

Politicians' Strategies Regarding Their Visual Representations in Media: June 2015 Turkish General Elections

Politikacıların Medyada Görsel Temsil Stratejileri: Haziran 2015 Türkiye Genel Seçimleri

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Abstract

This study examines how photographic depictions of political candidates published prior to the elections are utilized. Photographic representations of political candidates, involve descriptive characteristics such as posture, posing, facial expressions and clothing style. At the same time, non-verbal clues such as smiling and raising eyebrows, which often have positive effect, are some of the factors affecting their physical attractions. Such characteristics are essential when individuals' perceptions are considered, and they are significant components of political communication. This study examines, how visual clues and composition elements in politicians' images, readers interpret and evaluates the findings and conclusions accordingly. Objective and intuitive interpretations of four political party leaders – who were represented through 121 photographs published on three high-circulation newspapers in Turkey for three weeks prior to June 7th 2015 Turkish General Elections-were sought by using Q-sort and qualitative interview techniques. The research question of the study is as follows: How do readers interpret composition elements of politicians' representations and evaluate them?

Keywords: Visual Communication, Audience Perception, Political Representations, Q-sort

Öz

Bu çalışma, siyasilerin seçim öncesi medyada yer alan fotoğraflık tasvirleriyle görünürlüklerinin nasıl kullanıldıklarını incelemektedir. Siyasi adayların fotoğraflık sunumlarında tanımlayıcı özellikler bulunmaktadır; duruşu, pozu, yüz ifadesi ve giyim tarzı gibi. Aynı zamanda gülümseme, kaş kaldırma gibi olumlu etki yaratan sözsüz ipuçları fiziksel çekiciliklerini etkilemektedir. Bu tür özellikler bireysel algılamada önemlidir ve siyasal iletişimin kapsamındadır. Bu çalışma, politikacı imajlarındaki görsel ipuçlarını ve kompozisyon elemanlarını, izleyicinin nasıl yorumladığını araştırmakta ve bulgularla sonuçları değerlendirmektedir. Bir kart sıralama (Q-sort) ve nitel görüşme tekniği kullanılarak, izleyicilerin 7 Haziran 2015 Türkiye Genel Seçimleri öncesinde, üç yaygın gazetede bir hafta boyunca yayınlanan fotoğraflarla (121) temsil edilen dört parti liderinin tasvirlerindeki öznel ve sezgisel yorumları yakalanmaya çalışılmaktadır. Çalışmanın araştırma sorusu şöyledir: İzleyici, politikacıların sunulan tasvirlerinin değerliğini ve kompozisyon elemanlarını nasıl yorumlamaktadır?

Anahtar Kelimeler: Görsel iletişim, İzleyici Algısı, Siyasi Temsiller, Q-sort

Introduction

Today, visual elements are considered the basic components of political communication. Visual depictions of politicians imply certain clues about the perceptions of potential voters regarding how reliable and suitable the candidates are. Since these visual representations involve both positive and negative implications about candidates, they affect voters' perceptions and preferences to a great extent. Even they play a significant role in understanding their policies (Grabe and Bucy, 2009; Haumer and Donsbach, 2009). Professional politicians are aware of the fact that visual media images are essential in political communication (Blumler and Gurevitch, 2000; Papathanassopoulos, 2007; Schulz, 2011; Strömback, 2007), and they shape their political images accordingly (Schill 2012). They deliberately aim to appear in public more and to become more effective and sincere than before (Thompson, 2005). At this point, unfavorable or favorable depictions gain importance. Which visual clues make a visual image unfavorable or favorable? Such questions are concerns not only of politicians but also researchers conducting research in the fields of political and visual communication.

This research focuses on visual communication in general and the role of visual representations in specific. Following an introduction about a theoretical background, an analysis of reader perceptions about visual depictions of the leaders of four political parties published on newspapers prior to Turkish general elections is presented. Depending on positive and negative composition elements and clues, the study uses Q-sort (a card-sorting) technique and survey to obtain objective and intuitive interpretations of the participants. Different methods of reading media texts have been used in visual research (Berger, 1973; Rose, 2012). Numerical content analyses are often used to detect and define the realities in media messages and especially in multi-meaning visuals. In this study, qualitative and quantitative research techniques are used together, Q-sort is used as a data collection method and the data collected is also applied cluster analysis.

Visuals and Political Communication

Political communication is built on an approach where images have primary importance and words and texts secondary (Grabe and Bucy, 2009). Political candidates and their advisors try hard to create the most effective and strategic visuals that are likely to stand for their aims and to build up a strong leader image (Shea and Burton, 2001).

Visual elements are used carefully in advertisements, speeches, press conferences and other communication forms (Jamieson, 1988; Moffit, 1999). Image-makers guide the candidate in many issues such as what color to wear, who to take a photograph with and how (Hendrix, 2001; Strother, 1999; Wray, 1999). Visual images have the potential of teaching (Barry, 2005). Also, it has a basic role in developing ego and consciousness according to neurologists (Damasio, 1999). Images are perceived quicker than written and oral messages, easily understood and vividly memorable (Barry, 1997; Messaris, 1997). Readers process visual information faster than written information and other symbol forms (Graber, 1996b; Paivio, 1979). In addition, visuals are more memorable when they are catchy and include new information (Graber, 1990; Graber, 1996b; Paivio, 1979) and help information to be retained (Berry and Brosius, 1991; Brosius et al. 1996; Edwards, 2004; Edwardson et al. 1981; Findahl 1981; Kipper, 1986) According to political scientists (Nelson and Boyton, 1997), "persuasion (in a political message) is achieved through presentations, and presentations are successful when accompanied with details", and visual elements, colors, movements, sounds, music and characters in a presentation are the "tastes" that are retained in minds. The power of visual communication lies in conveying such "tastes".

The following findings were obtained in some related empirical studies: (1) People believe in what they see more than what they read and hear (Schweiger and Adami, 1999; Shea and Burton, 2001), (2) when visual and written messages conflict, individuals find it hard to remember written information (Drew and Grimes, 1987; Grimes, 1991; Lang, 1995); (3) when presented simultaneously, other messages are often ignored (Krauss et al. 1981; Noller 1985; Posner et al. 1976). Visuals have the following functions in politics providing persuasive evidence; the agenda setting; dramatizing; stimulating the emotions; building an image of the candidate; creating an identity; being a document; associating with social symbols; transferring to the viewer, serving as an argument creating uncertainty (Schill, 2012), importance depending on size, managing appearing and domination depending on placement.

Providing persuasive evidence. The most important and primary function of "image" in political communication is to have a rhetorical effect and provide persuasive evidence to the viewer (Birdsell and Groarke, 1996; Birdsell and Groarke, 2007; Blair, 2004).

Even if images lack a visual pattern, they can convey sensitive relationships among objects and bring these objects together to signify casual relationships, differences and similarities as well as generalization. To illustrate with, a political candidate can evoke a patriotic behavior by standing in front of his country's flag (Barry, 1997). Facial expressions and gestures are two ways to create an argument through an image (Lanzetta et al. 1985). Non-verbal communication such as facial expressions and gestures constitutes 65% of communication process (Birdwhistell, 1970) and it is stronger than or at least as effective as verbal and written communication (Argyle et al. 1972). Voters take facial expression of the candidate as reference when they decide on an idea about him or her (Olivola and Todorov, 2010). Physical attraction (competence, trustworthiness) creates a Halo effect that increases leadership talent (Riggle et al. 1992). A physically attractive candidate is likely to receive more votes than a candidate who is not.

(1) *Agenda setting*. According to agenda setting theory, news media determines the news to be highlighted in the agenda by placing an emphasis on it and publishing it more often (McCombs, 2004). Visuals with their catchy images give candidates and their campaigns an opportunity to take their place in the news and control news agenda (Klijn, 2003; Wanta, 1988).

(2) *Dramatizing*. Another function of visuals regarding agenda setting is dramatization. The nature of visuals gives political candidates an opportunity to depict the fact that they have already committed themselves to politics (Luntz, 2007). Aesthetical and quality images that are created through story-like depiction, staging, character descriptions and dramatization and are told in a simple way are identical to human nature (Fisher, 1984).

(3) *Stimulating the emotions and convince*. Symbolic images have the incredible capacity to create emotional reaction in viewers (Lanzetta et al. 1985). They can evoke strong emotions and provide with information that is able to trigger certain responses in viewers and motivate response norms to convince (Pratkanis and Aronson, 2008). In addition, moving images cause more emotional arousal than stable ones (Schill, 2012).

(4) *Building an image of the candidate*. Most individuals have limited information about political leaders at the beginning and they trust media to get some

information about them. Citizens obtain primary information about leaders through their photographs (visual image builds up political image) (Graber, 1987). Such images, which attract people's attention, give some intuitive clues about the background of the leader as well as his personality and attitudes. In other words, they directly shape a certain candidate image (Grabe and Bucy, 2009). For instance, for those who admire "affection", the images depicting religious symbols and being together with children, showing the candidate in casual daily clothes or sports clothing and while taking part in an activity (collecting tea glasses, riding a bike or playing footballs etc.) are examples of such images.

(5) *Creating an identity*. Since visuals quickly create an argument and communicate with emotions, they have unique role in establishing an identity. In other words, it helps to perceive the "similarity" between the politician and the voter. In Burke's words (Burke and Stets, 2009), identity is created when it matches with the nature of individuals (such as the activities shared, attitudes and ideas) and if this situation is supported with many resources, the candidate will be more advantageous in affecting more individuals, which is an important issue in politics. It is easier to create an identity through images than other communication forms.

(6) *Being a document*. Visual are also documents and they verify that an incident has occurred or something has happened (Messaris, 1997). Through documentation, they function as evidence for debated claims.

(7) *Associating with social symbols*. Visuals are often used in political contexts since they have the potential to touch emotions through iconic and social symbols and to combine these symbols with emotional power (Perlmutter, 1998; Spratt et al. 2005). Candidates are often depicted with the flags of their countries in photographs since flags have the advantage of being patriotic, historical and mythical symbolism (For citizens, gathering under the flag means combining leadership power with commitment to national unity and defending the nation against potential enemies) Another social symbol is the use of soldiers and officers in images. Politicians visits injured soldiers, take part in the funerals of martyrs, wear uniforms and visit military facilities. Still another common social symbols are doing sports or watching sports events. Visuals are also used to associate the candidates with those

having a mythical and symbolic function. Generally, candidates have a symbolic function of being current or past legendary leaders of the political party.

(8) *Transferring to the viewer.* Visual can take viewers to a different time periods or places. It is quite difficult to realize this merely through words but it is possible through images. Some researchers (Lombard and Ditton, 1997) examine the concept of "existing in virtual world" as well as the role of visuals in creating a space in virtual environments and carrying the emotions and users to this environment. Images can be used to convey a viewer to the past or a pastoral future. Once conveyed, it is easier for the viewer to accept visual arguments and emotional attraction. (For instance, in 2002 and 2004 American election campaigns, the visuals depicting September 11 terrorist attacks were used to remind the voters of that place and time).

(9) *Serving as an argument creating uncertainty.* Another important function of visuals is to add a sort of vagueness to the arguments that give unfavorable images and are controversial (Blair, 1996). Visual arguments can be used to create controversial arguments. Kepplinger (2010) explains the effect of an individual's visual representation in media as follows: (1) the depiction of non-verbal communication (facial expressions and movements etc.); (2) the use of technical and stylistic strategies (such as camera angle etc.); (3) inclusion of contextual clues in the image (such as the presence other individuals and the interaction the candidate has with them). The first and the last concepts clearly show that visual depictions do not controlled by the politicians. In addition, research shows that the moment when photograph is taken and its focus affect the perception of the image to a great extent. For instance, viewers show higher interest in direct-angled photographs than narrow-angled ones, which are considered stronger and more influential (Mandell and Shaw, 1973). Shooting angles of visuals are closely related to the meanings conveyed. According to Graber (1996a) in narrow-angled photographs, individuals look taller and stronger if the shooting angle is low. Broad angle can lead to unfavorable interpretations. Moving positions of individuals are considered more favorable than stationary ones. When shooting angle is closer, the messages of the candidate reach more individuals and he/she can look more friendly and reachable. Strong hand movements during a speech give a passi-

onate and strong image of the candidate. Finally, the color and light at the background changes the mood of the message.

(10) *Partially controlling representation.* Lundel (2010) conducted interviews with politicians in order to evaluate how they manage their appearances in media. He concluded that when politicians are taken their photographs, they could rarely control how this photograph is used and created. These findings reveal that candidates are only able to partially control their representation in media.

(11) *The more size, the more important.* Wanta (1988) suggests that the size of a news photograph is significant. The bigger size means being more important. Increasing the size of the photograph is the way to attract the readers' attention more effectively.

(12) *The more front, the more dominant.* According to Moriarty and Popovich (1991), the place of the candidate on a newspaper page is a sign of simple bias. The photographs on the first page are noticed more and more dominate than those on inside pages.

Generally speaking, the politicians' photographs can be examined under three main categories: (1) visual descriptions related to human interaction (such as the activity of the person represented, his posture, gestures, facial expressions, clothing style and special interests etc.), (2) visual descriptions related to outside appearance or photograph taking design (presence or absence of family members, the timing of shooting, the presence or absence of patriotic symbols such as flags) and (3) visual depictions related to photographic production techniques; camera angle, size of the photograph, focus, lighting direction and lighting angle etc. (Lobinger and Brantner, 2015; Verser and Wicks, 2006).

The Purpose of the Study

This study focuses on how visual clues are interpreted in the representations of political leaders published for one week before June 2015 Turkish General Elections on three high-circulation newspapers in Turkey (Hurriyet, Cumhuriyet and Haber Turk). The leaders in focus was Ahmet Davutoglu, the leader of Justice and Development Party (AKP), Kemal Kilicdarog-

lu, the leader of Republican People's Party (CHP), Devlet Bahçeli, the leader of National Movement Party (MHP), and Selahattin Demirtas, the leader of People's Democratic Party (HDP).

Methodology

The study uses Q-sort as a qualitative research method in order to reveal subjective and implied meaning structures in the representations of politicians since subjectivity is expected from the participants in their interpretations. Q sort is a card ranking method in which participants rank their opinions about the words, images or depictions presented to them according to their relations to each other (Lobinger and Brantner, 2015). Statistical analysis is applied to obtain rank results. Q sort has been derived from Stephenson's (1953). It is a suitable research tool for the analyses of phenomena that are difficult to be verbalized such as the impressions about images. It is especially useful for visual communication research. One advantage of this method is that it can transfer qualitative interpretations into a measurable scale. It makes it possible to obtain data about personal point of views as well as the dimensions of subjective phenomena. By doing so, it combines the power of qualitative and quantitative research traditions (Lobinger and Brantner, 2015). In this study, Q sort is used as a data collection tool. The study also uses both qualitative and quantitative research techniques and the data obtained is applied clustering analysis.

Materials

"Structured" Q-set design (Stephen, 1985) is established for Q-sort data collection procedures. These structured Q-sets are based on the topics reflecting of above mentioned empirical study findings (Lobinger and Brantner, 2015; Moriarty and Garramone, 1986; Moriarty and Popovich, 1991). The reason of choosing the leaders of four parties in the study is that they went beyond 10% threshold in the election and they won chairs in the parliament. However, no parties were able to have the ruling power in the parliament alone according to the results. Geise and Kamps (2012) suggest that when the representations of political leaders are ranked according to a comparison, it is likely that their personality and physical characteristics or viewers' bias affect research results. Keeping in mind that ranking results would be affected

since they are well-known public figures as leaders and have individual attractions, each leader was evaluated alone with their own representations. In other words, no comparisons were made among the leaders. The representations (images) published for one week before the elections were made equal in size and stuck on the cards and numbered. All the similar and identical images published on the newspapers were excluded from the study.

After the selections of the representations made by three researchers in terms of their appropriateness, a total of 121 photographs published on three high-circulation three newspapers (Hurriyet, Cumhuriyet, HaberTurk) were included in the study. The distribution of these photographs for each leader is as follows: Ahmet Davutoglu (AKP) 40 photographs, Kemal Kılıcdaroglu (CHP) 30 photographs, Devlet Bahçeli (MHP) 26 photographs and Selahattin Demirtas (HDP) 25 photographs. Visual impressions coded as favorable, unfavorable and neutral by the participants are used in discourse analysis and attribute clusters are formed.

Procedure

Each set of photographs for a leader is given to the participants after the previous set is collected back. What is asked from the participants to do is to make Q-ranking for each photograph from 1 (the most unfavorable) to 7 (the most favorable). The allowed number for each rank is as follows 1-2-3-(4+)-3-2-1: in other words, 1 photograph for the most unfavorable one; 1 photograph for the most favorable one; 2 photographs for the second most unfavorable one; 2 photographs for the second most favorable one; 3 photographs for the third most unfavorable one; 3 photographs for the third most favorable one; the rest being neutral ones [see Figure 1]. The reason for this pattern is the wish for half normal distribution by allowing more photographs in middle categories than the extremes. Prior to the study, the participants were told that - as for the columns more than one boxes in Figure 1- placing the photographs in lower or upper boxes makes no difference. In other words, ranking is not sought here. For instance, when 40 photographs of the leader of AKP are concerned, the participants are asked to write the number of most unfavorable photographs in the left-most box, the next two unfavorable ones in the two boxes to the right of this box etc. In the end, the participants are expected to choo-

se 6 unfavorable and 6 favorable photographs, so the rest of the photographs (28 photographs) are placed in neutral category [see Figure 1].

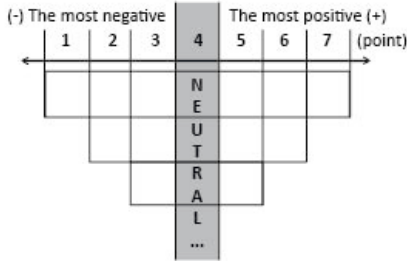


Figure 1. Q-sort Scale Where Participants Placed Photographs Codes During Their Photograph Choice

Clustering analysis is applied in order to determine the photographs with the lowest differences among the ranks of Q sort and attribute index. By using clustering analysis, the images for which the participants give the same or similar points are determined. In this study, variance method (Ward's) was used as hierarchical method. After dendrograms were visualized by using SPSS software for each politician, Q sort and attribute indexes were obtained.

Validity and Reliability

Reliability was calculated according to Holsti formula $[2M/(N1+N2)]$, in which M represents the decisions where two coders agreed and N1 and N2 the total decisions of the first and second coders (Atabek-Atabek 2007). According to this formula, reliability of the coding is as follows: Since both coders are in 100 % harmony in their coding's, reliability coefficient is "1"

here. The photographs where two coders are not in harmony in their decisions were excluded from the study. In addition, if the same photograph was published on all three newspapers, only one of them was included in the study for analysis. Therefore; a total of 121 photographs out of 200 photographs were included in the study.

Sampling

This research was conducted with a total of 60 participants; 30 males and 30 females. The ages of the participants range is between 18 and 64; the mean being 30.2 (SD=11.2). 43% of the participants are university students and 28% are graduates of primary, secondary and high-school; the rest being graduates of a university. As for the level of income, the findings are as follows: 46 % low income level (0-1000 TL); 23.4 % (1000-4000TL); and the rest higher income level (SD=2.13).

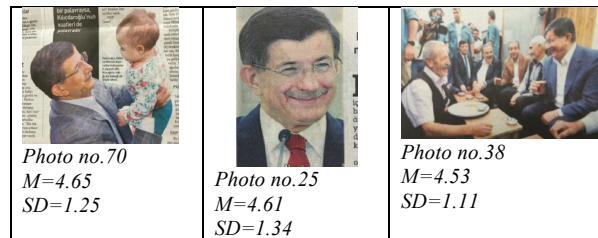
Findings

First of all, mean values for all the photographs in the study are calculated. Table 1 presents the results of representations of Davutoglu, the leader of AKP (Justice and Development Party) according to Q-sort study. Later, the study focuses on the most favorable and unfavorable photographs as labeled by the participants.

The table shows mean values of Q sort rank. Mean values range between the most unfavorable=1 and the most favorable=7 (For instance, the most unfavorable photograph is labeled as 1 and the second most unfavorable as 2 etc.)

Table 1. Representations of Ahmet Davutoglu, the Deader of AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi/Justice and Development Party): Q sort and Attribute-Index Result of His Representations

Photo No	M	SD	Rank Q-sort	Rank SD	Rank attribute-index	Rank difference
70	4.65	1.25	1	6	37	36
25	4.61	1.34	2	5	12	10
38	4.53	1.11	3	9	19	16
59	4.4	0.94	4	13	30	26
46	4.3	1.12	5	8	23	18
66	4.23	1.86	6	1	33	27
26	4.21	0.94	7	14	34	27
67	4.21	0.9	8	17	13	5
24	4.15	0.7	9	29	11	2
51	4.15	0.86	10	20	29	19
56	4.15	0.77	11	23	26	15
69	4.15	0.91	12	16	36	20
1	4.15	1.03	13	11	1	-12
2	4.05	1.08	14	10	20	6
40	4.05	0.76	15	24	2	-13
35	4.03	0.48	16	37	18	2
9	4.01	0.59	17	36	6	-11
54	4.01	0.72	18	26	27	9
16	3.96	0.41	19	40	9	-10
29	3.96	0.48	20	38	15	-5
48	3.91	0.69	21	33	28	7
50	3.91	0.76	22	25	24	2
55	3.91	0.46	23	39	25	2
68	3.91	1.62	24	3	35	11
15	3.9	0.7	25	30	8	-17
31	3.9	0.7	26	31	16	-10
7	3.85	0.68	27	34	21	-6
42	3.85	0.6	28	35	5	-23
3	3.83	0.71	29	28	3	-26
43	3.83	0.78	30	22	22	-8
60	3.81	1.63	31	2	31	0
65	3.76	0.83	32	21	32	0
11	3.75	0.72	33	27	38	5
71	3.75	0.7	34	32	7	-27
33	3.68	0.87	35	18	17	-18
27	3.66	0.87	36	19	14	-22
73	3.54	0.93	37	15	40	3
72	3.46	1.54	38	4	39	1
20	3.43	0.96	39	12	10	-29
5	3.26	1.13	40	7	4	-36
Av.	3.97	0.90				

**Figure 2. The Three Most Favorable Representations of Davutoglu are in the Q-sort**

Favorable photographs. Figure 2 presents the most favorable 3 photographs of Davutoglu according to Q sort results. The most favorable photograph is P.70 with a mean of 4.65. With a removed background, this photograph depicts him while he is holding a baby with two hands up and smiling in a natural mood. It also signals casual daily life of the political leader. It is an image involving body movement and sends an arousal to those who seek “affection”. It also has a symbolic function touching the emotions. It builds up an image of a leader who is active, strong and reachable thanks to its narrow shooting angle and the moment of shooting. The second most favorable photograph is the portrait of him (P.25) with a mean of 4.61. In this photograph, he is smiling in a sincere and heartfelt way (not looking directly into the lens). Especially, his facial expression was found favorable. In the third favorable photograph (P.38 M=4.53), he

is drinking tea with regular citizens and everybody in the image is smiling at the moment of shooting. Its shooting angle is a bit high. His interaction with people around him implies contextual clues. His hand movements while talking convey the message of power and passion. There is a sincere and natural look of an ordinary person. The first two photographs have no background and have a manipulative effect implying control. In all three photographs, his facial expressions imply affectionate, friendly, natural and sincere interaction.

When the participants were asked to give reasons why they found the images of Davutoglu favorable, the following responses were provided: being together with regular citizens and sincere interaction with them 28.3%, favorable facial expression 25.1%, and natural impression 23.3 % [Table 2].

Table 2. The Reasons Why Viewers Found Davutoglu's Depictions are Favorable

Favorable Expressions	Frequency	%
Humorous	6	10
Face expression	15	25.1
Compassion	6	10
Natural	14	23.3
Populist	17	28.3
Powerful	2	3.3
Total	60	100

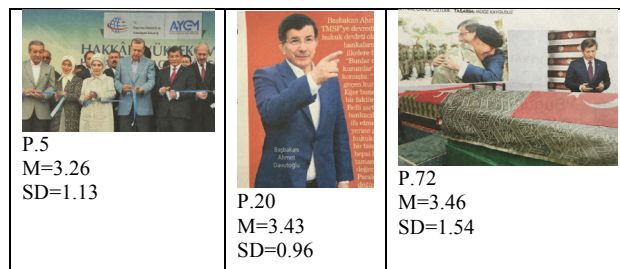


Figure 3. The Most Three Unfavorable Representations of Davutoglu are in Q Sort

Unfavorable photographs. The most unfavorable 3 photographs according to Q sort are displayed in Figure 3; P.5 being the most unfavorable (M=3.26), P.20 the second (M=3.43), and P.72 the third (M=3.46) respectively. In the first one, Davutoglu is cutting ribbon in an opening ceremony together with other

leaders. His facial expression is not a controlled one and does not reflect any satisfaction from the existing situation. It implies weakness and unnatural look. His visual depiction is not a controlled one. In the second photograph, he is depicted in an aggressive mood with his finger pointed upwards. With its re-

moved background, it describes a menacing stand. It is manipulative and out of his control. The third photograph shows him while praying during the funeral of a martyr behind his coffin. Another photograph, which shows him while embracing a crying soldier,

is removed background on the corner of this photograph. His facial expression is not clear. Although soldiers and martyr's funeral are used to create emotional arousal, dramatization here seemed to have an unfavorable effect [see Figure 3].

Table 3. The Unfavorable Reasons that Viewers Found Davutoglu's Depictions

Unfavorable Expressions	Frequency	%
Exploiter	13	21.6
Face expression	4	6.7
Dictator	1	1.7
Aggressive	3	5
Threatening	5	8.3
Unnatural	22	36.7
With antipathetic icon	1	1.7
Ineffective/ incapable	11	18.3
Total	60	100

As for the reasons why Davutoglu's images were found unfavorable, the participants provided the following: unnatural expression 36.7%, an expression

implying psychological oppression and exploitation of the situation 18.3 %, and coward and ineffective look 18.3% [see Table 3].



Figure 4. Two Pictures with the lowest differences among the ranks of the Q-sort study and the attribute-index study for Davutoglu; P.60, P.65

The first picture with the lowest difference among the ranks of the Q-sort study and the attribute-index study shows him while giving people "simit" (a food similar to doughnut) in the meeting area. Simit is considered an important food for the poor in Turkish culture so this photograph serves for mythical symbolism (dramatization). A function, which estab-

lishes an emotional bond with people having low income, can be perceived here. The second photograph is decoupage showing the leader in front of party flags. It is a controlled shooting and implies leadership and commitment to the party and its supporters [see Figure 4].

Table 4. Representations of Kemal Kılıçdaroglu, the Leader of CHP (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi/Republican People's Party): Q Sort and Attribute-Index Result of his Representations

Photo no	M	SD	Rank Q-sort	Rank SD	Rank attribute-index	Rank difference
44	4.98	1.43	1	5	20	19
39	4.86	1.54	2	2	18	16
27	4.73	5.26	3	1	12	9
51	4.6	1.21	4	8	23	19
35	4.58	1.22	5	7	15	10
6	4.44	1.11	6	12	3	-3
36	4.43	1.21	7	9	16	9
60	4.43	0.97	8	17	27	19
31	4.3	0.94	9	19	26	15
30	4.28	1.04	10	13	13	3
5	4.23	0.90	11	20	2	-9
14	4.16	1.18	12	10	7	-5
19	4.08	0.49	13	27	9	-4
38	4.01	1.04	14	14	17	3
3	3.9	1.44	15	4	1	-14
8	3.86	0.50	16	26	4	-12
48	3.83	0.69	17	23	22	5
54	3.81	1.01	18	16	24	6
32	3.8	0.97	19	18	14	-3
45	3.8	0.63	20	25	21	11
23	3.78	0.69	21	24	11	-10
22	3.75	0.75	22	22	10	-12
13	3.51	1.54	23	3	6	-17
56	3.43	0.81	24	21	25	1
18	3.26	1.03	25	15	8	-17
10	3.13	1.18	26	11	5	-21
43	2.78	1.41	27	6	19	-8
Av.	4.02	1.19				

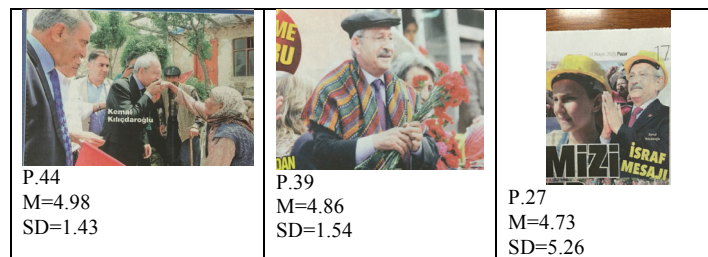


Figure 5. The Most Three Favorable Representations of Kılıçdaroglu are in Q-sort

Favorable photographs. Figure 5 presents the most favorable 3 photographs of Kılıçdaroglu according to Q sort. The most favorable depiction is given by P.44 with a mean value of 4.98. In this photograph, he is kissing the hands of an old female citizen. It implies “respect for society” (dramatization). The second favorable photograph (P.39, M= 4.86) shows him in lo-

cal clothes and with a hat and giving a sincere natural and heartfelt smile. He doesn't look directly into the lens and is in front of public during a meeting with an armful of gillyflowers. The local shawl and hat worn by the leader are symbolic and signify the concept of being ordinary. The third favorable photograph P.27 (M=4.73) depicts him wearing a yellow helmet worn

by workers and giving a sincere smile. The background of the photographs was removed and he is focusing on a point out of the focus of the camera and clapping. The photograph aims to manipulate and control the readers' perceptions. In all three photographs, his facial expressions imply natural and sincere interaction, and the activity sharing with the workers and "clapping" imply a sort of "support".

Table 5. The Favorable Reasons that Viewers Found Kılıçdaroglu's Depictions

Favorable Expressions	Frequency	%
Humorous	3	5
Face expression	11	11.7
Natural	17	28.3
Populist	30	50
Forceful	3	5
Total	60	100

When the participants were asked to give reasons why they found the images of Kılıçdaroglu favorable, the following responses were provided: being together

with regular citizens and sincere interaction with them 30%, natural impression 28.3 % and favorable facial expression 11.7%, [see Table 5].

Unfavorable Photographs. The most unfavorable three representations of Kılıçdaroglu according to Q sort ranking are displayed in Figure 6, P.43 being the most unfavorable (M=2.78), P.10 the second (M=3.13) and P.18 the third (M=3.26). In the first photograph, he is shouting with a clenched right fist. Its background was removed and has a manipulative effect that gains control. The second photograph depicts him with a menacing face expression with his index finger upwards. In the third photograph, he is talking with an angry face and with his right hand on his chest. In all three photographs, the leader does not directly look at the lens of the camera and has an aggressive expression on his face. All three decoupage photographs aim to manipulate and control the readers' perceptions [see Figure 6].

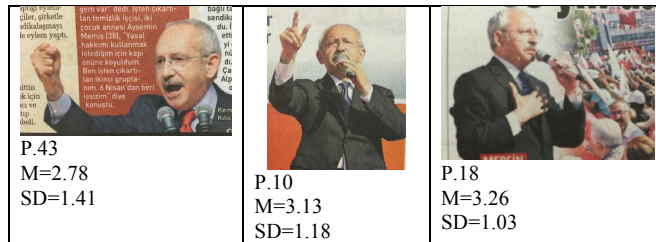


Figure 6. The Most Three Unfavorable Representations of Kılıçdaroglu are in Q-sort

Table 6. The Unfavorable Reasons that Viewers Found Kılıçdaroglu's Depictions

Unfavorable Expression	Frequency	%
Exploiter	6	10
Face expression	13	21.7
Dictator	1	1.7
Aggressive	10	16.7
Threatening	9	15
With antipathetic icon	1	1.7
Unnatural	17	28.3
Ineffective/incapable	3	5
Total	60	100

When the participants were asked to give reasons why they found Kılıçdaroglu's visual image unfavorable, the following findings were obtained: having an

unnatural look 28.3 %, unfavorable facial expression 21.7 % angry and aggressive expression 16.7% [see Table 6].

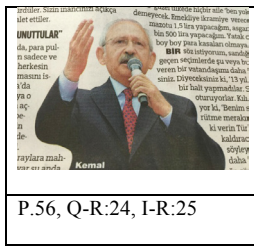


Figure 7. Picture with the Lowest Differences Among the Ranks of the Q-sort Study and the Attribute-Index Result for Kılıçdaroglu; P.56

The picture with the lowest difference between the ranks of the Q-sort study and the attribute-index is the one in which he is speaking with his right hand up. His face has a neutral expression [see Figure 7].

Table 7. Representations of Devlet Bahçeli, the leader of MHP (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi/Nationalist Movement Party): Q Sort and Attribute-Index Result of his Representations

Photo no	M	SD	Rank Q-sort	Rank SD	Rank attribute-index	Rank difference
17	5.26	1.38	1	4	9	8
29	5.16	1.53	2	2	15	13
38	4.75	1.8	3	1	20	17
34	4.75	1.11	4	12	18	14
35	4.61	1.15	5	10	19	14
1	4.5	1.2	6	8	1	5
11	4.41	1.23	7	7	6	-1
19	4.28	1.15	8	11	11	3
2	4.11	1.5	9	3	2	-7
22	4.03	0.55	10	20	13	3
33	3.93	0.84	11	18	17	6
4	3.85	0.93	12	15	3	-9
30	3.73	0.86	13	17	16	3
16	3.71	0.69	14	19	8	-6
24	3.38	0.97	15	14	14	-1
18	3.36	0.93	16	16	10	-6
13	3.16	1.2	17	9	7	-10
10	3.1	1.05	18	13	5	-13
20	2.88	1.34	19	5	12	-7
8	2.78	1.29	20	6	4	-16
Av.	3.98	1.13				

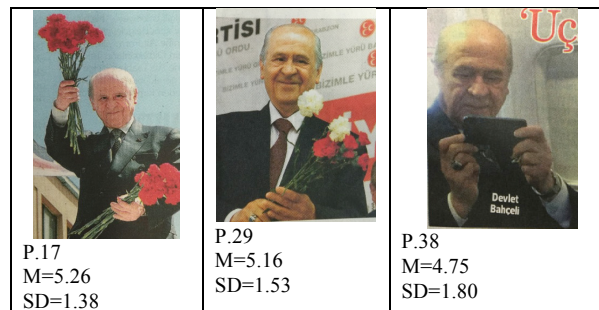


Figure 8. The Most Three Favorable Depictions of Devlet Bahçeli are in Q Sort

Favorable Photographs. Figure 8 shows the most favorable three representations of Bahçeli. The most favorable one is P.17 (M=5.26), in which he is smiling with gillyflowers in both hands and his right hand is up. The second most favorable image P.29 (M=5.16) shows him smiling with gillyflowers in his hands.

The symbolic “affection” meaning of gillyflowers is combined with smiling and results in a favorable perception. The final favorable photograph P.38 is the selfie photo he is taking with his own mobile phone (M=4.75). All three depictions give natural and sincere interaction impression [see Figure 8].

Favorable Expressions	Frequency	%
Humorous	4	6.7
Face expression	24	40
Natural	14	23.3
Populist	3	5
With favorite icon	15	25
Total	60	100

Table 8. The Favorable Reasons that Viewers Found Devlet Bahçeli's Depictions

As for the reasons why participants find Bahçeli's representations favorable, the following responses were given: favorable facial expression 40 %; natural look 23.3 %; being in the same photograph together with popular symbols 25 % [see Table 8].

Unfavorable Photographs. Figure 9 displays three most unfavorable representations of Bahçeli according to Q sort ranking respectively: P.8 (M=2.78), P.20 (M=2.88) and P.10 (M=3.10). In the first photog-

raph, he has an aggressive facial expression with his right hand up. The second photograph shows him with both hands up and he has an angry and menacing face. The third photograph depicts him talking on the microphone with his left hand up and aggressive facial expression. Its background was removed and has a manipulative effect. In all three photographs, he does not directly look at the lens of the camera and is aggressive [see Figure 9].



Figure 9. The Most Three Unfavorable Representations of Bahçeli are in Q Sort

Table 9. The Unfavorable Reasons that Viewers Found Devlet Bahçeli's Depictions

Unfavorable expressions	Frequency	%
Exploiter	1	1.7
Face expression	3	5
Aggressive	31	51.7
Threatening	9	15
Damage to holy	2	3.3
Unnatural	7	11.7
With antipathetic icon	1	1.7
Ineffective/ incapable	6	10
<i>Total</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>100</i>

When the participants were asked to give reasons why they found Bahçeli's visual image unfavorable, the following replies were provided: having an angry

and aggressive expression 51.7%; having a menacing facial expression 15 %; and unnatural look 11.7 % [see Table 10].

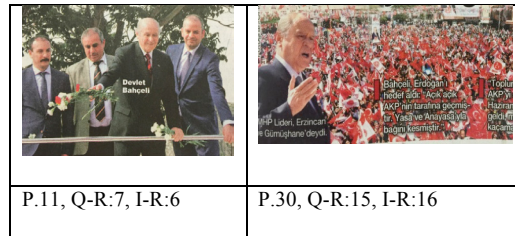


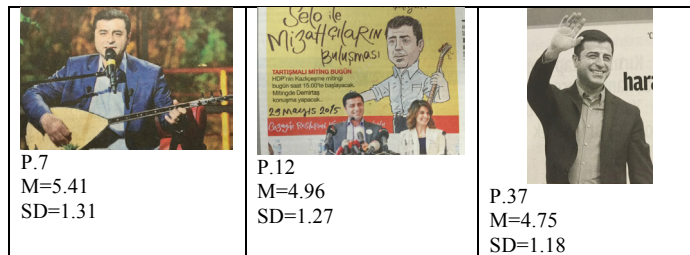
Figure 10. Pictures with the Lowest Differences are among the Ranks of the Q-Sort Study and the Attribute-Index Study for Bahçeli: P.11, P.30

The first picture with the lowest difference among the ranks of the Q-sort study and the attribute-index depicts Bahçeli throwing gillyflowers in meeting area. This flower is considered a mythical symbol that is considered “sign of affection” in social contexts. It is possible here to perceive a function that combines emotional power with masses. The second photog-

raph is a decoupage showing the leader in front of party flags. This photograph is a controlled photograph depicting leadership and commitment to party and its supporters [see Figure 10]. With a removed background and another removed background photograph full of flags as the background, the photograph has a manipulative effect.

Table 10. Representations of Selahattin Demirtas, the Leader of HDP (Halkların Demokratik Partisi/People's Democratic Party): Q Sort and Attribute-Index Result of his Representations

Photo no	M	SD	Rank Q-sort	Rank SD	Rank attribute-index	Rank difference
7	5.41	1.31	1	4	5	4
12	4.96	1.27	2	5	7	5
37	4.75	1.18	3	6	24	21
8	4.73	1.37	4	1	6	2
15	4.43	1.18	5	7	10	5
29	4.33	1.09	6	14	20	14
19	4.28	1.13	7	10	14	7
3	4.21	0.88	8	20	2	-6
18	4.16	1.15	9	9	13	4
2	4.13	1.04	10	16	1	-9
21	4.1	1.18	11	8	15	4
24	4.06	1.13	12	11	17	5
13	4.05	0.59	13	24	8	-5
26	4.05	0.72	14	23	18	4
27	3.95	1.32	15	2	19	4
35	3.91	0.92	16	19	23	7
17	3.71	1.12	17	12	12	-5
5	3.53	0.87	18	21	4	-14
14	3.45	0.85	19	22	9	-10
33	3.43	1.12	20	13	22	2
22	3.31	1.08	21	15	16	5
16	3.3	0.96	22	18	11	-11
4	3.28	0.99	23	17	3	-20
32	2.71	1.32	24	3	21	-3
Av.	4.00	1.07				

**Figure 11. The Most Three Favorable Depictions of Demirtas are in Q-Sort**

Favorable Photographs. Figure 11 shows three favorable visual depictions of Demirtas according to Q sort rank. The most favorable photograph P.7 (M=5.41) shows him smiling with a “baglama” (a stringed musical instrument) in his hand. The second favorable photograph is P.12 (M=4.96), in which we see he smiling in front of a caricature depicting him playing “baglama”. This photograph functions as a document implying the tolerance of a leader towards humor. The third photograph (P.37 and M=4.75) de-

picts him greeting the public with a smile. The photograph aims to manipulate and control the readers’ perceptions. All three photographs have natural and sincere interaction effect. Playing a musical instrument or being interested in music often mean a difference for a politician with his skill in art. It serves for a symbolism that emphasizes cultural unity and affects human nature. In such images, a function that combines emotional power with masses can be perceived [see Figure 11].

Table 11. The Favorable Reasons that Viewers Found Demirtas's Depictions

Favorable expressions	Frequency	%
Humorous	9	15
Face expression	16	26.7
Natural	23	38.3
Populist	5	8.3
Powerful	4	6.7
With favorite icon	3	5
Total	60	100

As for the reasons why the participants found Demirtas's visual images favorable, they mentioned favorable natural look due to smiling 38.3 %, favorable facial expression 26.7% and funny look 15% [see Table 11].

Unfavorable Photographs. Figure.11 shows three unfavorable images of Demirtas; the most unfavorable first being P.32 ($M=2.71$), the second P.4 ($M=2.28$), and the third P.10 ($M=3.30$). The third photograph-background removed- aims to manipulate and control

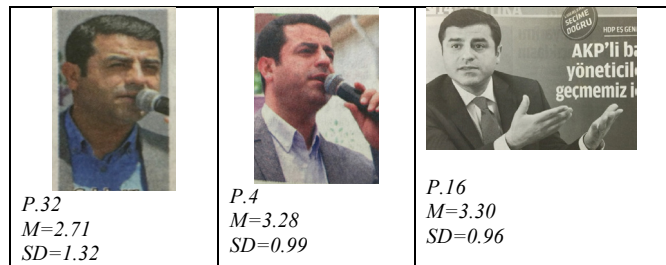


Figure 12. The Most Three Unfavorable Representations of Demirtas are in Q Sort

the readers' perceptions. In all three photographs, he has an aggressive facial expression and he does not directly look at the lens of the camera and looks angry. When the participants were asked to give reasons why they found Demirtas's visual image unfavorable, the following replies were provided: having an angry

and aggressive expression (35%); having a unfavorable facial expression (21.7 %); and unnatural look (23.3 %), [see Table 12].

The picture with the lowest difference among the ranks of the Q-sort study and the attribute-index

Table 12. The Unfavorable Reasons that Viewers Found Demirtas's Depictions

Unfavorable expressions	Frequency	%
Exploiter	2	3.3
Face expression	13	21.7
Aggressive	21	35
Unnatural	14	23.3
With antipathetic icon	8	13.3
Ineffective/ incapable	2	3.3

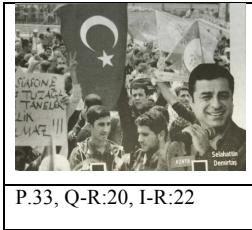


Figure 13. Picture with the Lowest Differences among the Ranks of the Q-Sort Study and the Attribute-Index Study for Demirtas; P.33

study for Demirtas show him smiling and standing alone in front of large-size Turkish flag. Flag serves for a mythical symbolism that is acknowledged as “patriotic” behavior. Since it is a decoupage photograph showing Turkish flag in the background, it has a manipulative effect and is controlled.

Conclusions and Discussion

Political communication involves not only written and verbal expressions but also visual presentations. In this research, favorable and unfavorable leader representations for each leader were evaluated by the participants by using Q sort rank and content analysis methods. While making inferences about the perceptions of visuals and evaluating the effects of visuals, it should be noted that visuals involve multi-meaning. In addition, subjectivity should be highlighted in visual prejudice and visual frame working analyses. Therefore; mixed methods could be combined with multidisciplinary approaches while mixed methods are being developed and applied.

The results of this study, which examines the photographs published in media before the 24th Turkish general elections in June 2015 for one week can provide insights for the future election campaigns. Among the photographs that voters perceive as favorable involve moving body action, symbols and situations such as being fond of children, sincere and heartfelt smiles, natural poses, friendly behaviors, humor, unity established through universal symbols like musical instruments and flowers; being together with regular citizens and greeting them and showing respect towards women. Such behaviors or body movements bring favorable images in politics. When the fact that voters

rely on candidates’ facial expressions is considered, it can be concluded that natural smiles can be persuasive. Finally, greeting in a friendly manner, being depicted while showing affection, defending people’s rights and communicating by using mythical symbols such as music lead to emotional arousal.

This research also may show that Turkish politicians have more active and more favorable depictions accordingly. In other words, this study supports existing theories in terms of the perceptions regarding different political visual cultures.

Among the visual representations that are found unfavorable are being out of the focus due to the presence of a more charismatic person or leader, menacing depictions through fingers pointed upwards, aggressive, furious and bitter facial expressions, poses implying a call to account, frowning, actions of affection in saddening environments such as martyrs’ funerals or fictive dramatizations.

The following reasons why voters find the representations of politicians unfavorable were given by the participants: unnatural facial expressions, actions taking the advantage of the situation, menacing, furious and aggressive facial expressions, faint-hearted and ineffective posing and unfavorable facial expressions.

Favorable and unfavorable visual perceptions should be taken into consideration in political contexts. Today, media images reach people faster and in an interactive, active and increasing way compared to traditional media. The dominance of visuals is increasing thanks to the opportunities provided by advancing technology, so the use of visuals can be a serious threat or have a favorable effect depending on how they are used. Political figures aim to build up the productivity, motivation and ability of images and design their election strategies accordingly. In the study specific newspapers, the images with removed backgrounds aim to manipulate the emotions by adding a flag in the background to arouse patriotism. However, this manipulation changes according to the bias of the newspaper as favorable or unfavorable. According to the findings of this research, the perceptions of voters can be manipulated thanks to photo-manipulation techniques or software through a biased approach of the newspapers although it is not exactly possible to control the success of politi-

cal representations and how these representations will be perceived by voters. Voters are also affected by the representations in social media platforms in addition to the representations in traditional media, which are relatively easier to control. Users generated content and sharing such content are increasing and they become a value in digital world. Therefore, it is extremely difficult to control visual representations by image-makers in this type of media.

Another issue that should be kept in mind is the role of verbal and written texts accompanying the images in creating news and biases. Therefore; journalists should be aware of their social roles and emphasize visual frameworks and realities not with aesthetical concerns but as an important component of news production.

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