve the problem;

(c) identify or infer that audience's interpretive system: their norms, fears and values;

(d) translate the problem into the audience's interpretive system: create the message:

(e) deliver the message for optimal audience acceptance.

Although it is out scope of this study, it is still worth mentioning that some scholars argue that political language has experienced some changes over the last decades, and being adapted to media logic or to new modes of electoral competition are considered as the main reasons (Håkansson, 1997). There is a consideration that the political communication is in decline as the value of words is reduced, and debates are described as pointless squabbling (p. 82). It is assumed that mass media corrupts political language (p .82). Altheide and Snow (1979) stated that media has its own logic and news criteria, to which politicians must adapt (p. 82).

2.4 Insights On Turkish Cypriot Politics and Electoral System

The political structure of TRNC is comprised from three entities which are executive body (a council of ministers composed of prime minister and 10 ministers), legislative body (Legislative Assembly, composed of 50 deputies) and judicial body (independent courts). Parliamentarians and president are elected whereas ministers are appointed by prime minister and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court is appointed by the Supreme Judicial Council. TRNC follows parliamentary system of government with a council of minister that is headed by prime minister. The president of TRNC serves as the chief negotiator and representative of the Turkish Cypriot community to the talks. The

national assembly of TRNC has fifty seats with six electoral districts which are Lefkoşa, Gazimağusa, Girne, Güzelyurt, İskele and Lefke. Elections for the Legislative Assembly are held every five years. In order to form a government, at least 26 seats are required.

According to new "Election and Referendum (Amendment) Law[7], the fifty members of the Assembly are elected by proportional representation in six constituencies with an electoral threshold of 5%. Lefkoşa, the capital of the country, has the most deputies in the TRNC parliament, with 16, followed by Gazimağusa with 13 deputies, Girne with 10, Iskele with 5, Güzelyurt with 4, and Lefke with 2.

In TRNC, elections are held under the general administration of the Higher Electoral Council, which is composed of judges. The Higher Electoral Council's main duty is to making sure of orderly administration and fairness of the elections, as well as for the examination of any complaints or objections. Following election results, there is also a three-day period during which parties may dispute the result.

2.4.1 Turkish Cypriot Electoral System Within the Framework of 2018 Early Parliamentary Elections

The 2018 Early General Elections had fundamental changes compared to previous elections. In previous elections, TRNC had 5 electoral districts (Lefkoşa, Mağusa, Girne, Güzelyurt and İskele) whereas within new "Election and Referendum (Amendment) Law" Lefke district has become one of six electoral districts of TRNC. Within the recent amendements to the law on election, voters are enabled to vote in three ways; for a party, a party and list of candidates from that party or for individual

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[7] Law No: 59/2017

candidates. For the first time, voters are not limited to their constituency, they enabled to vote for candidates from all districts. Voters who wish to vote for individual candidates are required to vote for at least 24 members and a maximum of 50 members. Voters must not cast more than the number of seats in the district nor less than half of seats in the district.

According to results published by the Higher Electoral Council, UBP won 21 out of 50 (35,61 percent) seats followed by CTP with 12 seats (20.95%), HP with 9 seats (17.07%), TDP with 3 seats (8.65%), DP with 3 seats (7.82%) and YDP with 2 seats (6.99%).

After the parliamentary elections, government formation process began. President Akıncı has assigned the leader of the UBP Hüseyin Özgürgün with the task of forming government according to Article 106[8]. UBP leader Özgürgün handed over the duty of formation government to President. After a series of talks between other political parties UBP leader was unable to form government. Following this, President handed CTP leader Tufan Erhürman the task of forming a new government and Erhürman formed a first-ever four-way coalition government with DP, HP and TDP (KKTC Resmi Gazete, no. 10, dated 02/02/2018).

2.4.2 Political Parties Represented In the Assembly of Republic

There are six political parties that represented in the National Assembly after the 2018 general elections.

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[8] The Constitution of the TRNC

2.4.2.1 Republican Turkish Party (Cumhuriyetçi Türk Partisi [CTP])

Republican Turkish Party was founded on December 27th, 1970 in Nicosia and it's first president was Ahmet Mithat Berberoğlu. Being a leftist, socialist party, Rebuplican Turkish Party is pro-solution and supports bi-communal, bi-zonal federal state system in Cyprus. The party favored the acceptance of the Annan Plan and conducted a "YES" campaign in the pre-referendum period. The party's name changed to Republican Turkish Party-United Powers as the liberals also joined the party in 2003 in order to achieve a solution through Annan Plan. Republican Turkish Party won elections for three times having come in first place and took place in coalitions governments for four times. The party gained its greatest victory in 2005 elections having come first, winning 24 of the 50 seats in the assembly.

2.4.2.2 Democrat Party (Demokrat Parti [DP])

Democrat Party was founded in 1992 by nine former members of parliament from National Unity Party under the leadership of Hakkı Atun in Nicosia. The party adopts rightist, nationalist and conservative ideologies. In 2013, the party's name changed to Democrat Party- National Powers as 8 members of parliament from National Unity Party joined the party. In 2016, however, the party changed its name back to Democrat Party. The party has been in coalition governments since 1993, except the 2009 General Elections. The most successful results were taken in 1993 elections in which the party won 16 of 50 seats taking the second place. Democrat Party supports bi-communal, bi-zonal federal state system in Cyprus which should be achieved step by step rather than a comprehensive solution.

2.4.2.3 People's Party (Halkın Partisi [HP])

People's Party was formed in January 6, 2016 under the presidency of Kudret Özersay. The party is against corruptionism and favors centrism. People's Party participated its

first election in 2018, won 9 seats in the assembly and became one of the coalition partners. The party promotes for a fair solution to the Cyprus Problem in which both sides will be politically equal.

2.4.2.4 Natioanal Unity Party (Ulusal Birlik Partisi [UBP])

National Unity Party was established on October 11, 1975 by Rauf Raif Denktaş in Nicosia. The party is described as rightist, nationalist and conservative. National Unity Party won elections for eight times taking the first place and formed the government for six times. In 1990 General Elections the party won the majority of the seats, 34 of 50 which can be considered as the most successful result of all times for a political party in North Cyprus. National Unity Party supports bi-communal, bi-zonal solution for the Cyprus Problem based on the principals of political equality and Turkey's guarantee.

2.4.2.5 Communal Democracy Party (Toplumcu Demokrasi Partisi [TDP])

The party was established in July 3rd, 2007 as two parties- Communal and Liberation Party and Peace and Democracy Party abolished themselves and joined together under the name of Communal Democracy Party. Communal Democracy Party is a leftist, social democrat and pro-solution party supporting bi-communal, bi-zonal federal solution in Cyprus. In 2018, Communal Democracy Party became one of the four parties forming the coalition government for the first time. The highest number of seats won in the assembly by Communal Democracy Party is three which were in the elections of 2013 and 2018.

2.4.2.6 Rebirth Party (Yeniden Doğuş Partisi [YDP])

Initially began as a Rebirth Movement in 2015, Rebirth Party was established as a political party in October 2016 by Erhan Arıklı. Turkish Nationalism, conservatism and rightism constitute the party's main ideologies. The party supports two state

solution - the division of Cyprus into two independent states. The party participated

the elections for the first time in 2018 and gained two seats in the assembly.

Chapter 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Digital Public Opinion

Public Opinion is defined by Lipmann (1922) as follows:

> Those features of the world outside which have to do with the behavior of other human beings, in so far as that behavior crosses ours, is dependent upon us, or is interesting to us, we call roughly public affairs. The pictures inside the heads of these human beings, the pictures of themselves, of others, of their needs, purposes, and relationship, are their public opinions. Those pictures which are acted upon by groups of people, or by individuals acting in the name of groups, are Public Opinion with capital letters (p. 23).

In this definiton of public opinion, Lipmann (1922) highlighted that individuals adopted opinions mostly relying on second-hand experiences. These second-hand experiences can be sourced from opinion leaders, family members, politicians, journalists, celebrities, educators, mass media and so on. Recently, social media also has crucial role in formation of public opinion (Shirky, 2011; Fábrega and Sajuria, 2013; Eren and Aydın, 2014; Güneyli et al., 2017; Yengin and Bayrak, 2017). Political discourse is mediated either through mainstream media or elites which lead to formation of different discourses and sometimes influence public opinion (Zaller, 1992; Fábrega and Sajuria, 2013).

Sociologists Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld carried out a research on political opinion after the 1948 U.S presidential election. They found out that solely mass media do not change people's minds instead they claimed that there is a two-step process which is

named as two-step flow of communication theory. Within this theory, Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) argued that it is first opinion leaders who receive the messages from mass media and then opinion leaders pass on their own interpretations in addition to the actual media content. In other words, opinions once transmitted by the media getting echoed by opinion leaders. Political opinion are formed in the second step (Shirky, 2011). Shirky (2011) stated that it is this second step in which the Internet has fully and social media has partial effect. Different form printing press, the Internet offers not just media consumption but also media production as well since it provides people to privately and publicly articulate and debate about different, even conflicting views (Shirky, 2011, p. 34).

Today we live in a socially-networked-society and the social media applications are on the rise so that in today's politics, the formation of public opinion getting more and more dependently on social networks which also function as a means of political communication (Güneyli et al., 2017). Westling (2007) argued that in terms of political communication, Habermas's concept of public opinion can be applied to social networking sites, especially Facebook, as enables individuals to engage more actively in the political communication process. According to Solis and Breakenridge (2009) social networks plays an ultimate role spreading developments globally in our lives (political, economic, artistic, etc.) and making information more accessible. Social networks influence political participation thus both politics and citizens have adopted to the social networks. Interacive nature of social networks lead community members to be more active in their relationship with the society and state (Güneyli et al., 2017, p.257). It is argued by several studies that social networks provide individuals a more

dynamic environment in terms of democratic process when compared to the traditional media (Ifukor, 2010; Kasmani et al., 2014; Güneyli et al., 2017).

3.2 Public Sphere 2.0

Habermas (1991, p.398) explained "public sphere" that it is "a domain of our social life in which such a thing as public opinion can be formed" (as cited in Robertson et al., 2010, p.13). According to Robertson et al., (2010) Habermas' way of defining public sphere shows that the public sphere is conceptualized as a mediating space between the state and the civil society. Similar to this definition, Castells (2008) pointed out that the public sphere lies between the state and society and it is "the space where people come together as citizens and articulate their autonomous views to influence the political institutions of society" (p. 78). Habermas (1996, p.360) also stated that the public sphere is "a network for communicating information and points of view" (as cited in Castells, 2008). John Thompson (2000) argued that media has become the major element of the public sphere in the industrial society (as cited in Castells, 2008). Castells (2008) highlighted that it is the communication networks that form the public sphere, then our society (p. 79). The networks society organizes its public sphere within the basis of communication networks (Lull, 2007; Cardoso, 2006; Chester, 2007; Castells, 2008). According to McCheney (2007) in the digital era, the communication networks includes both the mass media and Internet and the wireless communiction networks.

Robertson et al., (2010, p.13) considered SNSs as a form of online "public sphere" that meets the requirements of successful democratic deliberation than other types of online forums. Robertson et al., (2010) listed the public sphere characteristics of SNSs such as Facebook as follows (p.14):

Table 2: Public Sphere Characteristics of Facebook in Particular and Social Networking Sites in General

Sociological Functions	Dissemination Opinion Activism Advocacy Social Relations (weak & strong ties)
Technological Features	List of Friends Linear Threaded Discussion Forum (Wall) Threaded Discussion Forums Status Updates News Postings Information Sharings (links, photos, videos) User Comments Groups Affiliations Unmoderated vs. Moderated Open Door vs. Registration
Public Sphere Characteristics	Freedom of Expression Participation Interaction Rationality Emotionality Authority
Retrieved from Robertson et al., (2010)	

Robertson et al., (2010) stated that SNSs allow the dissemination of private opinion and by distributing and consumpting facilitate the formation of (online) public opinion through user participation and intraction. Dahlberg (2001, p.623) set out a set of "requirements" for online political discourse within the framework of Habermas' concept of the public sphere as follows:

    (e) Exchange and critique of reasoned moral-practical validity claims

    (f) Reflexivity

    (g) Ideal role taking

    (h) Sincerity

    (i) Discursive inclusion and equality

(j) Autonomy from state and economic power

Dahlberg (2001) stated that online forums of various types do not meet the requirements except the first one. Robertson et al., (2010) argued that SNSs, however, mostly fullfill the requirements of online political discourse within scope of Habermas' concept of the public sphere that proposed by Dahlberg (2001). One of the reasons for this is that friend network is at the hearth of SNSs meaning that users enable to represent themselves in a way that they wish to be seen by their friends. Secondly, users' activities can be seen by their friends which suggest presence of sincerity here and finally anyone may post on a political candidate's Facebook wall which means that there is discursive inclusion and equality.

Prior and similar to Dahlberg (2001), White (1989) and Fishkin (1991; 1995) also mentioned about the requirements for effective political deliberation and deliberative democracy highlighting individual's participation in discourse, expression of attitudes, wishes, and needs, questioning or intrducing any proposal and having mutual respect to each other.

Public sphere is aimed to be a democratic space where citizen's proactive participation can form, transform and exchange the public interests, opinions, agendas and problems. Habermasian public sphere need critical rationality, equality, freedom of expression, and dissemination in order to be structured properly and be functioned sustainably (as cited in Robertson et al., 2010, p.13). Web 2.0 technologies, particularly social media, has added a new dimension to Habermasian public sphere especially within the scope of political communication.

Chapter 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research aims to find out politicians' use of social media on the grounds of political communication during the general election campaign in 2018, in North Cyprus. Research is conducted based on content analysis of Facebook accounts of political party leaders. Facebook was used for analysing five leaders' posts except UBP Leader Hüseyin Özgürgün as he does not have any Facebook account thus his Twitter account was used instead. The analysis is placed upon archival data of six political party leaders' social media posts over a month and a half period, starting from 07.12.2017 to 22.01.2018, covering the period of a month earlier to election day (07.01.2018) and two weeks after the election day. Coding sheet was employed during the research in order to analyze the social media use of political party leaders. The coding sheet was created to meet needs for analysing the content of leaders' social media account.

Political party leaders were chosen for the study including leader of Republican Turkish Party (Cumhuriyetçi Türk Partisi [CTP]) Tufan Erhürman, leader of Demokrat Parti (Demokrat Parti [DP]) Serdar Denktaş, leader of People's Party (Halkın Partisi [HP[) Kudret Özersay, leader of Communal Democracy Party (Toplumcu Demokrasi Partisi [TDP]) Cemal Özyiğit, leader of National Unity Party (Ulusal Birlik Partisi [UBP]) Hüseyin Özgürgün, and leader of Rebirth Party (Yeniden Doğuş Partisi [YDP]) Erhan Arıklı.

Prior to elections, four political parties, CTP, DP, UBP and TDP, were chosen because of being represented in the National Assembly however after the elections two, newly founded, political parties also have won seats in the parliament which became the reason for including these two parties too. Their posts on social media accounts' accessed by logging into Facebook and Twitter, and the data was analyzed within the use of SPSS version 21. Cronbach's Alpha was employed in order to check the reliability of the coding sheet.

4.1 Research Design

Content analysis was conducted in this research. Coding sheet is an instrument that is developed for data collecting and named as " Coding Sheet of Political Party Leaders' Use of Social Media in North Cyprus During Parliamentary Election 2018"[9]. In the coding sheet, there are 15 variables: name of political party leader, date of post, time of post, type of visual material, number of visual material, number of video views, number of likes, number of reactions, number of shares and retweets, number of comments, presence of hashtag, presence of emoticon, period of published post, main theme of the post. The researcher has coded this coding sheet for each post of chosen political party leaders within determined time period. During that period a total of 623 posts of content on six political party leaders' social media accounts were studied in the current research.

Strategies and themes are created and grouped according to leaders' mosts repeated categories of posts. The table below shows definitions and some important criteria for the themes or strategies of the posts and act as a guide for researcher with deciding on

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[9] See Appendix A.

which theme or strategy to choose. The table also involves a distinctive example belonging to each theme and strategy.

Table 3: Themes/Strategies of Posts Including Definitions and Examples

	THEME/STRATEGY	EXPLANATION	EXAMPLE
1.	**Attack on the Current Government** **(Strategy)**	Involves harsh comments about current government's regulations, laws and policies referring to member of cabinet with using exact words, such as "government", "prime minister", "minister" and etc.	Post by CTP leader on December 18, 2017: "Being in power for twenty months, the government's frivolous actions also continued on law regarding the police officers. Found to be unconstitutional by the prime minister, the bill was sent to the committee. The president of the committee, Ahmet Kaşif, sent it back to the parliament without making any amendments which resulted in prime minister sending the bill back to the committee saying "I am not a populist". It seems that government's twenty month-comedy play ended up in tragedy with Özgürgün and Kaşif playing the leading roles!"
2.	**Attack on Opponent Leader(s) and/or Political Party(ies)** **(Strategy)**	Involves harsh comments about leaders of opponent political parties. Also includes direct criticisms over policies of opponent political parties	Post by HP leader on January 5, 2018: "Mr. Özgürgün disgrace and DISMISS the public by being deliberately absent from live broadcasts and leaving questions unanswered which will end up in public DISMISSING him on sunday[10]. Last two days!"

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[10] The vote day, January 7, 2018

| 3. | **Cyprus Problem**

 (Theme) | Posts related to Cyprus Problem and negotiation talks between Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot leaders | Post by TDP leader on December 31, 2017:

 "Dear friends ! 2017 will be over soon. Despite the vigorous efforts the talks in Crans-Montana and Geneva have failed and the Cyprus Problem remained unsolved. As for the Turkey and Western relations, the tension between them led to soaring foreign currency rates. In our country, economy is suffering as everything except wages and fees are based on foreign currency.
 The government, however, did not take any measurements regarding consumer purchasing power and continue to adopt illegal regulations instead.
 Elections will be held in our country at the beginning of the new year. The elections in North Cyprus will affect the ongoing corruption while the elections in the South will affect the Cyprus Problem. The people of Cyprus will make decisions that will shape their future.
 In the light of these beliefs abd thoughts, I wish that 2018 will be the year that the Turkish Cypriots will strive to stand on their own feet, the Cyprus Problem will be solved, the exploitation of people all around the world will come to an end, people will freely and equally benefit from human rights regardless of their gender, race and religion. Hopefully, 2018 will bring peace to the world. I wish everyone a good year." |

4.	**Economic and/or Social Development** **(Theme)**	Posts that reveal parties' development plans within the framework of election campaign manifestos on supporting youth entrepreneurship, encouraging women workforce, mentioning about development plans from agriculture to tourism sectors and explaining their plans on social security issues	Post by CTP leader on December 20, 2017 (accompanying a photo): "Who says that we can not produce! We are not travelling throughout the country because of the election campaign promotion. We have been travelling around the country village by village for two years. We have seen what our creative, entrepreneurial producers are capable of achieving without the government support. We know that as long as we support our producers in terms of promotion and marketing, the production capacity of our country will increase and more and more people will tend to produce. #çalışıryaparız[11] #üretenyokolmaz[12]"
5.	**Government Formation Talks** **(Theme)**	Posts related to talks between political parties on formation of government	Post by UBP leader on January 19, 2018 (accompanying a photo): "We are not reluctant to be in government. Serving public in forced governments does not serve to our purpose. Forced coalitions do not work in the long run and can be problematic in terms of serving the public."

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[11] #çalışıryaparız: This hashtag literally means "we work we can"
[12] #üretenyokolmaz: This hashtag literally means "the one who produce will exist"

6.	**Live Stream Announcement** **(Strategy)**	Posts that inform about upcoming Facebook livestream broadcast	Post by HP leader on December 8, 2017 (accompanying a video) "We are on livestream and waiting for your questions, comments and suggestions."
7.	**Statements Regarding Election Day and/or Post-Election Period** **(Strategy)**	Posts about the election day Posts include statements on election results	Post by TDP leader on January 7, 2018: "Dear Turkish Cypriots, today you will determine with what manner of rule we will be governed by going to the polls. It is your free will that will bring a fair rule, ask for the judgement for corruption allegations and create a society that everyone will have equal rights. I am asking you to go to the polls to create a better future together. Your votes will determine the future."

8.	**Promoting Campaign** **(Strategy)**	Posts that apparently related to election campaigns' manifestos of political parties including some visuals such as posters, photos and videos. Also covers announcements of upcoming TV Programmes featuring candidates and announcements of upcoming campaign trail visits both pre-election time and post-election periods.	Post by YDP leader on January 2, 2018 (a poster including following information): We are waiting for all our people Victory Celebrations Date: January 2, 2018 Time: 18:30 Venue: Rauf Raif Denktaş Culture and Congress Center
9.	**Responding to Ongoing Argument(s)** **(Strategy)**	Posts that involve politics' responds and criticisms to questions that are adressed to them Also includes politics' criticism made towards them	Post by HP leader on December 8, 2017: "They are trying to smear us with speculative news but we are well aware of what we say and what we do. We will stay the course. We are not making coalition talks with anyone and we will not do either. We trust our people. #KararlılıklaDevam[13] "

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[13] #KararlılıklaDevam: This hashtag literally means "carrying on decisively"

| 10. | **Other**

(Strategy) | Posts that are unsuitable for the themes listed above.

The posts that fall under this category are not about parliamentary elections but include some other content.

Includes posts spanning from politics' private life such as their family or friends' portraits or videos to politics' views on neighbouring countries' political situation. | Post by DP leader on December 27, 2017 (accompanying a video):

"Before new year, again we come together our pals ☺" |

4.2 Content Analysis

Content analysis research method is used in this study. One of the earliest definition of content analysis was made by Berelson (1952) in which content analysis is described as: "a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (as cited in Franzosi 2008, p.23). Another commonly known definition is offered by Holsti (1969), "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages" (as cited in Stemler, 2001). According to Kerlinger (1973) "Content analysis is a method of studying and analyzing communications in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner to measure variables" (as cited in Riff et al., 2014, p.19). According to Krippendorf (1980), content analysis is "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context" (as cited in Franzosi 2008, p. 30). Krippendorf also added that content analysis paves the way for the systematic reading of a body of text, images and symbolic matter without demanding an author's or user's perspective. Weber (1985) stated that content analysis is "a research methodology that utilizes a set of procedures to make inferences from text. These inferences are about the sender(s) of message, the message itself, or the audience of the message" (as cited in Jackson-Brown, 2013). Singletary (1993) also highligted that content analysis is an objective and systematic research method. In the book of "Analyzing Media Messages: Using Quantitative Content Analysis In Research", Riffle et al. (2014) describe content analysis as "the systematic assignment of communication content to categories according to rules and the analysis of relationship involving categories using statistical methods" (p. 3).

Above mentioned scholarly statements constitutes the reason why the content analysis research method used in the current study in which politics' use of social media during election campaign studied.

4.3 Sampling of the Study

Six political party leaders were chosen out of eight who run for the general elections 2018 in North Cyprus for the research. Four of these leaders' political parties which are CTP, DP, UBP and TDP had already been represented in the National Assembly in the previous legislative term. For this reason, at the beginning of the research, leaders of these four political parties were included. In the 2018 general elections, two newly founded political parties, HP and YDP also have gained the right to be represented in the Parliament. Thus after announcement of the results, leaders of these two political parties were also included in the research.

For the research, Facebook accounts of five leaders were analyzed except UBP leader who do not have any Facebook account, instead his Twitter account was employed. The unit of analysis was each post on the Facebook or Twitter pages of these leaders. Updated profil photos and third person's shared posts on leaders' timeline were not taken into account.

Reliability test where samples were chosen randomly was used with two coders including researcher and participant who is informed about content of research.

4.4 Population of the Study

Six political party leaders[14] who are the leader of Republican Turkish Party (Cumhuriyetçi Türk Partisi [CTP]) Tufan Erhürman, leader of Demokrat Parti (Demokrat Parti [DP]) Serdar Denktaş, leader of People's Party (Halkın Partisi [HP[) Kudret Özersay, leader of Communal Democracy Party (Toplumcu Demokrasi Partisi [TDP]) Cemal Özyiğit, leader of National Unity Party (Ulusal Birlik Partisi [UBP]) Hüseyin Özgürgün, and leader of Rebirth Party (Yeniden Doğuş Partisi [YDP]) Erhan Arıklı out of eight political parties running for 2018 General Elections in North Cyprus were chosen as a population of the study.

4.5 Instruments and Data Gathering

Data were collected from political party leaders' accounts of Facebook or Twitter. Posts as a data unit were accessed by scrolling through the timeline of Facebook or Twitter accounts. Each data collected according to the coding sheet was placed on the extended table which also includes data from all six political party leaders. IBM SPSS Statistics Version 21 is a software package that was used to analyze data.

4.6 Research Questions

This study, in general sense, revolves around the question that "How effectively politics use social media during the election campaign in 2018 in North Cyprus?"

It is revealed that campaign process and results of elections can be influenced by the Web 2.0 technologies including Internet and blogosphere (Wattal et al., 2010). In addition, social media is an important element that is offered within the Web 2.0 technology. Previous studies on the role of social media in political communication

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[14] It is once again worthed to mention that the names of the political parties are arranged in Turkish Alphabetical order in every part of this thesis and are as follow: CTP, DP, HP, TDP, UBP and YDP.

shows that political campaigns use social media in an effective way to reach their audience thus it is crucial to examine the content of the social media posts of politics since political communication become more and more dependable on social media (Borah, 2016). The use of social media during the election campaign in order to target voters and it's impact on the political communication have been subjected by many studies around the world. In Turkey, a research on social media use of political parties of CTP and UBP has conducted by Özselçuk (2014) in the 2013 general elecions on a small scale. In North Cyprus, however, politics' use of social media in election campaigns has not been conducted before. Thus in that sense this study attempted to answer these research questions below:

1- How did Political Party Leaders Use Social Networking Sites (Facebook or Twitter) during the election campaign?

2- What were the main themes in their SNSs posts?

4.7 Validity and Reliability

The coding sheet was practiced with one participant who was informed about the ongoing research and questions on coding sheet. For inter-rater reliability test, 20 data were collected out of n=623.

As total of 623 posts were analyzed in the research, only question 15 in which it is asked what is the main theme of the post was analyzed by two coders since other questions required numerical and quantitative data gathered directly from posts. To check the reliability of the question 15 on the "Coding Sheet of Political Party Leaders' Use of Social Media in North Cyprus During Parliamentary Election 2018", a second participant coded 3% of the same data (n=20) where there were two contradictions. Besides, participant was informed and trained about themes.

In order to check the two researchers' inter-rater reliability, Cohen's (1960) original formula was employed in the research. The Cohen's (1960) formula for calculating kappa is: $k = (Po - Pc) / (N - Pc)$ where Po is the observed proportion of agreement by coders, Pc is the proportion of agreement expected by chance and N is the total number of judgments made by each coder. The coders agreed on 18 judgements and two agreements were expected by chance $0.88 = (18 - 2) / (20 - 2)$. Banerjee et al. (1999) confirm that kappa values greater than 0.75 or so considered as a representation of excellent agreement beyond chance.

4.8 Limitations

The study focuses on six political party leaders' social media posts during the 2018 general elections which was held on 7th January 2018 in North Cyprus within the time period from 07.12.2017 to 22.01.2018 which covered a total of 6 weeks including a month prior to the election day and two weeks after the election day.

As stated earlier, the research is limited to six political party leaders out of eight that run for general election 2018 in North Cyprus. The chosen leaders' parties had seats in the parliament according to election results.

The study is limited to Facebook posts of five political party leaders including CTP, DP, HP, TDP and YDP. Since UBP leader does not have Facebook account, his Twitter account was used instead. In the research when collecting data from leaders' social media account, only posts that were posted or shared on their timelines by them were considered and other person's posts on their timeline were neglected.

Image-makers and Public Relations consultants hired by political parties were not taken into consideration since this study is only limited to social media accounts of political party leaders.

Another limitation for this study is the "main theme or strategy of the post" section on the coding sheet since a great number of posts include more than one theme or strategy even two or three that is why it is necessary to prevent any contradiction that would affect results of the study. Some posts may include more than one theme or strategy and, in order to eliminate ambiguity, we decided to only focus on main theme or strategy of the posts by picking only one theme or strategy for each post, the most apparent one.

The strategies of "Attack on the Current Government" and "Attack on Opponent Leader(s) and/or Political Party(ies)" are quite similar in a way that needs brief explanation since sometimes two of them would be used interchangeably, however, this is not the case for this study. The strategy of "Attack on the Current Government" was used for posts that target directly the government with including exact words, such as "government", "prime minister", "minister" and etc. The strategy of "Attack on Opponent Leader(s) and/or Political Party(ies)" used for posts accompanying attacks against opponent candidates. Posts that target any member of cabinet without referring to government or their position in government such as mentioning their official status also fell under this category.

At the end of the present study, it is understood that there are some gathered data that was not useful for analysis and would give ambiguous results thus that data (e.g. number of video views and number of visual materials) was neglected. Data about the

number of likes, reactions, shares or retweets and comments also were neglected since suitable cross-tabulation could not be created.

Coding sheet was constructed three times. First one was informed by other coding sheets from previous studies (Halpern & Gibbs 2012, Borah, 2016). The second coding sheet was used for the pilot study and finally the last one is the current coding sheet with minor changes from previous versions which was employed in finalizing the results of the study.

Chapter 5

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter answers the three research questions of this study: "How did political party leaders use SNSs (Facebook orTwitter) during the election campaign? And "What were the main themes in their SNSs posts?".

The present study investigates the social media use of Turkish Cypriot political party leaders in the 2018 general elections by using content analysis as a research method. Thus this section shows the analysis derived from gathered data through the coding sheet within the help of SPSS version 21.

Analysis tables including cross-tabulations and frequency tables were created according to meet the needs of the research questions. These data tables present the results of the study.
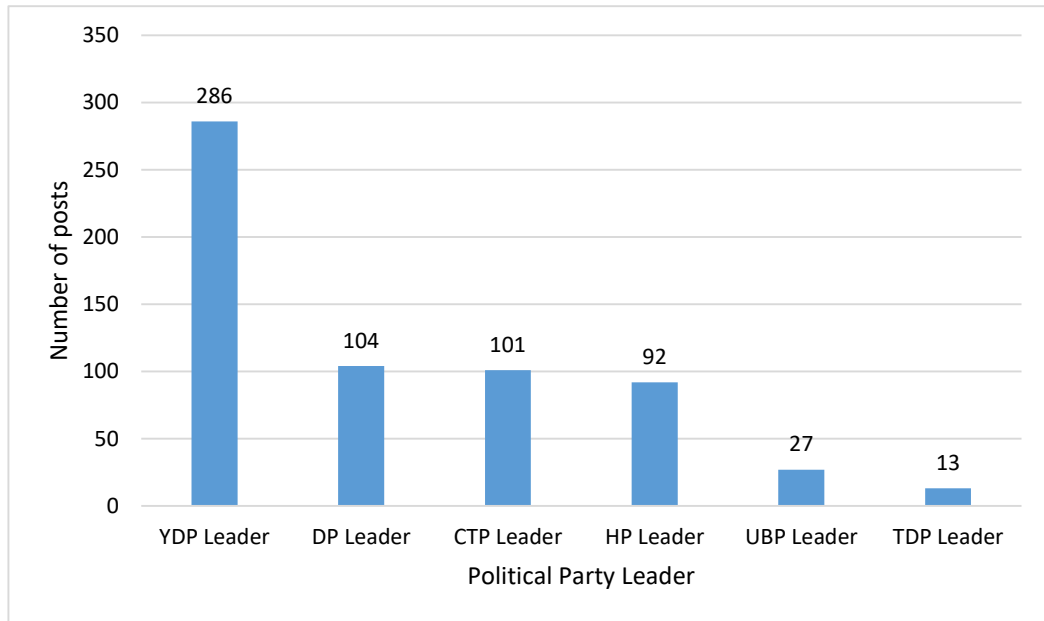
Figure 1: Total Number of Posts

Figure 1 shows the total number of posts shared by six political party leaders throughout the election campaign and post-election period. In total, 623 posts were shared by political party leaders. As it can be seen in Figure 1, YDP Leader posted 286 times which ranked highest among other leaders. The least number of posts were shared by TDP Leader with 13 times and UBP Leader with 27 times. The leaders of DP, CTP and HP followed similar paths by posting 104, 101 and 92 times, respectively, which were nearly less than half of the posts of YDP leader and almost three times more than UBP leader and roughly ten times more than TDP leader. These numbers illustrate that YDP leader posted three times more than the DP, CTP and HP leaders by constituting 286 posts out of the 623, almost half of the total number of posts.

Table 4: Evaluation of the Number of Posts
Regarding Posting Date

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	07.12.2017	5	.8
	08.12.2017	19	3.0
	09.12.2017	10	1.6
	10.12.2017	14	2.2
	11.12.2017	11	1.8
	12.12.2017	12	1.9
	13.12.2017	24	3.9
	14.12.2017	14	2.2
	15.12.2017	20	3.2
	16.12.2017	14	2.2
	17.12.2017	12	1.9
	18.12.2017	12	1.9
	19.12.2017	8	1.3
	20.12.2017	15	2.4
	21.12.2017	15	2.4
	22.12.2017	39	6.3
	23.12.2017	6	1.0
	24.12.2017	33	5.3
	25.12.2017	7	1.1
	26.12.2017	9	1.4
	27.12.2017	10	1.6
	28.12.2017	21	3.4
	29.12.2017	11	1.8
	30.12.2017	15	2.4
	31.12.2017	16	2.6
	01.01.2018	14	2.2
	02.01.2018	19	3.0
	03.01.2018	24	3.9
	04.01.2018	31	5.0
	05.01.2018	10	1.6
	06.01.2018	24	3.9
	07.01.2018	6	1.0
	08.01.2018	9	1.4
	09.01.2018	5	.8
	10.01.2018	6	1.0
	11.01.2018	10	1.6
	12.01.2018	9	1.4
	13.01.2018	8	1.3
	14.01.2018	8	1.3

		Frequency	Percent
	15.01.2018	7	1.1
	16.01.2018	7	1.1
	17.01.2018	11	1.8
	18.01.2018	11	1.8
	19.01.2018	5	.8
	20.01.2018	8	1.3
	21.01.2018	8	1.3
	22.01.2018	11	1.8
	Total	623	100.0

Table 4 shows the total number of posts shared regarding posting date. According to the Table 4, the number of posts per day on pre-election period were more than post-election period. From the date of 22.12.2017, two weeks ahead of the election day, the number of posts per day began to increase. Starting from the election day, 7th January 2018, the number of posts per each day began to decrease. It is worthed to mention that after campaign trail visits posting rates tended to increase.

Table 5: Evaluation of the Number of Posts
Regarding Posting Time

		Frequency	Percent
	00:00-00:30	26	4.2
	00:31-1:00	24	3.9
	01:01-01:30	13	2.1
	01:31-02:00	9	1.4
	02:01-02:30	15	2.4
	02:31-03:00	4	.6
	03:01-03:30	1	.2
Valid	03:31-04:00	6	1.0
	05:01-05:30	1	.2
	05:31-06:00	2	.3
	06:01-06:30	4	.6
	06:31-07:00	3	.5
	07:01-07:30	5	.8
	07:31-8:00	12	1.9
	08:01-8:30	4	.6

	8:31-9:00	20	3.2
	09:01-9:30	14	2.2
	09:31-10:00	20	3.2
	10:01-10:30	23	3.7
	10:31-11:00	21	3.4
	11:01-11:30	7	1.1
	11:31-12:00	14	2.2
	12:01-12:30	10	1.6
	12:31-13:00	16	2.6
	13:01-13:30	10	1.6
	13:31-14:00	16	2.6
	14:01-14:30	14	2.2
	14:31-15:00	12	1.9
	15:01-15:30	6	1.0
	15:31-16:00	13	2.1
	16:01-16:30	13	2.1
	16:31-17:00	20	3.2
	17:01-17:30	15	2.4
	17:31-18:00	10	1.6
	18:01-18:30	19	3.0
	18:31-19:00	11	1.8
	19:01-19:30	22	3.5
	19:31-20:00	11	1.8
	20:01-20:30	12	1.9
	20:31-21:00	15	2.4
	21:01-21:30	20	3.2
	21:31-22:00	22	3.5
	22:01-22:30	12	1.9
	22:31-23:00	20	3.2
	23:01-23:30	21	3.4
	23:31-23:59	35	5.6
	Total	623	100.0

Table 5 indicates the posting time alongside the number of posts that shared during pre-election and post-election period. Number of posts began to increase starting from 21:00 to 23:59. Between 23:31-23:59 the posting trends reached their peak. The lowest

number of posting rate can be seen between 2:30-07:00. Leaders had tendency to post in late night time rather than having organized time tables.

Table 6: Evaluation of the Number of Posts
Regarding Posting Period[15]

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Pre-Election Period	495	79.5
	Election Day (7th January 2018)	5	.8
	Post-Election Period	123	19.7
	Total	623	100.0

Table 6 demonstrates the total number of posts regarding posting period on pre-election period, election day and post-election period. Out of 623 posts, 495 posts (79.5%) belongs to pre-election period, which accounts for more than half of the total posts. There were only 5 posts (8%) that were posted on the election day and 123 posts (19.7%) were posted on the post-election period.

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[15] It should be mentioned that the pre-election period covers one month from 7 December, 2017 to 6 January, 2018, while the post-election period covers only two weeks following the election day. This table aims only to show the distribution of posts during these three period named as pre-election period, election day and post-election period without making any comparison between the number of posts and the posting period.

Table 7: Evaluation of the Use of Visual Material

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Photo	254	40.8
	Poster	71	11.4
	Video	96	15.4
	Photo and Video	1	.2
	Poster and Video	1	.2
	No Visual	200	32.1
	Total	623	100.0

Table 7 shows the number of different types of visual material that were used in the political party leaders' social media accounts. This table gives information about the massive use of visual materials such as photo, poster and video sometimes a combination of two were used together. Photo as visual material with 254 times (%40.8) has the highest rate of use and was followed by video with 96 times (%15.4). Out of 623 posts, 423 posts with visual content were shared while the remaining 200 posts had no visual material. In other words, posts without visual content were shared with 200 times (%32.1) were outnumbered by posts with visual content which were used 423 times out of the total 623. Leaders moslty use static images such as photos or posters rather than having more interactive content such as videos as a visual content.

Table 8: Is There Any Hashtags Within Post?

		Frequency	Percent
	Yes	208	33.4
Valid	No	415	66.6
	Total	623	100.0

Table 8 demonstrates the number of posts that include hashtags. Political party leaders' use of hashtags has been indicated as 208 times (%33.4) out of the total (623 posts) and were outnumbered by the posts without hashtags which were used 415 times (%66.6).

Table 9: Is There Any Emoticon Within Post?

		Frequency	Percent
	Yes	47	7.5
Valid	No	576	92.5
	Total	623	100.0

Table 9 shows the number of posts that include emoticons. Political party leaders' use of emoticons with 47 times (%7.5) out of the total (623 posts) was placed far behind than the number of posts that does not include emoticons with 576 times (%92.5).

Table 10: Is The Post Reposted or Shared by the Leaders From Another Source?

		Frequency	Percent
	Yes	293	47.0
Valid	No	330	53.0
	Total	623	100.0

Table 10 demonstrates the number of posts that were shared from other people by political party leaders. In other words, posts that were not originated from political

party leaders' accounts. 330 posts (%53) were created originally by leaders while 293

posts (%47) were affiliated posts that were shared by leaders. Almost half of leaders'

posts are not self-created.

Table 11: Evaluation of the Main Theme or Strategy of the Posts

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Attack on the Current Government (Strategy)	16	2.6
	Attack on Opponent Leader(s) and/or Opponent Political Party(ies) (Strategy)	52	8.3
	Cyprus Problem (Theme)	9	1.4
	Economic and/or Social Development (Theme)	65	10.4
	Government Formation Talks (Theme)	20	3.2
	Live Stream Announcement (Strategy)	8	1.3
	Statements Regarding Election Day and/or Post-Election Period (Strategy)	23	3.7

	Promoting Campaign (Strategy)	322	51.7
	Responding to Ongoing Argument(s) (Strategy)	29	4.7
	Other	79	12.7
	Total	623	100.0

Table 11 shows posting frequency and percentage of strategy or theme of posts by political party leaders during the election campaign period in 2018 General Elections. The majority of the posts fell under the strategy of *Promoting Campaign* with 322 posts (%51.5) which was slightly more than half of the total number of posts. *Promoting Campaign* was followed by the theme of *Economic and/or Social Development* with 65 posts (%10.4) and *Attack on Opponent Leader(s) and/or Opponent Political Party(ies)* with 52 posts (%8.3). 29 posts (%4.7) were shared under the strategy of *Responding to Ongoing Argument(s)* which is closely followed by *Statements Regarding Election Day and/or Post-Election Period* with 23 posts (%3.7) and *Government Formation Talks* with 20 posts (%3.2). During the election campaign period, leaders attacked on the current government 16 times (%2.6) as it can be seen from posts gathered under the theme of *Attack on the Current Government*. Of the total 623 posts, only nine posts (%1.4) were coded as *Cyprus Problem*, closely followed by Live Stream Announcement with 8 posts (%1.3). In addition, 79 posts (%12.7) were coded as *Other* as they were not related with those strategies or themes that are named in the table above.

Table 12: Q2-Date of Posts-Evaluation of the Political Party Leaders' Posts Cross Tabulation

		Name of the Political Party Leader						Total
		CTP Leader	DP Leader	HP Leader	TDP Leader	UBP Leader	YDP Leader	
Date of Posts	07.12.2017	1	1	3	0	0	0	5
	08.12.2017	2	2	3	0	0	12	19
	09.12.2017	3	0	3	0	1	3	10
	10.12.2017	3	1	0	1	1	8	14
	11.12.2017	2	0	4	0	0	5	11
	12.12.2017	6	4	1	0	0	1	12
	13.12.2017	3	4	4	0	0	13	24
	14.12.2017	2	3	2	0	0	7	14
	15.12.2017	0	1	1	0	0	18	20
	16.12.2017	0	7	2	0	0	5	14
	17.12.2017	6	0	0	1	0	5	12
	18.12.2017	4	0	2	0	0	6	12
	19.12.2017	2	1	1	0	1	3	8
	20.12.2017	3	6	3	0	0	3	15
	21.12.2017	8	3	3	0	0	1	15
	22.12.2017	3	1	1	0	1	33	39
	23.12.2017	1	1	2	1	1	0	6
	24.12.2017	3	15	3	1	0	11	33
	25.12.2017	1	2	3	0	0	1	7
	26.12.2017	0	3	2	0	0	4	9
	27.12.2017	3	2	2	0	0	3	10
	28.12.2017	3	1	6	0	1	10	21
	29.12.2017	5	1	3	0	0	2	11
	30.12.2017	6	2	1	0	3	3	15
	31.12.2017	5	4	3	1	1	2	16

01.01.2018	4	3	0	0	0	7	14
02.01.2018	6	2	2	0	0	9	19
03.01.2018	2	1	3	1	0	17	24
04.01.2018	2	5	3	1	4	16	31
05.01.2018	0	1	1	0	2	6	10
06.01.2018	3	9	2	0	0	10	24
07.01.2018	0	0	3	1	1	1	6
08.01.2018	1	2	1	0	2	3	9
09.01.2018	1	1	1	1	0	1	5
10.01.2018	3	0	1	1	0	1	6
11.01.2018	0	3	1	0	0	6	10
12.01.2018	0	4	2	1	0	2	9
13.01.2018	0	1	1	0	0	6	8
14.01.2018	0	1	1	0	0	6	8
15.01.2018	0	1	4	0	0	2	7
16.01.2018	0	0	1	0	0	6	7
17.01.2018	0	0	2	0	0	9	11
18.01.2018	0	0	2	0	0	9	11
19.01.2018	0	0	0	0	4	1	5
20.01.2018	2	2	0	0	2	2	8
21.01.2018	1	1	2	1	2	1	8
22.01.2018	1	2	1	1	0	6	11
Total	101	104	92	13	27	286	623

Table 12 shows political party leaders' posts number according to their posting date covered from 07.12.2017 to 22.01.2018. This table gives an insight into the political party leaders' posting habits which followed an upward trend prior to the elections. The figures, however, shows a decline in the post-election period.

Table 13: Q14-Period of Posts-Evaluation of the Political Party Leaders' Posts Cross Tabulation

			Period of Posting			Total
			Pre-Election Period	Election Day	Post-Election Period	
Name of the Political Party Leader	CTP Leader	Count	92	0	9	101
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	91.1%	0.0%	8.9%	100.0%
	DP Leader	Count	86	0	18	104
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	82.7%	0.0%	17.3%	100.0%
	HP Leader	Count	70	2	20	92
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	76.1%	2.2%	21.7%	100.0%
	TDP Leader	Count	7	1	5	13
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	53.8%	7.7%	38.5%	100.0%
	UBP Leader	Count	16	1	10	27
		% within Name of the Political	59.3%	3.7%	37.0%	100.0%

		Party Leader				
	YDP Leader	Count	224	1	61	286
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	78.3%	0.3%	21.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	495	5	123	623
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	79.5%	0.8%	19.7%	100.0%

Table 13 illustrates the number of posts that were posted by the political party leaders on pre-election period, election day and post-election period. On pre-election period, the leader of YDP posted 224 times (78.3%) which is the highest out of the total pre-election posts (in 495 posts) results. The leaders of CTP, DP and HP followed nearly the similar pattern by posting 92 times (91.1%), 86 times (82.7%) and 70 times (76.1%) respectively. The leader of UBP posted 16 times (59.3%) and was followed by TDP leader with 7 times (53.8%) which were the two lowest posting numbers. On the election day, the leader of HP posted 2 times and was followed by the leaders of TDP, UBP and YDP with 1 post. Whereas the leaders of CTP and DP did not post on their social media accounts. In post-election period, there was a sharp decrease in the number of posts shared by the leaders on their social media accounts. Similar to before the elections period, the leader of YDP is in the leading position with his 61 posts out of 123 posts which constitutes approximately half of the posts that were posted on post-election period. YDP leader was followed by the leaders of HP and DP with 20 and 18 posts, respectively. This time the leaders of UBP with 10 posts and CTP with 9 posts closely followed each other. Finally, the leader of TDP remained lowest with 5 posts out of 123 posts that belongs to post-election period.

Table 14: Q4- Type of Visual Material-Evaluation of the Political Party Leaders' Posts Cross Tabulation

			Type of Visual Material						Total
			Photo	Poster	Video	Photo and Video	Poster and Video	No Visual	
Name of the Political Party Leader	CTP Leader	Count	48	21	14	0	0	18	101
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	47.5%	20.8%	13.9%	0.0%	0.0%	17.8%	100.0%
		% within Type of Visual Material	18.9%	29.6%	14.6%	0.0%	0.0%	9.0%	16.2%
	DP Leader	Count	33	13	44	0	0	14	104
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	31.7%	12.5%	42.3%	0.0%	0.0%	13.5%	100.0%
		% within Type of Visual Material	13.0%	18.3%	45.8%	0.0%	0.0%	7.0%	16.7%
	HP Leader	Count	25	17	14	0	0	36	92
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	27.2%	18.5%	15.2%	0.0%	0.0%	39.1%	100.0%
		% within Type of Visual Material	9.8%	23.9%	14.6%	0.0%	0.0%	18.0%	14.8%

	TDP Leader	Count	3	1	1	0	0	8	13
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	23.1%	7.7%	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%	61.5%	100.0%
		% within Type of Visual Material	1.2%	1.4%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.0%	2.1%
	UBP Leader	Count	22	1	1	0	0	3	27
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	81.5%	3.7%	3.7%	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	100.0%
		% within Type of Visual Material	8.7%	1.4%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%	4.3%
	YDP Leader	Count	123	18	22	1	1	121	286
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	43.0%	6.3%	7.7%	0.3%	0.3%	42.3%	100.0%
		% within Type of Visual Material	48.4%	25.4%	22.9%	100.0%	100.0%	60.5%	45.9%
Total		Count	254	71	96	1	1	200	623
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	40.8%	11.4%	15.4%	0.2%	0.2%	32.1%	100.0%
		% within Type of Visual Material	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 14 shows the intensity of visual material accompanying leaders' social media posts. UBP leader used photos in his posts with 22 times out of his total of 27 posts which constitutes 81.5%. The leaders of CTP and YDP followed similar percentage rates for photo using in which the leader of CTP leader posted 48 times out of his total of 101 posts that accounted for 47.5% and YDP leader used photos in his posts for 123 times out his total of 286 posts which constitutes 43%. The leader of DP with 31.7% (33 times out of 104), HP with 27.2% (25 times out of 92) and TDP with 23.1% (3 times out of 13) also shared similar percentage rates in terms of photo using.

Figures for poster using pointed out that the leader of CTP used posters within his posts for 20.8% (21 out of 101) and was followed by HP leader with 18.5% (17 out of 92). DP leader with 12.5% (13 out of 104) and YDP leader with 6.3% (18 out of 286) follow similar trend. UBP leader with 3.7% (1 out of 27) and TDP leader with 7.7% (1 out of 13) has the lowest rate of having posts within posters.

As for the video use, the leader of DP has the greatest number of video including content with 42.3% (44 out of 104). Then, HP leader used posts with video content with 15.2% (14 out of 92) and was followed by CTP leader with 13.9% (14 out of 101). The leaders of YDP (22 out of 286) and TDP (1 out of 13) both have 7.7% percentage rate for video including posts while UBP leader's percentage rate for video including of posts were 3.7% (1 out of 27). Figures for posts without any visuals are as follow within descending order: TDP leader with 61.5% (8 out of 13), YDP with 42.3%, HP with 39.1% (36 out of 92), CTP with 17.8% (18 out of 101), DP with 13.5% (14 out of 104) and UBP with 11.1% (3 out of 27).

Table 15: Q11-Use of Hashtags-Evaluation of the Political Party Leaders' Posts Cross Tabulation

			Use of Hastags		Total
			Yes	No	
Name of the Political Party Leader	CTP Leader	Count	54	47	101
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	53.5%	46.5%	100.0%
	DP Leader	Count	33	71	104
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	31.7%	68.3%	100.0%
	HP Leader	Count	53	39	92
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	57.6%	42.4%	100.0%
	TDP Leader	Count	1	12	13
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	7.7%	92.3%	100.0%
	UBP Leader	Count	3	24	27
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	11.1%	88.9%	100.0%
	YDP Leader	Count	64	222	286
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	22.4%	77.6%	100.0%
Total		Count	208	415	623
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	33.4%	66.6%	100.0%

Table 15 demonstrates the use of hashtags in their social media posts. Hashtags' usage is important because it is designated by a "hash" symbol (#) and a it is a keyword assigned to information that describes a tweet and aides in searching (Small, 2011). The highest use of hashtags belongs to HP leader with 57.6% (53 out of 92) and was followed by CTP leader with 53.5% (54 out of 101), DP leader with 31.7% (33 out of 104) and YDP leader with 22.4% (64 out of 286). The lowest use of hashtag rate belongs to UBP leader 11.1% (3 out of 27) and TDP leader with 7.7% (1 out of 13).

Table 16: Q12-Use of Emoticons- Evaluation of the Political Party Leaders' Post Cross Tabulation

			Use of Emoticons		Total
			Yes	No	
Name of the Political Party Leader	CTP Leader	Count	12	89	101
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	11.9%	88.1%	100.0%
	DP Leader	Count	18	86	104
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	17.3%	82.7%	100.0%
	HP Leader	Count	5	87	92
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	5.4%	94.6%	100.0%
	TDP Leader	Count	0	13	13
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	UBP Leader	Count	0	27	27
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	YDP Leader	Count	12	274	286
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	4.2%	95.8%	100.0%
Total		Count	47	576	623
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	7.5%	92.5%	100.0%

Table 16 shows the use of emoticon in the posts that were shared by political party leaders. Tossell et al. (2011) suggested that users include emoticons within their posts in order to provide socioemotional context. Thus through emoticon usage politics might intend to be sympathetic within the framework of everyday language. In terms of emoticon use, DP leader was leading with 17.3% (18 out of 104) and was closely followed by CTP leader with 11.9% (12 out of 101). Leaders of HP with 5.4% (5 out of 92) and YDP with 4.2% (12 out of 286) follows similar trend while UBP and TDP leaders did not use emoticon at all.

Table 17: Q13- Reposted/Retweeted Posts by Leaders From Another Source-Evaluation of the Political Party Leaders' Cross Tabulation

			Repost		Total
			Yes	No	
Name of the Political Party Leader	CTP Leader	Count	1	100	101
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	1.0%	99.0%	100.0%
	DP Leader	Count	90	14	104
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	86.5%	13.5%	100.0%
	HP Leader	Count	18	74	92
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	19.6%	80.4%	100.0%
	TDP Leader	Count	1	12	13
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	7.7%	92.3%	100.0%
	UBP Leader	Count	24	3	27
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	88.9%	11.1%	100.0%
	YDP Leader	Count	159	127	286
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	55.6%	44.4%	100.0%
Total		Count	293	330	623
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	47.0%	53.0%	100.0%

Table 17 demonstrates the number of posts that are reposted or retweeted from another source. In other words, this table demonstrates the number of posts which content was created by other people and shared by political party leaders. CTP leader has the highest amount of content that was produced by his own with 99% (99 out of 100) and was followed by TDP leader with 92.3% (12 out of 13) and HP leader with 80.4% (74 out of 92). The percentage of YDP leader posts that originated from his own content was 44.4% (127 out of 286). The leaders of DP with 13.5% (14 out of 104) and UBP with 11.1% (3 out of 27) were among the lowest rates of producing content that originated from their own. This table suggests that CTP leader is more effective user of the self-created posts. The leaders of DP and UBP however moslty reposted or retweeted from another source.

Table 18: Date of Posts-Evaluation of the Strategy or Theme of Posts Cross Tabulation

		Theme of the Post[16]										Total
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Date of Post	07.12.2017	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	1	0	5
	08.12.2017	0	2	0	2	0	1	0	11	2	1	19
	09.12.2017	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	5	0	2	10
	10.12.2017	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	7	0	3	14
	11.12.2017	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	10	0	0	11
	12.12.2017	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	8	0	2	12
	13.12.2017	1	1	1	6	0	0	0	13	1	1	24
	14.12.2017	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	11	0	1	14
	15.12.2017	0	4	0	3	0	0	0	12	0	1	20

[16] Name of the themes are as follow:
 1: Attack on the Current Government (Strategy)
 2: Attack on the Opponent Leader(s) and/or Opponent Political Party(ies) (Strategy)
 3: Cyprus Problem (Theme)
 4: Economic and/or Social Development (Theme)
 5: Government Formation Talks (Theme)
 6: Live Stream Announcement (Strategy)
 7: Statements Regarding Election Day and/or Post-Election Period (Strategy)
 8: Promoting Campaign (Strategy)
 9: Responding to Ongoing Argument(s) (Strategy)
 10: Other

Date											
16.12.2017	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	1	1	14
17.12.2017	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	6	1	1	12
18.12.2017	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	1	12
19.12.2017	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	1	8
20.12.2017	0	1	0	5	0	1	0	7	0	1	15
21.12.2017	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	7	1	3	15
22.12.2017	3	7	0	10	0	0	0	18	0	1	39
23.12.2017	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	1	0	6
24.12.2017	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	19	5	5	33
25.12.2017	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	2	7
26.12.2017	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	5	1	0	9
27.12.2017	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	5	0	4	10
28.12.2017	1	4	1	3	0	1	0	9	1	1	21
29.12.2017	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	1	11
30.12.2017	3	2	0	2	0	0	0	8	0	0	15
31.12.2017	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	6	1	5	16
01.01.2018	0	1	1	1	0	2	0	8	0	1	14
02.01.2018	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	13	0	1	19
03.01.2018	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	21	0	1	24
04.01.2018	0	4	2	6	0	0	0	18	0	1	31
05.01.2018	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	7	0	0	10
06.01.2018	1	0	0	4	0	0	0	18	0	1	24
07.01.2018	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	1	0	6
08.01.2018	0	0	0	1	0	0	7	0	0	1	9

	09.01.2018	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	2	5
	10.01.2018	0	0	0	0	2	0	3	1	0	0	6
	11.01.2018	0	2	0	0	4	0	2	1	0	1	10
	12.01.2018	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	5	9
	13.01.2018	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	1	1	2	8
	14.01.2018	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	3	1	8
	15.01.2018	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	3	7
	16.01.2018	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	1	0	7
	17.01.2018	1	1	0	0	2	0	1	5	1	0	11
	18.01.2018	0	4	2	0	2	0	0	1	2	0	11
	19.01.2018	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	1	0	5
	20.01.2018	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	5	8
	21.01.2018	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	8
	22.01.2018	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	8	11
Total		16	52	9	65	20	8	23	322	29	79	623

Table 18 shows the number of posts of each theme according to posting date. Since 22.12.2017, two weeks earlier of the election day, the number of posts per day started to increase and these growing number of posts heavily relied on the theme of *Promoting Campaign*, *Economic and/or Social Development* and *Attack on Opponent Leader and/or Opponent Political Party (ies)* however after the day of 7th January 2018, the election day, the number of posts per each day began to decrease.

Table 19: Time of Posts-Evaluation of the Strategy or Theme of Posts Cross Tabulation

		Theme of Posts[17]										Total
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Time of Posting	00:00-00:30	0	3	2	2	1	0	0	15	0	3	26
	00:31-1:00	0	3	1	1	5	0	1	11	1	1	24
	01:01-01:30	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	10	0	1	13
	01:31-02:00	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	5	0	1	9
	02:01-02:30	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	8	2	1	15
	02:31-03:00	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	4
	03:01-03:30	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	03:31-04:00	0	3	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	6
	05:01-05:30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	05:31-06:00	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
	06:01-06:30	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	4
	06:31-07:00	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	3
	07:01-07:30	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	3	0	0	5
	07:31-8:00	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	7	0	2	12

[17] Name of the themes are as follow:
 1: Attack on the Current Government (Strategy)
 2: Attack on the Opponent Leader(s) and/or Opponent Political Party(ies) (Strategy)
 3: Cyprus Problem (Theme)
 4: Economic and/or Social Development (Theme)
 5: Government Formation Talks (Theme)
 6: Live Stream Announcement (Strategy)
 7: Statements Regarding Election Day and/or Post-Election Period (Strategy)
 8: Promoting Campaign (Strategy)
 9: Responding to Ongoing Argument(s) (Strategy)
 10: Other

08:01-8:30	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	4
8:31-9:00	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	17	0	1	20
09:01-9:30	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	8	1	2	14
09:31-10:00	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	14	0	2	20
10:01-10:30	2	3	1	2	2	0	1	6	2	4	23
10:31-11:00	1	2	0	3	1	0	1	11	0	2	21
11:01-11:30	1	0	0	2	0	0	1	3	0	0	7
11:31-12:00	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	4	2	4	14
12:01-12:30	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	3	1	2	10
12:31-13:00	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	12	1	1	16
13:01-13:30	0	1	0	3	0	0	1	2	1	2	10
13:31-14:00	2	2	0	2	0	0	0	7	0	3	16
14:01-14:30	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	8	1	2	14
14:31-15:00	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	3	12
15:01-15:30	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	6
15:31-16:00	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	6	1	2	13
16:01-16:30	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	5	2	2	13
16:31-17:00	0	7	1	2	0	0	0	7	1	2	20
17:01-17:30	4	2	0	2	0	0	1	6	0	0	15
17:31-18:00	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	6	2	0	10
18:01-18:30	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	10	1	3	19
18:31-19:00	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	6	1	2	11
19:01-19:30	0	1	0	3	0	1	3	12	0	2	22
19:31-20:00	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	7	2	1	11
20:01-20:30	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	7	0	2	12
20:31-21:00	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	11	0	0	15
21:01-21:30	1	0	0	2	0	0	1	8	4	4	20
21:31-22:00	0	1	0	6	0	0	0	9	1	5	22

	22:01-22:30	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	9	0	1	12
	22:31-23:00	0	1	0	2	0	1	1	11	0	4	20
	23:01-23:30	1	0	1	3	0	1	1	9	0	5	21
	23:31-23:59	1	0	0	9	2	0	1	19	1	2	35
Total		16	52	9	65	20	8	23	322	29	79	623

Table 19 shows the posting time alongside the number of posts within the theme of the posts. Starting from 21:00 to 23:59 the number of posts began to increase within two themes which were *Promoting Campaign* and *Economic and/or Social Development*. The time period 23:31-23:59 has the highest number of posts within the theme of *Promoting Campaign* with 19 posts which was followed by *Economic and/or Social Development* with 9 posts.

Table 20: Strategies/Themes of Posts-Evaluation of the Period of Posting Cross Tabulation

			Period of Posting			Total
			Pre-Election Period	Election Day	Post-Election Period	
Themes of Post	Attack on the Current Government (Strategy)	Count	15	0	1	16
		% within Themes of Post	93.8%	0.0%	6.3%	100.0%
		% within Period of Posting	3.0%	0.0%	0.8%	2.6%
	Attack on Opponent Leader(s) and/or Opponent Political Party(ies) (Strategy)	Count	44	0	8	52
		% within Themes of Post	84.6%	0.0%	15.4%	100.0%
		% within Period of Posting	8.9%	0.0%	6.5%	8.3%
	Cyprus Problem (Theme)	Count	6	0	3	9
		% within Themes of Post	66.7%	0.0%	33.3%	100.0%
		% within Period of Posting	1.2%	0.0%	2.4%	1.4%
	Economic and/or Social Development (Theme)	Count	64	0	1	65
		% within Themes of Post	98.5%	0.0%	1.5%	100.0%
		% within Period of Posting	12.9%	0.0%	0.8%	10.4%

Government Formation Talks	Count	0	0	20	20
	% within Themes of Post	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
(Theme)	% within Period of Posting	0.0%	0.0%	16.3%	3.2%
Live Stream Announcement	Count	7	0	1	8
	% within Themes of Post	87.5%	0.0%	12.5%	100.0%
(Strategy)	% within Period of Posting	1.4%	0.0%	0.8%	1.3%
Statements Regarding Election	Count	1	4	18	23
Day and/or Post-Election Period	% within Themes of Post	4.3%	17.4%	78.3%	100.0%
(Strategy)	% within Period of Posting	0.2%	80.0%	14.6%	3.7%
Promoting Campaign	Count	298	0	24	322
	% within Themes of Post	92.5%	0.0%	7.5%	100.0%
(Strategy)	% within Period of Posting	60.2%	0.0%	19.5%	51.7%
Responding to Ongoing	Count	17	1	11	29
	% within Themes of Post	58.6%	3.4%	37.9%	100.0%

	Argument(s) (Strategy)	% within Period of Posting	3.4%	20.0%	8.9%	4.7%
	Other	Count	43	0	36	79
		% within Themes of Post	54.4%	0.0%	45.6%	100.0%
		% within Period of Posting	8.7%	0.0%	29.3%	12.7%
Total		Count	495	5	123	623
		% within Themes of Post	79.5%	0.8%	19.7%	100.0%
		% within Period of Posting	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 20 demonstrates the strategies or themes of posts according to their posting periods that are named as pre-election period, election day and post-election period. The posts fell under the strategy of *Promoting Campaign* were posted 298 times out of total (in 495) which rank as the highest among others in pre-election period. The *Promoting Campaign* was followed by *Economic and/or Social Development* with 64 posts and *Attack on Opponent Leader(s) and/or Opponent Political Party(ies)* with 44 posts.

In post-election period, *Promoting Campaign* posts shared with 24 times*, Government Formation Talks* shared with 20 times and *Statements Regarding Election Day and/or Post-Election Period* shared with 18 times.

Table 21: The Number of Posts According to Themes-Evaluation of the Political Party Leaders' Cross Tabulation

			Themes of Posts[18]										Total
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Name of the Political Party Leader	CTP Leader	Count	6	12	0	18	1	2	3	48	2	9	101
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	5.9%	11.9%	0.0%	17.8%	1.0%	2.0%	3.0%	47.5%	2.0%	8.9%	100.0%
	DP Leader	Count	0	3	2	10	2	0	1	51	4	31	104
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	0.0%	2.9%	1.9%	9.6%	1.9%	0.0%	1.0%	49.0%	3.8%	29.8%	100.0%
	HP Leader	Count	5	9	1	1	1	5	6	46	4	14	92

[18] Name of the strategies/themes are as follow:
 1: Attack on the Current Government (Strategy)
 2: Attack on the Opponent Leader(s) and/or Opponent Political Party(ies) (Strategy)
 3: Cyprus Problem (Theme)
 4: Economic and/or Social Development (Theme)
 5: Government Formation Talks (Theme)
 6: Live Stream Announcement (Strategy)
 7: Statements Regarding Election Day and/or Post-Election Period (Strategy)
 8: Promoting Campaign (Strategy)
 9: Responding to Ongoing Argument(s) (Strategy)
 10: Other

		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	5.4%	9.8%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	5.4%	6.5%	50.0%	4.3%	15.2%	100.0%
	TDP Leader	Count	0	0	1	0	3	0	1	5	0	3	13
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%	0.0%	23.1%	0.0%	7.7%	38.5%	0.0%	23.1%	100.0%
	UBP Leader	Count	0	2	1	5	4	0	3	5	0	7	27
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	0.0%	7.4%	3.7%	18.5%	14.8%	0.0%	11.1%	18.5%	0.0%	25.9%	100.0%
	YDP Leader	Count	5	26	4	31	9	1	9	167	19	15	286
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	1.7%	9.1%	1.4%	10.8%	3.1%	0.3%	3.1%	58.4%	6.6%	5.2%	100.0%
Total		Count	16	52	9	65	20	8	23	322	29	79	623
		% within Name of the Political Party Leader	2.6%	8.3%	1.4%	10.4%	3.2%	1.3%	3.7%	51.7%	4.7%	12.7%	100.0%

Table 21 shows the strategies or themes of political party leaders' social media posts. The leader of CTP allocated most of his posts to *Promoting Campaign* with 47.5% (48 out of 101), *Economic and/or Social Development* with 17.8% (18 out 101) and *Attack on Opponent Leader(s) and/or Opponent Political Party(ies)* with 11.9% (12 out 101). CTP leader did not post on the theme of *Cyprus Problem*. DP leader's great number of posts belonged to *Promoting Campaign* with 49% (51 out of 104), followed by *Other* with 29.8% (31 out of 104) and *Economic and/or Social Development* with 9.6% (10 out of 104). DP leader did not post on the theme of *Attack on the Current Government*. For the theme of *Cyprus Problem*, he posted 2 posts out of 104 which constituted 1.2%. Like previous leaders, HP leader's posts on *Promoting Campaign* with 50% (46 out of 92) had big proportion within his posts followed by *Other* with 15.2% (14 out of 92) and *Attack on Opponent Leader(s) and/or Opponent Political Party(ies)* with 9.8% (9 out of 92). The lowest number of posts fell under the theme of *Cyprus Problem, Economic and/or Social Development and Government Formation Talk* with each 1.1% (1 out of 92). TDP leaders' most highlighting posts fell under *Promoting Campaign* with 38.5% (5 out of 92), *Government Formation Talks* with 23.1% (3 out of 92), *Cyprus Problem* and *Statements Regarding Election Day and/or Post-Election Period* with 7.7% (1 out of 92). He did not post on *Attack on the Current Government, Attack on Opponent Leader(s) and/or Opponent Political Party(ies), Economic and/or Social Development Live Stream Announcement and Responding to Ongoing Argument(s)*. UBP leader allocated most of his posts on *Other* with 25.7% (9 out of 27), *Economic and/or Social Development* and *Promoting Campaign* each with 18.5% (5 out of 27), *Government Formation Talks* with 14.8% (4 out of 92). TDP leader posted on *Cyprus Problem* with 3.7% (1 out of 92). However, he did not post on *Attack on the Current Government, Live Stream Announcement and Responding to*

Ongoing Argument(s). YDP leaders' great number of posts belonged to *Promoting Campaign* with 58.4% (167 out of 286), *Economic and/or Social Development* with 10.8% (31 out of 286), *Attack on Opponent Leader(s) and/or Opponent Political Party(ies)* with 9.1% (26 out of 286). YDP leader posted on *Cyprus Problem* with 1.4% (4 out of 286). His lowest number of posts belonged to *Live Stream Announcement* 0.3% (1 out of 286).

Overall, the most used were *Promoting Campaign* with five leaders 51.7%, *Economic and/or Social Development* with four leaders 10.4%, *Attack on Opponent Leader(s) and/or Political Party Party(ies)* with three leaders 9.1%.

For the theme of *Cyprus Problem*, TDP leader posted with 7.7% (1 out of 13) and was followed by UBP leader with 3.7% (1 out of 27), YDP leader with 1.4% (4 out of 286), DP leader with 1.9% (2 out of 104) and HP leader with 1.1% (1 out of 92). CTP leader did not post on the theme of *Cyprus Problem*.

For the strategy of *Live Stream Announcement*, HP leader posted with 5.4% (5 out of 92), CTP leader posted with 2% (2 out of 101), YDP leader posted with 0.3% (1 out of 286). On the other hand, the leaders of DP, TDP and UBP did not post at all on *Live Stream Announcement*.

Chapter 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter comprises three sections. First chapter shows a short summary of the study, second chapter revisits research questions by drawing conclusion form the study and third chapter includes recommendations for further investigation.

6.1 Summary of the Study

The findings of the study suggest that politics' use of social media as a means for political communication in election campaigns within a professional sense is not a main issue in North Cyprus. Although using social media to reach voters, politics still mostly rely on traditional ways such as campaign trail visits throught the country in order to have face-to-face relationship with voters. It was a decade ago that Obama's 2008 Presidential Election Campaign made a big difference on the utilization of social media as a political communication tool which later on followed by other politics around the world. Thus the main core of the study is to give an insight about the utilization of social media for election campaigns in North Cyprus.

In this study, we examined the social media use of politics during the 2018 General Elections in North Cyprus. Social media posts of six political party leaders were analyzed covering the period from 07.12.2017 to 22.01.2018. These political party leaders are as follows: CTP leader Tufan Erhürman, DP leader Serdar Denktaş, HP leader Kudret Özersay, TDP leader Cemal Özyiğit, UBP leader Hüseyin Özgürgün and YDP leader Erhan Arıklı. These leaders were chosen for the reason that they were

elected for the parliament in the 2018 General Elections. Facebook accounts of leaders were taken into account except UBP leader since he does not have any Facebook account thus his Twitter account was used instead. Content analysis was used as a research method in the study and a coding sheet was developed which includes 15 questions.

6.2 Conclusions Drawn from the Study

This research was conducted to analyze the social media utilization of politics during the 2018 General Elections in North Cyprus from 07.12.2017 to 22.01.2018 covering the period of a month earlier to the election day (07.01.2018) and two weeks after the election day. Leaders of six political parties that won seats in the parliament were chosen. Content analysis was used to analyze the posts. Findings of some previous studies related to this study were discussed alongside results of the present study to show consistency or inconsistencies.

The first research question asks; "How did Political Party Leaders Use Social Networking Sites (Facebook or Twitter) during the election campaign?", and the results show that intensive use of social media is not the main issue for politics and some features of SNSs have used slightly. There were total of 623 posts from all leaders both pre-election and post-election periods (see Figure 1). For the present study, all 623 posts were collected. The number was 286 for YDP leader, 104 for DP leader, 101 for CTP leader, 92 for HP, 27 for UBP leader and 13 for TDP leader. A significant difference was observed between other leaders and the YDP leader whose party run for elections for the first time. Results also suggest that politics' utilization of visual material were quite high (see Table 7). Politics' hashtags use was also quite low (Table 8) and use of emoticon has even more lower rates (see Table 9). Politics'

also mostly created their own content rather than reposting or sharing from another source (see Table 10).

Results show that it is the YDP leader who used the highest number of visual material. The leaders of CTP, DP and HP also used considerable amount of visual material ranging from posters to photos of their campaign trail visits. UBP leader used small number of visual material and TDP leader has the least number of visual material (see Table 14). This results are also in accordance with leaders' number of posts (see Figure 1). As for the hashtags use, HP leader has the highest utilization of hashtags closely followed by CTP leader. YDP and DP leaders also use considerable amount of hashtags whereas UBP and TDP leader's rates relatively lower than other politics (see Table 15). In terms of emoticon use, DP leaders was leading and followed by CTP, HP and YDP leaders while UBP and TDP leaders did not use emoticon at all (see Table 16). CTP leader had tendency to create his own content in the posts as he only shared one posts from other source and the rest of all belongs to him. DP leader however mostly relied on posts that were sourced form others with considerably high rates (see Table 17). Politics also mostly picked up time period between 21:00-23:59 reaching peak between 23:31-23:59. The reason for this might be their busy campaign programs which occupied their daytime with campaign trail visits, meetings and TV programme participations.

These results give general idea of how political party leaders use Facebook or Twitter when conveying their messages to voters in the election campaign time. These results suggest that leaders of CTP, DP, HP and YDP had more presence than the leaders of UBP and TDP on social media during the election campaign time. Apart from having more or less presences' rate on social media, at least their adaption of social media

may offer a clue about leaders' intention of being in touch with voters during the election time. In North Cyprus where face-to-face communication is still highly involved as an election campaign strategy thus using SNSs as an political communication means during election campaign give politics a chance to reach voters including from their outer-circle. As Robertson et al., (2010) state SNSs act as a form of "public sphere" which offers successful democratic deliberation than other types of online forums.

The second question asks; "What were the main strategy or theme in their SNSs posts?" Posts were gathered under the 6 stratedies and three themes (see Table 11). In general, the most used was "Promoting Campaign" followed by "Economic and/or Social Development" and "Attack on Opponent Leader(s) and/or Opponent Political Party(ies)". The least used was "Live Stream Announcement" which was closely followed by "Cyprus Problem".

"Promoting Campaign" mostly involves anouncements of upcoming campaign trail visits and TV Programmes and has the highest rate of posting among all leaders however "Live Stream Announcement" including upcoming Facebook live stream broadcast has the lowest rate of posting among all leaders. This situation suggests that politics paid more attention to the announcement of upcoming campaign trail visits or TV Programmes and rely mostly on traditional way of campaigning rather than using SNSs features such as live stream broadcast. As also suggested in previous study (Lappas et al., 2016), the reason behind this may be related to the country's small population which lead politics to give more importance to the face-to-face communication during election campaigns rather than meeting voters in an online sphere.

"Promotion Campaign" was the highest used among all leaders (see Table 21). Apart from "Promoting Campaign", the most used for CTP leader was "Economic and/or Social Development", for DP leader was "Other", for HP leader was "Other", for TDP leader was both "Government Formation Talks" and "Other", for UBP leader was "Other" and for YDP leader was "Economic and/or Social Development". Leaders' most used strategies or themes give us insight about their priorities and ideological preferences in the election campaigns. Being president of the leftist and socialist party, there is no suprise that CTP leader devoted a great amount of posts for the theme of "Economic and/or Social Development". Left-wing political parties have tendency to make emphasis on economic and social deveopments because of their ideological preferences that support economic and social equality among people. Running for election for the first time, YDP leader also made big emphasis on the theme of "Economic and/or Social Development".

"Other" was the second most used one of all by the leader of DP, HP, TDP and UBP. "Other" include content other than parliamentary elections. This results may suggest that campaigning on social media was not their priority.

The least used theme by leaders as follows: "Cyprus Problem" with no posts for CTP leader. Having 0 post for "Cyprus Problem" is quite surprising for CTP leader since his party is pro-solution and demand federal state system in Cyprus Problem.

The themes of "Attack on the Current Government" and "Live Stream Announcement" with no post each for DP leader. DP leader did not post on "Attack on the Current Government" since during the election campaign time DP were in coalition government with UBP.

"Cyprus Problem", "Economic and/or Social Development" and "Government Formation Talks" with 1 post each for HP leader. "Attack on the Current Government", "Attack on the Opponent Leader(s) and/or Opponent Political Party(ies)", "Economic and/or Social Development", "Live Stream Announcement" and "Responding to Ongoing Argument(s)" with 0 post each for TDP leader. TDP leader did not post on five theme again shows campaigning on social media was not the main goal for him.

UBP leader had 0 post for three theme namely "Attack on the Current Government" and "Responding to Ongoing Argument(s)" and finally "Live Stream Announcement" was the least posted theme for YDP leader with 1 post. Similar to DP leader, UBP leader also did not post on "Atack on the Current Government" as the leader of UBP was prime minister at that time. YDP and DP leaders' having not any post on "Live Stream Announcement" shows that they did not use live broadcast feature of social media for reaching voters during election campaign.

Theme of "Cyprus Problem" should be given a special importance because of the political situation in the island. This theme was not used by CTP leader, used 1 times by HP, TDP and UBP leaders, used 2 times by DP leader and 4 times for YDP leader. The results suggest that unlike previous elections, the concept of "Cyprus Problem" was not at the center of political parties' election manifestos, it can be even said that it was not given priority in their social media posts since reunification talks between Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot leaders collapsed 6 months prior to the elections.

Strategy of "Live Stream Announcement" also important that shows us leaders' level of engagement with SNSs friends within real time interactive environment. Borah

(2016) states that incumbency could have played a role in the choice of strategies in election campaign. Analyzing posts from both the 2008 and 2012 elections, Borah (2016) states that Obama's campaign used more attack posts when he was a nonincumbent in 2008 and Obama campaign's attack on his opponent was much less in 2012 than in 2008 due to Obama's incumbency advantage. Similar to Borah's (2016) findings, the present study also shows that the theme of "Attack on the Current Government" and "Attack on Opponent Leader(s) and/or Opponent Political Party(ies)" posted mostly by the leaders of CTP, HP and YDP (see Table 21). CTP was the main opposition party in the parliament at that time while HP and YDP were the newly founded parties that ran elections for the first time. The leader of CTP posted on the theme of "Attack on the Current Government" with 6 times, the leader of HP with 5 times and the leader of YDP with 5 times while the leaders of DP and UBP, also heads of the coalition government then in power, did not have any post on that theme. The theme of "Attack on Opponent Leader(s) and/or Opponent Political Party(ies)" was again moslty posted by the leader of CTP with 12 times, HP with 9 times and YDP with 26 times. On this theme, the leader of DP posted with 3 times and the leader of UBP posted with 2 times. Parallel to Borah's (2016) research, this present study also found that it is mostly the opposition leaders who made use of attack posts when compared to the leaders in power.

As for all the posts, prior to elections day, growing number of posts heavily rely on the theme of "Promoting Campaign", "Economic and/or Social Develoment" and "Attack on Opponent Leader and/or Opponent Political Party(ies)" (see Table 18). Results also indicated that the most shared theme "Promoting Campaign" and "Econocmic and/or Social Development" began to increase between the time period

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from 21:00 to 23:59 and between the time period 23:31-23:59 these two themes reached their peak (see Table 16). This situation suggest that politics did not have organized time tables for campaigning on social media rather they chose late night time for posting after their daily routine of paying campagin trail visits and participating to TV programmes.

In pre-election period, "Promoting Campaign", "Economic and/or Social Development" and "Attack on Opponent Leader(s) and/or Opponent Political Party(ies)" were among the highest used theme whereas "Promoting Campaign", "Government Formation Talks" and "Statements Regarding Election Day and/or Post-Election Period" were among themes that have high sharing rates in post-election period (see Table 20). The results suggest that "Promoting Campaign" was remain on top both for pre-election and post-election period. The reason for that is following announcement of the results, leaders' paid visits to some cities and villages to appreciate voters for supporting them in the elections and these posts also fell under the theme of "Promoting Campaign". These results also again highlighted that how our politics still depend on traditional ways in political communication.

Overall, political party leaders mostly used strategy of "Promoting Campaign" in their social media posts. Results suggest that politics use social media to promote their traditional way of contacting with voters such as posts about their campaign trail visits, to cities and villages throughout the country, their face-to-face communication with voters, upcoming information of TV programmes and so on.

It might also be worthed to mention that posting habits of leaders in pre-elections and post-elections periods[19] differed. Leaders' posting rates per day began to increase two weeks ahead of the election day and after the election day (7.01.2018) the number of posts per each day began to decrease (see Table 4 and Table 12). In other words, posting habits of leaders followed an upward trend prior to the elections. Posts that belong to pre-election period were considerably higher than the post-election period (see Table 6 and see Table 13). These results may suggest that leaders used social media as a part of political communication through goal-oriented approach with the aim of construction of public opinion in order to engage voters actively in election campaign since Westling (2007) suggest that SNSs, especially Facebook, are considered as the best options for realization of the Habermas's concept of public opinion.

6.3 Recommendation for Further Research

For the further research, rather than Facebook and Twitter another social networking site can be chosen. Other than political parties, social media use of Central Executive Committe (MYK) members and MP candidates may also be considered. Social media utilization of those candidates who lost elections may also be analyzed. Leaders' habits on social media whether they follow their parties campaign stretegies may also be studied.

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[19] It should be mentioned that the pre-election period covers one month from 7 December, 2017 to 6 January, 2018, while the post-election period covers only two weeks following the election day. This table aims only to show the distribution of posts during these three period named as pre-election period, election day and post-election period without making any comparison between the number of posts and the posting period.

This research can also be done with relational content analysis in order to have better understanding of identified concepts. This research can also be carried out with the research method of critical discourse analysis in order to provide more insight about political discourse. Semitoic analysis of photos and videos may also be considered. The coding sheet and list of choice can also be redeveloped by adding some new categories. Another suggestions for the further research is to study social media as a political means from voters' perspective and their way of reaching political information during election campaigns.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Coding Sheet

Coding Sheet of Political Party Leaders' Use of Social Media in North Cyprus During Parliamentary Election 2018
This coding sheet is relevant with Political Party Leaders' personal social media accounts, others do not have any place for research. There are also a list consisting choices for questions and a coding guide including instructions for filling question 15 in coding sheet.
1. Name of Political Party Leader
2. Date of post (ex: DD/MM/YY):
3. Time of post:
4. Type of visual material (if any, accompanying the post):
5. Number of visual material (if any, accompanying the post):
6. Number of video views (if any, accompanying the post)
7. Number of likes on post:
8. Number of reactions on post:
9. Number of shares or retweets on post:
10. Number of comments on post:
11. Is there any hashtag within post?
12. Is there any emoticon within post?
13. Is the post reposted or shared from another source?
14. Period of published post:
15. What is the main strategy or theme of the post?

Appendix B: List of Choice

This list is created for General Election in 2018, in North Cyprus. Therefore, it can be changed according to issues.

---

1. Name of Political Party Leader

    1= Tufan Erhürman (CTP)

    2= Serdar Denktaş (DP)

    3= Kudret Özersay (HP)

    4= Cemal Özyiğit (TDP)

    5= Hüseyin Özgürgün (UBP)

    6= Erhan Arıklı (YDP)

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2. Date of post

1= 07.12.2017

2= 08.12.2017

3= 09.12.2017

4= 10.12.2017

5= 11.12.2017

6= 12.12.2017

7= 13.12.2017

8= 14.12.2017

9= 15.12.2017

10= 16.12.2017

11= 17.12.2017

12= 18.12.2017

13= 19.12.2017

14= 20.12.2017

15= 21.12.2017

16= 22.12.2017

17= 23.12.2017

18= 24.12.2017

19= 25.12.2017

20= 26.12.2017

21= 27.12.2017

22= 28.12.2017

23= 29.12.2017

24= 30.12.2017

25= 31.12.2017

26= 01.01.2018

27= 02.01.2018

28= 03.01.2017

29= 04.01.2018

30= 05.01.2018

31= 06.01.2018

32= 07.01.2018

33= 08.01.2018

34= 09.01.2018

35= 10.01.2018

36= 11.01.2018

37= 12.01.2018

38= 13.01.2018

39= 14.01.2018

40= 15.01.2018

41= 16.01.2018

42= 17.01.2018

43= 18.01.2018

44= 19.01.2018

45= 20.01.2018

46= 21.01.2018

47= 22.01.2018

3. Time of post

1= 00:00-00:30

2= 00:31-01:00

3= 01:01-01:30

4= 01:30-02:00

5= 02:01-02:30

6= 02:31-03:00

7= 03:01-03:30

8= 03:31-04:00

9= 04:01-04:30

10= 04:31-05:00

11= 05:01-05:30

12= 05:31-06:00

13= 06:01-06:30

14= 06:31-07:00

15= 07:01-07:30

16= 07:31-08:00

17= 08:01-08:30

18= 08:31-09:00

19= 09:01-09:30

20= 09:31-10:00

21= 10:01-10:30

22= 10:31-11:00

23= 11:01-11:30

24=11:31-12:00

25= 12:01-12:30

26= 12:31-13:00

27= 13:01-13:30

28= 13:31-14:00

29= 14:01-14:30

30= 14:31-15:00

31= 15:01-15:30

32= 15:31-16:00

33= 16:01-16:30

34= 16:31-17:00

35= 17:01-17:30

36= 17:31-18:00

37= 18:01:18:30

38= 18:31-19:00

39= 19:01-19:30

40= 19:31-20:00

41= 20:01-20:30

42= 20:31-21:00

43= 21:01-21:30

44= 21:31-22:00

45= 22:01-22:30

46= 22:31-23:00

47= 23:01:23:30

48= 23:30-23:59

4. Type of visual material (if any, accompanying the post)

1= Photo

2= Poster

3= Video

4= Photo and Poster

5= Poster and Video

6= Photo and Poster

7= No Visual

5. Number of visual material

1= 1-5

2= 6-10

3= 11-15

4= 16-20

5= 21-25

6= 26-30

7= 31-35

8= 36-40

9= 41-45

10= 46-50

11= More Than 50

6. Number of video views

1= Less Than 1K

2= 1K-10K

3= 10.001K-20K

4= 20.001K-30K

5= 30.001K-40K

6= 40.001K-50K

7= 50.001K-60K

8= 60.001K-70K

9= 70.001K-80K

10= 80.001K-90K

11= 90.001K-100K

12= More Than 100K

13= No Video

7. Number of likes on post

1= 1-50

2= 51-100

3= 101-150

4= 151-200

5= 201-250

6= 251-300

7= 301-350

8= 351-400

9= 401-450

10= 451-500

11= 501-550

12= 551-600

13= 601-650

14= 651-700

15= 701-750

16= 751-800

17= 801-850

18= 851-900

19= 901-950

20= 951-1000

21= More Than 1000

22= No Like

8. Number of reactions on post

1= 1-5

2= 6-10

3= 11-15

4= 16-20

5= 21-25

6= 26-30

7= 31-35

8= 36-40

9= 41-45

10= 46-50

11= 51-55

12= 56-60

13= 61-65

14= 66-70

15= 71-75

16= 76-80

17= 81-85

18= 86-90

19= 91-95

20= 96-100

21= More Than 100

22= No Reaction

9. Number of shares/retweets on post

1= 1-5

2= 6-10

3= 11-15

4= 16-20

5= 21-25

6= 26-30

7= 31-35

8= 36-40

9= 41-45

10= 46-50

11= 51-55

12= 56-60

13= 61-65

14= 66-70

15= 71-75

16= 76-80

17= 81-85

18= 86-90

19= 91-95

20= 96-100

21= More Than 100

22= No Shares/Retweet

10. Number of comments on post

1= 1-5

2= 6-10

3= 11-15

4= 16-20

5= 21-25

6= 26-30

7= 31-35

8= 36-40

9= 41-45

10= 46-50

11= 51-55

12= 56-60

11= 51-55

12= 56-60

13= 61-65

14= 66-70

15= 71-75

16= 76-80

17= 81-85

18= 86-90

19= 91-95

20= 96-100

21= More Than 100

22= No Comment

11. Is there any hashtag within post?

    1= Yes

    2= No

12. Is there any emoticon within post?

    1= Yes

    2= No

13. Is the post reposted or shared from another source?

    1= Yes

    2= No

14. Period of published post

    1= Before Elections

    2= Election Day

    3= After Elections

15. What is the main strategy or theme of the post?

    1= Attack on the Current Government

    2= Attack on Opponent Leader(s) and/or Opponent Political Party(ies)

    3= Cyprus Problem

    4= Economic and/or Social Development

    5= Government Formation Talks

    6= Live Stream Announcement

    7= Statements Regarding Election Day and/or Post-Election Period

8= Promoting Campaign

9= Responding to Ongoing Arguments

10= Other