P-ISSN 2088-3706 E-ISSN 2502-9320



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**OTORITAS** 

Department of Government Studies Faculty of Social and Political Sciences Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar

VOL. XIII

NO. 3



December 2023



E-ISSN 2502-9320

P-ISSN 2088-3706

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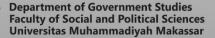
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**OTORITAS** 



VOL. XIII

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**S2** 

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Volume 13 • Number 3 • 2023

### **OTORITAS : Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan**

Published by the Department of Government Studies, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Muhammadiyah University of Makassar

For further information, please visit: https://journal.unismuh.ac.id/otoritas

### ISSN: 2088-3706 (Print) | 2502-9320 (Online) | DOI : 10.26618

First published in April 2011

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# Navigating digital platforms: a comparative study into Turkish political communication strategies on tiktok and twitch

### Canan Uyumaz<sup>1\*)</sup>, Md. Nazmul Islam<sup>2,3,4,5</sup>

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#### Abstract

This paper explores the use of new media platforms Twitch and TikTok by Turkish politicians leading up to the Presidential Elections of 2023. The paper focuses on the unique attributes of these platforms and establishes a comparison between the two by a coding scheme. This coding scheme has been constructed based on Cervi et al.'s (2023) methodological framework. It includes four themes: content, frequency, engagement, and interaction. These four themes will be examined through comparative analysis methodology. A selection of twenty TikTok videos for each sample and Twitch stream statistics will be analyzed by the numerical data, dates, and content pattern. To assess the political communication strategies that are applied by politicians, the paper will underline the possible importance of new media platforms in political campaigns. It should be noted that further research in this area is needed and there is also an emerging need to explore the evolving role of Twitch and TikTok in political campaigns.

Keywords: new media, political communication, Twitch, TikTok, Turkish Politicians

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#### Introduction

New media has been a prominent way of political communication in recent years, though while some platforms like Twitter are widely used by political figures there are still many others that are not explored fully. TikTok is one of them, although it is getting popular each day as a tool to spread political messages, the way it is achieved is not familiar with other platforms. Twitch also has its own distinct features, and it is important to note that to be able to reach the audience, politicians should understand the system of these platforms. Each platform offers unique traits and the content that is created should be analyzed to see how politicians are using it, the benefits and disadvantages of these two specific platforms, what differentiates them from others, and how the audience perceives the use of Twitch and TikTok by politicians. To show the benefits and disadvantages of the platforms, this paper will analyze and compare the two platforms. The distinction will be analyzed through the

platforms' unique traits, such as live chat function and sub-communities. The audience perception will be analyzed through the reception of these usages by politicians, through numbers of likes and sharing metrics.

Türkiye's political landscape involves diverse political parties and prominent political figures. Türkiye has a parliamentary system, in the 2023 elections it conducted both presidential and parliamentary elections. According to Euronews, pre-election surveys hinted at a change in the 2023 elections as Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was seemingly losing popularity and support ("Cumhurbaşkanlığı Seçimi", 2023). Since he was seeking re-election and was an important political figure, the 2023 elections were highly crucial. The 2023 presidential elections took place on June 25, 2023. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was facing several opponents. However, his strongest rival was Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, as he was the most popular opponent in the elections. The results of the election led to a second-round runoff and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was elected as the President of Türkiye. In recent years, it can be seen that Turkish politicians have been using social media platforms for political communication and campaigns. While traditional media still plays a high role in public opinion, digital platforms promise new changes with their distinct features.

A few political figures are selected as samples for this paper. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was selected because he was running for the presidency. His TikTok data carries high importance as he was re-elected as the president. Inspecting the statics of his TikTok page, therefore, can lead us to important results. Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, Ekrem İmamoğlu, and Mansur Yavaş are the opposition party politicians from CHP. Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu was one of the candidates that were running for the presidency. Therefore his data is also essential. Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu has 918.3K followers on TikTok, while Ekrem İmamoğlu has 1.3M followers. Ekrem İmamoğlu was selected as he is the most followed Turkish politician on TikTok. For Twitch, Mansur Yavaş is chosen. His record-breaking stream with 340K live viewers made a significant impact on the Turkish Twitch scene. Ekrem İmamoğlu is also chosen, as his 88.6K followers are a great number considering Twitch followers. Taylan Yıldız, a politician from another opposition party, İYİ is selected due to his individual success and because he is the first Turkish politician to have a Twitch account.

This paper will aim to note down the use of Twitch, as this platform has a great potential to reach young voters and some politicians have shown interest in the platform lately. Compared to TikTok, the number of politicians that are using Twitch is relatively low, however previous live streams and the interest in those streams are a significant indicator that Twitch is an emerging platform for the area of political communication. There are only a few research papers on this topic, making it a promising and open opportunity for future studies. To conclude, the research will aim to show whether selected politicians are actively using the platforms for their gain before and during the Turkish presidential elections of 2023. Lastly, depending on the findings it will be discussed if political figures are successful with their use of these two digital platforms. The success key here will be measured as the perception of the politicians' presence on the platforms, on an individual basis. These will be done through numerical data, such as views and likes. However, it will be compared to the results of the elections as well, to show if individual success on new media has affected the results and if some issues were raised, such as younger audience not being the prominent factor in winning the elections.

#### **Research Methods**

Research This paper employs a comparative analysis to investigate the role of Twitch and TikTok as political communication tools in Turkish Politics. Comparative analysis will lead us to examine the unique functions of these platforms and their impact on political communication strategies. The differences and similarities in content and strategies will also be examined. This paper's comparative analysis takes a qualitative approach. Qualitative analysis will help discover the qualitative aspects of these platforms and what makes them distinct from the other platforms, regarding content and strategy. The primary focus of this paper is to examine the role of Twitch and TikTok as platforms for political communication in Turkish politics, especially through the time that led to the build-up for the 2023 elections.

RQ1: What are the differences and similarities in content and communication strategies employed by politicians on Twitch and TikTok?

RQ2: To what extent were Turkish politicians successful in leveraging the full potential of Twitch and TikTok during the Presidential Elections of 2023?

As it was mentioned earlier, success will be measured regarding a few factors.

First, numerical data will be considered, such as likes and shares. These will showcase the positive outcome politicians perceive in the said platforms. Then, the data will be compared to the results of the 2023 elections. Lastly, individual achievements will be taken into account.

This paper will address the questions through comparative analysis. Qualitative analysis will be used to discover the answers to the paper's research questions. Three politicians will be selected for each platform, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is selected for the TikTok platform, as he is the current president and running for presidency again. He is a great political figure and his use of TikTok is important for having an analysis. Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, Ekrem İmamoğlu, and Mansur Yavaş are three important figures in the opposition party. Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu and Ekrem İmamoğlu were selected for the TikTok platform because of their popularity within the platform. Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu has 918.3K followers, while Ekrem İmamoğlu has 1.3M followers. Mansur Yayas was selected for the Twitch platform because his first stream had broken a record within the Turkish Twitch scene, as it was watched by 340K viewers live. Ekrem İmamoğlu also has a great audience on Twitch, having 88.6K followers. An important number for the platform. Taylan Yıldız, a politician from another opposition party, IYI party is selected because he is the first Turkish politician to create an account on Twitch, and actively use it. These names are important in their platforms, in their own way of achieving numbers. Such as having breaking records and having considerably high numbers of followers.

For Twitch, Ekrem İmamoğlu, Mansur Yavaş, and Taylan Yıldız's statics will be extracted from a web tool called Twitch Tracker and peak viewers, followers, hours streamed and number of streams they have done on the platform between 2021-2023 will be chosen as a sample. The dates are from 2021 up to 2023, to showcase if they have been using the platform frequently, an important factor the platform itself requires for to have a great impact. For TikTok, twenty TikTok videos will be analyzed for each political figure, by the numerical data, dates, and content pattern. These twenty samples are selected with a random selection method. This is to come up with a more general view of the data, to gain insight to see which content politicians are focusing on, which content is getting more or less engagement, and how that differs in each politician. For both platforms, a coding scheme will be followed. This coding scheme was constructed and reorganized according to Cervi et al.'s (2023) methodology. This methodology was chosen because it was appropriate for analyzing the data of TikTok content. The coding scheme involves content and interaction. Within content, political, personal, and entertainment categories are going to be listed. The political category has been subdivided by Dekavalla (2018), including the issue frame and game frame. The issue frame includes content that focuses solely on political issues, solutions, etc. Whereas the game frame involves how politicians are seeing politics as a battle or a war.

This study will follow Cervi et al.'s (2023) methodology and adopt the personality category which involves content that highlights politicians' personal lives. Lastly, the entertainment category will be listed. It is, however, going to differ from Cervi et al.'s (2023) study. The previous study titled Entertainment as content that has no relation to politics and is shared for entertainment purposes only. However, this study is going to list entertainment as a category to include content that is political yet combined with trends and edits. Trends and edits will contain norms such as memes, top TikTok content, and viral trends. The aim is to see how politicians are following the current TikTok trends, and how they are using memes, songs, games, or current popular TV series as their content while mixing it with political messages. It will highlight the use of politainment in the platforms. The interaction scale that was constructed by Lilleker and Vedel (2013) will also be followed. The subcategories will involve information/promotion, deliberation, and participation. The information/promotion subcategory reflects how politicians are using the platform as they are using the traditional media, it is the least interactive scale (Lilleker & Vedel, 2013). Deliberation reflects how politicians are asking for feedback or requests from the audiences. Lastly, participation reflects how politicians are encouraging the voters to mobilize, having them take part in events, and so on.

This study will implement two more categories that were not included in Cervi et al.'s (2023) study. The first category is frequency, it is going to be added as a category because the author believes that frequency is a drastic measure for both platforms, and the author will aim to highlight the importance of frequency throughout the study. The last category will be engagement, showcasing the numerical data from platforms with the aim of comparing both platforms, traditional media, and the success of the samples.

Construct	ID	Definition		
Content	CONT	Categorization of the issues politicians are		
		covering in their content. Political (issue frame,		
		game frame), personal, entertainment.		
Frequency	FREQ	How often do politicians post content? Are		
		they active?		
Engagement	ENGA	To determine the engagement;		
		Twitch – peak viewers, followers, hours		
		streamed.		
		TikTok – likes, shares, comments, followers.		
Interaction	INT	Categorization of the strategies politicians are		
		using. Information/promotion, deliberation,		
		participation.		

 Table 1. Coding scheme constructs

Source: Author's table based on Cervi et al.'s (2023)

Limitations for this study include lack of data, although TikTok is used by Turkish politicians, Twitch is not widely used. There are only a few examples, and those politicians seem to be not using Twitch actively. While the other two politicians' data are public, Mansur Yavaş's Twitch statistics are not available to view, therefore same criteria will not be measured. Instead of peak viewers and hours streamed, the views on his video section will be measured. The insufficient usage of Twitch by Turkish politicians is a significant limitation. This might suggest that Twitch is not a widely adopted political communication tool in Türkiye yet and the lack of usage of this platform can hinder the possibility of coming up with definite results. While inspecting the results, these limitations should be considered, and it should be recognized that these findings may not be generalizable to all politicians in Türkiye.

#### Results and Discussion Digital Platforms

TikTok was launched in September 2016, as Douyin in China. However, the platform became one of the most popular platforms at a rapid speed. It was rebranded as TikTok for the international scene in 2018, merging with the lip-sync app Musical.ly. TikTok is known for its unique functions such as short-form video content, which ranges between 15 to 60 seconds. It is popular for its creative content, allowing users to generate distinct videos. Perhaps the most important function is the For You Page, an algorithm-driven function that allows the content to reach a broader audience, this feature is especially important for politicians if they wish to reach a broader audience and demographics that may not interact with traditional media or long-form content. TikTok's emerging trends-driven culture is also attractive to audiences and politicians can aim to create content that is unique and up to date. Twitch was founded in 2011 as a platform that mainly focused on live-streaming video games and esports tournaments.

However, the platform managed to expand to an ecosystem that now holds a wide range of content. This content includes music and talk shows, drawing, and politics. Twitch's distinct features include the ability to have interactive and real-time conversations between content creators and their audiences. This feature can be used by politicians as it allows them to engage sincerely with their audience. Allowing them to have authenticity, which is not the case in other formal content, that is usually scripted. The platform has been used by politicians globally, and some of the Turkish politicians also joined the platform lately.

Both Twitch and TikTok have been getting popular in Türkiye, especially gathering younger demographics. While Twitch originally had gaming communities, it expanded its reach and has been attracting people who are not only interested in games but in other areas too. TikTok is also popular with younger audiences, as its trends reach broader algorithms. It is important to note the latest shift to these platforms, especially seeking to consume political content. TikTok and Twitch differ from other platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook regarding their established user bases and different functions. While Instagram offers more aesthetic content containing pictures, TikTok may offer memes and trends-based videos which could be seen more positively in authenticity.

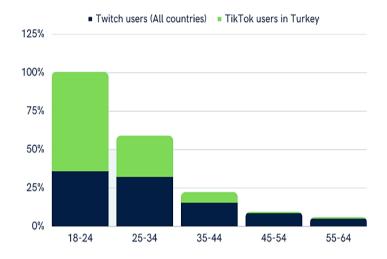


Figure 1. Demographics of Twitch and TikTok Source : processed by the author

Politicians started using the platform Twitch years ago. French politician Jean-Luc Mélenchon created an account back in 2018, streaming public events and answering citizen questions via the chat tool. US Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez used this platform in 2020 as well, getting involved with streams that emphasized the importance of voting. Another example would be Íñigo Errejón, as he was the first Spanish politician and one of the first Members of Parliament to use Twitch (Iranzo-Cabrera & Casero-Ripollés, 2023). Errejón claimed that being able to interact with people and being open to criticism was enriching, highlighting the immense importance of the platform to reach potential voters. Platforms like Twitch and TikTok are indeed allowing new strategies, practices, actors, and new content to emerge, which then creates a rich ecosystem. This ecosystem is changing the way of political communication.

In previous studies, digital platforms were believed to have three main points: interactivity, connectivity, and accessibility (Dijck, 2013). Firstly, it was noted that digital platforms were giving opportunities for exchanges and communication. These platforms allowed features like responding and giving feedback, therefore creating a possibility for interactivity (Stromer-Galley, 2019). Social media also favors connectivity. This is done by establishing links and allowing collaboration (Iranzo-Cabrera & Casero-Ripollés, 2023). Lastly, with the popularity of digitalism, the new internet has cut the costs of creating, producing, and distributing content. While this allowed any user to create, it also brought an emerging problem. The accessibility forged an issue of competition, in which control of the information flow was crucial for individuals (Chadwick, 2017). Whilst these three points are the common aspects of digital platforms, it can be said that each platform has unique characteristics, benefits, and disadvantages. Therefore, this leads politicians to follow different paths for each platform. There are, however, some common goals for digital platforms altogether, just as there are distinctions.

#### **Twitch and TikTok**

In previous studies, reconnecting with citizens in accountability terms was discussed as a way for politicians to have self-monitoring. Unlike other platforms, Twitch offers space without interventions from external elements. Without the time restriction of the parliament or the intermediation of other news outlets, Twitch enables an extended monitoring nature. This nature contributes to strengthened democracy (Iranzo-Cabrera & Casero-Ripollés, 2023). Selva-Ruiz and Caro-Castaño (2017) suggested that digital platforms allow direct connection with citizens, and this creates a possibility for different communication strategies. One of the communication strategies is the politicians' efforts to share intimate aspects of their lives, such as hobbies or everyday habits. This creates authenticity, making the politicians seem more realistic and genuine (Enli, 2015). This is an important political strategy, especially in Türkiye where older audiences can be gathered with it. Politicians achieve this by visiting the shopkeepers, meeting with the citizens, and listening to their problems. This is also very important in the digital world. Twitch is a prominent platform regarding authenticity. The reason for this is because of the real-time communication between the streamer and the audience. By talking about personal preferences such as taste in music, Twitch allows great potential for humanizing political figures. Politicians can find it easier to have this authenticity on Twitch, rather than TikTok. Since it is live, and politicians can interact with viewers directly, Twitch allows politicians to talk without any scripts. Viewers also know this, and this creates even more opportunities for both parties to see each other in a new light.

Iranzo-Cabrera and Casero-Ripollés (2023) suggested that the politician Errejón aimed to approach citizens genuinely, showing the audience that he was a regular person just like them. Therefore, Twitch is a significant platform for political actors' public construction. It was also noted that politicians have a constant need to reconnect with citizens, especially with young people who have immense voting potential (Cervi et al., 2023). To reach young voters, even governmental institutions created profiles on Twitch (Basu, 2020). Another feature that was mentioned was connective democracy and two-way communication (Iranzo-Cabrera & Casero-Ripollés, 2023). Twitch has this feature via the embedded chat function. In chat, viewers can communicate with the streamer in real time. This differs Twitch from Instagram and Twitter, which usually consist of passive audiences. Unlike those platforms, Twitch offers a space for debate and disagreement, and with that, discourse diversity is met. This enables the reduction of social divisions caused by polarization and political discontent (Stroud, 2021). It should be noted that the live chat on Twitch is public and open, this fosters opinion heterogeneity rather than echo chambers (Guidetti et al., 2016). TikTok however, can harbor political polarization and hate speech (Weimann and Masri, 2021). This is mostly because of the algorithm system. Citizens tend to follow those with the same ideological, cultural, and behavioral links, TikTok algorithm may not allow citizens to reach opposition contents, therefore creating echo chambers that generate polarization (Pariser, 2011).

In their study, Iranzo-Cabrera and Casero-Ripollés (2023) found out that Twitch has the potential to generate new connections with citizens. They, however, noted that only a few relevant politicians were using Twitch, therefore a comparative approach was difficult to make. In previous studies, TikTok usage during German and Italian elections was studied and it was concluded that political figures concentrated on the performativity side of TikTok, rather than using it as a way of direct communication with the electorate (Bösch & Ricks, 2021). In Peru, most of the candidates used TikTok as a tool for promotion with having a topdown communication style, rather than participative intentions (Cervi et al., 2023). This hints at the difference between TikTok and Twitch, as it was discussed that Twitch was mostly used for two-way communication previously. Politainment, a word that consists of politics and entertainment, emerges especially for the use of TikTok. It is said to be capitalizing the platform and it is a preferred content by the candidates that are using TikTok for visibility (Cervi et al., 2023). While TikTok might be the first platform to do this (Guinaudeau et al., 2020), an increase in the politainment content is expected to happen (Cervi et al., 2023). Perhaps, Twitch can also be used for this very reason with the right tactics.

#### **Comparing Twitch and TikTok**

TikTok and Twitch have some differences, the first one is two-way communication. Twitch is a platform more suitable for this concept, compared to TikTok. It allows interactions and engagement thanks to its live chat function. This creates a sense of closeness between the viewers and the politician. Twitch also emphasizes live streaming and therefore longerform content, this enables politicians to have an extended time and therefore discussions. TikTok is focused on short-form videos which often feature edited and visually engaging content. While both platforms have immense potential to reach young voters and youth, Twitch is known for its popularity among gaming communities and their subcultures, therefore it is more specific. TikTok, however, has a broader user base and appeals to a wider demographic. Overall, each platform has its unique features and requirements. Politicians' use of Twitch and TikTok has shown a hint of departure from traditional media channels to digital platforms. Twitch offers an alternative for politicians, where they can connect with their audience on their own terms.

Compared to Twitch, TikTok offers a wider base where politicians can reach a larger audience, in the sense that Twitch is focused more on youth and sub-communities. This highlights an evolving landscape of political communication and the importance of taking advantage of digital platforms to engage with diverse audiences. Yet, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's success in the 2023 Presidential Elections brings forth a question, although he is the least popular in TikTok and his absent in Twitch, he still won the elections. Gen Z was considered a key factor in the 2023 elections, and as can be seen from the earlier data, both TikTok and Twitch have a younger audience (see Figure 1). While it is possible to reach wider audiences through social media, digital and young audiences may not be the answer. In 2023 selections, another political figure from Türkiye, Mustafa Sarıgül was selected as a member of parliament after 36 years in his city, Erzincan. He is a political figure from CHP, yet while he is a less-known figure compared to Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, Ekrem İmamoğlu, or Mansur Yavaş, he was still able to win. He was also very active on TikTok, getting famous for his meme-based videos. His individual success is, however, not only related to his TikTok videos. He was known for being very active, visiting shopkeepers, talking with citizens, in short being authentic with common citizens who most likely had no access to digital platforms that younger audiences preferred. After the 2023 elections, CHP was mostly criticized for not visiting cities, towns, and villages as Mustafa Sarıgül did. They were also criticized for not trying to reach out to older voters. Our data shows that Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has fewer followers and fewer likes on TikTok, compared to his opponents. However, he was elected as the president. This and the criticism the opposition party received on the matter can lead us to the conclusion that citizens who are not using social media actively could be more prominent in determining the outcomes of the elections.

#### TikTok

According to the findings, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has a focus on political content with 85%, personal content with 15%, and lastly entertainment content with 0%. He mainly focuses political content through regular campaign videos and showcasing his achievements such as services he has provided over time. Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu has 85% political content, 5% personal content, and lastly 10% entertainment content. His approach on TikTok includes

direct communication without edits and he focuses on issues that are related to the government, youth, and a sense of closeness. Ekrem İmamoğlu has 30% political content, 25% personal content, and 45% entertainment content. He seems to prioritize using trends, edits (see Figure 3), and content that are aligned with the platform's mainstream trends, this has likely contributed to his popularity on TikTok. For example, the trends he used were edited songs, Pedro Pascal eating meme, Hasbulla meme, and so on.

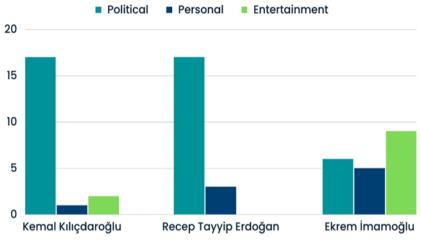


Figure 2. Content of the TikTok Posts Source : processed by the author



**Figure 3.** Ekrem İmamoğlu's TikTok, Hasbulla Meme *Source: compiled by the authors* 

Out of the political content the samples have shared on TikTok, findings showcase that Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu has 64.71% game frame, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has 70.59% game frame and Ekrem İmamoğlu has 50% game frame. The two candidates running for the 2023 presidency have the most game frame, often attacking their opponent and reflecting how it is a battle. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan seems to be using terrorism as a tool, while Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu claims innocence (see Figure 4). Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu has a 35.29% issue frame, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has 29.41% and Ekrem İmamoğlu has 50%. According to the findings,

Ekrem İmamoğlu seems to be focusing more on political issues, rather than only targeting the opponents. The findings align with Cervi et al.'s (2023) frame results, as politicians in Perú prefer to create content in the game frame, just as it is a very popular strategy in Turkish politics.



Figure 4. Attacking the opponent examples from both candidates Source: compiled by the authors

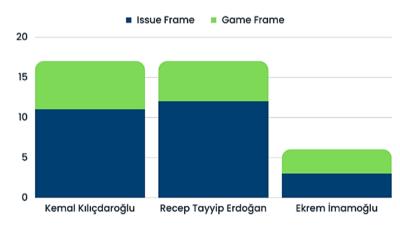
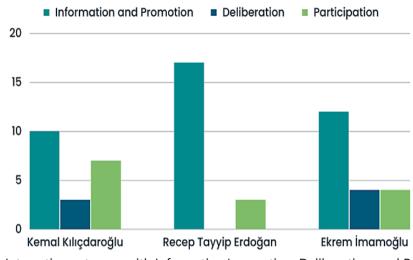


Figure 5. Categorization of Issue Frame, Game Frame on TikTok Source : processed by the author

According to the findings, Ekrem İmamoğlu seems to balance participation 20% and deliberation 20%, including his audience to interact actively. However, the highest category he has is information with 60%, where he uses the platform to disseminate information about politics. He primarily uses mainstream trends in TikTok to capture more engagement. Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu has the lowest information content with 50%, and the highest participation content with 25%. His deliberation content ranks 15%. His content often involves calls for voting and mobilizing the masses. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has the highest information content with 85%, lowest deliberation with 0%, and lowest participation with 15%. His content seems to be not very inclusive or interactive and it is like how old media is used.



**Figure 6.** Interaction category with Information/promotion, Deliberation, and Participation *Source: processed by the author* 

The difference between the three figures highlights that understanding the platform and its audience brings more engagement. From the data, it can be concluded that trendbased videos and edits receive more likes and engagement. Posts that are related to youth also gain a higher level of engagement. Traditional campaign videos, and regular talk videos that are not edited, however, receive a lower level of engagement, especially if they do not align with the platform's trends. Ekrem İmamoğlu has 1.3M followers, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu has 918.3K followers, and lastly, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has 641.8K followers. The TikTok pages of three figures were inspected in May 2023. Within 24 days scope, Ekrem İmamoğlu shared 44 posts, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu shared 35 posts, and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan shared 82 posts. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan appears to be the most active one on the platform, he however has the lowest engagement and followers out of all three. This can be compared with the content findings of the study and therefore can be connected to how he uses information and almost no participation and deliberation, compared to the other two figures.

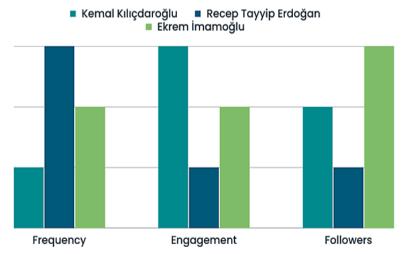


Figure 7. Sorting of the three samples by Frequency, Engagement, Followers on TikTok Source: processed by the author

#### Twitch

The analysis of Twitch engagement, content strategy, and frequency data reveals that Taylan Yıldız stands out as a more effective user of the platform in comparison to the other two politicians. The data underscores Yıldız's adeptness in engaging the Twitch audience, suggesting a higher level of interaction and responsiveness. Examining the content strategy employed by the politicians, it becomes evident that Yıldız has crafted a more compelling and resonant approach, capturing the attention and interest of the Twitch community. Additionally, the frequency of Yıldız's Twitch activity appears to be well-balanced, maintaining consistent engagement without overwhelming the audience. This data-driven insight implies that Taylan Yıldız has successfully leveraged Twitch as a dynamic platform for connecting with constituents, making strategic content choices, and maintaining a frequency of engagement that aligns effectively with the preferences of the Twitch user base.

Politician	Engagement	Content	Interaction	Frequency
Taylan Yıldız	Peak Viewers: 5674 Followers: 46.1K	Talk shows, just chatting, games, and politics	Engagement with Youth Relatability and Casual Persona Utilizing Interactive Features	Hours Streamed: 123 Most active among the three politicians
Ekrem İmamoğlu	Peak Viewers: 32.2K Followers: 88.6K	'Ask Tough Questions' concept featuring Twitch streamers' questions Highlighting youth	Youth Engagement Transparency and Accountability Collaborative Approach Leveraging Digital Platforms	Hours Streamed: 20
Mansur Yavaş	Followers: 202.1K Least viewed Clip: 523 views Most viewed Clip: 242.9K views	Introduction video using Twitch subculture edits, featuring popular Twitch streamers, emphasizing youth opinions and service for university students	Digital Outreach and Engagement Youth Empowerment and Inclusion Authenticity and Relatability Highlighting Relevant Services	Very Scarce

**Table 2.** Twitch engagement, content, strategy, and frequency data

Source : prepared and compiled by the authors

According to the data, Taylan Yıldız appears to be more effective in using Twitch compared to the two other politicians. Taylan Yıldız engages with the audience through concepts such as gaming, talk shows, politics and just chatting (see Figure 8). He utilizes the platform greatly by connecting with the youth through games and he also maintains a

consistency in streaming regularly. Even though he has a lower number of followers, for someone who was barely known in the political arena before, he gained a lot of support from youth, creating a dedicated base for himself. He founded an association, Yarın İçin Şimdi, which claims that they created this association for a beautiful, happier, and greener future where they can think freely and realize their dreams which are intertwined with technology. Taylan Yıldız is also known as 'İnternetçi Abi' (Big brother who provided us with Internet) which was a nickname that was given to him by the Twitch community.

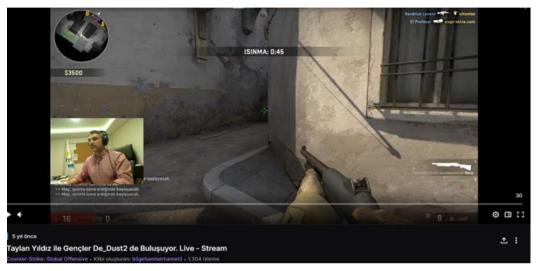


Figure 8. Taylan Yıldız playing games with youth on Twitch Source: compiled by the authors

Ekrem İmamoğlu and Mansur Yavaş gained great support and even achieved recordbreaking streams when they first opened their Twitch accounts. However, their infrequent use of Twitch may have limited their long-term success on the platform. There is still great potential for them to reengage with Twitch and tap back into its audience in the future because of the positive reception and high viewership during their guest appearances on popular Twitch streamer channels. Twitch remains as great potential for creating connections, and a sense of closeness. It is especially vitally important for reaching young voters and youth as the politicians were positively welcomed among the subcultures of Twitch.

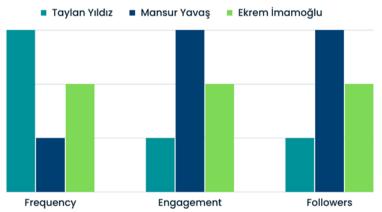


Figure 9. Sorting of the three samples by Frequency, Engagement, and Followers on Twitch Source: processed by the author

As Twitch streams are not abundant, it is not possible to categorize the content in Cervi et al.'s (2023) implementation. However, it can be concluded that the Twitch platform is more used for the entertainment category. Politainment is a huge strategy within Twitch and politicians seem to grasp it to reach youth. It can also be concluded that participation and deliberation have an immense place in Twitch, as the platform encourages active interaction between the viewers and the streamer.

#### Conclusion

According to the findings of the study, there are distinct differences and similarities between content and interactions that are employed by politicians on Twitch and TikTok. While Twitch emerged as a platform where politicians were able to engage in talk shows, games, and politics, TikTok demonstrated success in reaching broader audiences with trendbased and short videos. Taylan Yıldız stood out as an efficient user of Twitch since he was able to connect with the youth through interactive features and gaming. Ekrem İmamoğlu and Mansur Yavaş gained a lot of support as well when they first joined the scene of Twitch. They, however, were limited in long-term engagement because of their lack of activity on the platform. TikTok demonstrated success in reaching broader audiences with its potential to go viral. Politicians on TikTok used a lot of strategies, mainly using political content except Ekrem İmamoğlu. Ekrem İmamoğlu mostly used entertainment, using trends, challenges, and editing videos.

However, current criticisms about the opposition party's lack of visits to citizens and listening to them face to face, and the Mustafa Sarıgül example have shown that only digital presence was not enough to win the elections. This paper revealed that both Twitch and TikTok gathered interest from audiences, especially from young audiences. Twitch's two-way communication features were highlighted in the findings, concluding that the platform enables participation and deliberation which is particularly important in political communication. It also highlighted the importance of authenticity, as it was a factor that was both required with old and young voters. TikTok on the other hand, stood out with its ability to reach broader audiences and creative content that was gathering attention. Overall, Twitch and TikTok appeared to have unique characteristics that require different political content and interactions. Twitch's focus was more on interactivity and relatability that demanded engagement and consistent activity for preferred effectiveness. TikTok's success in reaching broader audiences should be balanced to ensure there is a diverse and inclusive political discourse, as well as authentic content to make up for the lack of platform features. Based on the findings, both Twitch and TikTok for political communication have an immense potential to engage audiences and foster connections. However, politicians should prioritize consistent usage, interactive features, reliability, and addressing relevant issues to enhance their effectiveness on these platforms. Ultimately, this study suggests that these two platforms offer great opportunities for political communication, but it shouldn't be forgotten that reaching digital audiences may not be the answer to winning elections. There is a need to understand the distinct characteristics and dynamics of each platform to effectively engage with the audience and make a meaningful impact. Politicians should also aim to capture people who have different views on politics, to differ from traditional media.

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