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Political Advertising

Nisanur Aydın *¹

1. Sakarya University, Serdivan, Turkey.

Abstract

Political advertising is an important type of advertising that affects voters' behavior during election periods. During these periods, political actors try to influence voters positively and gain their votes with election campaigns targeting their target audience. In political advertisements, the aim is to tell voters about the candidates' promises, achievements and projects. In political advertisements, the aim is to influence voters' perceptions and behaviors by supporting visual and linguistic elements. Although political advertising in Türkiye began with posters and radio speeches, it became professionalized with the campaigns that the Justice Party conducted with an advertising agency in 1977. Today, with the developing technology, the campaigns have diversified and are being used more effectively. The media plays an extremely active role in the dissemination of these advertisements. The joint implementation of public relations and advertisements allows the campaigns to be more effective. In this research, it provides the framing of political advertising, its change from the rotten past, the functioning of political advertising, the details of political advertising, political advertising strategies, the relationship of political advertising with public commerce, the realization of political advertising, the purposes of political advertisements and the election strategies of the Justice and Development Party and the Republican People's Party in the 2023 Türkiye General Elections are examined.

Keywords: Political, Advertising, Campaign, 2023 Presidential Election.

Introduction

Political advertising refers to communication efforts designed by politicians with the aim of setting a political agenda or attracting voter support during election periods. These advertisements are employed not only by political parties but also to enhance the public image of individual leaders, candidates and governments in a favorable manner. With the rapid proliferation of television, the internet and social media, political advertising has evolved beyond a mere promotional tool to become a strategic means of communication that plays a pivotal role in shaping political landscapes. In the Turkish context, the origins of political advertising can be traced back to the 1950s. During the 1950 Turkish General Elections, political messages were communicated to the public for the first time through posters and radio broadcasts. However, the onset of the professionalization of political

advertising in Turkiye is generally attributed to the 1977 general elections, during which the Justice Party collaborated with the

Email Addresses : nisanur.aydin6@ogr.sakarya.edu.tr (Nisanur Aydin).

advertising agency Cenajans. This campaign utilized various media, including posters, audio cassettes and press advertisements.

Advertisements prepared within the scope of political election campaigns are disseminated across all forms of media and play a functional role in influencing society and shaping the perspectives of target audiences. Consequently, the impact of these advertisements often proves to be a determining factor in election outcomes. Such advertisements serve as platforms through which candidates are afforded the opportunity to express themselves and present their projects to the electorate in the most effective manner. In this sense, they also emerge as key instruments in reinforcing the image and rhetoric of both the candidate and the political party [1].

1. Purpose

According to Uztuğ, within the framework of political campaign communication, the general objectives of political advertising can be outlined as follows:

- To increase or consolidate the number of votes,
- To enhance awareness of the political candidate or party,
- To develop the identity of the political candidate or party,
- To influence public attitudes,
- To inform or educate the electorate,
- To establish and steer the campaign agenda,
- To introduce a new candidate or party to voters within a short period of time [2]. In addition to increasing the public visibility of a political party or candidate, encouraging political participation in elections also constitutes one of the primary objectives of political advertising [3].

2. Conceptual Framework

Political advertising is the process of presenting political ideologies, promises and candidate profiles to the public. Its primary objective is to influence voters' attitudes. Therefore, perception management, image building, and the creation of a sense of trust are essential components in political advertising.

It can be argued that the fundamental elements of the communication process are also integral to political advertising. These elements are:

- Source
- Message
- Channel
- Receiver

When contextualized within the realm of political advertising, these components can be identified as follows:

- Source – Political Party, Leader, Candidate, Ideology
- Message – Promise, Discourse
- Channel - Advertisement
- Receiver – Voter, Target Audience [4].

3. Foundations and Historical Development of Political Advertising

Political advertising is one of the key components of how politics communicates with the public. In Türkiye, the foundations of political advertising date back to the 1950s; however, communication tools during that period were quite limited. Political actors utilized methods such as posters and mail announcements, radio broadcasts, rallies and meetings, as well as newspaper and magazine advertisements.

With the advancement of technology over time, political advertising began to adopt different strategies to reach broader segments of society. A significant turning point in the professionalization of political advertising in Türkiye was the collaboration between the Justice Party (Adalet Partisi) and the advertising agency Cenajans in 1977.

In the 1983 elections, for the first time, advertisers prepared targeted campaigns and demonstrated to political parties that the effective use of political advertising could open the path to power. Advertising agencies did not leave political parties the time to gather information and experience through trial and error over an extended period. Particularly in the United States, where political advertising has seen the most development, agencies sought to assist Turkish political parties and leaders by analyzing previous election campaigns, applying tried-and-tested methods that yielded positive results in the U.S. to the Turkish context. One of the most significant contributions of American politics to Turkish politics through political advertising has been the transformation of election campaigns into vibrant, lively shows, which has led to the public viewing politics more favorably and an increase in political participation [5].

The implementation of political advertising continued in a broader scope and with advanced communication techniques during the 1987 elections. However, political advertising in Türkiye firmly established its name and position in politics with the 1991 elections. In the December 24, 1995 General Elections, while political advertising was prohibited, party leaders were given the opportunity to make statements on television channels and promote their ideas. Although it is difficult to measure the precise impact of televised debate discussions as a dimension of political marketing, they had a significant influence on voters [6].

With the 21st century, transformations have occurred in the field of political communication studies. The internet has now become an integral part of campaigns, and with the widespread use of mobile phones, it has become possible to reach voters via SMS. The evolving technological conditions, particularly after 2007, have led campaigns to shift toward social media. Through social media, individuals can follow and support the activities of their political party, and they can also communicate with others who support the same party. The developing technological conditions continue to transform political communication and political advertising efforts [7].

The development of campaigns in Türkiye has not progressed at the same pace as in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. The reasons for this include the late establishment of a free market economy, the strong ideological foundation of party support, the

establishment of private television channels only in the 1990s, and the occasional prohibition of political ads on television by the Supreme Election Council and the Radio and Television Supreme Council [8].

4. Channels and Practices Used in Political Advertising

The main tools used in political advertising campaigns include print media, television, radio, posters, leaflets, letters, telephone calls, billboards, cassettes and others. Additionally, programs such as speeches made by party leaders in the media and panel discussions are influential in shaping voter decisions [9].

The media is considered a platform through which communication is established between political parties and citizens. Through the media, political messages are transmitted from parties to citizens through news, interviews, commentary, reviews, and research, while reactions from citizens are conveyed back to political structures using the same types of methods and tools [10].

The repetition of political advertising messages across multiple channels ensures the memorability of the message [11].

The media, which sets the agenda, creates awareness within this framework and contributes to the formation of public opinion [12].

During election periods, political advertisements play an active role in introducing political parties and candidates to the public. Today, political advertisements and political debates, influenced by the media, determine the direction of election campaigns and are effective in influencing which political party or candidate will win the election [13].

Political advertisements, which were first used in Türkiye during the 1977 elections, became legal with the necessary legal regulations made in 1983. Since this date, political advertising practices have rapidly increased, and political advertising has evolved into a sector carried out by professional teams in Türkiye. It has become the most important tool for political parties and candidates aiming to shape voters' decisions in their favor. Advertising, by its nature, is a process aimed at persuading people to purchase a product and convincing them [14].

The goal of election campaigns is to obtain political power and have a say in the governance of the country. In this context, political parties generate messages to communicate their ideas, promises, and projects to the electorate as part of their campaign efforts. They then attempt to reach voters and influence them through mass communication channels [15].

Political advertising, in today's political platform where political intensity is increasingly growing, aims to influence the political preferences of voters in general, and specifically undecided voters, by approaching them with various alternatives [16].

During the election campaign period, the press, particularly daily newspapers and political reporters, worked to establish healthy political communication between political parties and voters. Politicians and political parties, well aware that the key to influencing public opinion lies in mass communication channels, have made efforts throughout the campaign to stay positively in the media's agenda and strengthen their image [17].

Creating awareness and conveying messages are important roles of political advertising. Political actors use advertising to ensure that voters cast their ballots and become informed about the process. Tools such as television, radio, and the internet convey information, while social media establishes emotional connections. At the same time, advertising can communicate political parties' messages and policies to voters, helping the public understand the differences between parties. However, voters may also face misinformation and misguidance.

5. Components of Political Advertising

5.1. Media Usage

In political advertising, the use of media plays a critical role in reaching a wide audience. Both traditional media (television, radio) and digital media (social media, internet advertising) are utilized to convey candidates' messages to voters.

The media, regarded as the representative and voice of the public, has the following duties:

- To monitor the actions of high-level officials, politicians, and bureaucrats, and prevent their arbitrary actions,
- To contribute to the formation of the political structure,
- To represent the public,
- To inform the public about the functions and operations of political power,
- To help the public decide who should have what rights on various issues,
- To assist in ensuring that the public determines the limits [18].

Today, political advertisements and political debates, influenced by the media, determine the direction of election campaigns and are effective in influencing which political party or candidate will win the election [19].

Today, with the expansion of mass communication opportunities, both the tools of propaganda and the effectiveness of propaganda have increased. For example, a person who was undecided until shortly before the general elections might decide to vote for a particular party on election day after being impressed by the words of a party leader during a radio or television speech. According to communication scholars, propaganda occurs within the process of communication and social interaction. The key factors that shape or influence the formation of opinions are what individuals see, hear, or read [20].

5.2. Television Advertisements

In Türkiye, with the permission granted for the broadcast of political advertisements on television starting from the 2011 general elections, political advertising films have become an indispensable tool in the political campaign process. Television, which reaches a broad audience and serves as an important source of news and information, enhances the persuasive power of political advertisements aired on it, as they appeal to both visual and auditory senses, and allow the message to be encoded with numerous signs [21]. Despite television arriving later in Türkiye compared to other countries, the Turkish public has been the most impacted by it. This is because television has played a significant role in shaping the general, political, and cultural environment, determining the agenda, and guiding public attitudes [22].

5.3. Content and Message

Political advertisements are prepared according to the characteristics of the electorate, and their content is determined with the aim of influencing attitudes and behaviors. The goal is to positively enhance the image of political leaders and the policies of political parties.

5.4. Candidate's Character

In a field study conducted with the participation of 346 voters in the province of Kırklareli prior to the March 31, 2019 local elections, it was found that the most important characteristic components identified by voters were "Being Reliable," "Being Honest," "Being Fair," "Mastering the Problems of Kırklareli," and "Not Making Promises That Cannot Be Kept." The findings align with the results obtained in the studies of Pierce (1993), Uztuğ (2004), Bilir (2008), Canöz (2010), Holian and Prysby (2014), and Çağlar and Göker (2014). The high significance of these traits suggests that voters, particularly those who will govern them, have an expectation of a character rich in moral and ethical values. On the other hand, the least important characteristics for voters in a political candidate were found to be "Being Religious," "Being Conservative," "Being Male or Female," and "Being Wealthy" [23].

5.5. Promises and Projects

In the tradition of democracy, ideal election promises can be regarded as the preliminary indicators of how the surplus values produced or to be produced by society will be politically utilized, the form of governance that will be exhibited, and the places and time frames in which they will be applied. These indicators, by ensuring that the governance approach of a political party that is likely to gain power becomes known to the electorate, will correspond to the expectations that are highly probable to materialize. In a sense, election promises can be considered as manifestos declared by political parties to the public during election campaigns [24].

5.6. Positive Image

The creation of a positive image can be achieved through positive political advertisements. The positive behaviors displayed in these advertisements can foster a sense of trust toward the political candidate or party.

5.7. Visuals and Symbols

The correct use of visual elements in political advertisements enhances the impact of the message. Colors, symbols, and images of the candidate can evoke emotional responses in the electorate. When visuals and symbols are used together, a more effective advertising campaign can be created.

5.8. Photographs of the Candidate

As a visual element, photographs play a significant role in constructing the image of a leader. When photography was introduced to the public in 1839, its purpose and who would benefit from such an invention were not well understood. Over the years, photography has become an indispensable tool for artists, scientists, the military, and especially the media. Photographs in the media serve as evidence of events and convey information to the audience visually [25].

A photograph provides the leader with numerous opportunities, allowing them to convey what words cannot and presenting the leader as sympathetic and heroic. However, in some cases, the opposite effect may occur [26].

5.9. Colors and Symbols

In advertisements, colors generate different meanings and codes within the narrative structure. In the advertising message, colors are considered a form of communication in themselves due to the psychological effects they evoke. Each color has its own unique meaning, and within the narrative structure, it also carries the characteristic of complementing and completing the story [27].

5.10. Target Audience and Segmentation

For political advertising to be effective, it is essential for the advertisements to reach the appropriate audience. Candidates target their ads based on demographic and socio-cultural characteristics. Political advertisements are created by considering factors such as the socio-cultural status, economic structure, education level, geography, and demographic features of the electorate designated as the target audience, before being disseminated in the media. Political advertisements, which play a significant role in influencing voters during the political persuasion process, aim to establish a connection between political actors and voters, ultimately influencing the voting behavior of the targeted electorate [28].

5.11. Timing and Campaign Periods

The timing of advertisements affects how voters will respond to the campaign. Advertisements made with precise timing, particularly during the election period, can be more effective. During election times, political parties and candidates aim to influence and persuade voter groups through their political campaign efforts. Political advertising, as a component of a political campaign, serves as a significant source of political information to gain public support. It is also a crucial factor in shaping the image of a political party or candidate and acts as an effective catalyst in promoting political participation, voter motivation, and mobilization. Political figures aiming to secure the votes and support of the electorate reach out to voters through various media platforms, utilizing political advertisements to communicate their services, campaign promises, ideological identities, messages about their mission and vision, and the projects they aim to implement, with the goal of persuading and influencing them [29].

6. Political Advertising Strategies

6.1. Negative Campaigns

Negative campaigns are deliberate, pre-planned efforts designed to damage the credibility of political parties. They typically involve attacks such as distortions and falsehoods. These attacks can be executed through direct assaults, direct comparisons, or implicit comparisons. One of the objectives is to tarnish the image of the rival candidate and capture the attention of the voters. Negative campaigns may succeed in shaping a negative perception of the opposing candidate among the electorate.

6.2. Positive Advertising

Positive advertising highlights the favorable aspects, achievements, and projects of a candidate or political party. Themes such as hope, progress, and vision are often employed.

Positive political advertising involves the direct praise and elevation of a political party, organization, or its leaders in the eyes of the public. In this type of advertising, the past is often used as a reference. This reference can be either leader-centered or party/organization-centered. In leader-focused positive political advertising, positive attributes such as the leader's ability to instill trust and problem-solving skills are emphasized. In party or organization-focused advertising, successful past achievements of the political party or organization are highlighted, with the promise that, if elected, these successes will continue to grow in the future [30].

6.3. Image and Identity Building Strategy

Appearance and impression play a significant role in people's lives. Whether consciously or unconsciously, intentionally or unintentionally, these images have a societal counterpart, and social life is often evaluated based on these images. It is acknowledged that there is a relationship between the personal characteristics of leaders [31].

The creation of a politician's image typically begins before elections and ideally continues afterward to support and reinforce the image that has been established [32].

Image advertising focuses more on emotions or a strong image rather than words, facts, and claims in its relationship with the consumer. A third approach can also be discussed, which is a combination of the information-emotion (image) duality. This approach involves the use of both rational and emotional elements together [33].

In this type of political advertising, either the candidate and party image is emphasized, or a topic that is currently of significant interest to society is brought to the forefront. In advertisements that highlight the candidate's image, the candidate's personal traits, abilities, and education are emphasized. Issue/image-based advertisements are used to draw attention, influence voters, and create a positive perception of the candidate among the electorate [34].

The candidate image can be defined as the overall impression left by the political actor running for office in the minds of the electorate. This impression consists of variables such as the candidate's personal traits, physical appearance, lifestyle, and stance on various issues and problems. However, it is primarily expressed as an image derived from the candidate's striking personal characteristics [35].

7. Relationship with Public Relations

Political advertising and public relations are carried out in conjunction. The candidate's or party's credibility, consistency of discourse and media visibility are influenced by public relations activities. Advertising alone is not sufficient to influence voters; it must be supported by public relations efforts. Factors such as crisis communication, reputation management and agenda-setting enhance the impact of advertising.

Public relations, media, and politics meeting at a common interest is an increasingly important phenomenon.

The role of public relations in political advertising can also be observed through the objectives and functions of political advertisements; it can, in particular, quickly introduce a new candidate or party,

play a significant role in setting and directing the campaign agenda, and change voter attitudes in terms of political awareness and persuasion [36].

In the political persuasion process, techniques such as advertising, propaganda, and marketing tend to create a certain resistance among voters to the messages being conveyed, due to their manipulative nature. In comparison to these techniques, public relations is perceived as more objective and democratic [37].

In line with the principle of political accountability, public relations professionals conducting political public relations activities bear responsibility for a range of matters, from providing the public with consistent and honest information about whose interests they are working for, to ensuring that the public has access to the information they need during the political election process [38].

One of the distinct characteristics of contemporary election campaigns is the use of public relations professionals and public opinion researchers in the campaigns [39].

Public relations, during the election campaign period, is addressed alongside other promotional elements, and if strategies are determined in this way, more effective results can be achieved. Public relations has several communication-related functions in election campaigns [40]:

- Planning newsworthy stories and staged events and organizing publicity efforts
- Organizing relationships with news media and broadcasters
- Being effective in facilitating the flow of information to columnists in structuring the targeted candidate's identity and thus managing the news flow
- Guiding the candidate's or party's efforts to influence the agenda
- Creating newsworthy stories that facilitate media coverage of candidate debates, press conferences, election tours and rallies in favor of the candidate or party
- Designing the candidate's presentation in a manner suited to the nature of mass communication tools [41].

8. The Effects of Political Advertising

Political advertisements can influence voters either positively or negatively. Political parties use advertisements to attract voters to their side. With successful campaigns, voters can be positively influenced, or their decision may shift towards other parties due to the doubt created by uncertainty. Emotionally charged and target-audience-appropriate messages can have a positive impact on voter behavior.

8.1. Impact on Voter Behavior

One of the most notable effects of political advertising is its ability to influence voters' voting behavior.

There are many studies that show political advertisements influence the political attitudes of the target audience [42]. Political advertisements draw society into new understandings or into a perception world desired by the creators of the advertisement. At this point, the image presented by the political advertisement is offered to the voter. Undecided voters, as a result of the messages they are exposed to, unknowingly adopt the idea presented, depending on the frequency and intensity of these messages. This situation demonstrates that perceptions shaped by political advertisements are influenced and directed [43].

The findings related to political science models concerning voter preferences and decision-making processes between 1940 and 1988 are summarized as follows [44]:

- While party affiliation continues to be a key variable influencing voter behavior, its importance has gradually diminished over time.

- As the importance of party image has decreased, candidate image has shown significant development. Today, voter preference models are primarily built around candidates, with evidence suggesting that image plays a crucial role in influencing voter behavior.
- The candidate's stance on issues contributes to the evaluation of the candidate and their image.
- Voters are assumed to act as independent individuals, separate from the influences of partisan and group pressures.
- Additionally, it has been found that when voters make comparisons regarding parties or candidates, they consider evaluations from the past [45].

Political advertisements have effects on voters' levels of information, perceptions of candidates, and voting preferences. These effects can be summarized as follows [46].

Impact on Voters' Level of Information: Political advertisements convey a wealth of information and messages related to political parties, candidates, and policies. Voters exposed to these advertisements encounter the messages they communicate, thereby gaining knowledge. The advancements in communication technologies have provided technical possibilities that make advertisements more visually and auditorily appealing. This, in turn, leads to increased viewing, visibility, and reading of the advertisements, significantly contributing to the enhancement of voters' information levels.

Impact on Voters' Perceptions of Candidates: Political advertisements that effectively communicate the claims, policies, promises, and discourses of political parties leave a positive impression and perception among voters. As a result of this positive perception, it is reflected onto the party's candidates for positions such as members of parliament or mayors. Through these advertisements, voters can develop favorable perceptions of the candidates.

Impact on Voters' Voting Preferences: Political advertisements are considered successful to the extent that the information they convey to their target audience—voters—is persuasive. In other words, if voters believe, trust, and find the messages convincing, they may cast their vote for the political party that persuaded them. Therefore, great care must be taken in crafting the messages within political advertisements, ensuring they are well-considered, and avoiding any attempts to deceive voters [47].

8.2. Societal Impacts of Political Advertising

Political advertising not only influences individual voter behavior but also creates widespread effects at the societal level. These effects can impact the general political attitudes of the public, political polarization within society, and public policies.

9. Elections

2023 Türkiye General Elections

For the 2023 Presidential Elections of the Republic of Türkiye, advertising campaigns were carried out by the alliances and broadcasted by the media. Four candidates participated in the election. The People's Alliance, consisting of the Grand Unity Party, the New Welfare Party, the Nationalist Movement Party and the Justice and Development Party, nominated Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as their candidate. The Nation Alliance, consisting of the Republican People's Party, the Felicity Party, the Democrat Party, the Good Party, the Future Party and the Democracy and Progress Party, nominated Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu. The Ancestral Alliance, comprising the Victory Party, the Justice Party, the My

Country Party and the Turkey Alliance Party, nominated Sinan Oğan. The candidate of the Homeland Party was Muharrem İnce [48]. Muharrem İnce, leader of the Homeland Party and a candidate in the 2018 Presidential elections, announced that he would run in the 2023 Presidential elections as well. However, 72 hours before the election, he announced his withdrawal from the candidacy. Despite withdrawing, his name was not removed from the ballot and throughout the election process, his name appeared in the predictions of all public opinion research companies [49].

In the first round of the 2023 Presidential elections on May 14, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan received 49.24% of the votes, Muharrem İnce received 0.41%, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu received 45.07%, and Sinan Oğan received 5.28% [50].

In the 2023 Presidential election held on May 14, one of the candidates was required to have at least 50% + 1 of the votes to achieve a simple majority. However, since no candidate reached this threshold, the election went to a second round. In the second round of the Presidential election on May 28, 2023, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu received 47.82% of the votes, while Recep Tayyip Erdoğan received 52.18% [51], winning the election and becoming the 12th President of the Republic of Turkey [52].

In a study conducted on political parties and candidates advancing to the second round of elections, it was found that during the period between election rounds, some individuals experienced positive effects while others were negatively affected.

The candidate with the most negative change between two months was Sinan Oğan. The candidate with the most positive change was Muharrem İnce, despite being exposed to various tape scandals. The data that can be seen as a very serious change in the table is that 6 research companies showed Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu with a vote rate above 50% in April, but below 50% in May. In addition, 14 research companies stated that Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu's voting rate decreased between April and May [53].

Campaign Strategies Used by the AK Party in the 2023 Turkey General Elections

Strategies Employed

Erdoğan carried out his election campaign with a strategy that he uniquely developed. As in many previous elections, in this election as well, the ruling party and the opposition merged their campaign strategies to achieve success with a hybrid approach. In this framework, Erdoğan first presented the projects he had already completed to the public, even inaugurating some of them right before the election. He then shared the projects he designed for the "Century of Türkiye" with the public. The initiatives that the AK Party had completed and inaugurated during this period include the following: TOGG, TCG Anadolu ship, Altay Tank, Hürjet and National Combat Aircraft Kaan, Istanbul Financial Center, Ankara-Sivas high-speed train line, Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant, the connection of Black Sea Natural Gas to the system, Başakşehir-Çam Sakura Hospital, Kayaşehir Metro Line, the Zigana

Tunnel, the "Yarısı Bizden" Project in Urban Transformation, and the discovery of oil with a daily capacity of 100,000 barrels in the Cudi and Gabar mountains. These projects, which were activated one after another, not only had a significant impact within the country but also attracted considerable attention in the international community. In fact, the TCG Anadolu ship was opened to the public for visits in Istanbul and Izmir, and media continuously reported on the impressions of the tens of thousands of people who visited the ship [54].

The Crises Faced by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in the Elections

One of the most significant crises faced by the AK Party as it entered the election process was the reality of the earthquake. Another crisis involved the sale of tents by the Turkish Red Crescent (Kızılay) to AHBAP. Erdoğan and the government did not take responsibility for this mistake.

Subsequently, the President of Kızılay appeared on television and stated that he did not approve of the sale and that the relevant manager had acted inappropriately. Observing that the public was not satisfied with these statements, Erdoğan expressed his regret about the issue shortly before the elections. Immediately following this, Kızılay held a general assembly meeting and elected a new president. Another crisis Erdoğan faced occurred during a TV program, when he became ill. During the moment he was unwell, the camera remained on the presenter who was asking questions, and the broadcast was temporarily halted. As a result, viewers did not see Erdoğan's condition at that moment. After the break, Erdoğan returned to the program in a weakened and sickly state, explaining that he had been suffering from a severe cold but had participated in the program out of respect for the commitment he had made beforehand, and apologized to the viewers, asking for their forgiveness [55].

During this period, whether Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the Chairman of the Justice and Development Party, could run for president for a third time became a subject of debate. At that time, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, the chairman of the opposition Republican People's Party, argued that Erdoğan could not be a candidate again. However, the Supreme Election Council (YSK) stated, with its reasoning, that there was no obstacle to Erdoğan's candidacy.

Election Manifesto and Theme

During the election period, the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) prepared and released an election manifesto titled "*Right Steps for the Century of Türkiye – 2023 Election Manifesto*," consisting of 481 pages and divided into six sections. The manifesto covers topics such as *disaster risk and crisis management, a resilient social structure, and a stable and strong economy*. The main theme of the AK Party's election campaign was "*The Century of Türkiye*."

Media and Advertising Strategy

In the 2023 General Elections, the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) adopted a strategy centered on visual and digital propaganda. The advertisements emphasized President Erdoğan's leader-centric image and employed the roadblocking technique. Additionally, exclusive content was produced for social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok.

Through the roadblock technique, the AK Party's campaign video was broadcast simultaneously on all television channels. This method enabled the party's message to reach a wide audience at the same moment. In the local elections held on May 14, 2023, it is observed that the AK Party sought to capture voters' attention and influence viewer perceptions through its televised advertisement titled "The Nation Does Not Bow, Türkiye Cannot Be Divided," utilizing the roadblock advertising strategy [56].

During the election period, the AK Party incorporated national values into its campaign advertisements and highlighted its achievements through the use of dramatic music.

One of the campaign advertisements was titled "Türkiye is Entrusted to You." The film reflected national values and emphasized the significance of the elections for the future of Türkiye. At the

conclusion of the advertisement, the phrase “In this land, people entrust their loved ones to those they trust. This unique homeland, the product of many beloved stories—Türkiye, is entrusted to you” was featured. Accompanying this message was an image of President and presidential candidate Erdoğan on the ballot, implying that the nation's trust rests with him.

Campaigns Used by the Republican People’s Party (CHP) in the 2023 Turkish General Elections

Strategies Employed

In the 2023 General Elections, the Republican People’s Party (CHP) implemented several strategies aimed at securing electoral victory. One of these strategies was emphasizing pension payments to address voters’ economic expectations. Additionally, under the leadership of Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu at the time, an alliance named the *Nation Alliance (Millet İttifakı)* was formed with Meral Akşener (Leader of the İYİ Party), Ali Babacan (Leader of the DEVA Party), Ahmet Davutoğlu (Leader of the Future Party), and Gültekin Uysal (Leader of the Democrat Party). Another key strategy was Kılıçdaroğlu’s use of the slogan “*Sana Söz*” (“A Promise to You”) to convey a sense of trust and commitment to fulfilling campaign promises. The party also sought to build a connection with voters through rallies held in various cities.

Election Manifesto and Theme

In the context of the 2023 elections, the Nation Alliance ‘a coalition formed by six different political parties’ published a document titled “Joint Policies Consensus Text.”. Prepared in 2023, the document consists of 244 pages and is divided into nine main sections [57]. These sections cover the areas of law, public administration, anti-corruption, economy, science, sectoral policies, education, social policies, and foreign policy.

Media Usage

In the 2023 Presidential Election, the campaign of Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu—the candidate of the Nation Alliance formed by the Republican People’s Party (CHP), Democracy and Progress Party (DEVA), Democrat Party (DP), Future Party, Good Party (İYİ Party), and Felicity Party (Saadet Party)—featured a campaign advertisement titled “A Promise to You (*Sana Söz*).” This advertisement was broadcast on television, social media platforms, and various digital media outlets [58].

The selected campaign music symbolically emphasized the spring season, which represents renewal and new beginnings. Implicit within this choice was the message that the alliance bloc served as a viable alternative for initiating a new chapter in the country. The underlying themes conveyed the necessity of change for a freer, more independent, and humane Türkiye—one free from economic hardship and looking to the future with hope [59].

Crises Faced by the CHP in the 2023 Turkish General Elections

One of the crises faced by the Nation Alliance was the dispute over the nomination of the presidential candidate, which occurred prior to the elections. Meral Akşener’s objection to Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu’s candidacy led the Six-Party Table (6’lı Masa) to the brink of collapse. Although a compromise was eventually reached, the crisis undermined public trust in the alliance.

Another crisis emerged in March 2023 when a photo of Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu taken during a visit was published. In the photo, Kılıçdaroğlu was seen stepping on a prayer rug, which the pro-government media interpreted as a sign of disrespect towards religious values.

Conclusion

Political advertising has become an indispensable element of contemporary political election periods. The various campaigns conducted during this period can influence voters, alter their decisions about which party to support, and enable them to follow political candidates and their promises more closely, based on the narratives presented. With the increasing technological capabilities, these campaigns have started to reach a broader audience compared to the past. The media plays an undeniable role in this process. Political candidates can more easily access their target audience through media platforms. By utilizing political advertising strategies, candidates can tarnish their rivals' reputations through smear campaigns, disseminate misleading information, or highlight their own positive qualities through positive advertisements, showcasing their achievements and promises. Through image and identity construction strategies, they can effectively present their promises and positions by creating a consistent perception of themselves.

This study examines the election manifestos of the AK Party and the CHP in Türkiye's 2023 General Elections, the strategies they employed, the crises experienced by president Erdoğan and the CHP leader and presidential candidate of the Nation Alliance, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, during the 2023 General Elections and how these crises were resolved. Both Erdoğan and Kılıçdaroğlu did not remain silent in the face of the crises they encountered and made efforts to resolve them. Through their election manifestos, they promised to address the problems faced by the public and to ensure a life of greater prosperity.

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