

Turkish Political Advertising: A Content Analysis of Newspaper Political Advertisements Between 1977 and 2007

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Abstract

Although political advertising in newspapers in Turkey dates back to the late 1970s, the systematic study of this phenomenon remains in its infancy. In an effort to contribute to a deeper understanding of Turkish political culture, this study uses qualitative content analysis to examine political advertising in newspapers in Turkey during eight general elections between 1977 and 2007. It explores the main characteristics of newspaper political advertising during this four-decade period, covering a total of 434 political ads collected from the online archive of *Milliyet*, which it classifies according to categories widely used in the scholarly literature. The results of this study indicate that Turkish newspaper political ads are (1) positive; (2) issue oriented, though there is an upward trend in the rate of images; (3) not entirely evidence based; (4) generally concerned with economic issues; and (5) mostly aimed at the youth when it comes to a specific voter segment.

Keywords: Political communication, political advertising, political parties, newspapers, Turkey

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Türk Siyasal Reklamcılığı: 1977-2007 Yılları Arasındaki Siyasal Gazete Reklamları Üzerine Bir İçerik Analizi

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Öz

Türkiye'de siyasal reklamcılığın geçmişi 1970'lerin sonlarına kadar uzanmasına rağmen, ampirik verilere dayalı sistematik çalışmaları içeren literatür nispeten küçüktür. Bu makale, Türkiye'de 1977 ile 2007 yılları arasında gerçekleşen sekiz genel seçimde gazetelerdeki siyasal reklamları nitel içerik analizi yöntemiyle incelemektedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türk siyasi kültürünün daha derinlemesine anlaşılmasına katkıda bulunmak için gazete siyasi reklamlarının temel özelliklerini incelemektir. Çalışma, *Milliyet*'in çevrimiçi arşivinden derlenen toplam 434 siyasal reklamın literatürde yaygın olarak kullanılan kategorilere göre sınıflandırılmasını kapsamaktadır. Bu çalışmanın sonuçları, siyasal reklamların (1) olumlu olduğunu; (2) imaj oranlarında artan bir eğilim olmasına rağmen konu odaklı olduğunu; (3) kanıt sunmada yeterli olmadığını; 4-) konu bakımından genel olarak ekonomiye odaklandığını ve belirli bir seçmen kesimi söz konusu olduğunda çoğunlukla gençleri hedef aldığını göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Siyasal iletişim, siyasal reklamcılık, siyasi partiler, gazeteler, Türkiye

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The first half of the 20th century was associated with strong political institutions and stable political preferences (Krouwel 2006). It was the period of mass parties (Duverger 1964). As the party system was a reflection of social cleavages, party identification was very strong, and political communication was dominated by partisan channels. Political messages were substantive, had easily reached the mass media, and targeted partisan voters (Blumler and Kavanagh 1999).

However, the period of political stability has turned into the “dealignment process” (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000). There has been a “growing electoral volatility, which reflects a combination of eroding partisan identification, party switching, new party emergence, and electoral abstention” since the 1970s in most Western democracies (Scarrow and Webb 2017, 2). Because the more heterogeneous working class has undermined the political polarization, mass parties were replaced by catch-all parties that appeal to all social classes (Kircheimer 1966). Socio-political changes along with the commercialization of media and developments in communication technologies have consequently transformed the nature of political communication.¹

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1 Modern campaigning is characterized by “personalization of politics, expanding reliance on

The media has provided a great opportunity for political actors to reach voters with both “mediatized and non-mediatized formats” (Paletz and Vinson 1994, 362-8). Thus, political parties, which are guided by communication experts and focused on electoral achievement, have begun to use the media more to influence voters whose decisions may vary from election to election (Panebianco 1988). “The personalized, media-centered forms of election campaigning, using techniques similar to consumer-product marketing” have been widely used in the USA and to some extent in European countries as well (Hallin and Mancini 2004, 26). Political advertising has become the form of political communication that best serves candidates’ needs, as it provides a “controlled and unmediated communication” (Holtz-Bacha and Kaid 2006, 4). Hence, it is fair to say that as a research area, political advertising is one of the most important topics of political communication research today (Kaid 1997).

Although there is a growing literature on political advertising in European countries such as Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and the UK (Kaid and Holtz-Bacha 1995) and also in evolving democracies including Poland, Romania, Russia, Turkey, and Hungary (Kaid 1999a), the majority of studies are limited to the USA politics. In Turkey, newspaper political advertising dates back to the late 1970s;² however, the literature including systematic studies based on empirical data is relatively small.³ It is still not known whether the majority of political advertisements in Turkey are positive or negative, issue-oriented or image-oriented, informative or uninformative. Most studies on political advertising in Turkey lack quantitative methods and are based on narratives and are limited to a single party or election. Therefore, they cannot be generalized. They produce inconsistent results due to operational problems and does not allow comparison with each other. Thus, there is a need to map the content of political advertising in Turkey broadly and systematically. This study seeks to obtain data that will help to address these research gaps.

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technical experts and professional advisers, growing detachment of political parties from citizens, development of autonomous structures of communication, and casting citizens in the role of spectator” (Swanson and Mancini 1996, 249).

- 2 “Political advertisements in Turkey started in June 1977, when the Justice Party (AP) took out advertisements in magazines and newspapers. Before this date, advertisements had not appeared in the newspapers due to ideological and partisan concerns” (Can 2006, 390).
- 3 For some systematic empirical studies, see, (Uztuğ 2003; Balcı 2007; Balcı and Bal 2008; Atıkcı and Öge 2012; Toros 2015; Toros 2017).

This paper examines political ads in newspapers during eight general elections between 1977 and 2007 in Turkey by using the qualitative content analysis method. The essay aims to explore the main characteristics of newspaper political advertisements to contribute to a deeper understanding of Turkish political culture. It is beyond the scope of this study to examine the effect of political advertising. This paper employs a descriptive research design to characterize Turkish political advertising. It is exploratory and interpretative in nature. Do political parties only attack each other? Do they use rational appeals more? What kind of voter segments do they specifically target? The study collects data from the online archive of *Milliyet*, one of the large-circulation newspapers in that period to classify advertisements according to the categories widely used in the literature.

The Literature Review on the Content of Political Advertising

Modern political advertising may be defined as “the communication process by which a source (usually a political candidate or party) purchases the opportunity to expose receivers through mass channels to political messages with the intended effect of influencing their political attitudes, beliefs, and/or behaviors” (Kaid 1981, 250). It is characterized by “the control of the message and the use of mass communication channels for message distribution” (Kaid 1999, 423). However, “other forms of political communication, from speeches to debates, are subject to interpretation or filtering by news media or other participants in the political process” (Kaid 2004, 156). Thus, political advertisements are great resources revealing which issues are given prominence, and how they are presented by different political parties at a specific election.

In one of the early attempts, political ads were analyzed to determine whether political discourses focus on candidate personalities and images or party ideology and issues. Previous studies mostly defined *issues* as “statements of candidate positions on policy issues or preferences on issues or problems of public concern”, while describing *images* as “a concentration on candidate qualities or characteristics” (Kaid 2004, 162). In other words, issue-focused messages are about political proposals, whereas image-focused messages are about candidates themselves. Since the defining features of the catch-all party include the reduction of ideological baggage and strengthening of leadership, individual leaders have become more critical to the appeal of parties than ideology and group loyalties (Hallin and Mancini 2004). For example, Silvio Berlusconi gained more than 20% of total votes in the 1994

Italian general election without any organized party in the traditional sense (Hopkin and Caterina 1999).⁴ Thanks to image-focused ads, the party leader has become the message itself. In this regard, it was argued that political advertising has contributed to the personalization of politics and even de-politicization (Shyles 1986).

According to some studies, political advertising is dominated by images. For example, Humke et al. (1975) examined 849 political ads in newspapers in the USA between 1932 and 1960 and concluded that almost four-fifth of the ads were image-oriented. However, empirical data do not fully support the argument that political advertising mostly focuses on images. Many other studies have come to the opposite conclusion that most political advertising in newspapers concentrates more on issues than on images (Bowers 1972; Elbash and Rosene 1982). Raymond's analysis (1987) on campaign brochures in 37 races for US Congress in 1978 indicated that campaign materials mainly produced by challengers were issue-oriented. The research on the 40 different newspaper political ads published by two big parties in the 2007 Turkish general election suggests that nearly 70% of total ads were issue-oriented (Balci and Bal 2008). The issue-image debate has been accelerated with the wide use of TV spots. The basic assumption is that television advertising will concentrate more on images than issues because of its nature. For example, it was argued that in the 1995 Turkish general election, parties focused most of the verbal and visual aspects of the spots on the party leaders (Can 1999). On the other hand, Kaid, who conducted one of the most comprehensive studies, analyzed 1535 presidential ads in the USA between 1952 and 2004 and concluded that "69% of all campaign ads used in general elections campaigns by the Republican and Democratic candidates for president have been focused on issues" (Kaid 2006, 41).

This dichotomy is very helpful and widely used in political communication studies, but it is also confusing. First, it is highly American-oriented. The political competition in the USA is among candidates rather than parties due to its political system and electoral institutions. In most European democracies, by contrast, political parties play more important roles than candidates,

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4 Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia is one of the most striking symbols of the personalization that a political party is transformed into a vehicle for marketing a single leader but a similar trend "can be seen, in differing degrees, in other cases as well – with Blair in Britain, for example, or Schroeder in Germany." (Hallin and Mancini 2004, 30).

or at least there is a balance between parties and candidates. For example, in Turkey, the party lists are voted other than candidates, which means that political parties and party leaders are at the heart of the political system. Political campaigns are sponsored by parties and focus on the party's promises as well as the leader's charisma. In most cases, political leaders and their parties are perfectly overlapped with each other. Therefore, it can be argued that "the party leader's image may become a synecdoche of party's image" (Athanasios and Papathanassopoulos 2006, 217).

Second, it can be hard to determine whether a political ad is candidate-focused or issue-focused. Mostly, political messages are about either personality traits or promises. The issue-image dichotomy has arisen from that observation. However, candidate positions on policy issues are sometimes presented to voters through the personal characteristics of candidates. Such advertisements can be considered both issue-focused and image-focused.

It should also be noted that an issue-focused ad does not necessarily mean that it includes an informative message or is based on a concrete policy proposal. Some issue-focused ads are so ambiguous that it does not make any sense to distinguish them only from image-focused ones. Therefore, it also needs to be determined whether messages are informative or uninformative. Despite not being easy to determine, *uninformative messages* are more general and emotional, based on ideas or concepts such as democracy, freedom, or ideologies. They generally include no physical referents. In contrast, *informative messages* are more specific and rational, based on concrete facts, and generally include measurable promises. The point is not whether the evidence is accurate or not, as propaganda by its very nature is based on a biased reality. Rather, to be categorized as "informative", a political advertisement should be rational than emotional and offer more factual than intuitive evidence. Consequently, "even if a candidate runs a heavily issue-oriented campaign, but little evidence is offered to support those claims, it would not be viewed as informative" (Geer 2006, 46).

Since the 1980s, the content of political messages has also been analyzed according to whether it has a positive or a negative tone. Whereas a *positive ad* refers to "an ad that promotes the virtues of the sponsoring candidate and ignores that candidate's opponent", a *negative ad* refers to "an ad in which negative things are said about an opponent" (Shapiro and Rieger 1992, 135). Compared to the past, many scholars believe that candidates have increasingly

used more ads attacking other candidates than positive ads about themselves (Surlin and Gordon 1977; Pfau and Kenski 1990). On the other hand, many studies show that the level of positivity is still higher than that of negativity. For instance, by analyzing 594 ads from Senate campaigns in 1988, 1990, and 1992, Kahn and Kenney (2000) found that only 41% of all ads were negative. According to Kaid (2006), the percentage of positive ads in the USA between 1952 and 2004 is overall 59%. Nevertheless, her analysis supports the view that the percentage of negative ads has been increased in recent years. Also, Toros (2015) stated that the level of negativity is generally high in Turkey and political parties go more negative when they ideologically diverge from the center.

There is almost no confusion about what a positive ad is, but the definition of a negative ad is controversial to some extent. This is because negative ads are often considered mudslinging and harmful to democracy (Jamieson 1992; Kamber 1997).⁵ However, from this perspective, it might be difficult to decide what a negative ad is as it is based on a subjective evaluation. To distinguish a negative ad from a positive one, a researcher should determine whether it is based on an unfair criticism though that might easily change depending on his/her political standpoint. Thus, a value-free (or directional) definition of negative advertising should include “all forms of attacks on the opponent, for example, when a party/candidate says something negative about an opponent” (Walter and Vliegenthart 2010, 443).

Grey areas occur within the positivity-negativity debate when it comes to political ads focused on “comparison”. It should be noted that, in general, opposition parties say what is wrong with the ruling party while at the same time they propose their solutions. Criticisms sometimes do not specifically target any party/candidate rather are raised against the status quo. By doing this, political ads mark a contrast between the sponsoring party and others. Likewise, the ruling parties generally generate propaganda that compare present governments and past governments. That means the verb tenses that a political ad uses helps to understand its content. While the attempt to differentiate “the present” from “the past” is seemingly positive, it has implicit negativity, a common feature of comparison ads. That is to say, apart from

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5 On the other hand, it was argued that negative ads tend to be more informative (Garramone et al. 1990), more issue-oriented (Kaid and Johnston 1991; Johnston and Kaid 2002) and remembered better (Garramone 1984) than positive ads.

direct attacks, any form of comparison lies in the middle of the positive-negative spectrum.

Research Design

Method

This paper aimed to examine the main characteristics of Turkish newspaper political advertisements drawing on the qualitative content analysis method. Krippendorff defines *content analysis* as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (2004, 18). Generally, there are two types of content analysis; basic and interpretive, or quantitative and qualitative. Using word or symbol counts and other quantitative methods to analyze data has a relatively long tradition within content analysis (Lasswell et al. 1952). Although it is “scientifically” robust, the quantitative approach might ignore the meaning not overtly evident in the communication. It should be noted that “many forms of everyday speech, such as irony, sarcasm, and double meanings, require active interpretation of communications rather than relying solely on the manifest content” (Drisko and Maschi 2016, 4). Likewise, political messages generally include both explicit and implicit meanings. Thus, both manifest contents (e.g. whether there is a leader’s photo) and latent contents (e.g. whether it is issue-oriented or image-oriented) were included in this study to interpret the communication as a whole, and results were summarized by frequency tables. In other words, the data were analyzed by the qualitative approach but presented in frequency tables.

All categories in this research were generated according to the literature summarized above, tested through a pilot study to see if they worked, and revised when necessary. For interpretive categories, a well-established procedure was applied based on clear criteria to reduce subjective evaluation. The following descriptions were used regarding interpretive categories:

- *Issues*: Statements of candidate positions on policy issues or preferences on issues or problems of public concern.
- *Images*: A concentration on candidate qualities or characteristics.
- *Positive ad*: An ad that promotes the virtues of the sponsoring candidate and ignores that candidate’s opponent.

- *Negative ad*: An ad in which negative things are said about an opponent.
- *Informative ad*: An ad based on issues / policy, specific information, rational appeal, and concrete facts.

This study also applied a longitudinal research design to examine variations in newspaper political ads between 1977 and 2007. It was limited by that period because political advertising was allowed on television in Turkey since 2011. Thus, newspapers have been one of the most essential political communication channels of that period.

Sampling

The sample in this study is political party advertisements published in *Milliyet*, in the last four weeks before the general elections between 1977 and 2007. It covered a total of 434 political ads (338 originals + 96 reissues) in eight elections. *Milliyet*, founded in 1950, was one of the most circulated and influential newspapers in that period. This research does not aim at generalization as it is based on purposive sampling. However, since *Milliyet* is close to the political center, it covered political advertisements of various parties from the far-right to the far-left. Therefore, as a data source, it provided rich research data.

The coding key

Before coding, it should be clearly stated what counts as a political ad in this research. A *political ad* is defined as “a controlled, non-mediated campaign channel, meaning that responsibility for the ads lies with the political actors, and they do not run the risk of their messages being altered by the media production process” (Holtz-Bacha and Kaid 2006, 3). It must be sponsored by the party’s central or local organizations and aim to influence voters to vote for them or not to vote for competitors by explicitly expressing the party’s political messages focused on issues or personality traits. In this respect, ad-like promotions such as groundbreaking ceremonies or calls for meetings cannot be considered political advertising. Thus, all kinds of political propaganda except political advertisements were excluded from the coding process. Also, political advertisements sponsored by individual candidates and published at the regional level were not analyzed.

In the study, both manifest and latent contents were coded. For each political advertisement, it was identified which date it appeared, which party

it was sponsored by, which title it had, and whether it had a leader's photo. Then the coding key⁶ was designed to measure the following questions regarding each unit of observation (newspaper political advertisement):

- 1-) Is it issue-oriented or image-oriented?
- 2-) Does it have a positive tone or a negative tone?
- 3-) Which topics does it focus on?
- 4-) Is it informative or uninformative?
- 5-) What groups of voters does it specifically target?
- 6-) Does it focus on past or present / future?

Reliability

Reliability focuses on the question of “whether different researchers categorize the data in the same way” (Drisko and Maschi 2016, 47). To achieve objectivity, reliability is crucial. In content analysis, reliability refers to intercoder reliability (Neuendorf 2017). The percent agreement is one of the most commonly reported coefficients, as it is easy to understand and calculate. In this study, due to the multiplicity of categories, only five percent of the sample for each question above were checked by two different experts for inter-judge coding reliability. Test results were reported 85%, 80%, 71%, 95% 95% 75% respectively according to the formula:

$$\frac{\text{the number of agreements}}{\text{the total number of cases}}$$

Findings

The overview of political ads according to the election year and the sponsoring party are presented in Table 1. The number of political ads reached a peak during the 1990s. What can be clearly seen in this table is the dominance of right-wing parties in advertising.

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6 A coding example is provided in the Appendix.

Election Year	N	%	The Sponsor	Ideology	n	%
1977	18	4.1%	FP	Pro-Islamist	4	0.9%
1983	14	3.2%	RP	Pro-Islamist	11	2.5%
1987	36	8.3%	MHP	Far-right	32	7.4%
1991	82	18.9%	AP	Center-right	18	4.1%
1995	146	33.6%	AKP	Center-right	6	1.4%
1999	58	13.4%	ANAP	Center-right	144	33.2%
2002	48	11.1%	DP	Center-right	6	1.4%
2007	32	7.4%	DYP	Center-right	110	25.3%
			GP	Center-right	4	0.9%
			MDP	Center-right	2	0.5%
			YP	Center-right	2	0.5%
			LDP	Liberal	1	0.2%
			YDH	Liberal	1	0.2%
			BP	Center-left	1	0.2%
			CHP	Center-left	40	9.2%
			DSP	Center-left	25	5.8%
			SHP	Center-left	22	5.1%
			İP	Far-Left	5	1.2%
Total	434	100%	Total		434	100%

Notes: PF = Fazilet Partisi (The Virtue Party), RP = Refah Partisi (The Welfare Party), MHP = Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (The Nationalist Action Party), AP = Adalet Partisi (The Justice Party), AKP = Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (The Justice and Development Party), ANAP = Anavatan Partisi (The Motherland Party), DP = Demokrat Parti (The Democrat Party), DYP = Doğru Yol Partisi (The True Path Party), GP = Genç Parti (The Young Party), MDP = Milliyetçi Demokrasi Partisi (The Nationalist Democracy Party), YP = Yurt Partisi (The Homeland Party), LDP = Liberal Demokrat Parti (The Liberal Democratic Party), YDH = Yeni Demokrasi Hareketi (The New Democracy Movement), BP = Barış Partisi (The Peace Party), CHP = Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (The Republican People's Party), DSP = Demokratik Sol Parti (The Democratic Left Party), SHP = Sosyaldemokrat Halkçı Parti (The Social Democratic Populist Party), İP = İşçi Partisi (The Workers' Party).

Table 1: The number of political advertisements according to election years and sponsoring parties

Figure 1 shows the change in visual elements usage among advertisements. 60 per cent of ads included in this study do not have any leader photos. In 1977, for example, only the AP used newspaper advertising; these were

non-colored, monotonous texts without any kind of visual elements except the party logo.

The results of the positivity-negativity analysis are summarized in Table 2. This table shows that more than half of all political ads coded in the study have a positive tone. In all elections, except for 1995, the percentage of positivity is higher than that of negativity. These results align with those of previous studies (Kaid 2006; Balci and Bal 2008; Uztuğ 2003)

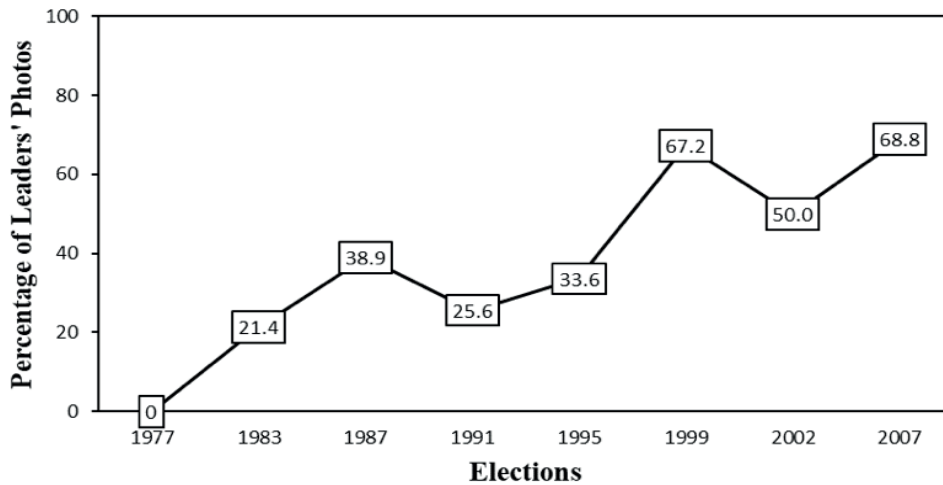


Figure 1: The percentage of ads with leader photos between 1977 and 2007

The high level of negativity in 1995 could be attributed to the fierce competition between two center-right parties (the ANAP and the DYP), reactions to the rise of the pro-Islamist RP, and accusations of corruption. The perception that politics became dirty was so strong in 1995, and consequently, the dominant motto was “clean politics”. Based on the simple discourse that “we are good (clean) and they are bad (dirty)”, politicians have generally utilized emotional appeal without any physical referents. When the 1995 election is excluded from the data set, the proportion of positivity increases to 63.2 per cent.

Table 3 presents the breakdown of positive, negative, and comparison ads according to verb tenses they use. From this table, it can be seen that positive ads focus more on “only present/future” than negative and comparison ads do. More than 40 per cent of comparison ads, on the other hand, refer to “past and present/future”. Interestingly, more than 25 per cent of all ads do not use any time expressions.

Election	Comparison		Negative		Positive		Total	
1977	4	22.2%	0	0.0%	14	77.8%	18	100.0%
1983	4	28.6%	0	0.0%	10	71.4%	14	100.0%
1987	11	30.6%	6	16.7%	19	52.8%	36	100.0%
1991	20	24.4%	9	11.0%	53	64.6%	82	100.0%
1995	37	25.3%	65	44.5%	44	30.1%	146	100.0%
1999	6	10.3%	8	13.8%	44	75.9%	58	100.0%
2002	18	37.5%	4	8.3%	26	54.2%	48	100.0%
2007	8	25.0%	8	25.0%	16	50.0%	32	100.0%
Total	108	24.9%	100	23.0%	226	52.1%	434	100.0%

Table 2: The number of positive, negative, and comparison ads between 1977 and 2007

Time Expressions	Comparison	Negative	Positive	Total
No Time Expressions	24.1%	35.0%	23.9%	26.5%
Only Past	6.5%	35.0%	3.5%	11.5%
Only Present/Future	27.8%	28.0%	65.0%	47.2%
Past and Present/Future	41.7%	2.0%	7.5%	14.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 3: Positivity-Negativity according to time expressions

Table 4 provides the results of issues and images between 1977 and 2007. Approximately 60 per cent of political ads coded in this study are issue-oriented. This finding is consistent with that of Kaid (2006, 41) who reported that 69 per cent of all campaign ads used in general elections in the USA between 1952 and 2004 focused on issues. It can also be argued that the proportion of issue-focused ads in Turkey is higher than 60 per cent because the category of 'both' sometimes include much more issues than images like in the case of 1983 election.

Election	Issues		Images		Both		Total	
1977	15	83.3%	2	11.1%	1	5.6%	18	100.0%
1983	4	28.6%	1	7.1%	9	64.3%	14	100.0%
1987	21	58.3%	9	25.0%	6	16.7%	36	100.0%
1991	61	74.4%	12	14.6%	9	11.0%	82	100.0%
1995	67	45.9%	50	34.2%	29	19.9%	146	100.0%
1999	38	65.5%	12	20.7%	8	13.8%	58	100.0%
2002	26	54.2%	17	35.4%	5	10.4%	48	100.0%
2007	12	37.5%	12	37.5%	8	25.0%	32	100.0%
Total	244	56.2%	115	26.5%	75	17.3%	434	100.0%

Table 4: The number of issues and images between 1977 and 2007

However, it is apparent from Figure 2 that image-oriented ads show an upward trend. Just over ten per cent of ads used in 1977 were image-oriented. The share of image-oriented advertisements, which increased in the 1990s, peaked in 2007 (37.5%). The increase in images is likely to be related to the socio-political changes and the professionalization of election campaigns. Since the late 1980s, both center-right and center-left parties in Turkey have demonstrated the main characteristics of catch-all parties in developed democracies, such as the reduction of ideological baggage, the deemphasis of the *classe gardée*, and the strengthening of leadership. As the competition was intra-blocks rather than inter-blocks, the leadership became more significant than ideological differences. For example, the ANAP's campaign in 1987 depicted Turgut Özal as a wise, experienced leader with an entrepreneurial spirit and always holding a pen in his hand. Likewise, the SHP has portrayed Erdal İnönü as an honest, reliable leader with a smiling face and used celebrities in propaganda. Since media experts have involved election campaigns more, partisan channels in political propaganda were abandoned. As Panebianco stated, bureaucratic roles have become obsolete and new professional roles have gained ground (Panebianco 1988). That is, political communication has become a profitable business. Advertising agencies and political parties have been closely engaged with each other during election campaigns, as exemplified in the 1991 election (Karahana 1995). Additionally, better printing quality has enabled colorful ads with images. Consequently, as shown in Figure 1, political ads with leader photos have multiplied. In other words, the use of both physical and mental images has seen an increase.

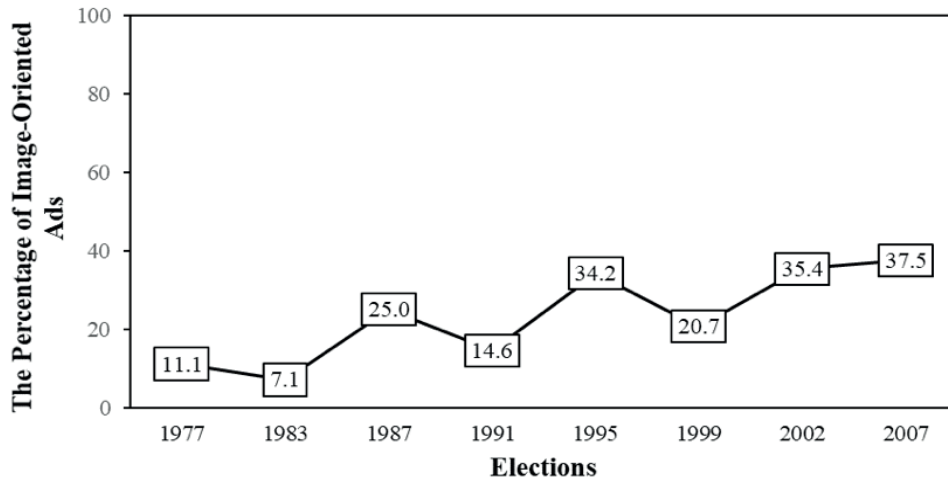


Figure 2: The percentage of image-oriented ads between 1977 and 2007

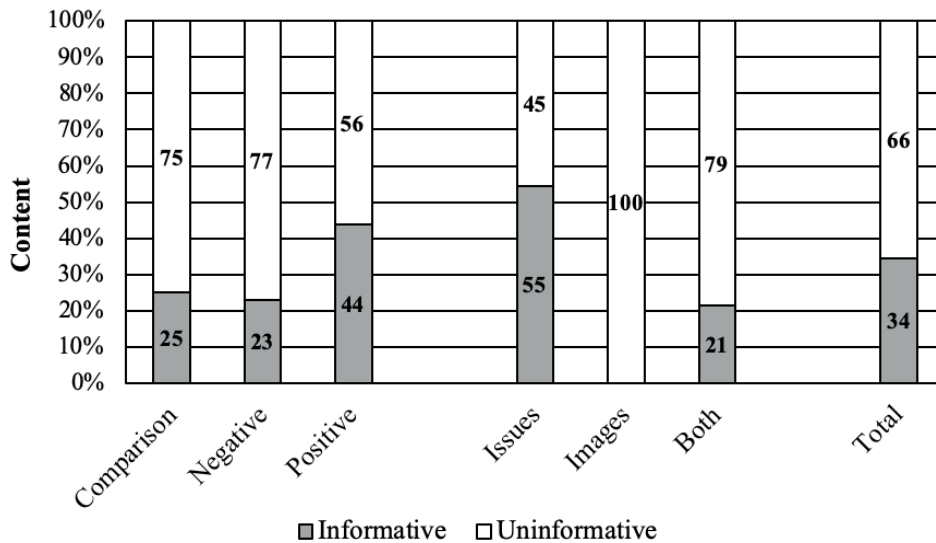


Figure 3: Contents according to informativeness

Figure 3 compares the contents of political ads in terms of informativeness. The data in this table illustrates that only a third of all ads are informative. An image-oriented ad tends to be uninformative by its very nature. However, what is striking about the figure above is that 45 per cent of issue-oriented ads are not informative. That is, they do not offer evidence based on specific information. By using this type of ad, political parties tell people that they will improve economic development or the level of democracy without

any concrete proposals. On the other hand, positive ads tend to be more informative than negative ones in contrast to earlier findings (Garramone et al. 1990). While 44 per cent of positive ads are informative, only 23 per cent of negative ads are informative.

Table 5 shows the breakdown of themes and target groups. Since most ads focus on more than one topic and target group, observed units regarding those exceed the total number of ads. The number of observed themes is 562 except for images. More than a fourth of those focus on the economy, the most common theme as expected. Democratic rights and national security are other top themes. These have always been and still are the most important political issues in Turkey.

Theme	N	%	Target Group	n	%
Economy	145	25.8%	Youth	45	21.7%
Democratic Rights and Freedoms	73	13.0%	Women	26	12.6%
National Security, Terror and Political Threats	62	11.0%	Professionals	21	10.1%
Education	40	7.1%	Workers	21	10.1%
Social Security	27	4.8%	Civil Servants	17	8.2%
Housing	24	4.3%	Pensioners	17	8.2%
Foreign Policy	23	4.1%	Farmers	17	8.2%
Communication	20	3.6%	SMEs	9	4.3%
Judiciary	19	3.4%	The Unemployed	7	3.4%
Health	18	3.2%	Businessmen	6	2.9%
Transportation	16	2.8%	Other social groups	21	10.1%
Political Corruption	15	2.7%			
Agriculture	14	2.5%			
Progress	14	2.5%			
Other issues	52	9.3%			
Total	562	100.0%	Total	207	100.0%

Table 5: Themes and target groups

Regarding the target group, the number of observed units is 207, except those addressing the general public. It is important to note that 60 per cent of all observed units do not target any specific voter segments. The table above provides the statistics for the remaining units. Among those, the youth has the highest percentage. The youth is mostly associated with educational issues. Women have the second-highest percentage among targeted groups, and they are considered in the context of disadvantaged groups such as the disabled or elders. Political messages targeted to women refer to social justice or employment. Among occupational groups, professionals and workers are the most targeted voter segments. Political ads coded in this study had hardly addressed religious-ethnic groups.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to examine the characteristics of newspaper political ads in Turkey. Thirty years of political advertisements data were collected from the online archive of *Milliyet*, one of the large-circulation newspapers during that period. They were analyzed using the qualitative content analysis method. The main contributions and findings of this study are summarized below.

First, consistent with the literature (Kaid 2006), this research found that the proportion of positive ads was higher than that of negative ones. This result may be explained by the fact that there is very little evidence that negative campaigns can win elections. For instance, Lau et al. (2007, 1183) examined over 100 articles on the effects of campaign advertising and concluded that negative campaigning is no more effective than positive campaigning. It was also reported that “there are no benefits from attacking one’s opponent, even if the opponent has decided to go on the attack” (Malloy and Pearson-Merkowitz 2016, 14).

The second major finding was that although the percentage of issue-oriented ads was greater than image-oriented ones, there has been an upward trend in the rate of images. As mentioned earlier, the observed increase in images could be attributed to the growing interest in adopting modern campaign techniques in Turkey since the 1980s. Election campaigns using techniques similar to consumer-product marketing saw an increase with the development of the free-market economy in Turkey. Media and marketing experts has gained prominence in the election campaigns compared to the party bureaucracy. Thus, this study corroborates the ideas of Manin (1997, 220), who sug-

gested that “a new elite of experts in communication has replaced the political activist and the party bureaucrat”. Consequently, as Hopkin and Caterina (1999) observed, political propaganda has focused more on the party’s leader than on issues or ideologies.

The third major finding was that not all issue-oriented ads were informative. This is a significant result because the issue-image dichotomy implies that issues are related to measurable promises. Thus, most studies have simply distinguished issues from images. However, this research has analyzed issue-oriented ads according to the criteria of informativeness based on Geer’s work (2006) and found that 45 per cent of issue-oriented ads do not offer any factual evidence regardless of the accuracy of information.

This study has confirmed that the economy was key to understanding voting behavior as it was the central theme among issues. Over 25 per cent of issues were found to be economy-related. Yet, it should be noted that the category of the economy is too broad due to the limitations of this study. It contains related but different subtopics such as the fight against inflation, creating new employment opportunities, tax reduction, and economic justice. It is important to bear in mind that political discourses on the inequality of income and economic growth refer to different political positions. Therefore, further research needs to examine more closely the distinctions within economical issues.

This study have also shown that most political advertisements do not target any specific voter segments. Like political messages, target groups are also general. As a typical feature of the catch-all parties, any link between political parties and social classes could not be identified in the content of advertising. Most political ads have appealed to all social strata. However, when politicians attempted to target a specific voter group, they concentrated on the young voters as many new voters have gone to the polls in each election.

To conclude, despite its limitations, the study certainly adds to our understanding of political advertising. It provides one of the most comprehensive assessments of the content of newspaper political advertising in Turkey. This research intends lays the groundwork for future research. Further research might compare the content of political messages delivered through other communication channels during election campaigns.

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Appendix

Coding example

Identification

Date	The 14 th of October, 1991
Sponsor party	Doğru Yol Partisi [The True Path Party]
Leader's Photo	No
Title	Sendikalara Özgürlük [Freedom to Unions]
Content	<p>DYP iktidarı bütün kesimlere gerçek çağdaş sendikalar getiriyor.</p> <p>Memurlara sendika kurma hakkı...</p> <p>İşçi sendikalarına ILO standartları...</p> <p>Özgürce toplu sözleşme, grev ve çağdaş ölçülerde yeniden düzenlenecek yürüyüş yapma, toplanma, dernek kurma hakları...</p> <p>Gelin, hiçbir partinin söylemeye bile cesaret edemediği bu toplumsal demokratik haklar için, hepimiz DYP'de bütünleşelim. Sendikal haklar için herkes DYP'ye!</p> <p>[The DYP government guarantees modern unions to all... The right to form unions to civil servants ... ILO standard for workers' unions ... The right to collective bargaining, strike, and protest, and freedom of associations arranged in modern standards... Come, let us all unite in the DYP for these social democratic rights that no party dares to say. Everyone to the DYP for union rights!]</p>

Is the message issue-oriented or image-oriented?

Issue-oriented	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Image-oriented	<input type="checkbox"/>
Both	<input type="checkbox"/>

Does the message have a positive or negative tone?

Positive	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Negative	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comparison	<input type="checkbox"/>

Which topics does the message focus on?

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Images | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Arts and Culture | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Economy | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Education | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Energy | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Environment | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Foreign Policy | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Health | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Judiciary | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Democratic Rights and Freedoms | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Sport | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Housing | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Transportation | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Communication | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Social Security | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| National Security, Terror and Political Threats | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Progress | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Get out the vote | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Political Corruption | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strong Turkey | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Military Service | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Is the message informative or uninformative?

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| Informative | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Uninformative | <input type="checkbox"/> |

What groups of voters does the ad specifically target?

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| General Public | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Artists | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Businessmen | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Civil Servants | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Elders | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Farmers | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Disabled | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Middle Class | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Professionals | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| SMEs | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Underclass | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Unemployed | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Women | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Workers | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Youth | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Does the message focus on past or present/future??

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Only Past | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Past and Present/Future | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Only Present/Future | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| No time expressions | <input type="checkbox"/> |

