



# El papel mediador de la comunicación viral en el efecto del marketing político sobre el consentimiento político: un estudio transversal

## The mediating role of viral communication in the effect of political marketing on political consent: a cross-sectional study

Murat Çakirkaya\*<sup>1</sup>  and Murat Koçyiğit<sup>1</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Necmettin Erbakan University, Konya, Turkey

### OPEN ACCESS

EDITED BY  
Mardel Morales-García  
Universidad Peruana Unión,  
Lima, Perú

### \*CORRESPONDENCE

Murat Çakirkaya  
✉ [murat.cakirkaya39@gmail.com](mailto:murat.cakirkaya39@gmail.com)

RECEIVED 22 April 2023  
ACCEPTED 21 March 2024  
PUBLISHED 06 May 2024

### CITATION

Çakirkaya, M. & Koçyiğit, M. (2024). The mediating role of viral communication in the effect of political marketing on political consent: a cross-sectional study. *Apt. Univ.*, 14(1), <https://doi.org/10.17162/au.v14i1.1481>. ISSN. 2304-0335  
doi: <https://doi.org/10.17162/au.v14i1.1481>

### COPYRIGHT

© 2024 This is an article written by Çakirkaya and Koçyiğit, submitted for possible open access publication under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). The CC BY license permits the use, distribution, and reproduction of the article in other forums, provided the original author(s) and copyright owner are credited and the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. Any use, distribution, or reproduction that does not comply with these terms is prohibited.

### Resumen

La comunicación política es uno de los ámbitos importantes afectados por los avances tecnológicos en la actualidad. De hecho, se observa que los partidos políticos utilizan habitualmente el marketing viral, un tipo de marketing boca a boca, en sus campañas realizadas en el ámbito del marketing político. Este estudio pretende investigar el impacto del marketing político tanto en la comunicación viral como en el consentimiento político. Además, pretende analizar la relación entre la comunicación viral y el consentimiento político para determinar si existe una influencia notable. La Generación Z constituye el universo de la investigación de este estudio. En el contexto de este estudio, se llevó a cabo un examen de los datos recogidos de 511 participantes a través de la investigación en línea para explorar y analizar las interconexiones entre diversas variables. Se emplearon estadísticas descriptivas, análisis factorial confirmatorio y modelos de ecuaciones estructurales (SEM), utilizando programas de paquetes estadísticos para el análisis de datos. Los resultados revelaron que no existía un impacto estadísticamente significativo del marketing político tanto en la comunicación viral como en el consentimiento político. Por el contrario, se estableció que existe una influencia estadísticamente significativa y extremadamente fuerte de la comunicación viral sobre el consentimiento político. Sobre la base de estos resultados, puede afirmarse que las actividades de comunicación viral pueden contribuir significativamente a la aplicación de estrategias de marketing.

### Palabras Clave

marketing político, comunicación viral, consentimiento político, generación z, comportamiento de los votantes.

### Abstract

Political communication is one of the important areas affected by technological developments today. As a matter of fact, it is observed that political parties commonly use viral marketing, a type of word-of-mouth marketing, in their campaigns conducted within the scope of political marketing. This study aims to investigate the impact of political marketing on both viral communication and political consent. Additionally, it seeks to analyze the relationship between viral communication and political consent to determine if there is a noteworthy influence. Generation Z constitutes the universe of the research in this study. In the context of this study, an examination of the data gathered from 511 participants through online research was undertaken to explore and analyze the

interconnections between various variables. Descriptive statistics, confirmatory factor analysis, and structural equation modeling (SEM) were employed, utilizing statistical package programs for data analysis. The findings revealed that there was no statistically significant impact of political marketing on both viral communication and political consent. Conversely, it was established that there exists a statistically significant and extremely strong influence of viral communication on political consent. Based on these results, it can be said that viral communication activities can make a significant contribution to the implementation of marketing strategies.

### **Keywords**

political marketing, viral communication, political consent, generation z, voter behavior.

## **I Introduction**

As we entered the 21st century, the landscape of political marketing underwent a profound transformation, courtesy of the widespread adoption of the Internet. With this transformation, people have benefited from a large number of interactive Web technologies such as blogs, viral emails / videos and social networking sites, and have taken an active role in political campaigns (Baumgartner & Morris, 2010). One of the key features of this transformation was the ability of people to share information virally, leveraging the connectivity and reach provided by online platforms. In addition, the internet and social media gave small companies the chance to compete with large companies (Snow, 2010). It is essential to recognize that the evolution from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 played a pivotal role in this paradigm shift. Unlike its predecessor, Web 2.0 is characterized by online applications that foster user communication and collaboration (Waite, 2010). The rate of participation of young people, who adapt well to the web environment, to these activities is also quite high. The interest of young people in social media and viral sharing also makes them interested in viral political marketing messages through social media. Young people feel the need to express themselves, not being able to keep up with such an interesting sharing with a viral feature.

Therefore, within the scope of political marketing, it can be said that a political sharing with a viral nature is much more effective than traditional marketing activities. As a matter of fact, in this way, more attention of the target audience can be attracted and these people can be included in the spread of this sharing (Baumgartner & Morris, 2010). Naturally, the young population is also a part of these shares.

Viral messages spread among individuals create a potential audience for product and service purchase. With the effect of the rapid spread, this audience grows even more and ensures the participation of new consumers in the process. Viral messages spread among individuals create a potential audience for product and service purchase. With the effect of the rapid spread, this audience grows even more and ensures the participation of new consumers in the process. Viral communication takes place via the Internet and often through the use of social networks. Therefore, Generation Z, the group that uses these platforms the most, has a critical importance in viral communication.

The reaction of generation Z to political marketing activities is extremely important. Because this generation will play an active role in the political shaping of the future and its ratio among total voters is increasing day by day. For this reason, determining the values adopted by Generation Z in voting preferences and analyzing their behavior as a voter are important in obtaining the desired results from political marketing activities. Another important issue is determining the effect of viral communication on the voting behavior of generation Z and developing strategies to increase this effect.

Political consent is accepted as the reflection of the collective will of the citizens of a democratic society (Miller & Wertheimer, 2010). One of the important areas affected by the developments in the digital transformation era is political communication. Political communication, which aims at a management based on mutual consent, is among the areas that should be most sensitive to the transformation and change in the society. Because politics affects social life, whereas social life also affects politics (Ince, 2012). In this

study, the effect of political marketing on political satisfaction was investigated in the context of generation Z. Another goal of the study is to examine the interaction of viral communication with these two variables.

## 1.1 Literature Review

### 1.1.1 Political Marketing

Marketing is the process by which individuals fulfill their needs and desires through mutually beneficial transactions. At this point, the marketer aims to sell products and services with some offers. This relationship established can produce results beyond sales of products and services. For example, a political candidate expects a vote against his proposal. On the other hand, an orchestra aims to increase the audience and a social action group aims to accept their ideas (Kotler & Armstrong, 2008). The adaptation of the marketing mix to political processes emerges at this point. There has been a noticeable uptick in the integration of marketing mix strategies within the realm of political endeavors. The reason for this is that the applications such as determining the target market, categorizing the customers, marketing researches, promotion etc. which are included in the political marketing processes are essentially among the marketing mix studies (Abid et al., 2023).

Kotler summarizes the difference between political marketing and commercial marketing as follows: In commercial marketing, there is a seller who offers products and services to the market and communicates with his customers. The company aims to sell as a result of its marketing activities. In return, it aims to make a profit and collect information about its customers and the market in which it operates. The goal in political marketing is to get the voters' vote in return for some promises. There is also communication with voters in political marketing. The information collected about the voters is used in the marketing activities of the next election (Kotler, 1975). Based on all these explanations, it is possible to define political marketing as follows: Political marketing is the creation, transmission, distribution and exchange of political organizations, processes or actions used by voters, candidates and political parties among political party stakeholders, voters and society (Hughes and Dann, 2009). If we delve into the facets of marketing through a political lens, we can identify the components of political marketing as follows:

**Product:** The political product consists of a combination of many elements. These elements that make up the political product are: leaders, candidates and party programs (Arklan, 2006). Newman (2001) emphasized that the most important characteristics of a *leader* for citizens are honesty and reliability. It is possible to consider the *candidate*, another element that constitutes a political product, as a product that is newly introduced to the market by the voters and there is no information about his/her. For this reason, the candidate should consider the stages of product marketing and introduce himself to the voters with a similar approach (Kotler, 1975). At this point, leaders and candidates should not lose sight of the fact that they are part of the party in their promotions, they should act based on party strategy rather than individual promotions and advertisements.

Grusell and Nord (2023) found that the personalization of party leaders in politics did not increase, contrary to what was believed as a result of the work carried out within the scope of the 2018 general elections in Sweden. In the study, it is emphasized that party leaders are presented visually in an innovative way, but this is done within the scope of campaigns created for parties. Although *party programs*, another element of its political product, have the power to significantly affect the political product, this is not always possible. Political programs can become a less important part of the product in democracies where the candidate is seen more important by the voters. Although it varies between countries, party programs are becoming more and more similar with each passing day. This similarity in the programs of political parties reduces the awareness of the voters and causes the party leaders and candidates to come to the fore as a political product.

**Price:** The time spent by the voter for voting, transportation costs, time spent in support of the party or candidate, and all other material and moral contributions made constitute the price headline (Ince, 2012). Niffenegger (1988) has taken a more comprehensive approach to price in terms of political marketing. According to him, the price is the sum of the costs the voters are willing to bear. Niffenegger classified these costs into economic costs, psychological costs and national image effects.

**Distribution:** Niffeneger (1988) pointed out that there are different distribution channels that can be used by the party administration and its leader to reach voters. In this context, distribution channels can be created through local organizations, members and volunteers, as well as through party activities of the candidates or through propaganda activities. In another classification, it is emphasized that political distribution can be carried out in two ways, through party cadres and tools.

**Promotion:** According to Cwalina et al. (2011), promotion consists of advertisement efforts and promotional activities covering the candidate, program and campaign. On the other hand, negative communication studies have become a frequently emphasized area in political marketing studies. As a matter of fact, Henneberg (2006) stated that in addition to the problems of political culture in political marketing practices, negative communication studies have become a part of political marketing. On the other hand, creating image and reputation, which are among the basic concepts of public relations, are other important areas of interest for political marketers (Harris, 2000).

Personal selling stands out among various marketing communication strategies due to its unparalleled capacity to pinpoint and connect with individual voters, supporters, and citizens. This distinctive capability not only sets it apart but also offers exclusive advantages by fostering personalized and enduring relationships. (Ogbidi et al., 2016).

Political parties can cultivate a favorable image among voters through strategic sales development initiatives. For example, participation of political parties in organizations such as fairs, exhibitions, festivals, organizing seminars, conferences and scientific meetings, gifts to voters, treats, free concerts, etc. are some of these activities. Other voters who interact with voters can have a significant influence on voting decisions. In addition, the opinions of opinion leaders who are knowledgeable about politics are another group that has an influence on the voters. In other words, it would not be wrong to say that viral communication has an effect on voter behavior (O'Cass & Pecotich, 2005).

### 1.1.2 Political Marketing & Viral Communication Interaction

Viral communication represents a modern and tech-savvy rendition of traditional word-of-mouth strategies, leveraging the internet to amplify the dissemination of marketing messages. This approach encourages individuals to share messages organically, creating a ripple effect that can potentially reach thousands or even millions of people, akin to the contagious nature of a virus (Mohr, 2007; Dasari & Anandakrishnan, 2010). Cruz and Fill (2008) define viral communication as the online transmission of news, information, or entertainment from one individual to another.

The advent of the Internet has given rise to numerous social networking platforms like MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, and blogs, ushering in a new era of social interaction. These platforms serve as the breeding grounds for viral communication, enabling messages to swiftly travel across vast online networks and communities. This new high-tech viral marketing, which is largely realized using these channels, has had a great impact on the marketing world (Kotler & Armstrong 2008).

Richey (2008) found in his study based on the American National Election Survey data collected in 2000 that social networks of people affect voter behavior. Wattal et al., (2010) In their work on the results of the presidential elections held in the USA in 2008, concluded that Web 2.0 internet-based technologies such as Youtube and MySpace have become an important tool for political candidates in persuading voters (Bigi, 2013).

One of the important factors that encourage the use of viral communication in political activities is its effective role in increasing the spread of political messages. Messages embedded with viral elements possess a heightened probability of reaching not only potential supporters but also undecided voters, thereby enhancing their impact and outreach in the political landscape (Bigi, 2013). Because it is known that posts that trigger strong emotions such as humor, fear or sadness will have a viral effect. In addition, messages that are inspiring, lead to strong interaction and offer rewards to shareholders contribute to the further strengthening of the viral cycle (Phelps et al., 2004; Dobelet et al., 2005).

Although there are different platforms that can be used within the scope of viral communication, today viral communication is mostly carried out using social media sites. Therefore, it would be a reasonable approach

to benefit from social media in political marketing activities. Indeed, a current trend in political marketing involves utilizing social networking and video-sharing platforms as key channels for communication. This signifies a shift towards leveraging the influential reach and interactive nature of these online spaces to effectively promote political messages. Other new trends are political marketing using political blogging and political marketing via website and e-mail (Akar, 2009).

Facebook's appeal as a political advertising platform stems from its expansive user base, cost-effectiveness, swift and adaptable production options, and notably, its advanced targeting capabilities (Bene et al., 2023). Additionally, its cost-effectiveness is evident as charges are based on the volume of impressions or clicks the ad garners, offering remarkable flexibility with the option to purchase advertising in small increments of impressions or clicks (Edelson et al., 2019; Fowler et al., 2021). Facebook advertisements possess the unique ability to swiftly adapt to real-time events owing to their adaptable format. Yet, the platform's paramount advantage lies in its unparalleled micro-targeting capabilities for advertisers. Facebook's operational framework relies on amassing comprehensive user data by tracking their actions both within and outside the platform. Subsequently, this wealth of information is shared with advertisers, empowering them to precisely tailor their messages to specific audience segments (van Dijck, 2013).

Some studies in the literature on the use of Facebook in political marketing are presented below: Enli and Skogerbo (2013), who conducted research on the use of social media during the Norwegian local election process in 2011, found that politicians saw Facebook as a marketing tool for them. On the other hand, in the study, it was seen that mayor candidates used Facebook to raise awareness, but preferred Twitter to establish dialogue with voters. Hendricks and Frye (2012), in their research on the 2010 US elections, concluded that political candidates generally use Facebook and Twitter for informing the voters, and especially Twitter for urgent information. Borah (2016) reached the following results in his study, where he examined Facebook shares of candidates in the US presidential elections in 2008 and 2012: When the 2008 posts of the candidates were examined, it was observed that although John McCain posted mainly for attacking purposes, Barack Obama posted mostly based on praise. In the presidential elections of 2012, it was seen that although Obama posted mostly praise and with enthusiasm, excitement and humor, his rival Romney's posts were based on promoting his political campaign.

Another importance of using Facebook is its potential impact on changing voter preferences. For example, in the study conducted by Garay et al., (2021), it was concluded that the influence of social networks, especially Facebook, can change the opinion of voters. The study conducted by Poon & Lam (2020) in the context of Hong Kong elections in 2017 focused on how viral marketing works in political campaigns and communication. As a result of the study, it was found that viral marketing played an important role in the political communication of the election campaign. Especially the videos and content on the Facebook page helped the campaign to go viral on the internet.

On the other hand, some important studies on the effect of Facebook on the political preferences of Generation Z, which constitutes the sample group of our study, are presented below: In a study specific to the USA and investigating the social media preferences of young people, it was concluded that YouTube was the most popular social media channel with a share of 90% in the 18-24 age group, Instagram and Facebook had shares of 76% and 75%, respectively, and Snapchat came right after them with a share of 73%. The study also emphasised that Facebook is under intense criticism for violating privacy, encouraging hate speech and spreading misinformation (Harder, 2020). In the study conducted by Baykal (2019), it was concluded that Facebook is effective in the voting behaviour of Generation Z, although not as much as Generation X. According to Freedman (2021), with the effect of the recent changes in social media preferences, Facebook, one of the social media platforms preferred by US voters in the last two presidential elections, has gradually started to lose its place to Snapchat, Instagram and TikTok for Generation Z members. Bosetta and Schmokel (2022) concluded that posts displaying anger are less likely to perform highly on Facebook compared to calm posts.

Another of the most used social media platforms is Twitter. Examples and research results regarding the use of twitter in the context of political marketing are explained below: In the study conducted by Jungherr (2016) based on data obtained from 127 studies on Twitter use in political campaigns, the following results were obtained: Opposition parties use Twitter more actively than the government party. Opposition parties use Twitter to inform candidates 'campaigns and activities, and receive information about voters'

preferences through Twitter. However, they do not establish a dialogue with the citizens on Twitter. According to the findings of Buccoliero et al, (2018) in their examination of Twitter usage by candidates during the 2016 US presidential election, the study revealed the following outcomes: Both Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton have frequently used Twitter as the most important communication platform. It was observed that the more both candidates used Twitter to express their opinions, the more people re-tweeted the messages, and the journalists also mentioned these tweets in their content about the election news. In their 2012 study, Skoric et al (2012) observed a noteworthy and statistically significant correlation between the frequency of tweets at the national level and the voting turnout during the campaign period of the 2011 Singapore general election. Although Twitter is less preferred among the social media preferences of Generation Z members compared to other channels, it is seen that twitter is one of the social media channels they use the most to follow political developments. As a matter of fact, in a study conducted on Generation Z living in the USA; it was concluded that Twitter is the social media channel that the participants follow political developments the most, followed by Facebook and YouTube (Carufel, 2020). However, according to Freedman (2021), with the effect of the recent changes in social media preferences, Twitter, which was one of the social media platforms preferred by US voters in the last two presidential elections, has gradually started to lose its place to Snapchat, Instagram and TikTok for Generation Z members.

The third largest social media option that can be used in political marketing efforts is YouTube. In the 2008 US presidential election, seven out of the sixteen presidential candidates chose YouTube as the platform to announce their candidacy, demonstrating a notable trend in utilizing the video-sharing platform for political campaign launches. To gear up for the election, YouTube introduced YouChoose in March 2007, providing a platform that enabled candidates to disseminate their messages through speeches and advertisements in video format. You Choose has become a platform that enables the voters to reach the candidate, ask questions to the candidate and express their opinions in the political process (Takaragawa & Carty 2012). Emruli et al. (2011) found that the utilization of online videos in political campaigns not only played a significant role in shaping the campaign process but also exerted a measurable impact on election outcomes.

YouTube supports the development of the democratic process, as it provides not only a traditional form of one-way communication but also a forum and tool for two-way communication. As a matter of fact, many studies have shown that Generation Z uses YouTube frequently for various purposes, including political information. For example, in a study conducted in the USA, it was concluded that social media is the medium that many members of Generation Z use the most to receive political news (Grace, 2020). However, it is also observed that political campaigns prepared through YouTube are often based on speculation and misinformation. As a matter of fact, in a study by Chen and Wang (2022), the potential harms of promoting misinformation-based political campaigns via YouTube are explained and the need for re-evaluation of such campaigns is underlined. In addition, members of Generation Z find it important to pay attention to some issues in political marketing activities carried out via YouTube. In this context, transparency and openness to interaction are among the elements they especially seek. As a matter of fact, in the study conducted by Aktepe and Durukan (2022), it was emphasised that in cases where the question-answer activity is not carried out, comments on the broadcasts are closed and the answers given to the questions of the participants are not clear, they are targeted by the harsh criticism of Generation Z and this situation is defined by this generation with the expression *lynching*

Instagram is one of the social media channels that Generation Z uses intensively. In the study conducted by Parmelee et al. (2023), the following conclusion was reached in in-depth interviews with Generation Z who use Instagram intensively: Visual and verbal Instagram posts of politicians can have an impact on the beliefs and actions of this generation. In a study, it was concluded that Instagram has the greatest impact on voting behaviour on Generation (Baykal, 2019). Bosetta & Schmokel (2022) found that posts displaying anger are less likely to perform highly on Instagram compared to calm posts and that Instagram users reward politicians' emotionality. Another result of the study is that the reactions of different generations to the emotions obtained through social media measurements reveal a generational conflict in terms of how they prefer their political leaders to be.

Blogs, another important social media channel, offer digital platforms where different types of communication can be added: Videos, articles, pictures and audio, etc. Blogs are easy to use. The simplicity

of the platform has resulted in a surge in the quantity of online journals and individuals engaging in blogging activities (Bigi, 2013). As a result of the studies conducted by Buccoliero et al. (2018) in the US presidential election in 2016, it has been seen that the micro blogging platform has become a platform that attracts more attention every day.

While there are studies on the contribution of viral communication to political marketing activities, it is also possible to confirm studies on the negative impact of some viral messages that have the potential to harm parties on the course of elections. For example, in the 2020 presidential elections in ABD, it was observed that they were trying to carry out perception operations through viral messages. Various instances of misinformation circulated during the election period, reflecting a polarized political landscape. A right-wing radio commentator alleged that Democrats were planning a coup against President Trump on Election Day, while an extreme left-wing source falsely claimed Trump's involvement in a plot to kidnap Michigan's Democratic governor. Additionally, as the post-election period unfolded, unfounded claims emerged suggesting that President Biden was stealing the election from Trump, gaining traction rapidly (Perloff, 2021). It is possible to multiply such examples. Such negative examples may also lead to changes in Generation Z's perspectives on political marketing campaigns carried out through social media. As a matter of fact, Divenyi (2020) stated in his study that the majority of Generation Z can perceive a relationship between manipulation of people on social media and political marketing.

Ultimately, social media has emerged as a powerful educator, shaping the beliefs, ideas, and political ideologies of entire generations, a phenomenon not fully appreciated at its inception. Initially viewed primarily as a tool for advertising campaigns, its profound influence on shaping political perspectives has become evident. Recognizing this transformative power, political parties must prioritize the dissemination of their ideas via social media, realizing that investing in this strategy today could yield significant dividends in shaping the political landscape decades hence (Rinaudo, 2023).

The research hypotheses, which are conceptually justified in line with the above literature on the relationship between political marketing and viral communication, are listed below:

H1. The product factor, which is one of the sub-dimensions of political marketing, significantly affects viral communication.

H2. The price factor, which is one of the sub-dimensions of political marketing, significantly affects viral communication.

H3. The place factor, which is one of the sub-dimensions of political marketing, significantly affects viral communication.

H4. The promotion factor, which is one of the sub-dimensions of political marketing, significantly affects viral communication.

H9. Political marketing has a significant impact on viral communication.

### **1.1.3 Political Consent**

In ancient societies, the concept of "the consent of the governed" wasn't primarily tied to universal suffrage as we understand it today. Instead, it revolved around the approval of those directly involved in physical conflict—the troops. The introduction of voting in early communities served as a mechanism to gauge whether the common soldiers, the backbone of any military action, supported the proposed decisions of their leaders (Smith, 1914). Political consent is the consent of the governed and the approval of those who rule. On the other hand, the rulers convince the governed (Ceylan et al., 2019). Gaining the approval of the electorate is the fundamental aspect of attaining political power. This is only possible with correct communication. In other words, the only condition for governments to maintain their power is the continuation of popular support. For this reason, it is important to continue political communication activities effectively (Ince, 2012).

The correct understanding of the content of the given political consent, it's voluntary and willingness, the availability of options, etc. are extremely important in terms of the reality of political consent (Miller &

Wertheimer 2010). Effective utilization of political marketing tools is crucial at this juncture, as their proper application will play a pivotal role in shaping and enhancing communication strategies for establishment purposes. When the studies on Generation Z's approaches to political marketing and political consent are analysed, it is observed that young people both enter into the spiral of silence of the digital age and feel the pressure created by the concept of surveillance society. For example, in the research conducted by Gürel and Eyüboğlu (2023) on Generation Z youth, it was concluded that although the participants show an engagement with the online political agenda, their participation tends to be passive. In addition, another result of the study was that the participants expressed that they were concerned about the potential misuse of their personal digital data and doubts about the accuracy of the political content they encountered online.

The research hypotheses, which are conceptually justified in line with the above literature on political consent and viral communication, are listed below:

H5. Viral communication significantly affects the responsibility factor, which is one of the sub-dimensions of political consent.

H6. Viral communication significantly affects the Righteousness factor, which is one of the sub-dimensions of political consent.

H7. Viral communication significantly affects the Competence factor, which is one of the sub-dimensions of political consent.

H8. Viral communication significantly affects the Free Will factor, which is one of the sub-dimensions of political consent.

H10. Political marketing has a significant effect on political consent.

H11. Viral communication has a significant impact on political consent.

## 2 Methodology

This study was type cross-sectional quantitative because to examine the relationships between variables measured at a specific time. The Generation Z was determined as the population in the study. The main reasons for this are that Generation Z is one of the generations that use social media the most, it is an undecided group that can affect political results, and it is the group with the highest potential to be affected by political marketing. On the other hand, the following steps were taken to ensure that the sample represents this demographic group: (1) The demographic characteristics targeted in sample selection were determined. (2) Sampling criteria were defined. (3) Sampling method was selected. (4) Data were collected from 511 participants. During the data collection process, attention was paid to demographic characteristics to ensure that they accurately represented the targeted demographic group. (5) Frequency analysis and descriptive analysis were performed to evaluate whether the sample accurately represented the targeted demographic groups. When the results were analysed according to demographic characteristics, the representativeness of the sample was better understood.

According to TUIK's December 2019 data, the population of Turkey is 83,154,997. According to these data, the number of individuals from Generation Z is 13,304,799 and the ratio of men in this group is 51.15% and the ratio of women is 48.85% (TUIK, 2020; Erdoğan & Koçyiğit, 2021). Due to constraints in reaching the entire Generation Z population, the research adopted a purposeful sampling approach, a type of non-probability sampling. The study was conducted online and included a total of 520 participants. Subsequently, questionnaires from 9 participants were excluded due to incomplete or inaccurate data, resulting in a final dataset of 511 participants for the analysis.

The study employed the survey technique, a widely utilized method for collecting primary data, conducted through an online platform. The questionnaire utilized in the research comprises two distinct sections. In the first part, 3 scales were used. The first of these is the "political consent" scale adapted from the study of Ceylan et al. (2019). The second scale is the "viral communication" scale created by using the studies of

Zernigah and Sohail (2012). The third scale is the "political marketing" scale created using the following studies: (O'Cass, 2002; Niffenegger, 1988; Baines at al., 2003; Kotler, 1975; Wring, 1997; Harris, 2000; Henneberg, 2006); The second part of the questionnaire is aimed at determining the demographic characteristics of the participants. The questionnaire is prepared in Turkish. All expressions in the used scales are scaled according to a 5-point Likert scale. Research results are limited to the period of September 2020-October 2020, when research data was collected.

Frequency analysis, confirmatory factor analysis and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis were carried out in the scope of the research to investigate the correlation between political marketing, viral communication, and political consent. First of all, the study investigated whether sub-dimensions of political marketing have a significant effect on viral communication and political consent. Secondly, it was investigated whether the main dimension of political marketing has a significant effect on the main dimensions of viral communication and political consent, and whether the main dimension of viral communication has a significant effect on the main dimension of political consent.

Google Forms was selected as the online survey platform in the study. After the questionnaires were uploaded to Google Forms, the survey link was shared with the participants in the sample group via social media platforms (WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook) and the questionnaire was filled out. Factors such as ease of use, features and cost (time, labour and financial) were taken into consideration when choosing the Google Forms platform. Participation in the survey was voluntary. Within the scope of informed consent regarding ethical issues in the research, it was declared to the participants that their responses would be kept completely confidential, no information indicating their identity would be collected, participation in the survey was completely voluntary, their participation was voluntary, there was no obligation, their responses would be completely anonymous, and personal identifying information such as Internet browsers and IP addresses would not be collected. It was also stated that they had the right to leave the survey at any stage and that they could correct their answers or request deletion at any time.

### 3 Results

The data collected in the study were encoded and transferred to the statistics program and analyzed. While determining the tests to be carried out, it was primarily examined whether the data were normally distributed over the kurtosis-skewness values. As a result of the kurtosis-skewness normality test performed on the research data, it was determined that the data showed a normal distribution.

Table I shows the demographic data of the participants and reveals a balanced representation in terms of gender, with 51.9% of participants being men and 48.1% women, suggesting an equitable distribution. The average age of 19.17 aligns well with the Z generation focus of the study. Turning to participants' monthly household income, the breakdown is as follows: 22.5% earn 2500 TL or less, 30.7% fall within the 2501-5000 TL range, 28.6% have incomes between 5001-7500 TL, and 18.2% enjoy household incomes of 7500 TL and above. In terms of income distribution, it can be said that there is a distribution suitable for the general structure of the society.

**Table I.** Descriptive analysis of the sociodemographic characteristics of the participants.

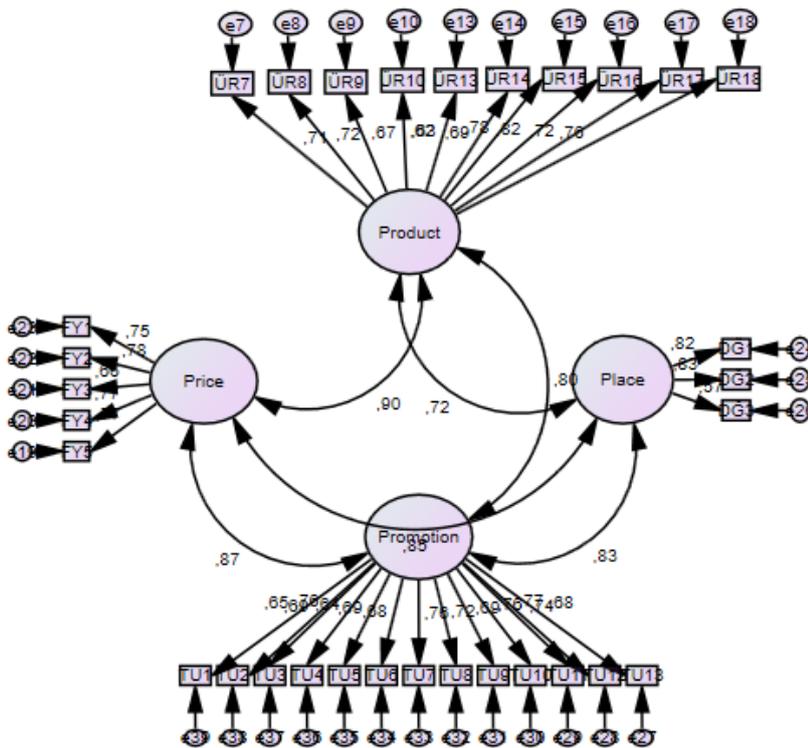
<b>Demographic Variables</b>		
	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	265	51,9
Female	246	48,1
Total	511	100,0
<b>Average of Age</b>		19,17
	Frequency	Percentage
Monthly Household Income		
2500 TL and below	115	22,5
2501-5000	157	30,7
5001-7500	146	28,6
7500 TL and above	93	18,2
Total	511	100,0

Nota: n=511.

### 3.1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Goodness of fit index (GFI) are used in defining how well conceptually generated model explains the obtained data. GFI are tested via *Confirmatory Factor Analysis* (CFA), in other words via a measurement model. As a result of the CFA, the model structure is accepted according to the goodness of fit values of the political marketing communication factor. In Figure 1, the results of political marketing CFA are presented:

The GFI serves as a critical phase in deciding whether to accept or reject a model. In assessing the acceptability of a model's GFI structure, *Root Mean Square Error of Approximation* (RMSEA) values play a pivotal role. RMSEA values below 0.05 are considered excellent, those between 0.05 and 0.08 are deemed acceptable, values ranging from 0.08 to 0.1 are considered marginal, and values exceeding 0.1 are considered poor (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993; Arbuckle, 2013). The RMSEA value of the research model is 0,080.  $\chi^2 / df=4,31$  and  $p<0.000$ .



**Figure 1.** Political marketing confirmatory factor analysis.

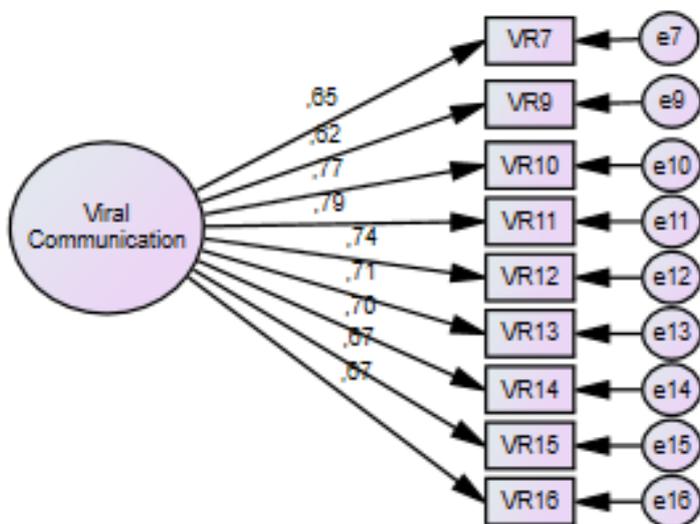
As seen in Table 2, the following results were obtained: Following the initial CFA, variables with standardized regression coefficients below 0.7 were excluded from the factor. Subsequently, a second round of CFA was conducted with the refined set of variables. Accordingly, 8 questions with a coefficient below the expected value in the political marketing factor were dropped (in order, starting from the lowest) and CFA was re-implemented. When the goodness of fit values are examined after the removed questions, it is seen that the acceptable values are provided by the model. The favorable outcome of the model fitting implies that we can assess the estimated structural coefficients by testing the hypotheses (Ayyıldız & Cengiz, 2006). Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) value for the reliability of the Political Marketing scale used in the study was found to be 0.967. This value shows that the political marketing scale is quite reliable.

**Table 2.** Political marketing variable goodness of fit values.

	$\chi^2$	p	$\chi^2/df$	CFI	NFI	IFI	GFI	AGFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Acceptable Goodness of Fit Index	Lowest	>0,05 Insignificant	≤5	≥0,90	≥0,90	≥0,90	≥0,85	≥0,80	≤0,080	≤0,090
Model Goodness of Fit Index	1802,743	0,000	4,31	0,87	0,86	0,88	0,89	0,87	0,080	0,053

### 3.1.1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Viral Communication Variable

When viral communication CFA and goodness of fit values are examined, it is seen that the fit values of the factor are above the acceptable level (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Viral communication variable goodness of fit values.

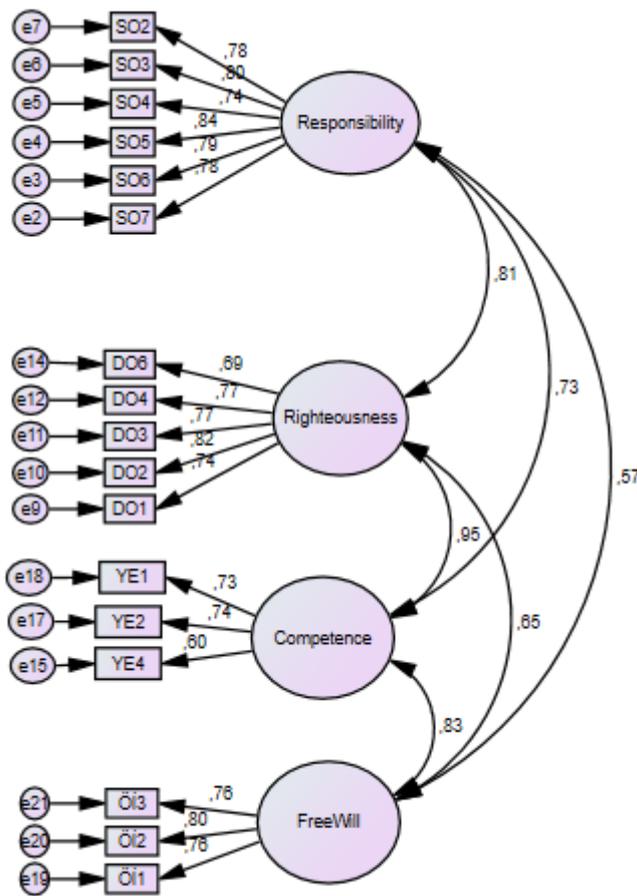
In CFA performed for the viral communication factor, no questions were removed from the factor because the standardized regression coefficients of all observed variables were above 0.70. When the goodness of fit values of the viral communication factor are examined, it is seen that  $\chi^2 / df = 2.38$  and  $p < 0.000$ , and the RMSEA value is, 052. When other goodness of fit indexes are examined, it is seen that the viral communication factor has acceptable goodness of fit values, moreover, the factor has excellent goodness of fit values. Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) value for the reliability of the Viral Communication scale used in the research was found to be 0.849. This value shows that the viral communication scale is quite reliable.

**Table 3.** Viral communication variable goodness of fit values.

	$\chi^2$	p	$\chi^2/df$	CFI	NFI	IFI	GFI	AGFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Acceptable Goodness of Fit Index	Lowest	>0,05 Insignificant	$\leq 5$	$\geq 0,90$	$\geq 0,90$	$\geq 0,90$	$\geq 0,85$	$\geq 0,80$	$\leq 0,080$	$\leq 0,090$
Model Goodness of Fit Index	50,100	0,000	2,38	0,98	0,97	0,98	0,97	0,95	0,052	0,024

### 3.1.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Political Consent Variable

When the values of goodness of fit obtained as a result of the confirmatory factor analysis of the Political Consent variable are examined, it is seen that the fit values of the factor are above the acceptable level and the model fit in the factor structure of the 4 sub-dimensions is quite good (Figure 3).



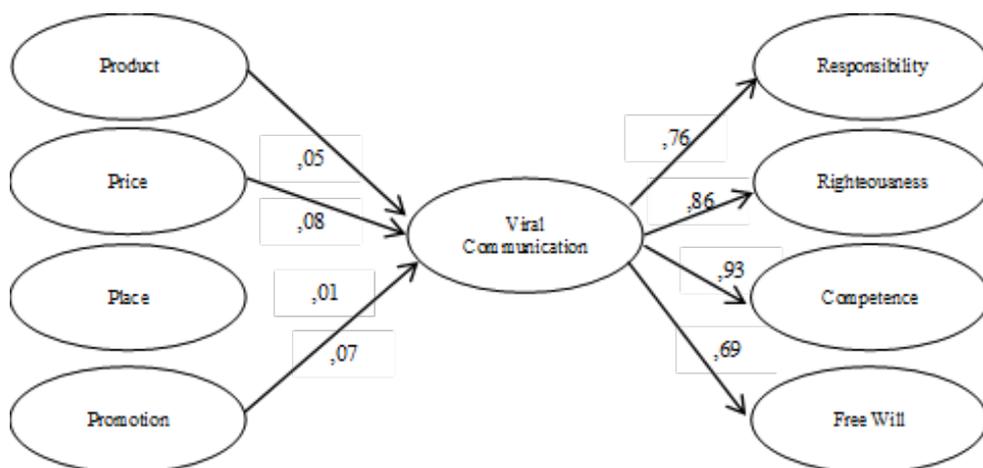
**Figure 3.** Political consent variable goodness of fit values.

Table 4 displays the findings obtained after CFA of the political consent latent variable, consists of four sub-dimensions. Throughout this process, observed variables with standardized regression coefficients below 0.70 were removed from the factor, and CFA was re-performed. Accordingly, 4 questions with a coefficient below the expected value in the political consent factor were dropped (in order, starting from the lowest) and CFA was re-implemented. When the goodness of fit values are examined after the removed questions, it is seen that the acceptable values are provided by the model. When the goodness of fit values of the Political Consent factor are examined, it is seen that  $\chi^2 / df = 3.10$  and  $p < 0.000$ , and the RMSEA value is 064. When other goodness of fit indices (CFI = .95; NFI = .94; IFI = .96; GFI = .93; AGFI = .90 and SRMR = .040) were examined, it was determined that the political consent factor had acceptable goodness of fit values, moreover, the factor had excellent goodness of fit values. Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) value for the reliability of the Political Consent scale, which is another variable used in the study, was found to be 0.941. This value shows that the political consent scale is quite reliable.

**Table 4.** Political consent variable goodness of fit values.

	$\chi^2$	p	$\chi^2/df$	CFI	NFI	IFI	GFI	AGFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Acceptable Goodness of Fit Index	Lowest	>0,05 Insignificant	≤5	≥0,90	≥0,90	≥0,90	≥0,85	≥0,80	≤0,080	≤0,090
Model Goodness of Fit Index	326, 416	0,000	3,10	,95	,94	,96	,93	,90	0,64	0,040

### 3.1.3 Structural Model Results



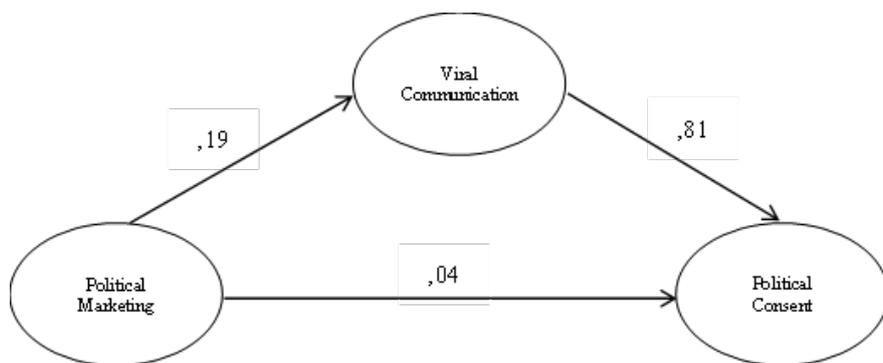
**Figure 4.** Structural model I.

Also, it was determined that the variables of product, price, distribution, and promotion, which are among the sub-dimensions of political marketing, do not have a significant effect on viral communication ( $p>.05$ ) (Table 5). Accordingly, hypotheses H1, H2, H3 and H4 could not be confirmed. On the other hand, it was determined that viral communication has a significant effect on the responsibility variable ( $\beta=.759$ ;  $p<.001$ ), which is one of the sub-dimensions of political consent. Accordingly, hypothesis H5 is accepted. Similarly, it was determined that viral communication has a very strong significant effect on the righteousness variable ( $\beta=.859$ ;  $p<.001$ ), which is one of the political consent sub-dimensions. Accordingly, hypothesis H6 is accepted. It was observed that viral communication had a very strong and significant effect ( $\beta=.930$ ;  $p<.001$ ) on the competence variable, another sub-dimension of political consent. Accordingly, hypothesis H7 is accepted. It has been determined that viral communication has a statistically significant effect ( $\beta=.686$ ;  $p<.001$ ) on free will, variable another political consent sub-dimension. Accordingly, hypothesis H8 is accepted. These results show that the sub-dimensions of political marketing do not have any significant effect on viral communication (Figure 4). On the other hand, viral communication has a high and statistically significant effect on all sub-dimensions of political consent. In line with all this information, the conceptual model has been accepted and it has been determined that viral communication has a very strong predictive role on political consent (Figure 5).

**Table 5.** Structural model I.

Dependent Variables	Independent Variables	Direct Impact	Indirect Impact	Total Impact (SRW)	S.E.	C.R.	P
Viral Communication	<--- Product (PM)	,046	,000	,046	,037	,959*	
Viral Communication	<--- Price (PM)	,083	,000	,083	,041	1,687*	
Viral Communication	<--- Place (PM)	,008	,000	,008	,054	,169*	
Viral Communication	<--- Promotion (PM)	,069	,000	,069	,036	1,457*	
Responsibility (PC)	<--- Viral Communication	,759	,000	,759	,075	13,283***	
Righteousness (PC)	<--- Viral Communication	,859	,000	,859	,073	13,337***	
Competence (PC)	<--- Viral Communication	,930	,000	,930	,076	13,723***	
Free Will (PC)	<--- Viral Communication	,686	,000	,686	,086	11,550***	

\*\*\* $p<.001$ , \* $p>.05$ .



**Figure 5.** Structural model results 2.

As seen in Table 6, it was determined that political marketing did not have a statistically significant effect ( $p>.05$ ) on viral communication. Accordingly, hypothesis H9 could not be confirmed. In the model established, it is seen that political marketing has no statistically significant effect ( $p>.05$ ) on the political consent variable. Accordingly, hypothesis H10 could not be confirmed. On the other hand, it was determined that viral communication has a statistically significant and extremely strong effect on the main variable of political consent ( $\beta=.815$ ;  $p<.001$ ). Accordingly, hypothesis H11 is accepted. To make a general evaluation based on the results found, the following can be said: Political marketing does not have a statistically significant effect on neither viral communication nor political consent. However, viral communication has significant and powerful effects on political consent. Therefore, the results found reveal the necessity of marketing activities within the framework of viral strategies. In other words, it will be much more effective to use viral marketing strategies rather than traditional marketing elements to influence voter behavior and gain political consent of the voters. Therefore, viral marketing communication, which is one of the most important marketing strategy that shapes political consent, is one of the most effective strategies of today. As a result, traditional political marketing activities do not have any effect on either viral communication or political consent, whereas the strong effect of viral communication on political consent reveals the need for a change in marketing strategies. In this context, remarkable and interesting messages that can create a viral cycle have a significant impact on voters and make them a part of the viral cycle.

**Table 6.** Structural model results 2.

Dependent Variables	Independent Variables	Direct Impact	Indirect Impact	Total Impact (SRW)	S.E.	C.R.	P
Viral Communication	<--- Political Marketing	,187	,000	,187	,039	3,847*	
Political Consent	<--- Viral Communication	,815	,000	,815	,076	12,659***	
Political Consent	<--- Political Marketing	,040	,000	,040	,031	1,247*	

#### 4 Discussion

The analysis of participant socio-demographics unveils a near-equal split, with 51.9% identifying as male and 48.1% as female. This balanced representation across genders indicates an equitable distribution within the sample. The average age of 19.17 aligns seamlessly with the study's focus on the Z generation. Regarding participants' monthly household income, the data showcases a diverse breakdown: 22.5% earning 2500 TL or less, 30.7% falling within the 2501-5000 TL range, 28.6% having incomes between 5001-7500 TL, and 18.2% enjoying household incomes of 7500 TL and above. This distribution reflects a fitting representation of the general societal income structure.

Characteristics of Generation Z members make it necessary for politicians to change their marketing methods. Because this generation spends the most time online. It is much more difficult for political parties to influence this generation, which has very different ideas from the groups formed by other voters, with traditional political marketing methods. For this reason, it is important to develop new strategies in order to reach the members of this generation and affect their election choices.

Upon reviewing the existing literature, it becomes apparent that, for the most part, there is a favorable correlation between political marketing and viral communication except for exceptions. The positive relationship between political consent and viral communication in this study is consistent with the results of the studies in the literature. To give an example to the studies in this field; Gülsünler (2014) researched the effect of viral marketing on political communication in her study using the documentary review method. As a result of the study, it was emphasized that American and Turkish politicians frequently use social media tools and it was determined that viral communication used within the scope of political marketing studies had a significant effect on consumers. According to the research conducted by Williams and Trammell in 2005, they highlighted the significance of email messages as potent instruments in political marketing. They underscored that email messages serve as a type of viral marketing, presenting a distinctive approach to addressing the selective exposure problem.

Goldstein (2007) emphasized the effect of the internet on democracy, in particular for the orange revolution in Ukraine in 2004. In the study, it was emphasized that instant sharing of political messages on digital networks over the internet and mobile phones gave results. Therefore, the contribution of viral communication in achieving this spread can be clearly observed. In the study conducted by Leppäniemi et al. (2010), it was emphasized that viral campaigns are successful and cost effective, and it was stated that negative feedback in viral campaigns is always minimal. Ross and Bürger (2014) investigated the social media usage patterns and purposes of New Zealand MPs. As a result of their work, it has been shown that although MPs emphasize the use of social media for voter participation, most politicians use social media to distribute information and make themselves "visible" and "cool" to the public.

It is crucial for political entities and leaders to effectively disseminate their political messaging across diverse platforms. These channels should possess the essential attributes to inform the public, convey accurate messages, and initiate a constructive viral cycle (Bigi, 2013). So it would not be wrong to say that current and future candidates will need to invest in online technology. Otherwise, too much time and energy will be wasted (Smith, 2010).

The remarkable and impressive posts of political parties and political leaders using all platforms that have viral effects, especially social media accounts, will have an impact on the members of Generation Z and will be effective in getting their political support. In this context, it is important that politicians speak the same language as Generation Z in their posts, follow the reactions to these posts, and ultimately benefit from the dynamism of social media to the maximum extent. If expertise regarding these applications can be obtained from internal party resources, these resources can be used. However, considering the importance of social media use for Generation Z, it is possible to say that it would be a much more correct approach to purchase a professional consultancy service from outside the institution (Kutlu & Altuntaş, 2019).

On the other hand Relative advantages and disadvantages of social media, ongoing is a matter of debate. Frequently cited disadvantages of social media include; a decrease in real-world personal connections and cyber bullying, stalking, hacking and other privacy concerns is in place. Some of the advantages of social media are that users can be to keep in touch with their friends and family, to connect with like-minded people, often for free as it allows them to expand their business contacts. Social One of the most important advantages of the media is undoubtedly communication is extremely fast and efficient. For this reason to raise awareness of social media, social and political issues and It has also been frequently used to organise demonstrations. As a matter of fact, in the USA In a study conducted on Generation Z living in Turkey, it was found that the participants were politically It has been observed that the issues they are most interested in are social problems. The respondents used traditional TV and other media for current information traffic on relevant issues. that they follow news from social media rather than news websites They did not have any political views. In the same study, the participants also stated that political developments are generally they follow social media (Carufel, 2020; Çakirkaya, 2022). Thus, new generations with many different cultures, different languages, different views and approaches people who live in different societies. can lead to the emergence of interaction between people (Kaplan, 2020).

## 5 Limitations

This study has some limitations. (1) Sample Selection and Generalisation Limitations: The sample used in the study has specific geographical, demographic and cultural characteristics. This may limit the

generalisation of the results of the study and may not be valid for different regions or communities. (2) Methodological Limitations: Due to the cross-sectional nature of the study, it is based only on data from a specific time period. This may make it difficult to assess changes over time or long-term effects. (3) Measurement Limitations: The measurements and data collection methods used in the study may not reflect the full aspects of a particular topic, which may affect the results of the study. (4) Theoretical Framework Limitations: The theoretical model used in the study may not fully explain the issue or may ignore some factors. Therefore, new models can be tested with different variables. (5) Limitations of Determining Independent Variables: The independent variable analysed in the study was determined as political marketing. Political marketing was used as the only independent variable that is thought to affect political consent through viral communication. (6) Time Limitations: The fact that the research was conducted in a limited period of time limits the relationships between variables. A longer time frame may be needed to evaluate long-term effects. (7) Direction of Effect Limitations: The direction of the effects analysed in the study is one-sided. This may lead to a general picture and limited analyses of the results. (8) Data Access and Reliability Limitations: There are certain limitations regarding the full accessibility or reliability of the data used for the research. This situation affects the results of the study and makes it difficult to generalise. These limitations should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results of the study and planning the design of future research.

As a suggestion for future research, long-term data can be analysed using different methods (panel data analysis, etc.). The research can track the effects of political marketing over time by collecting data before, during and after a specific political campaign. In the data collection process, methods such as online surveys, focus groups and social media analyses can be used. In order to determine the mediating role of viral communication, a network analysis can also be conducted to analyse how political messages and content are spread and interacted with on social media platforms.

On the other hand, this research has helped us to gain a deeper understanding of the effects of political marketing on voter behaviour and to identify the role of viral communication in these effects. Moreover, by providing a descriptive perspective, it has revealed how political marketing has changed over time and the effects of these changes on political consent. The findings of this study can make a valuable contribution to political science, political marketing, viral communication literature and political communication strategies.

In similar researches to be conducted in this direction, the role of semantic web technology in political marketing, the effect of content sharing platforms on political consent, or the relationship between phygital political communication strategies and voter behavior can be examined. Studies to be carried out in this direction will be able to make significant contributions to the field and the literature.

## **6 Conflict of Interest**

As authors, we declare that the research was conducted without any commercial or financial relationship that could be interpreted as a potential conflict of interest.

## **7 Author Contributions**

Conceptualization, M.Ç.; methodology, M.K.; formal analysis, M.K.; resources, M.Ç.; writing—original draft preparation, M.Ç.; writing—review and editing, M.K. and M.Ç.; visualization, M.K.; supervision, M.K. and M.Ç. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

## **8 Funding**

No funding, grants or other support was received for the conduct of this study.

## **9 Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank Mükremin Yiğit for his support during the data collection phase of this study.

## 10 References

- Abid, A., Roy, S. K., Lees-Marshment, J., Dey, B. L., Muhammad, S. S., & Kumar, S. (2023). Political social media marketing: a systematic literature review and agenda for future research. *Electronic Commerce Research*, 1-36. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10660-022-09636-7>
- Akar, E. (2009). İnternetle değişen siyaset pazarlaması: Dünyadan örneklerle yeni trendler. *Dumlupınar Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 23: 2-9.
- Aktepe, H. S., & Durukan, T. (2022). A Descriptive Study to Determine the Effect of Use of New Social Media Channels in Political Marketing Communications on Generation Z: The Example of Youtube and Twitch. *Journal of Applied & Theoretical Social Sciences*, 4. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0017-8426>
- Arbuckle, J.L. (2013). *IBM SPSS Amos 22 User's Guide*. Amos Development Corporation, SPSS Inc.
- Arklan, Ü. (2006). Siyasal liderlikte karizma olgusu: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan örneğinde teorik ve uygulamalı bir çalışma. *Selçuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 16: 45-65.
- Ayyıldız, H. & Cengiz, A.G.E. (2006). Pazarlama modellerinin testinde kullanılacak yapısal eşitlik modeli (YEM) üzerine kavramsal bir inceleme. *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 11(2): 63-84.
- Baines, P.R., Brennan, R. & Egan, J. (2003). "Market" classification and political campaigning. *Journal of Political Marketing*, 2(2): 47-66. [https://doi.org/10.1300/J199v02n02\\_04](https://doi.org/10.1300/J199v02n02_04)
- Baumgartner, J.C. & Morris, J.S. (2010). Who wants to be my friend? Obama, youth and social networks in the 2008 campaign. J.A. Hendricks, R.E. Denton (ed.), *Communicator-in-Chief: How Barack Obama Used New Media Technology to Win the White House*: 51-66. Lexington Books.
- Baykal, A. (2019). *A Comparative Analysis on Voting Behavior of Generations X, Y and Z: Ankara Case* (Doctoral dissertation, Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University Institute of Social Sciences).
- Bene, M., Petrekanics, M., & Bene, M. (2023). Facebook as a Political Marketing Tool in an Illiberal Context. Mapping Political Advertising Activity on Facebook during the 2019 Hungarian European Parliament and Local Election Campaigns. *Journal of Political Marketing*, 22(3-4), 248-266. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15377857.2023.2221935>
- Bigi, A. (2013). Viral political communication and readability: An analysis of an Italian Political Blog. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 13(2): 209-217. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.1476>
- Borah, P. (2016). Political Facebook use: Campaign strategies used in 2008 and 2012 presidential elections. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 13(4): 326-338. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19331681.2016.1163519>
- Buccoliero, L., Bellio, E., Crestini G. & Arkoudas A. (2018). Twitter and politics: Evidence from the US Presidential Elections 2016. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 26(1): 88-114. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2018.1504228>
- Bossetta, M., & Schmøkel, R. (2023). Cross-platform emotions and audience engagement in social media political campaigning: Comparing candidates' Facebook and Instagram images in the 2020 US election. *Political Communication*, 40(1), 48-68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2022.2128949>
- Carufel, R. (2020). PR pulse: Gen Z, Millennial voting behavior is based on issues, not candidates. <https://www.agilitypr.com/pr-news/public-relations/pr-pulse-gen-z-millennial-voting-behavior-is-based-onissues-not-candidates/>
- Ceylan, F., İspir, N. & Özpolat, A.R. (2019). Siyasal rıza ölçeği. *Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 23(2): 605-629.

- Chen, Y., & Wang, L. (2022). Misleading political advertising fuels incivility online: A social network analysis of 2020 US presidential election campaign video comments on YouTube. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 131, 107202. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2022.107202>
- Cruz, D. & Fill, C. (2008). Evaluating viral marketing: Isolating the key criteria. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 26(7): 743-758. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02634500810916690>
- Cwalina, W., Falkowski, A. & Newman, B.I. (2011). Political marketing: Theoretical and strategic foundations. ME Sharpe.
- Çakirkaya, M. (2022). Siyasal Pazarlamanın Seçmen Davranışlarına Etkisinde Sosyal Medya, Referans Grupları ve Politik İlgilenimin Aracılık Rollerini: Z Kuşağı Üzerine Bir Araştırma. Eğitim Yayınevi.
- Divenyi, M. (2020). Political Marketing in the Digital World: the Case of Cyber Propaganda. Master Thesis, International Business School.
- Dasari, S. & Anandakrishnan, B. (2010). Viral marketing of retail products: A study on the influence of attributes of web portals and incentives offered on user registrations. *IUP Journal of Marketing Management*, 9(1): 99-111.
- Dobebe, A., Toleman, D. & Beverland, M. (2005). Controlled infection! Spreading the brand message through viral marketing. *Business Horizons*, 48(2): 143-149. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2004.10.011>
- Edelson, L., Sakhuja, S., Dey, R., & McCoy, D. (2019). An analysis of united states online political advertising transparency. arXiv preprint arXiv:1902.04385. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.1902.04385>
- Emruli, S., Zejneli T. & Agai, F. (2011). YouTube and political communication macedonian case. *IJCSI International Journal of Computer Science Issues*, 8(4): 460-466.
- Enli, G.S. & Skogerbø, E. (2013). Personalized campaigns in party-centred politics: Twitter and Facebook as arenas for political communication. *Information, Communication & Society*, 16(5): 757-774. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2013.782330>
- Erdoğan, M., & Koçyiğit, M. (2021). The correlation between social media use and cyber victimization: A research on generation Z in Turkey. *Connectist: Istanbul University Journal of Communication Sciences*, (61), 101-125. <https://doi.org/10.26650/CONNECTIST2021-817567>
- Fowler, E. F., Franz, M. M., Martin, G. J., Peskowitz, Z., & Ridout, T. N. (2021). Political advertising online and offline. *American Political Science Review*, 115(1), 130-149. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055420000696>
- Freedman, D.H. (2021). Exclusive: Chris Evans Was Captain America. Now He Wants to Help Gen Z Reshape US Politics. <https://www.newsweek.com/2021/06/25/exclusive-chris-evans-was-captain-americanow-he-wants-help-gen-z-reshape-us-politics-1598792.html>
- Garay, J. P. P., Flores, J. L. E., Uribe-Hernández, Y. C., & Castagnola-Sánchez, C. G. (2021). Political marketing through facebook and its influence on the attitudes of the artesanos electors of Lima Metropolitana. *Revista Turismo Estudios e Práticas-RTEP/UERN*, (01), 1-19.
- Goldstein, J. (2007). The role of digital networked technologies in the Ukrainian Orange Revolution. Berkman Center Research Publication, 2007(14). <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1077686>
- Grace, M.M. (2020). Voices on Voting: Getting Gen Z to the Polls. <https://www.meghanmGrace.com/blog/getting-gen-z-to-the-polls>
- Grusell, M., & Nord, L. (2023). Not so intimate Instagram: Images of Swedish political party leaders in the 2018 national election campaign. *Journal of Political Marketing*, 22(2), 92-107. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15377857.2020.1841709>
- Gülsünler, M.E. (2014). Siyasal iletişimde viral pazarlama: Kuramsal bir çerçeve. *Selçuk İletişim*, 8(3): 76-91.

- Gürel, E. & Eyüboğlu, E. (2023). Political Communication in Digital Media and Online Political Participation of Generation Z. *The Turkish Online Journal of Design Art and Communication*, 13 (4), 980-994. <https://doi.org/10.7456/tojdac.1321756>
- Harder, D. (2020). New voters, new platforms: How first-time Generation Z voters used social media in the 2019 Canadian federal election. <https://doi.org/10.7939/r3-5cm5-ag47>
- Harris P. (2000). To spin or not to spin, that is the question: The emergence of modern political marketing. *The Marketing Review*, 2(1): 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1362/1469347012569436>
- Hendricks, J.A. & Frye, J.K. (2012). Social media and the millennial generation in the 2010 midterm election. H.S.N. Al-Deen, J.A. Hendricks (ed.), *Social Media Usage and Impact*: 183-199, Lexington Books.
- Henneberg, S.C. (2006). Leading or following? A theoretical analysis of political marketing postures. *Journal of Political Marketing*, 5(3): 29-46. [https://doi.org/10.1300/J199v05n03\\_02](https://doi.org/10.1300/J199v05n03_02)
- Hughes, A. & Dann, S. (2009). Political marketing and stakeholder engagement. *Marketing Theory*, 9(2): 243-256. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593109103070>
- İnce, M.E. (2012). Politik pazarlamanın geleneksel pazarlama karmasıyla ilişkilendirilmesi ve Ak Parti örneği, *Konya Ticaret Odası Etüd-Araştırma Servisi Yayınları*: 1-8.
- Jöreskog, K.G. & Sörbom, D. (1993). LISREL 8: Structural equation modeling with the SIMPLIS command language. Scientific Software International.
- Jungherr, A. (2016). Twitter use in election campaigns: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 13(1): 72-91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19331681.2015.1132401>
- Kaplan, E. B. (2020). The millennial/gen Z leftists are emerging: are sociologists ready for them?. *Sociological Perspectives*, 63(3), 408-427. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0731121420915868>
- Kotler, P. (1975). Overview of political candidate marketing, in NA - *Advances in Consumer Research*, 02: 761-770.
- Kotler, P. & Armstrong, G. (2008). *Principles of marketing*. 12. Painos. Person Education Inc.
- Kutlu, Ö. & Altuntaş, A. (2019). Gençlerin kamu politikaları süreçlerine sosyal medya üzerinden katılımı. 2019 SPMS, V. Stratejik Kamu Yönetimi, Sempozyumu Bildiri Kitabı (39-66), İstanbul.
- Leppäniemi, M., Karjaluoto, H., Lehto H. & Goman A. (2010). Targeting young voters in a political campaign: Empirical insights into an interactive digital marketing campaign in the 2007 finnish general election. *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 22(1): 14-37. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10495140903190374>
- Miller, F.G. & Wertheimer, A. (2010). *The ethics of consent: Theory and practice*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195335149.001.0001>
- Mohr, I. (2007). Buzz marketing for movies. *Business Horizons*, 50(5): 395-403. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2007.04.001>
- Newman, B.I. (2001). An assessment of the 2000 US presidential election: a set of political marketing guidelines. *Journal of Public Affairs: An International Journal*, 1(3): 210-216. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.67>
- Niffenegger, P.B. (1988). Strategies for success from the political marketers. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 2(3): 15-21. <https://doi.org/10.1108/eb024729>
- O'cass, A. (2002). Political advertising believability and information source value during elections. *Journal of Advertising*, 31(1), 63-74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2002.10673661>

- O'Cass, A. & Pecotich, A. (2005). The dynamics of voter behavior and influence processes in electoral markets: A consumer behavior perspective. *Journal of Business Research*, 58(4): 406-413. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2003.08.003>
- Ogbidi, J., Basil, G. & Bassey, A.E. (2016). Marketing communication strategies and voters behaviour in electioneering process in Cross River State, Nigeria. *Global Journal of Management and Business Research*, 16(11): 51-62.
- Parmelee, J.H., Perkins, S.C. & Beasley, B. (2023) Personalization of politicians on Instagram: what Generation Z wants to see in political posts, *Information, Communication & Society*, 26:9, 1773-1788, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2022.2027500>
- Perloff, R. M. (2021). *The dynamics of political communication: Media and politics in a digital age*. Routledge.
- Phelps, J.E., Lewis, R., Mobilio, L., Perry, D. & Raman, N. (2004). Viral marketing or electronic word-of-mouth advertising: Examining consumer responses and motivations to pass along email. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 44(4): 333-348. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021849904040371>
- Poon, D.Ck., Lam, S.Sk. (2020). Viral Marketing in Political Communication: Case Study of John Tsang's Campaign in the 2017 Hong Kong Chief Executive Election. In: Ho, A. (eds) *Advances in Human Factors in Communication of Design. AHFE 2019. Advances in Intelligent Systems and Computing*, vol 974. Springer, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20500-3\\_16](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20500-3_16)
- Richey, S. (2008). The autoregressive influence of social network political knowledge on voting behaviour. *British Journal of Political Science*, 38(3): 527-542. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123408000264>
- Rinaudo, B. (2023). *The new teacher of ideas: A study on social media, political influencers, and Generation Z*". Honors Theses. 3002.
- Ross, K. & Bürger, T. (2014). Face to Face (book) social media, political campaigning and the unbearable lightness of being there. *Political Science*, 66(1): 46-62. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032318714534106>
- Skoric, M., Poor, N., Achananuparp, P., Lim, E. P. & Jiang, J. (2012). Tweets and votes: A study of the 2011 Singapore General Election. In 2012 45th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (2583-2591). IEEE. <https://doi.org/10.1109/HICSS.2012.607>
- Smith, M. (1914). The consent of the governed. *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science in the City of New York*, 5(1): 82-88. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1193335>
- Smith, M. (2010). Political campaigns in the Twenty-First Century: Implications of New Media Technology. J.A. Hendricks, R.E. Denton (ed.), *Communicator-in-Chief: How Barack Obama Used New Media Technology to Win the White House*: 139-155. Lexington Books.
- Snow, N. (2010). My fellow blogging Americans: Weblogs and the race for the White House. J.A. Hendricks, R.E. Denton (ed.), *Communicator-In-Chief: How Barack Obama Used New Media Technology to Win the White House*: 67-82. Lexington Books.
- Takaragawa, S. & Carty V. (2012). The 2008 US presidential election and new digital technologies: Political campaigns as social movements and the significance of collective identity. *Tamara: Journal for Critical Organization Inquiry*, 10(4): 73-89.
- TUIK, (2020). *Adrese Dayalı Nüfus Kayıt Sistemi Sonuçları, 2019*. <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Adrese-Dayali-Nufus-Kayit-Sistemi-Sonuclari-2019-33705>
- Van Dijck, J. (2013). *The culture of connectivity: A critical history of social media*. Oxford University Press.
- Waite, B.C. (2010). E-mail and electoral fortunes: Obama's Campaign internet insurgency. J.A. Hendricks, R.E. Denton (ed.), *Communicator-In-Chief: How Barack Obama used New Media Technology to Win the White House*: 105-121. Lexington Books.

Wattal, S., Schuff, D., Mandviwalla, M. & Williams C.B. (2010). Web 2.0 and politics: The 2008 US Presidential Election and an e-politics research agenda. *MIS Quarterly*, 34(4): 669-688. <https://doi.org/10.2307/25750700>

Williams, A.P. & Trammell, K.D. (2005). Candidate campaign e-mail messages in the Presidential Election 2004. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 49(4): 560-574. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764205279438>

Wring, D. (1997). Reconciling marketing with political science: Theories of political marketing. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 13(7): 651-663. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.1997.9964502>

Zernigah, K. I. & Sohail, K. (2012). Consumers' attitude towards viral marketing in Pakistan. *Management & Marketing*, 7(4): 645-662.

### Appendix I: SURVEY FORM

- 1) **Are you from Generation Z?** : ( ) Yes ( ) No, you do not need to fill out the survey, thank you.
- 2) **Your gender** : ( ) Female ( ) Male
- 3) **Total monthly net household income** : ( ) Less than 2000 TL ( ) 2001- 3500 TL ( ) 3501- 5000 TL ( ) 5001- 7500 TL ( ) Over 7501 TL

Please indicate your degree of agreement with the following statements in the political decision-making process!		I strongly disagree	I do not agree	I neither agree nor disagree	I agree	Absolutely I agree
<b>Political Marketing</b>						
ÜR1	Personal characteristics of the Leader/Candidate such as age and gender are important.	1	2	3	4	5
ÜR2	The identity of the Leader/Candidate (ethnic and religious identity, etc.) is important.	1	2	3	4	5
ÜR3	The political experience of the Leader/Candidate is important.	1	2	3	4	5
ÜR4	The actions of the Leader/Candidate in the past are important.	1	2	3	4	5
ÜR5	The leader/candidate's image (charisma, communication and oratory skills, etc.) is important.	1	2	3	4	5
ÜR6	The reputation and reliability of the Leader/Candidate is important.	1	2	3	4	5
ÜR7	The ideology of the Leader/Candidate is important.	1	2	3	4	5
ÜR8	The Leader/Candidate's promises and projects on current issues are important.	1	2	3	4	5
ÜR9	The Leader/Candidate's attitude in handling criticism is important.	1	2	3	4	5
ÜR10	It is important that the Leader/Candidate is seen as a man of the people and the value he attaches to customs/traditions.	1	2	3	4	5
ÜR11	Positive/negative advertisements about the Leader/Candidate are important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
ÜR12	The party from which the candidate is nominated is important.	1	2	3	4	5
ÜR13	The image of the party (its actions in previous periods and its historical background) is important.	1	2	3	4	5
ÜR14	The ideology advocated by the party is important.	1	2	3	4	5
ÜR15	It is important that the current promises in the party program are realistic.	1	2	3	4	5
ÜR16	It is important that the party program appeals to target audiences with different characteristics.	1	2	3	4	5
ÜR17	It is important that the election campaigns in the party program comply with the ideology of the party.	1	2	3	4	5
ÜR18	The political identity of the party is important.	1	2	3	4	5
FY1	It is important for me to go to the polls and vote for the party I support.	1	2	3	4	5
FY2	It is important for me to participate in the election campaigns of the party I support and spend time and effort.	1	2	3	4	5
FY3	It is important for me to provide financial aid (dues, membership fees, donations, etc.) to the party I support.	1	2	3	4	5
FY4	It is important for me to be close to the party that will win the election.	1	2	3	4	5
FY5	The party I will vote for depends on the public, media, bureaucracy, etc. It is important for me to be supported by.	1	2	3	4	5
DĞ1	The rallies organized by the party are important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
DĞ2	The activities of party organizations (provincial-district organizations, women-youth branches, etc.) are important.	1	2	3	4	5

DĞ3	Political activities carried out in election offices are important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
TU1	Advertisements about the Leader/Candidate/Party on television and radio are important.	1	2	3	4	5
TU2	Advertisements about the Leader/Candidate/Party in newspapers and magazines are important.	1	2	3	4	5
TU3	Positive/negative advertisements about the Leader/Candidate/Party are important.	1	2	3	4	5
TU4	Television, radio, newspaper news and television and radio programs are important.	1	2	3	4	5
TU5	Political open sessions, etc. attended by party leaders and candidates. programs are important.	1	2	3	4	5
TU6	Press release, press conference, conference, celebration, etc. Private meetings are important.	1	2	3	4	5
TU7	Posters, flyers, brochures and banners for the Leader/Candidate/Party are important.	1	2	3	4	5
TU8	Balloons, flags, streamers, calendars, etc. were used in my voting decision. Giving gifts is important.	1	2	3	4	5
TU9	News on the Leader/Candidate/Party's website, social media and email messages are important.	1	2	3	4	5
TU10	Mobile phl messages and phl calls sent by Leader/Candidate/Party are important	1	2	3	4	5
TU11	Home, workplace, etc. as a 1-to-1 promotional activity to voters. Visits are important.	1	2	3	4	5
TU12	The personal propaganda of the Leader/Candidate is important.	1	2	3	4	5
TU13	Political campaigns, election music and election campaigns are important.	1	2	3	4	5
Viral Communication						
VR1	I find politically charged Email marketing messages informative.	1	2	3	4	5
VR2	I find political marketing messages shared on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) informative.	1	2	3	4	5
VR3	Blogs used in political marketing studies are an important source of information.	1	2	3	4	5
VR4	I find the political marketing messages I receive via e-mail exciting.	1	2	3	4	5
VR5	I find political party sympathizers' political posts on social networking sites exciting.	1	2	3	4	5
VR6	I find blogs valuable where people share their opinions about political products (leaders, candidates, party programs, etc.) that they find interesting and worth reading.	1	2	3	4	5
VR7	I believe that emails shared within the scope of political marketing may contain viruses.	1	2	3	4	5
VR8	Political marketing messages shared on social media are disturbing.	1	2	3	4	5
VR9	The political marketing messages I provide from Blogs for information purposes are unreliable and misleading.	1	2	3	4	5
VR10	I trust political messages delivered via email.	1	2	3	4	5
VR11	The posts of political party sympathizers on social media sites can be trusted.	1	2	3	4	5
VR12	I trust the political SMS ads I receive.	1	2	3	4	5
VR13	I trust political messages provided by bloggers.	1	2	3	4	5
VR14	I can be a part of viral campaigns with political content if it includes incentives.	1	2	3	4	5
VR15	I think viral marketing is a useful marketing tool for creating political brand awareness.	1	2	3	4	5
VR16	I find viral marketing messages with political content more successful when compared to political marketing messages prepared in traditional media (TV and print ads, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
Political Consent						
SO1	I make my decision to vote of my own free will, without being influenced by anyl.	1	2	3	4	5
SO2	I make my voting decision based on the interests of the country, not my personal calculations.	1	2	3	4	5
SO3	I always try to vote in every election.	1	2	3	4	5
SO4	I make my decision to vote solely of my own free will.	1	2	3	4	5
SO5	I think that I will have a role in determining the future of the country with the vote I cast.	1	2	3	4	5
SO6	I make sure that my decision to vote is mine all.	1	2	3	4	5
SO7	In my decision to vote, I attach importance to the accuracy of the information given by politicians.	1	2	3	4	5
SO8	I have criteria (such as good service, education, experience, beliefs, etc.) that determine my decision to vote.	1	2	3	4	5
DO1	Even though I support his party, I will not vote for a candidate whose intentions I doubt.	1	2	3	4	5
DO2	I won't vote for a candidate who I know is lying.	1	2	3	4	5
DO3	I am not biased in my decision to vote.	1	2	3	4	5
DO4	In my decision to vote, I attach importance to the parties' openness/hl sty towards society.	1	2	3	4	5
DO5	In my decision to vote, I give importance to candidates who offer realistic solutions to the country's problems.	1	2	3	4	5
DO6	Even if they have a different ideology, I vote for the candidate I believe is right.	1	2	3	4	5
YE1	I do research on parliamentary candidates during my voting decision-making process.	1	2	3	4	5
YE2	I do research on mayoral candidates during my voting decision-making process.	1	2	3	4	5
YE3	I do research on parties during my voting decision-making process.	1	2	3	4	5
YE4	I benefit from my experiences in my voting decision-making process.	1	2	3	4	5
Öi1	I determine my voting decision based on the opinions of my social circle.	1	2	3	4	5
Öi2	I determine my voting decision based on the results of the survey conducted before the elections.	1	2	3	4	5
Öi3	Whichever party my family elders vote for, I vote for that party too.	1	2	3	4	5
Öi4	The general perception of society affects my decision to vote.	1	2	3	4	5