

Municipal Engagement on Facebook in Turkey

Differences by Political Party, Region, and Size

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Abstract

Social network sites have changed the ways that all institutions, including municipalities, communicate and engage with their constituents. Also wanting to make use of their many advantages, municipalities use social media as an engagement tool. This study examines how municipalities in Turkey use their Facebook pages to engage with the public and how their engagement differs based on political party, region, and size. The descriptive results reveal that municipalities in Turkey only make use of half of the advantages offered by social media. Statistical analyses indicate there to be a significant difference by political party, geographical region, size of municipalities. One of the more significant findings of the study is that the more municipalities employ engagement strategies, the more followers on Facebook they attract. Moreover, metropolitan municipalities are more efficient at managing their Facebook page, sharing news links and press releases more often than other municipalities. Based on the findings, the study suggests that managing a Facebook page requires greater professional insight and public relations knowledge.

Keywords: Engagement strategies, social media, municipalities, local government, Facebook.

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Received: 13.5.2020 • Accepted: 20.8.2020

<http://ilefdergisi.org>

ilef dergisi • © 2020 • 7(2) • sonbahar/autumn: 247-268

Araştırma Makalesi • DOI: 10.24955/ilef.822773

Türkiye'deki Belediyelerin Facebook Kullanımı:

Siyasi Parti, Bölge ve Büyükölük Ekseninde Farklılıklar

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Öz

Sosyal ağ siteleri, belediyeler dahil tüm kurumların hedef kitleleri ile iletişim kurma ve etkileşim kurma yöntemlerini deęiřtirdi. Belediyeler, sosyal medyanın birçok avantajından yararlanarak onu bir ilişki kurma aracı olarak kullanmaktadırlar. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'deki belediyelerin kitlelerle etkileşim kurmak için Facebook sayfalarını nasıl kullandıklarını ve ilişki kurma düzeylerinin siyasi parti, bölge ve büyüklüğe göre nasıl farklılaştığını incelemektedir. Sonuçlar, Türkiye'deki belediyelerin sosyal medyanın sunduğu avantajların yalnızca yarısından yararlandığını ortaya koymaktadır. İstatistiksel analizler, siyasi parti, coğrafi bölge ve belediyelerin büyüklüklerine göre kullanımda önemli bir farklılık olduğunu göstermektedir. Çalışmanın en önemli bulgularından biri, belediyelerin katılım stratejilerini ne kadar çok kullanırlarsa Facebook'ta o kadar çok takipçi çekiyor olmalıdır. Dahası, büyükşehir belediyeleri Facebook sayfalarını yönetme, haber bağlantılarını ve basın açıklamalarını paylaşma konusunda diğer belediyelere göre daha verimlidir. Bulgulara dayanarak, çalışma bir Facebook sayfasını yönetmenin önemli ölçüde profesyonel içgörü ve halkla ilişkiler bilgisi gerektirdiğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İlişki kurma stratejileri, sosyal medya, belediye, yerel yönetimler, Facebook.

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Makale geliş tarihi: 13.5.2020 · Makale kabul tarihi: 20.8.2020

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As technology improves, so do the methods institutions use to engage with the various communities they serve. Social media (SM) has improved public relations (PR) and has even changed the way that organizations engage and communicate with their audiences (Wright and Hinson 2008, 17). Facebook (FB) has the most daily active users of all social networks. Despite the emergence of new SM applications nearly every year, FB continues to maintain its position of dominance. With 2.41 billion monthly users (Statista 2019), FB is still the largest social network worldwide. In addition to individual users, several types of institutions, like municipalities, utilize FB to engage with their constituents.

Today, it is considered an absolute must for municipalities to use SM, with several studies supporting this view. In fact, one study found that although young adults are unlikely to visit municipalities' web pages, they prefer to interact over digital mediums (Sørum 2018, 93). This clearly indicates that websites are already considered an outdated form of technology by young adults and that they seek new methods, like SM, to engage with others. Given this, municipalities in Turkey, similar to the rest of the world, are currently trying to keep pace with this SM trend (Solmaz and Görkemli 2012; Şenyurt 2016; Ertem-Eray and Pınar 2018).

Municipalities use SM as an engagement tool (Bonsón, Perea, and Bednárová 2019; Lev-On and Steinfeld 2015). The engagement strategies adopted by municipalities have increased in importance since the last elections were so contested in Istanbul. In fact, a study conducted in Portugal indicates that more competitive local elections and higher commitment to transparency serve to increase levels of SM activity (Silvia et al. 2019). There were two municipal elections in Istanbul in 2019. One occurred on March 31, 2019, and the other, which was conducted based on objections, occurred on June 23, 2019. In the second election, only Istanbul and its subordinate towns were included because the incumbent Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) objected to the results indicating that the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP) had won. Based on the last elections, the incumbent AKP won 39 municipalities, the main opposition party, CHP, won 21 municipalities, the People's Democratic Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi, HDP) won 8 municipalities, and the Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP) won 11 municipalities of the total 81 municipalities. There is also one independent municipality government by Turkey's Communist Party (Türkiye Komünist Partisi, TKP) municipality.¹ Therefore, each political party can pursue its own public relations (PR) strategy.

That said, the political party that governs them is not the only difference between municipalities. There are 81 provinces located in the seven different geographical regions of Turkey, each with its own municipal government. A study revealed there to be significant regional differences with regard to internet use across the twelve specific international regions (Peslak 2004). According to the *We Are Social - Digital Report 2019*, SM penetration differs by country. It is therefore expected that some of the factors affecting SM use on the world scale will similarly affect the regions in which these countries are located. Therefore, understanding regional differences is crucial for municipalities in terms of using SM.

Population is a key determinant for municipalities. The aforementioned cities have a relatively larger population than other cities in Turkey. For a province to become a metropolitan area its population must be at least 750,000 people (Union of Municipalities of Turkey). Becoming a metropolitan municipality means that the municipality has a larger budget (depending on

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1 After the research ended, these numbers may have been changed due to the appointment of a trustee.

its population), and one study found that the cities with higher populations use their SM accounts significantly different than do others (Faber, Budduing, and Gradus 2019, 9). Thirty of the municipalities in Turkey are considered metropolitan areas and the rest are regular cities. It is only reasonable, therefore, that municipalities with a larger budget might interact on FB more efficiently than smaller polities.

Based on the aforementioned reasons, the main purpose of the study is to understand how municipalities integrate engagement strategies into their FB pages in Turkey. More specifically, the survey focuses on regional, populational, and political party differences in terms of their use of FB. Since previous studies have restricted their focus to the impact of citizens' "characteristics on municipalities" SM use (Agostino 2013; Gesuele 2016; Lappas et al. 2017), this study offers a novel perspective to the literature.

The current study follows a hybrid model combining content and qualitative analyses. The research examines the FB pages of all the municipalities of the 81 provinces of Turkey to show how they engage with citizens and residents on a social network, meaning that a total of 81 FB pages were subject to content analysis. The study also employs quantitative methods. Specifically, the quantitative analysis reveals whether the size and region of the municipality in addition to the political party governing it affects how municipalities use FB.

The paper is organized into four parts. The first section briefly explains engagement strategies on SM. The second presents the lay of the literature and the third clarifies the method and hypothesis formulated. The fourth and final section is the conclusion.

Engagement strategies on social media

SM has greatly changed the way in which people communicate with each other and, perhaps more importantly, how organizations engage with their audiences. Although there might be no agreed-upon definition for what the term engagement means, the concept is related to participation, which could be considered as the mutual approach and understanding and which is considered the main component of building relationships in a digital environment (Uzunoğlu, Türkel, and Akyar 2017, 2). SM engagement is a measurement of how effectively a company is able to reach its target audience and convey information about its purpose.

Studies on engagement are abundant and there is a trend among current studies to focus on SM and online engagement (Jelen-Sanches 2017). Indeed, existing studies show that online engagement has become an effective PR tool for both non-profit and for-profit organizations (Jiang, Luo, and Kulemeka 2016; Avidar 2017; Voorveld et al. 2018)

Waters et al. (2009) and other scholars have developed three strategies to engage with others, namely disclosure, information disclosure, and involvement (Jo and Kim 2003; Hofman et al., 2013; Bellström, Magnusson, Sören, and Thorén 2016). *Disclosure* refers to the way that communication transparency of different elements on websites, like its description, history, mission statement, and URL. *Information disclosure* means sharing details about organizations, like news, photos, and videos. *Involvement*, however, deals with organizations' efforts to share communication channels, like e-mail addresses and phone numbers. These three dimensions are used in this study to reveal the online engagement strategies of municipalities in Turkey.

Current debates on FB engagement of municipalities

Using FB as a PR tool has recently become increasingly popular among municipalities. There is a multitude of studies portraying FB as an efficient engagement tool. Although municipalities use SM for specific purposes, they have diverse ways of using SM. A study shows that the character of municipal works, innovativeness, technology, management capacity, and stakeholder influence all help predict information distribution, feedback on service quality, participation, and internal collaboration on SM (Oliveira, Gustavo and Welche 2013, 400-402).

Different studies from different perspectives have been conducted to assess how municipalities employ SM. The literature reveals that some studies emphasize different aspects of constituents' engagement whereas other studies focus on municipalities' own activities. Examining both sides of SM, Bonsón, Royo, and Ratkai (2017, 344) concluded that FB page activity is based more on the decision of municipality than a consequence of constituents' demand.

FB is a more effective engagement tool for constituents than other social network sites (SNS). A comparison between municipalities' use of Twitter and FB indicates that higher levels of constituent engagement are obtained on FB profiles than Twitter (Haro-de-Rosario, Sáez-Martín, and del Carmen Caba-Pérez 2018), which can be attributed to the aging of FB users (Statista 2020).

Studies concentrated in different countries reveal varying results. A comparative study examining the US, the UK, and Spain demonstrates there

to be no relationship between population and degree of FB use (Miranda, Chamorro, and Rubio 2018, 214). Another study conducted in Sweden shows that municipalities' adoption of SM revolves around providing more conventional services via their websites (Lidén and Larsson 2016, 348). A regional study emphasizes that SM provides key amenities to local governments in Mercosur countries. The findings reveal that SM dialogue strategies have a positive effect on online participation, especially if when municipalities seek to promote a dialogical loop through SM (del Mar Gálvez-Rodríguez, et al. 2018, 272).

Although municipalities make extensive use of SNS, there are still several problems in municipalities' involvement in SM. Larsson (2013) indicates that the use of SM by municipal governments in Sweden is somewhat lackadaisical and in some cases on the decline, perhaps due to the legal risks concerned. Another study (Bennett and Manoharan 2017, 325) demonstrates that although most cities have incorporated SM into their daily operations, many do not follow or even have effective SM policies.

Conducting a study on German municipalities, Hofmann, Beverungen, Räckers, and Becker devised five categories for a FB page, namely *provision* of current information (frequency of posts, comments), *marketing* (reference to government services on info page), *co-design* (reference to co-creation on the info page), *f-transaction* (link to the government website on the info page), and *multi-media features* (number of posts that include pictures, videos, etc.) (2013, 389). Waters et al. used three main dimensions, *disclosure*, *information dissemination*, and *involvement*, in their study, and this work adds another dimension, *popular*, to these categories (2009, 104). Conducting a study on regional governments in the Czech Republic, Bachman used six segments to measure social engagement, *page activity* (measured by the number of posts published), *page popularity* (measured by the number of likes), *citizen loyalty* (measured by the number of followers), *responsiveness* (measured by the number of user reactions), *involvement* (measured by the number of comments), and *virality* (measured by the number of shares) (2019, 2).

However, just as there are studies that reveal the beneficial sides of using SM, other studies indicate the lack of any effect. Conducting a study in the Netherlands, Effing, Hillegersberg, and Huibers found that SM use and sense of community have a negative relationship (2013, 65).

Unlike previous studies, this study underlines the differences that political parties use SM at the municipal level, which is quite rare in literature.

Method and hypothesis

This study aims to demonstrate the municipalities' online engagement strategies and reveal any differences based on political party, region, and size. To this end, the following research question is asked: How do municipalities integrate engagement strategies into their FB pages?

To answer this question, we subjected the FB pages of 81 municipalities to content analysis using the 20 categories determined by Water et al. in their study on non-profit organizations' FB pages (Water et al. 2009). As a result, some of the items would be inappropriate for a municipality's website. This then led us to use other studies in the literature to make changes to some of the categories. Accordingly, in addition to the PR strategies in the works of Waters et al. (2016), Agostino (2013), Hofmann et al. (2013), Bellström et al. (2016), and Miranda et al. (2018), we included the following categories: bulletin, link to other social media account, verified or not, and number of followers. PR strategies used by municipalities in our study and their references are presented in Table 1.

After obtaining a guide to answer the research question, the following hypotheses were developed based on the PR score.

After analyzing municipalities' FB page usage, we obtained an average PR score and then divided municipalities based on political party in power, geographical region, and whether they are a metropolitan area. The following hypothesis were then formulated.

In terms of using PR strategies:

- H1. There is a significant difference among political parties.
- H2. There is a significant difference among geographical regions.
- H3. There is a significant difference between metropolitan and non-metropolitan cities.

In terms of amount of use:

- H4. PR strategies are a predictor of numbers of likes.
- H5. PR strategies are a predictor of numbers of followers.

In terms of PR score:

- H6. There is a significant difference between metropolitan and non-metropolitan cities.
- H7. There is a significant difference among political parties.
- H8. There is a significant difference among geographical regions.

Table 1: The public relations strategies used by municipalities on Facebook

DISCLOSURE	REFERENCE
Description	Waters et al. (2013)
History	Waters et al. (2013)
Mission Statement	Waters et al. (2013)
URL	Waters et al. (2013), Hofmann et al. (2013)
Logo	Waters et al. (2013)
Administrators listed	Waters et al. (2013)
INFORMATION DISSEMINATION	
News links	Waters et al. (2013)
Photo posted	Waters et al. (2013)
Video files	Waters et al. (2013)
Audio files	Waters et al. (2013)
Posted items	Waters et al. (2013)
Discussion w.	Waters et al. (2013)
Press releases	Waters et al. (2013)
Bulletin	Current study
Shared Project or Services	Bellström et al. (2016)
INVOLVEMENT	
E-mail to municipality	Waters et al. (2013)
Link to other social media account	Current study
Phone number	Waters et al. (2013)
Message board used	Waters et al. (2013)
Calendar of events	Waters et al. (2013)
POPULARITY	
Verified or Not	Current study
Like numbers	Miranda et al. (2018), Agostino, (2013)
Follower numbers	Bachman, (2019)

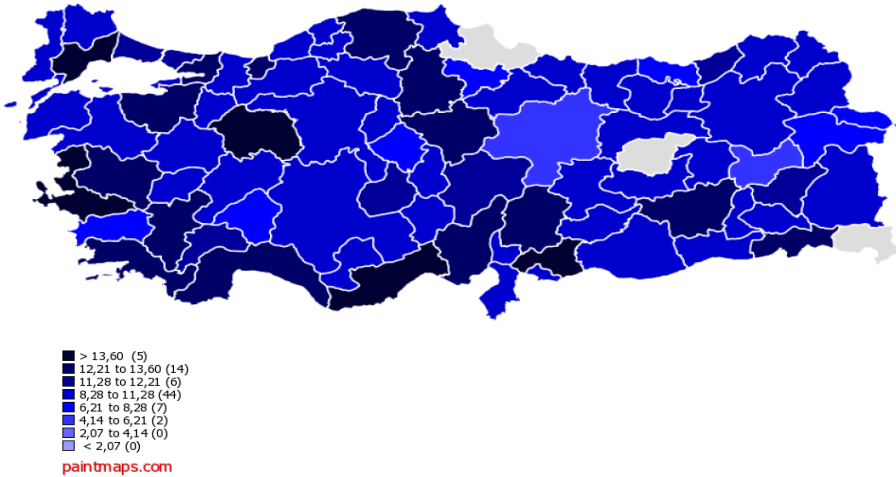
Before revealing the findings, limitations should be mentioned. The current study has certain limitations. Though the statistical analyses conducted in the study reveal the engagement strategies of local governments in Turkey and further demonstrate how the methods they use differ based on several factors, the results are limited strictly to data collected from FB. As such, the study can be enriched by investigating other SNSs.

The findings obtained based on the research question and the hypothesis represented in the section below.

Findings

This section starts by answering the research question and continues by testing the study's hypotheses. Before testing the hypotheses, however, it would be beneficial to share some descriptive statistics. In this study, the maximum PR score (out of a possible 20) earned by a municipality was 15 out of 20 and the minimum was 7 when the missing FB pages are ignored. The average of all municipalities' engagement score was found to be 10.34 ($\mu=10.34$). Figure 1 below depicts municipalities' PR scores.

Figure 1: PR scores of municipalities in Turkey



As a result, we were able to obtain municipalities' PR scores by subjecting the data to content analysis. After this, we examined the study's hypotheses. In order to test H1, we investigated whether any difference existed in how political parties used SM. Table 2 depicts the PR strategies employed by political parties.

We used a chi-square statistical test to determine whether any of the political parties were more likely to merge any of the PR strategies. Of the 20 PR tools evaluated, only three were found to be statistically significant among political parties: URL ($\chi^2= 8.332$, $df=3$, $p=.040$), logo ($\chi^2= 14.874$, $df=3$, $p=.002$), and posted items ($\chi^2= 11.270$, $df=3$, $p=.010$) (H1). Political parties differed in their use of URLs, logos, and posted items on FB.

Table 2: Chi-square test results between PR strategies and political parties

	AKP (JDP)	CHP (RPP)	HDP (PDP)	MHP (NMP)	OTHER (Independent and TCP)
DISCLOSURE					
Description	36(3)	20(1)	7(1)	10(1)	1(1)
History	13(26)	9(12)	1(7)	6(5)	1(1)
Mission Statement	10(29)	9(12)	0(8)	3(8)	0(2)
URL ^b	37(2)	21 (0)	6(2)	11(0)	1(1)
Logo ^b	38(1)	20(1)	5(3)	11(0)	1(1)
Administrators listed	4(35)	2(19)	0(8)	0(11)	0(2)
INFORMATION DISSEMINATION					
News links	13(26)	9(12)	3(5)	3(8)	0(2)
Photo posted	38(1)	21(0)	7(1)	11(0)	1(1)
Video files	37(2)	20(1)	7(1)	11(0)	1(1)
Audio files	0(39)	0(21)	0(8)	0(11)	0(2)
Posted items ^b	38(1)	21(0)	6(2)	11(0)	1(1)
Discussion wall	4(35)	2(19)	1(7)	2(9)	0(2)
Press releases	2(37)	0(21)	1(7)	0(11)	0(2)
Bulletin	0(39)	0(21)	0(8)	1(10)	0(2)
Shared Project or Services	1(38)	1(20)	0(8)	0(11)	0(2)
INVOLVEMENT					
E-mail to municipality	35(4)	21(0)	6(2)	10(1)	1(1)
Link to other social media account	13(26)	9(12)	1(7)	2(9)	0(2)
Phone number	33(6)	21(0)	7(1)	11(0)	1(1)
Message board used	32(7)	19(2)	7(1)	9(2)	1(1)
Calendar of events	21(18)	13(8)	2(6)	6(5)	0(2)
POPULARITY					
Verified or not?	13(26)	5(16)	0(8)	1(10)	0(2)

Note: ^a Frequencies are written in the form of Present (Not Present). ^b $p < .05$.

Likewise, the chi-square test is used for the geographical areas to ascertain whether there are any differences between regions. Mission statements, which constitute only one of the 20 PR tools, were statistically significant (Mission statements $\chi^2 = 15.080$, $df=6$, $p=.020$) (H2). Another study supporting this finding has shown that municipalities differ in how they use SM based on

geography. In Portugal, for instance, municipalities' SM adoption is more innovative in the south than the north of the country (Silva, Tavares, and Lameiras 2019). Therefore, this result underlines that geographical difference can be considered as a valid variable for local governments' SM usage.

Table 3: Chi-square test results between PR strategies and regions

	Total Mun.	Mediter. Region	Aegean Region	Central Anatolia Region	Black Sea Region	South- eastern Anatolia Region	Marmara Region	Eastern Anatolia Region
DISCLOSURE								
Description	74(7)	8(0)	8(0)	12(1)	15(3)	9(0)	11(0)	11(3)
History	30(51)	3(5)	5(3)	8(5)	6(12)	2(7)	5(6)	1(13)
Mission Statement ^b	22(59)	6(2)	3(5)	2(11)	3(15)	3(6)	4(7)	1(13)
URL	76(5)	8(0)	8(0)	13(0)	17(1)	8(1)	11(0)	11(3)
Logo	75(6)	8(0)	8(0)	13(0)	17(1)	8(1)	10(1)	11(3)
Administrators listed	6(75)	1(7)	0(8)	2(11)	1(17)	1(8)	1(10)	0(14)
INFORMATION DISSEMINATION								
News links	28(53)	3(5)	4(4)	5(8)	5(13)	3(6)	6(5)	2(12)
Photo posted	78(3)	8(0)	8(0)	13(0)	17(1)	9(0)	11(0)	12(2)
Video files	76(5)	8(0)	8(0)	12(1)	17(1)	9(0)	11(0)	11(3)
Audio files	0(81)	0(8)	0(8)	0(13)	0(18)	0(9)	0(11)	0(14)
Posted items	77(4)	8(0)	8(0)	13(0)	17(1)	8(1)	11(0)	12(2)
Discussion w.	9(72)	0(8)	1(7)	2(11)	3(15)	2(7)	0(11)	1(13)
Press releases	3(78)	0(8)	0(8)	0(13)	0(18)	2(7)	0(11)	1(13)
Bulletin	1(81)	0(8)	0(8)	0(13)	1(17)	0(9)	0(11)	0(14)
Shared	2(79)	0(8)	1(7)	0(13)	1(17)	0(9)	0(11)	0(14)
Project or Services								
INVOLVEMENT								
E-mail to municipality	73(8)	8(0)	7(1)	12(1)	17(1)	8(1)	11(0)	10(4)
Link to other SM account	25(56)	5(3)	4(4)	6(7)	4(14)	2(7)	1(10)	3(11)
Phone number	73(8)	7(1)	8(0)	13(0)	16(2)	8(1)	11(0)	10(4)
Message board used	68(13)	8(0)	5(3)	11(2)	13(5)	8(1)	11(0)	12(2)
Calendar of events	42(39)	6(2)	6(2)	5(8)	10(8)	5(4)	7(4)	3(11)
POPULARITY								
Verified or not	19(62)	3(5)	2(6)	2(11)	4(14)	3(6)	3(8)	2(12)

Note: ^a Frequencies are written in the form of Present (Not Present). ^b $p < .05$.

According to statistical tests on municipality metropolitan or province size municipality, the following categories were found to be statistically significant: mission statement ($\chi^2=12.563$, $df=1$, $p=.001$), news link ($\chi^2=3.992$, $df=1$, $p=.046$ -continuity correction), press releases (Fisher exact Test= 0.048), and link to other SM account ($\chi^2=6.814$ $df=1$, $p=.009$ -continuity correction) (H3). A study conducted in Macedonian municipalities finds with a larger population to be more active on social platforms (Levkov 2017, 208).

Table 4: Chi-square test results between PR strategies and municipality types

	METROPOLITAN M.	PROVINCE M.
DISCLOSURE		
Description	29(1)	45(6)
History	15(15)	15(36)
Mission Statement ^b	15(15)	7(44)
URL	29(1)	47(4)
Logo	28(2)	47(4)
Administrators listed	0(30)	6(45)
INFORMATION DISSEMINATION		
News links ^b	15(15)	13(38)
Photo posted	29(1)	49(2)
Video files	29(1)	47(4)
Audio files	0(30)	0(51)
Posted items	29(1)	48(3)
Discussion wall	2(28)	7(44)
Press releases ^b	3(27)	0(51)
Bulletin	0(30)	1(50)
Shared Project or Services	1(29)	1(50)
INVOLVEMENT		
E-mail to municipality	28(2)	45(6)
Link to other SM account ^b	15(15)	10(41)
Phone number	28(2)	45(6)
Message board used	27(3)	41(10)
Calendar of events	19(11)	23(28)
POPULARITY		
Verified or not? ^b	14(16)	5(46)

Note: ^a Frequencies are written in the form of Present (Not Present). ^b $p < .05$.

In general, we observed numbers of followers to be higher than numbers of likes, meaning constituents followed their municipalities' FB page without liking

it. A constituent governed by a municipality belonging to a party that s/he does not support, for example, may follow the developments going on without liking the page. This can be considered a passive-aggressive protest by constituents. Based on this observation, we developed H4: Does using more PR strategies (PR score) make a page more liked? Since the rise of the PR score increases the like number of municipalities ($p < 0.05$), the regression test results verified H4.

Table 5: OLS regression results for likes

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²		Std. Error of the Estimate	
.486	.237	.227		31376.075	
ANOVA	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	24112097528.191	1	24112097528.191	24.493	.000***
Residual	77772188074.698	79	984458076.895		
Total	101884285602.889	80			
Dependent Variable: Likes	Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B		Beta		
(Constant)	-31950.701	13312.657		-2.400	.019**
Pr Score	6146.076	1241.878	.486	4.949	.000***

Note: Statistical Significance 1% (***) ; 5% (**); 10% (*)

Whereas liking behavior is simply a single-click activity, following a page is an indicator of loyalty. Therefore we asked the following question: Does using more PR strategies on FB have an effect on the number of followers? To answer this question, we devised H5. Since the regression test results showed that public relations score positively affected a page's number of followers, H5 was proved ($p < 0.05$).

Table 6: OLS regression results for followers

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²		Std. Error of the Estimate	
.510	.260	.251		32184.325	
ANOVA	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	28733118040.580	1	28733118040.580	27.739	.000***
Residual	81830630518.926	79	1035830766.062		
Total	110563748559.506	80			
Dependent Variable: Followers	Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B		Beta		
(Constant)	-35596.538	13655.592		-2.607	.011**
Pr Score	6709.217	1273.869	.510	5.267	.000***

Note : Statistical Significance 1% (***) , 5% (**), 10% (*)

Verification of an SM account indicates that it does in fact belong to the municipality and is therefore not a fake. Moreover, the image of a verified checkmark makes a page look more professional. As a result, municipalities using a verified account could make more efficient use of an FB page. That said, being verified makes no difference statistically (verified or not $\chi^2=12.316$ $df=1$, $p=.000$ -continuity correction). However, correlation results do show there to be a significant relationship between verification and links to other SM accounts.

Table 7: Correlation tests results

	K-S Z	Link to other SM account	Verified or not
Link to other social media account	.474***	1.000	
Verified or not	.438***	.261**	1.000

Note : Statistical Significance 1% (***), 5% (**), 10% (*)

Since metropolitan municipalities have a larger budget, they are anticipated to use their FB pages more professionally than regular cities. Moreover, Köksal and Anil (2015, 128) found that adopting broadband access varies by region. Correspondingly, since broadband access affects how local governments use SM, we developed H6. Accordingly, we conducted a Mann-Whitney U test to determine whether metropolitan municipalities used more PR strategies than non-metropolitan cities, which corroborated H6. However, a study conducted by Bonsón et al. (2019, 487) did find that population had no bearing on engagement, concluding there to be no significant relationship between constituent participation on SM and population, furthermore and there to be a negative relationship between activity and engagement.

Table 8: Mann-Whitney U tests results by municipality size

Variable	Mean		Significance tests	
	non-metropolitan	Metropolitan	K-S Z	p-value
Public relation strategies	9.75	11.37	1.893***	.001

Note : Statistical Significance 1% (***), 5% (**), 10% (*)

According to the Mann-Whitney U tests, PR strategies did not differ significantly by political party, indicating that H7 is incorrect. As a matter of fact, local government elections were held during the course of this study.

As a result, political parties made more frequent use of their SM accounts for election advertising, which thereby increased page activity. It may be assumed, therefore, that the engagement strategies adopted by political parties will differ. However, political parties are not equally distributed among polities. As expected, the results obtained were statistically insignificant. Moreover, differences are expected because political parties have, among other things, different communication strategies, budgets, principles of transparency. Still, we could find no causal effect explaining this finding. An inference to this conclusion is that the number of municipalities held by each political party is unevenly distributed. Whereas some political parties control a very large number of municipalities, others control very few.

Table 9: Mann-Whitney U tests results by political party

Variable	Mean					Significance tests	
	AKP	CHP	HDP	MHP	OTHER	K-S Z	p-value
PR strategies	10.42	11.33	8.38	10.73	5.00	1.893***	.045

Note: Other Independent and TCP, Statistical Significance 1% (***), 5% (**), 10% (*)

Lastly, a significant difference in use of PR strategies was found to exist among geographical regions. This result is anticipated inherently since there is a different level of development among the regions of Turkey. H8 is accepted. According to empirical research conducted in the Czech Republic, citizens' engagement on SM, which included the number of posts published, page popularity, responsiveness, involvement, and virality, showed high regional differences (Bachman 2019, 6). Therefore, this assumption has been validated for turkey via the current study.

Table 10: Mann-Whitney U tests results by region

Variable	Mean							Significance tests	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	K-S Z	p-value
PR strategies	11.88	8.00	11.50	10.56	10.92	10.00	11.09	1.893***	.045

Note: 1: Mediterranean Region, 2: Eastern Anatolia Region, 3: Aegean Region, 4: Southeastern Anatolia Region, 5: Central Anatolian Region, 6: Black Sea Region, 7: Marmara, Statistical Significance 1% (***), 5% (**), 10% (*)

Conclusion

The current study has examined how 81 provincial municipalities in Turkey used SM to engage their constituents. The FB accounts of these 81 municipalities received a score based on specific criteria examining how well they followed their engagement strategies. Then, based on that PR score, the study determined the differences between political parties, region, and size of polity. Descriptive statistics showed that municipalities in Turkey take advantages of half of the benefits offered by social media ($\mu=10.34$), possibly indicating that municipalities lack a professional component managing their FB pages. As previous research has shown, although users understand the importance of SNS in developing relationships, they disagree about how to facilitate the development of the organization (Hill and White 2000, 31; Water et al. 2009).

By sharing news links and press releases more frequently, metropolitan municipalities use their FB pages more actively than non-metropolitan municipalities. Supporting this finding, Mawela (2017, 7) found discrepancies in how municipalities of different sizes used SM in South African countries. Finally, metropolitan municipalities were much more likely to provide links to the other SM accounts of theirs on other platforms, thereby enhancing the amount of involvement on the page.

The statistical analyses show there to be a significant difference among political parties, geographical regions, and whether a province is incorporated into a metropolitan district or a normal city. One of the more noteworthy results of the study is that municipalities increasingly use engagement strategies as they gain more followers on FB ($p<0.05$). Given this result, the official adoption of social media is not only an opportunity but also mandatory to serve that citizens develop positive perceptions towards the municipality.

SM offers an unofficial presence of local governments. Thus, local governments gain the chance to demonstrate to the public that they are there for citizens regardless. Yet, without developing a tailored social media strategy, this may result in disappointment. This study offers vital suggestions for public relations practitioners such as the importance of being aware of regional differences or population density. Practitioners to be consider the opportunities and threats based on their region and use them for engaging with the public. Sharing communication options to the public helps them to increase their level of involvement. Also, using a verified account entails

two significant outcomes. One is that verified accounts have more followers and the other is that they are able to use their FB account more effectively by providing links to other SM accounts associated with the municipality.

Based on the study's results, we recommend that managing a FB page be done more professionally by individuals with greater insight and PR knowledge.

Declaration of interest statement

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

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