Communication, Persuasion and Cognition: The Review on Application of the ELM-Model in Political Communication of North Cyprus[1]

Dilan Çiftçi[2]

Abstract

This study mainly focused on the problematic notions of cognition and persuasion process application in political communication. For this process the ELM-Model was used to explain the persuasiveness of the political messages with special reference to their perceptions of candidates, shared values, and ideological link. These are attached through the cognitive process as persuasion apparatuses in the course of similarities between the candidates and citizens. In this study social differences and similarities are not only covers social but also psychological responses of both candidates and voters. The ELM-Model was crucial topic in terms of cognition and persuasion in the political communication studies, which helps to understand and evaluate voters' decisions and election campaigns at the same time. In order to show, the application of ELM-Model in the North Cyprus political communication, this study introduces the four categorization of the political messages evaluation. For this purpose, semi-structured in-depth interview method was used to explain the application of the ELM-Model in North Cyprus political communication. The findings suggest that in North Cyprus political communication central route of ELM-Model was more applicable. Citizens were mostly persuaded by the central route in the application.

Keywords: Cognition; persuasion; peripheral and central routes; ELM-Model; political communication; voter behaviors.

2 Asst. Prof. Dr., Near East University, dilan.ciftci@neu.edu.tr

İletişim, İkna ve Biliş: Kuzey Kıbrıs'ın Siyasal İletişiminde ELM Modeli Üzerine Bir İnceleme

Öz

Bu çalışma, muhtemel adaylar ve seçmenler arasındaki kişisel benzerliklerin seçmenleri adaylara yakınlaştırması seyrinde, bazı ikna aygıtları ile bilişsel süreç özelliklerine de ayrıca değinmektedir. Bu süreçlerin oluşumunda oluşabilecek seçmenlerin adaylar yönelik algılarına ve bu algılarını etkileyen belli başlı konulara özel olarak değinerek, çalışmada seçmenler ve politikacılar arasındaki biliş ve iknakonuları Kuzey Kıbrıs özelinde ele alınmaktadır.Seçmen ve adaylar arasındaki ikna sürecinde benzerlikler ve farklılıklar konusunun sosyal olarak üretildiği fikrinden yola çıkılarak bu çalışma vatandaşın sadece kendisi ve adayla değil toplumun da adaylara karşı sosyal ve psikolojik tepkilerini kapsayan sonuçlar elde edilmiştir. ELM-Modeli, siyasal iletişim çalışmalarında, seçmenlerin kararlarını ve aynı zamanda seçim kampanyalarını da anlamaya ve değerlendirilmelerine yardımcı olan biliş ve ikna açısından çok önemli bir konudur. Bu amaçla, çalışmaların kısmen başarılı olduğu düşünülerek bu konuda bazı tutumlardan yola çıkılarak seçmenle yapılan yüz yüze derinlemesine görüşmeler de Kuzey Kıbrıs özelinde siyasal iletişim süreçlerinde ELM-Modeli açısından ikna yolları özelliklerinin çoğunlukla merkezi rota kullanılarak yapıldığı gözlenmiştir. Bunun yanında çalışmanın ortaya sürdüğü diğer bulgulardan diğeri ise Kuzey Kıbrıs siyasal iletişim süreçlerinin neredeyse tamamında adayların performanslarından daha ziyade ortak değer yargıları ile adayların temsil ettiği partilerin ortak değerlerinin ikna süreçlerinde seçmen davranışlarında etkili olduğudur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Biliş; ikna; periferi ve merkezi rota; ELM-Modeli; siyasal iletişim; seçmen davranışları.

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1. Introduction

1.1. The Origin of Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)

To begin with, the term persuasion was first systematized by the ancient Greeks. The use of persuasion was referred to as "rhetoric". Significantly, Aristotle's explanations on means of persuasion are still applied in current research on persuasion and its effects on political communication. According to Aristotle, persuasion includes not only artistic proof, such as the choice of evidence, the organization of persuasion, style of delivery and language choices but it also includes inartistic proof, such as the occasion, the time and speaker's physical appearance.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM-Model) was presented by Cacioppo and Petty in 1981, which are accepted as a founder of the model to the academic literature. Although, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) was associated with the dominant model especially for the field of persuasion and consumer attitude formation, it is clear to say that with Petty and Cacioppo's work the process of persuasion either as resulting from extensive consideration of issue-relevant arguments, or from the use of various heuristic cues (Petty& Cacioppo, 1984). Significantly, Petty and Cacioppo (1985) emphasized that there are specified variables that would probably affect the persuasion. In other words, they argued that the likelihood of extensive cognitive activity and consequences of attitudinal change was affected from artificial variables.

There are plenty of literature, with more than 125 articles and chapters since 1981 (Schumann et al., 2012) continue to use ELM in different studies such as; advertising, marketing and etc., where persuasion is assumed to be externally generated process. The Elaboration Likelihood Model is a cognitive model in which persuasion takes one of two routes with motivation and ability. These routes are central information processing route with direct focuses on elaboration and peripheral information processing routes without direct focuses on elaboration (Larson 2007).In the light of this information, ELM-Model could be applied in current political communication research by evaluation of political messages, evaluation of candidates in election period**s** and political discourse elaboration.

1.2. Behind the Study

First, persuasiveness of political messages is important in political content of programs**.** The exposures to alternative news outlets and entertainment programming have the potential to shape political attitudes. The classical persuasion paradigm generally assumes repeated messages through campaigns which would often reach people multiply, and then the credibility of messages is reinforced**.** Some political comedy shows like The Daily Show, The Colbert Report and Saturday Night Live are the few examples of repeated exposure in entertainment media (Bennett & Iyengar 2010).

Moreover, the values in political messages are another typical example of changing

attitudes in political persuasion. The persuasive power of values is subject to recipients by having shared values, shared political party identifications and values traditionally associated with different political parties. Clearly, the value matching promotes close attention to the political message via central route, while party mismatching is likely to increase the message rejection. Significantly, these two effects based on expectancies about values effects on informed voters. Apparently, if there are unexpected values, participants rejected messages from rival party members (Nelson & Garst, 2005).

Second, candidate evaluations are also applied in the ELM-Model and recent political communication research. At this point, ideological thinking has a moderating role on candidate evaluation. Based on American National Election Studies data from the 1984-2000 period, ideological thinking increases voters reliance on issues and relatively decreases the reliance on candidate cues, who were concerned about the outcome of the election i.e. motivated. Significantly, the cognitive processes with ideological thinking often regulate political choice by asserting in the political decision-making process (Lavine & Gschwend 2006).In addition, citizens assess a candidate's hidden characteristics to their vote decisions. Either, voters behave as motivated tacticians or rational, they are primed to move beyond initial impressions to decide whether the information is confirmatory or contradictory (Bianco, 1998). On the other hand, American news media provides presidential candidates debates. Hence most of American citizens make candidate evaluation by focusing their performance instead of repeated issues. Presidential debate subsequently changes voting behavior in terms of political knowledge, ideology, salience of issues, strength of initial attitude and exposure to news coverage (Hwang et al., 2007).

Third, elaboration itself is an important process as the mediator for effects of political discussion and political knowledge. Recent studies suggest that there is a mediation power of the discussion and knowledge by the motivation and information processing behavior (ability). On the other hand, the discussion-generated elaboration is questioning the how discussion itself can influence information processing through attitude change (Eveland, 2004). Furthermore, the power of the majority opinion is extended. Relatively, citizens make judgments with regards of the ambiguous political messages. Therefore, the use of a personal experience heuristic gives rise to a political bias. Consequently, this rising political bias tends to be continued by dominance of majority opinion (Huckfeldt et al., 1998).

Another consistent finding in political persuasion research is about political awareness. Based on the Zaller's the mainstream effect 1992, the elite influence on public opinion is obvious when the political elite mostly stress one certain point of view quite a lot over another. For example, just after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait both Democrat and Republican US politicians agreed on sending troops to Persian Gulf. There are presented message arguments and partisan cues that make politically aware supports the elite point of view. Significantly, people process the cues more extensively when they are politically involved. Hence, cues in such a situation are a powerful variable in the persuasion process that may change attitude (Kerkhof, 2000).In the light of this

information, the following main research question is going to be tested: 'how voters' behaviors' in North Cyprus are affected by the political communication, and more precisely the application of ELM-Model during the election period?

2. Method

The aim of this research is to examine how political communication in North Cyprus related to aspects of the ELM-Model. The main subjects of interest are the political actors and the political messages, matters of identity, representations. This study sought answers to questions related to the approaches and positions the ELM-Model, and persuasion of the political communication. In order to analyze the application of ELM-Model in North Cyprus political communication process, this study make four different categorizations for the evaluations of the political messages which are, persuasiveness of political messages, shared values, shared political party identifications and candidates' hidden characteristics. In this study the central route of the ELM-Model was investigated under these four characteristics of the evaluation of political messages. The object of this study is to show that central route of the ELM-Model is more applicable for direct and implied meanings of communication, persuasion and cognition among Turkish Cypriot citizens. This study will accomplish this through an attempt to understand and analyze the practices implemented by political candidates in their selection and presentation of ideas in terms of the evaluations of their political messages. In the light of this information, this study sought to answer the above mentioned main research question with the special interest on the 'how central route of ELM-Model is important to change voters behaviors when they are evaluating the political messages of candidates?

2.1. Sample

The anticipated research question was investigated with the 50 semi-structured, in-depth interviews. These interviews were conducted between 9th June and 18th June in North Cyprus, with Turkish Cypriot citizens. The interviewed Cypriot citizens were chosen if they not only actively used social media but they also interested with the politics during the election period and actively participated in election and propaganda campaign. The citizens that interviewed were expressed that they were willing to attend interview process and felt free while they are sharing all their thoughts, feelings and experiences about the politics in general, politicians and the application of the political communication of North Cyprus. Also, during the interview process, respondents had a freedom for open questions as well. Then with the open questions follow-up enquiries were also available for respondents. In the interview guide open questions allow respondents the fullest opportunity to answer individually. With the qualitative interviewing, it is true to say that interview results were efficiently portraying an environment in larger intricacy. Therefore in this study using a qualitative method enables to investigate application of the ELM-Model and persuasiveness of the political messages in depth. It is also important to highlight that with a semi-standardized interview format the coding of the issues with an all dimensions were ensured. The

sample was well-balanced to portray the views on the application of ELM-Model in North Cyprus politics in general and more specifically persuasiveness of political messages in North Cyprus which allow comparative interpretations.

3. Results

Now that the literature review defined and classified the different processes distinguished within the various field of research, the next objective will be to identify the constructs determining when a particular effect can be expected to occur. As already stated, persuasion is an active process that is currently missing a comprehensive framework that allows me to integrate the different answers from the respondents in a meaningful way. Throughout the following section, the study will argue that the ELM-Model in North Cyprus political communication process might be considered as a promising avenue towards the creation of such an explanatory area for further researches. However, this study proposes to elaborate the basic principles behind the ELM-Model somewhat further by completing it with additional insights.

Table 1. Basic principles of ELM-Model in Political Communication

Evaluation of Political Messages	
Persuasiveness of Political Messages	Þ repeated exposure by multiple outlets
Shared Values	Þ expectancies, elite influence
Shared Political Party Identification	Þ ideology, political knowledge, salience of issues
Candidates' Hidden Characteristics	Þ strength of initial attitude, performance

3.1. Persuasiveness of Political Messages

An overwhelming majority of citizens agreed that their decisions and attitudes have changed based on the persuasiveness of political messages; because they believed that during the election process they were more interested with the politics compare with the normal periods. Besides they announced that values in political messages are important. Citizens from different ideological point of view expressed that messages through campaigns reach themselves multiply which was affected credibility of message. They explained that they felt a lot nearer to politicians when they came up with politicians on the street while they were walking during the horse race periods, that is to sit pre and post-election periods. On the other hand, citizens who were able to engage in propaganda activities, they were more suspicious on the political messages, although they played an active role in the persuasion process. As it is mentioned before, for Turkish Cypriots citizens repeated exposure of same political messages are accepted as ordinary situation. Most of the citizens express that they were already memorize the political messages, which are not changed throughout the North Cyprus history. From these results, it is important to mention that for Turkish Cypriot, although the election dates were changed, the candidates and their special emphasized topic of political messages are still same.

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3.2. Shared Values

Similar with persuasiveness of political messages, shared values are another important aspect which would directly affect the political communication persuasion process. An overwhelming majority of citizens approved that their decisions and attitudes showed increase in a supportive way based on the shared values that are mentioned in the political messages. Since, they expressed that that during the election process they would prefer to listen and follow political debates if they felt they are going to come up with shared values. Moreover, the shared values are important to strengthen the group identification and feelings of an 'us'. Therefore, citizens from different ideological point of view said that political messages usually aimed to reach targeted group to mobilize their togetherness. In other words, the cognitive process of shared value is more related with the idea of belonging than the ideological content. It is unavoidable results that most of the Turkish Cypriots, who were interviewed, express their needs to feel belonging to any small society. They believe the power of the 'us' in the political messages, and they explain their needs of following the same candidates who already shows the shared values in their political messages. Therefore, sharing the same values work as a glue to bond citizens together, which are cognitively help to easily feel belonging, and avoid isolation.

3.3. Shared Political Party Identification

It is in such a context that the main parties that have dominated Turkish Cypriot politics for several decades the process of political messages evaluation is something that is strongly linked with the shared political party identification in North Cyprus case. Therefore, partisan logic is vital aspects in the cognition process of persuasiveness of political messages. Significantly, an overwhelming majority of citizens favored hat politician or candidate with and political party identification such as; party logo, identified party color or etc. would affect their decisions and attitudes while they were watching or listening the political debate. Since, they expressed that that during the election process they would prefer to wears basic accessories which belong to one political party. On the other hand, political party identification is crucial for political messages itself, which citizens expressed that they would like to follow political messages including shared political party identification. Also, respondents express that political parties, tapped into their campaign's emblem, which for many symbolized their commitment to share political identification, but which in candidates' speeches and advertisements clearly had an additional meaning. Although, Turkish Cypriot citizens are more likely to be persuaded by the partisan logic, the general political knowledge is not as effective as the shared values and political party identification aspects in the evaluation of the political messages during the horse race. In addition to that, it is clear to say that political communication in North Cyprus flows ran more with against partisan grain.

3.4. Candidates' Hidden Characteristics

From the above mentioned results for principles of political messages evaluation

process, candidates' hidden characteristics aspect in North Cyprus case is mostly referred to personal experience, which gives rise to a political bias. Cyprus is accepted as an example of a Mediterranean media system (Hallin and Mancini, 2011), an overwhelming majority of respondents express that candidates political messages were substantive, and their political characteristics were subordinate strong and stable political institutions. Also, it is clear from the respondents that citizens choose what they wanted to exposed, that is knows as audience reception of politics. At this point, candidates' hidden characteristics category is not only show the unique results for own, but also prove the above mentioned results of the evaluation of political messages. From the respondents answers, it is crucial to say that shared values, shared political party identifications and persuasiveness of political messages were heavily rely on the candidates' hidden characteristics. In North Cyprus case, the respondents believe those candidates' characteristics or performance were more alive compare with the other countries as they were still making their election campaign on the streets, whereas the other countries are mostly used social media. Also, they believe that their candidates with shared values perform very well on the public media. For Turkish Cypriots, knowing candidates with shared values were safer decision while they were surrounded by the uncertain life in an unrecognized state.

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to provide a first and preliminary insight into importance of the ELM-Model in political communication research in the case of North Cyprus during the horse race period. In-depth interviews with 50 citizens from different ideologies and political parties' sympathizers provided a rich collection of sample. The interview responses were analyzed within the context of the findings of similar studies focusing on cognition and persuasion from different fields.

Prior findings, mostly based on the advertising and marketing persuasion indicated that political persuasion as a named of ELM-Model had not yet evolved a role, norms and values in the Cypriot media studies. Respondents in this study found that 'making election propaganda' was the important factor that constituted persuasiveness of political messages in Northern Cyprus during the election period. Although it is not clear if this opinion represents the emergence of a cognitive process of persuasion, the data suggests that citizen's sees 'central route' as their highest goal to explain their voting behavior.

This study was interested in whether the persuasiveness of political messages varied by the topic and shared political party identification. The results suggest that shared political party identification was more important than the topic of the political messages. The differences in the use of shared values were just as much dependent on the political party value matching. Their frequent use of political party values showed a similar emphasis on the persuasiveness of the political messages. With respect to specific differences between political parties' sympathizers, there was a tendency to use ideologically well-accepted messages more frequently than party mismatching

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messages during the election period in order to reduce message rejection. This is what this study wanted to find, based on interview results that demonstrate the existence of ELM-Model characteristics in political communication process of North Cyprus.

In conclusion, the ELM-Model tried to approach the persuasion process by arguing that persuaded people are likely tended to change their attitudes. Although, there are two different persuasion routes, there is no clear distinction between them. By talking specifically about political persuasion can be accepted that the prior knowledge on politics might be moderator. People with lower knowledge are more likely affected by moderated media effects. Yet, these moderated effects would possibly work with contextual moderators that change from nations and occasions.

On the other hand, one can also argue that candidates' messages would be a mediator because mediation analysis is applied both cognitively and in terms of effective interplay during the effects process. As it is clear from the explanations, by media persuasion people are likely tend to change their attitudes. It is appropriate to support that 'time' is a key variable in the political persuasion process. Time implies that whether people have an ability and motivation with high political knowledge, if there is certain situation like election they tend to go with peripheral routes. Therefore, it is hard to say there is a distinction between two routes in the ELM-Model applied in the political persuasion. The results imply that the different variables in ELM-Model have multidimensional effects on political persuasion. Therefore, it is necessary to take account essential variables.

The effects of group cue by framing, priming effects and cognitive elaboration might be the adequate explanations for political persuasion. It is vital to mention that compare with the advertising or Health persuasion, political persuasion is much more complex in terms of its broad variables context. The variables in political persuasion would be differed from one country to another even one citizens to another. It is obvious that the ELM-Model applied in political persuasion needs to consider persuasion process in general regardless by distinguishing central and peripheral routes.

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