



## ***MESSAGES TARGETING YOUTH IN THE 2023 TURKISH GENERAL ELECTION ADVERTISEMENTS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF AK PARTY AND CHP CAMPAIGNS***

### ***2023 TÜRKİYE GENEL SEÇİMLERİ REKLAMLARINDA GENÇLERE YÖNELİK MESAJLAR: AK PARTİ VE CHP REKLAMLARININ KARŞILAŞTIRMALI ANALİZİ***

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#### **Abstract**

Political campaigns and election advertisements are created for various purposes, such as conveying parties' ideologies, election promises, and political views to society; influencing undecided voters; persuading the electorate; changing attitudes; and shaping public opinion. Although election advertisements are generally designed for all voters, in some cases, they target specific audiences. This study aims to examine the messaging strategies political parties employ to engage with young voters, specifically Generation Y and Z, and to identify the characteristics of these messages over the past five years. In the research section, the commercials published by AK Party and CHP in 2023 were analyzed. These commercials were examined using semiotic analysis, with Roland Barthes' technique serving as a reference for interpreting the codes. The analysis aimed to reveal the denotations and connotations of the codes, icons, symbols, and messages present in the advertisements. While the AK Party emphasizes its past achievements and future promises through calm folk tones and cultural references, the CHP highlights dynamism and change by using energetic language, music, and visuals to appeal to young voters.

**Keywords:** Elections, Political Advertising, Public Relations Campaigns, Strategic Communication, Semiotics.

#### **Öz**

Siyasal kampanyalar ve seçim reklamları partilerin ideolojilerini, seçim vaatlerini, düşüncelerini topluma aktarmak, kararsız seçmenleri etkilemek, ikna etmek, tutumları değiştirmek ve kamuoyu oluşturmak gibi birçok sebepten dolayı yapılmaktadır. Seçim reklamları genellikle toplumda yer alan tüm seçmenler için hazırlansa da bazı durumlarda özel hedef kitlelere yönelik olarak yapıldığı görülmektedir. Çalışmanın amacını siyasal partilerin gençlere özellikle Y ve Z kuşaklarına ne tür mesajlarla ulaşmaya çalıştığı ve geçen beş yıllık süreçte mesajlarda kullanılan özelliklerin ortaya çıkartılması oluşturmaktadır. Araştırma kısmında AK Parti'nin ve CHP'nin 2023'te yayınladıkları reklam filmleri incelenmiştir. Reklam filmleri göstergibilimsel analiz çerçevesinde çözümlenmiştir. Kodların çözümlenmesinde Roland Barthes'in tekniği referans alınmıştır. Araştırmadaki bulgular sonucunda, reklamda AK Parti, geçmiş başarılarını ve geleceğe yönelik vaatlerini sakin halk ezgileri ve kültürel referanslarla öne çıkarırken, CHP genç seçmenlere hitap etmek için enerjik dil, müzik ve görsellerle dinamizm ve değişim vurgusu yapmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Seçimler, Siyasal Reklam, Halkla İlişkiler Kampanyaları, Stratejik İletişim, Göstergibilim.



## INTRODUCTION

Election periods are times when political communication campaigns reach their peak. During these periods, political parties produce advertisements both to maintain the support of their existing voters and to influence swing voters. According to Ölçer (2016), political advertisements are created based on unity across verbal, visual, and auditory themes. These advertisements typically feature the party leader, the party's ideology and vision, its promises, and its achievements, aiming to construct a particular image. While these advertisements are generally designed for all voters, in some cases, they specifically target audience segments.

This study focuses on Generation Y and Z because young voters, born after 1980, represent a substantial portion of the electorate and have significant potential to influence electoral outcomes. Although previous research has analyzed political advertisements (Akmeşe & Taşcıoğlu, 2023), (Tüylüoğlu, 2024) no study has simultaneously examined a specific age group across multiple election periods, compared parties with opposing ideologies, and considered both government and opposition perspectives. Filling this gap, this study aims to explore how the AK Party and CHP target young voters, what semiotic strategies are employed, and how the advertisements construct meaning for this demographic. This investigation is important for understanding contemporary political communication and the role of youth-oriented messaging in shaping electoral behavior. The study employs semiotic analysis, using Roland Barthes' approach to examine denotations and connotations of scenes, characters, verbal and visual content, and prominent signs in the advertisements.

### Political Communication From A Public Relations Perspective

Political communication is a multidimensional and technical process. Influencing individuals and gaining their approval is a challenging endeavor; when successfully achieved, it leads to political power. For this reason, political actors and parties must engage in professional communication efforts. Political communication processes, designed to influence both political and public discourse, aim to shape the opinions of the masses. The media plays a critical role in informing and influencing the public due to its unique characteristics. Through media channels, the messages of opinion leaders and political party leaders reach and are accepted by the public (Mcquail & Windahl, 1993). Political communication is a strategic process undertaken by politicians to achieve their predefined goals. The primary actors in this politician, the press, and citizens (McNair, 2011).

Public relations serve as a fundamental tool in establishing connections between institutions and the public, as well as in shaping a positive image and reputation. In this context, both the content of the messages and the platforms through which they are disseminated are of critical importance. Integrating public relations strategies into political communication aims to foster public support and trust in political parties. Public relations techniques provide various functional benefits to both political parties and politicians, including enhancing visibility, enabling self-expression, facilitating rapid responses, and effectively conveying ideological positions. The media's role in political promotion and agenda-setting is particularly crucial during election campaigns. For this reason, political parties and leaders actively seek media exposure during campaigns to present themselves to voters in a controlled manner, accurately communicate their electoral promises, and ensure their messages remain memorable.

Research has shown that political messages conveyed to the public are not always accepted by the masses. Political knowledge and ideological orientation emerge as key factors influencing the perception and acceptance of these messages. Individuals who consistently vote for a particular political party are less likely to be influenced or persuaded by opposing parties (Franz & Ridout, 2007). At this stage, the concept of political trust in a party or leader becomes a crucial factor in persuading individuals. Although the content of trust varies from country to country, in general, electoral preferences shift when a political party and its leader are perceived as moral and honest that are often emphasized in political campaigns (Hsiung & Djupe, 2019).

### Election Campaigns And Political Advertising

Political campaigns are considered a process in which professionally crafted and detailed messages, prepared within the framework of the ideological views and promises of political parties, are

communicated to society. The primary goal of election campaigns is to capture public attention, and they are typically conducted around specific themes during this period (Keskin, 2014). The methods used in election campaigns have evolved in alignment with the Anglo-American system as democratic practices spread to other countries. With technological advancements, the American political campaign model was first adopted by European politicians and later by those in Asia. Political campaigns are managed with the assistance of professional political scientists, sociologists, and communication experts (Lilleker, 2013).

Political advertisements aim to establish an emotional connection between voters and candidates while enhancing candidates' visibility. They encompass a series of strategic efforts to position political parties and leaders in alignment with their objectives, raise awareness, and secure the desired vote share in elections. The primary goal of political advertisements, designed to shape attitudes and perceptions, create differentiation, and promote candidates, is persuasion-based communication (Çalapkulu & Bozdemir, 2019). To achieve the objectives of election campaigns, communication and advertising experts must create images and symbols that align with the ideologies of political parties. Various elements, such as the attire of party leaders, colors, hand and facial gestures, and other visual cues, serve as political indicators. The narratives constructed in political advertisements, along with the way political figures present themselves through selected media channels, play a crucial role in determining the success of political campaigns (Yavaşgel, 2004).

When analyzed within the broader framework of political campaigns, political advertisements can be categorized into distinct types. These include positive and negative advertisements, those emphasizing party identity, leader image, party loyalty, party leaders' achievements, government actions, and those targeting specific demographic groups (Tunca & Koldaş, 2019).

### **General Characteristics And Voting Behavior Of Generation Y And Z**

Although classifying individuals based on generations can sometimes be considered risky, the rapid transformations in contemporary life have made such categorizations necessary. Generational classifications help in understanding and evaluating individuals within a broader societal context (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). In particular, the widespread use of mass media and the internet has played a crucial role in shaping generational distinctions. These differences among individuals have been identified through various research studies, data analyses, and theoretical frameworks, leading to structured classifications based on age groups.

The foundation of these classifications lies in the idea that emotional, cognitive, social, economic, and cultural differences among age groups are reflected in daily life. Generational cohorts are commonly defined as follows: the Silent Generation (born between the Great Depression of 1929 and 1945), the Baby Boomers (born between the end of World War II and 1964), Generation X (born between 1965 and 1979), Generation Y (Millennials) (born between 1980 and approximately 1997-1999), and Generation Z (born from 1997-2000 onward) (Krahan & Galambos, 2014). Since individuals born within these specified periods tend to share common personality traits, they are grouped under distinct generational labels. Notably, significant differences have been observed even between Generation X and Generation Y, despite their relatively close birth periods. According to (Karaçetin, 2019), Generation X is characterized by respect for authority and rules, strong loyalty, resistance to change, adaptability, and a result-oriented mindset. In contrast, Generation Y tends to challenge authority, seek new experiences, embrace change, prioritize entertainment, exhibit impatience, demonstrate innovation, and focus on processes rather than outcomes.

Generation Z has an inherently strong connection with the concepts of the internet, networking, constant connectivity, and technology. With the widespread development of the internet, Generation Z has integrated internet-based elements into their social lives. Growing up with computers, laptops, tablets, and smartphones has enabled them to master these tools effectively, contributing to their rapid cognitive development. Additionally, members of Generation Z exhibit greater success in creativity and imaginative thinking compared to previous generations (Tuncer, 2016). According to a study conducted

in 2021 by Doğruluk Payı, when considering individuals born in Türkiye from 1997 onward, Generation Z accounted for 7% of all voters in the 2018 general elections. This percentage was projected to rise to 13% in a potential 2021 election and 16% in the 2023 elections (Sputnik Türkiye, 2021) Another study conducted by the same platform in 2023 revealed that 52% of Türkiye's total electorate in the 2023 elections consisted of individuals born in 1980 or later, encompassing both Generation Y and Generation Z. This percentage indicates a significant and influential portion of the voting population (Doğruluk Payı, 2020).

## METHODOLOGY

In Türkiye, there are studies in the literature that analyze general election advertisements using Barthes' semiotic analysis method. However, these studies primarily focus on election advertisements and strategies in a broad sense. The number of studies specifically addressing election campaigns targeting different generations is quite limited. Moreover, no study in the literature has examined strategies targeting the same age group across two different elections and political parties with distinct ideologies. This study analyzes the message content directed at young individuals in the election campaign advertisements of the Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Justice and Development Party (AK Parti) within the framework of the 2023 General Elections.

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What semiotic elements are emphasized in election advertisements targeting Generation Y and Z?

Research Question 2: How do election advertisements designed for Generation Y and Z differ from traditional election advertisements?

As the research method, a semiotic analysis was applied to two political advertisements frequently used in the 2023 election campaigns, based on Roland Barthes' theories and analytical approaches, to interpret the denotations and connotations of visual, verbal, and auditory elements. AK Parti's advertisement titled "Those Who Work with Love Never Get Tired" and CHP's advertisement titled "Haydi Türkiye! #Haydi". Both advertisements were widely broadcast on multiple platforms, including television, YouTube, and other social media channels. While the parties published other advertisements during this election period, these two were selected due to their frequent use, explicit targeting of young voters (Generation Y and Z), and their prominence in shaping the parties' youth-oriented messaging. The semiotic analysis processes employed in this study are primarily based on Roland Roland Barthes' theories and fundamental analytical approaches, examining denotations and connotations across visual, verbal, and auditory elements.

To interpret linguistic messages and identify signifiers and signifieds, it is necessary to analyze denotative and connotative codes. Although denotations are not the primary meanings of images and messages, they are the first associations that come to mind. Within the messages, connotations are embedded within denotations. These connotative meanings are evoked in the audience through signs and are dispersed throughout the message (Barthes, 1990). Additionally, elements such as symbols, signs, colors, music, objects, animations, and graphics used in advertisements are deliberately structured to be combined by voters, forming new meanings and integrating with the core indicators of the advertisement. In this study, within the framework of Barthes' approach, linguistic messages, signifiers, and signifieds in the advertisements will be analyzed using semiotic analysis. The research will examine both denotative and connotative meanings embedded in the election advertisements to provide an in-depth interpretation of how political messages targeting Generation Y and Z are structured.

## FINDINGS

The election advertisements of (AK Parti Resmi Youtube Hesabı, 2023) and (CHP Resmi Youtube Hesabı, 2023) have been analyzed through semiotic coding, considering various elements such as linguistic messages, music, visual communication, as well as social, cultural, economic, religious, and technological factors.

### Analysis Of The 2023 General Election Ak Parti Advertisement: "Those Who Work With Passion

### Never Get Tired”

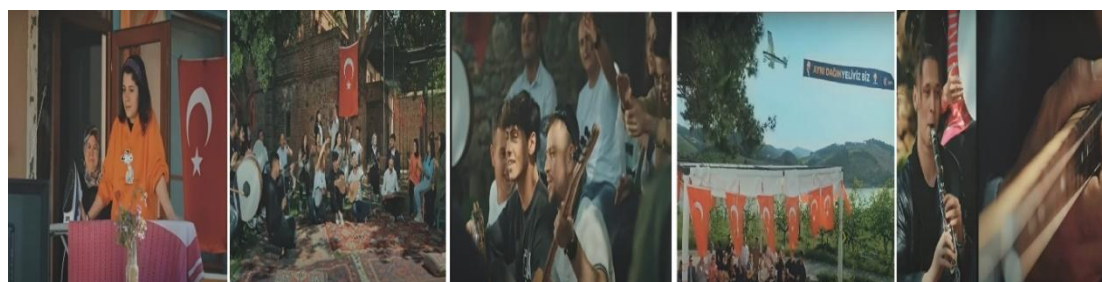
A semiotic analysis of the advertisement can be conducted by examining its denotations and connotations, taking into account spatial codes, object codes, as well as verbal and visual elements.

Denotation 1: A young woman and her mother are sitting on the porch of a house while a man and a woman sing on television simultaneously. The scene begins in clear, sunny weather, surrounded by nature. The young girl is wearing a sweatshirt featuring the cartoon character Snoopy, while her mother is wearing a headscarf. The Turkish flag is also present in the scene.

Connotation 1: The first scene of the advertisement references the coexistence of tradition and modernity, cultural identity, nationalism, globalization, and shared cultural experiences. The depiction of a headscarved mother alongside her uncovered daughter symbolizes a family structure accommodating different lifestyles and reflects the modernization process. The presence of the Turkish flag reinforces Turkish culture and nationalism alongside the interplay of tradition and modernity.

**Table 1.** Section 1 and Indicators in the Advertisement Narrative

Section 1	Elements in the Advertisement
Advertisement Scene	The scenes from the beginning of the political advertisement up to the 25th second.
Characters	A young woman and her mother standing under the porch of a house, a man and a woman singing on a television screen, a seated man in his 50s.
Verbal Content	<i>Song lyrics: We've traveled the same road.</i> Young woman standing under the porch: Mom, come! Our song has started. Hurry! <i>Song lyrics: We've drunk from the same water. Our summers and winters are the same. We are the wind of the same mountain. Our songs and folk tunes are one. We sing together.</i> Man in his 50s: Our songs, just like Reis, are national, local, and legendary.
Visual Content	-A headscarved mother and her uncovered daughter standing under the porch of a house, surrounded by greenery in a sunny environment, along with a Turkish flag and a television screen. -Young people playing traditional musical instruments such as the bağlama, saz, and zurna while singing in a historical setting decorated with traditional carpets and Turkish flags. -Another group of young people singing near a pond adorned with Turkish flags, while an airplane carrying a banner featuring Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's image flies overhead.
Key Indicators	-The young woman under the porch wearing a sweatshirt featuring the character Snoopy alongside the Turkish flag, representing both traditional and modern elements. -Young people sitting on authentic carpets in a stone-walled garden filled with greenery, playing musical instruments and singing. -A setting near a pond with Turkish flags, where young people continue to sing while an airplane in the background carries a banner displaying Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the AK Party logo.



**Figure 1.** Scenes Between the Beginning and the 25th Second of the Advertisement

Denotation 2: Young women deliver speeches about large-scale projects, including bridges, airplanes, ships, and software development. Another young woman draws attention to Turkey's defense industry, stating, "Thanks to our ancestors, Çanakkale became impassable. Now, we are making our airspace equally invincible." A middle-aged man likens Erdoğan to the legendary figure of Ferhat in the Ferhat and Şirin story, declaring, "Our leader, out of love for his people, is breaking through mountains." The song lyrics reinforce this message, stating, "The leader is coming, breaking through mountains."

Connotation 2: These scenes associate Erdoğan’s leadership with large-scale projects and national development initiatives, portraying him as a symbol of modernization and technological progress. The speeches delivered by young women emphasize Erdoğan’s trust in the youth and their role in shaping the future. The reference to Çanakkale establishes a link between historical victories and contemporary projects, positioning Erdoğan as a leader who continues Turkey’s national struggle. The emphasis on the defense industry reinforces the idea of Erdoğan as a figure strengthening Turkey both economically and militarily. The horon dance scene presents Erdoğan as a leader deeply connected to the people and their traditions. Mythological comparisons, such as the Ferhat and Şirin reference, frame him as a self-sacrificing figure overcoming obstacles for the country’s sake.

**Table 2.** Section 2 and Indicators in the Advertisement Narrative

Section 2	Elements in the Advertisement
Advertisement Scene	The scenes between the 26th second and the 1st minute 28th second of the political advertisement.
Characters	Photographs and banners of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, posters and flags featuring the AK Party logo, young women delivering speeches, a middle-aged man, crowds - primarily composed of young individuals, young musicians and singers, young people performing the horon dance.
Verbal Content	(The music changes at the 26th second of the advertisement.) Young Woman 1: New nuclear power plants, bridges, airplanes, ships, energy discoveries, new software—we will accomplish all of these. If God wills, he trusts us greatly! Banner on the airplane: The right time, the right man. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Song Lyrics: "He is the powerful voice of the oppressed, the free voice of the silent world. He is as he appears, deriving his strength from the nation—Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Young Woman 2: Thanks to our ancestors, Çanakkale became impenetrable. Now, we are making our sky homeland just as invincible. No amount of pride is enough for this. (The music changes again at the 57th second, and the horon dance begins.) Middle-aged Man: Ferhat carved through mountains for his love of Shirin. Our leader, too, carves through mountains for the love of his nation—Mashallah! Song Lyrics: The leader is coming, breaking through mountains. The leader is coming, breaking through mountains. Our national pride, Kızılma, has taken off. Let us unite on the same path. Young Woman 3: Our Kızılma has taken flight; soon, our flag will wave at the highest altitudes.
Visual Content	-A predominantly young crowd in the streets, holding Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and AK Party branded caps, flags, and banners. -Another setting features seated young individuals singing, waving Turkish and AK Party flags and banners in the background. -1915 Çanakkale Bridge with a Turkish flag hanging from it, Kızılma aircraft flying above, Kanuni drillship, Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge, Çanakkale Martyrs’ Memorial, Seyit Onbaşı Statue, New Zigana Tunnel, and the first flight of Kızılma aircraft. -People from all walks of life—children, young people, the elderly, shepherds, tradesmen—located in villages, cities, rural areas, and various settings. -Young musicians playing the bağlama and singing folk songs in front of Balıkesir Kuva-i Milliye Museum and Balıkesir Clock Tower.
Key Indicators	-The representation of all segments of society, with a particular emphasis on youth. -The dominance of young women’s voices in the narrative. -The showcasing of national elements, including newly constructed bridges, aircraft, tunnels, and drillships. -The use of Ottoman-era historical structures and traditional attire. -The depiction of diverse locations, such as cities, villages, neighborhoods, picnic areas, and gardens, alongside natural landscapes of Türkiye. -A scene featuring a man and a woman throwing confetti from a terrace, symbolically referencing the victory speech delivered from a balcony on election night.



**Figure 2.** Scenes Between the 26th second and the 1st minute 28th second of the Advertisement

Denotation 3: In this section, a bride and groom holding a Turkish flag and an AK Party flag are first

seen dancing to the accompaniment of a drum and zurna at a wedding. In a village house, four elderly women, with a poster of Erdoğan on the wall, pray for both Erdoğan and the state. A young woman poses the question: "Which will prevail? Hate or love?" The visuals include a boy in circumcision attire, AK Party flags behind him, and young people playing the saz, bağlama, and zurna at locations such as Balıkesir Kuva-i Milliye Museum, Zağnos Pasha Mosque, and the historical Baruthane. In the final scene, Erdoğan's photograph, the AK Party logo, a Turkish flag badge, and a ballot paper with the word "Yes" written on it are displayed.

Connotation 3: The wedding scene suggests that Türkiye has entered a new era under Erdoğan's leadership, one that is expected to progress in unity and solidarity. The elderly women in the village praying, combined with the phrase "let the games be spoiled", reinforce the idea that Erdoğan is depicted as a protector against elements perceived as threats to Türkiye. The phrase "against seven world powers" echoes a long-standing discourse on foreign adversaries, a narrative that dates back to the Ottoman Empire. This framing positions Erdoğan as a strong leader who stands against external forces. The inclusion of the Kuva-i Milliye Museum and historical buildings in Balıkesir further reinforces Erdoğan's image as a leader who embodies the spirit of the War of Independence.

**Table 3.** Section 3 and Indicators in the Advertisement Narrative

Section 3	Elements in the Advertisement
Advertisement Scene	The scenes between 1'29" and the end of the political advertisement.
Characters	A bride and groom, a man in his 60s, young people playing and singing with the saz, bağlama, and zurna, four women over the age of 50 standing side by side in a village, a boy in circumcision attire, Erdoğan posters, a young woman holding flowers, and a young man in a suit.
Verbal Content	(At 1 minute and 29 seconds, the music changes.) Man in his 60s: "This song takes me back 30 years. Now is Erdoğan's time." Song lyrics: "For Türkiye to be glorious, for the games to be spoiled, for the oppressed to rejoice, now is the time for unity." Village women in their 50s: "God, do not let harm come to our state and our nation!" "Amin!" Young woman: "Which do you think will win? Hate or love?" Young man's voice: "Who do we say?" – Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (in the tone of the dombra song). "Against whom do we stand?" – "Against all odds, against seven world powers." "And what do we say?" – "Come on, one more, one more, one more!" (in a singing tone). Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's voice: "Those who work for love do not get tired!"
Visual Content	-A bride and groom dancing to the accompaniment of a drum and zurna, holding Turkish and AK Parti flags. -A man in his 60s speaking, with AK Parti flags in the background. -Young people playing and singing with the saz, bağlama, and zurna in front of the Balıkesir Kuva-i Milliye Museum, Balıkesir Zağnos Pasha Mosque, and the historic Balıkesir Baruthane, with a Turkish flag in the background. -A boy in circumcision attire with AK Parti flags behind him.
Key Indicators	-The representation of political symbolism in everyday life through the presence of Turkish and AK Parti flags held by the bride and groom at a village wedding, as well as AK Parti flags appearing in the background of a circumcision ceremony. -The selection of historically significant locations in Balıkesir, a city crucial in the War of Independence, emphasizing the Kuva-i Milliye spirit. -The use of young people singing in front of multiple historical landmarks, symbolizing continuity between the past and the present. -Erdoğan's voice being used at the end of the advertisement, alongside ballot papers marked "Yes," a photograph of Erdoğan, the AK Parti logo, and a Turkish flag reinforcing his leadership and political message.



**Figure 3.** Scenes Between the 1st minute 28th second and the End of the Advertisement

### 2023 General Elections: "Haydi Türkiye! #Haydi" Chp Advertisement Analysis

A semiotic analysis of the advertisement can be conducted by examining its denotations and connotations, taking into account spatial codes, object codes, as well as verbal and visual elements.

Denotation 1: At the beginning of the advertisement, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu stands beneath a blossoming tree. A young boy and a young man are depicted herding sheep in the mountains. As a pickup truck arrives, the young people inside invite the shepherding youth into the vehicle. In subsequent scenes, a young mother embraces her child, a young man plays the bagpipe by the river, fishermen pass crates of fish hand to hand, and a group of young people sing along the shore of the Bosphorus.

Connotation 1: The advertisement opens with an image of Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu standing beneath a blossoming tree, a universal symbol of spring and renewal. This visual suggests that a difficult period has come to an end, making way for a hopeful new beginning. The subsequent scene, in which a young boy and a young man herd sheep in the mountains, evokes themes of patience, labor, and a humble rural existence—values traditionally associated with Anatolian life. However, the boy's solitude also highlights the hardships and limited opportunities faced by individuals in rural areas. While this scene underscores existing social inequalities, it simultaneously introduces the promise of change, which is further reinforced in the following moments. The image of fishermen passing crates of fish hand to hand reinforces the themes of cooperation and shared effort.

**Table 4.** Section 4 and Indicators in the Advertisement Narrative

Section 4	Elements in the Advertisement
Advertisement Scene	Scenes between the beginning and the 34th second of the political advertisement.
Characters	Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu; a young shepherd and a child; young individuals boarding a pickup truck, along with two others in the truck bed; a young mother embracing her child at home; a young man playing the tulum by the river; three middle-aged male fishermen; a young woman playing the bağlama; two middle-aged men and two women in an old moving car; a young man playing the clarinet, a young woman playing the violin, and another young woman singing by the Bosphorus.
Verbal Content	Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu: "I am Kemal. I promise you." Song Lyrics: "Come, let's embrace hope. Come, come, let's embrace abundance. Come, come, let's win. We are tired, we are weary, come. We have had enough, come. Let's win, come."
Visual Content	-Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu standing under a blossoming tree. -A child and a young man shepherding in a small town nestled between mountains. -The arrival of a pickup truck, with the young individuals at the back pulling the shepherd into the vehicle. -A young mother embracing her daughter. A young man playing the tulum in a lush, mountainous riverside setting. -Middle-aged couples singing along to the background music while traveling in an old car. -Young musicians playing the clarinet and violin while singing by the Bosphorus.
Key Indicators	-Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu standing under a blossoming tree, symbolizing renewal and rebirth. -The young individuals in the pickup truck pulling the shepherd into the vehicle, conveying a message of solidarity and inclusion. -The embrace of the young mother and her child, symbolizing love and affection. -The transition to the advertisement's music through the young man playing the tulum. -The act of fishermen passing fish crates hand to hand, reinforcing themes of cooperation and abundance, aligning with the lyrics emphasizing prosperity.



**Figure 4.** Scenes Between the Beginning and the 34th Second of the Advertisement

Denotation 2: In this segment of the commercial, a young man and a middle-aged man engage

in a conversation. The middle-aged man instructs the young man to take out his phone and take a selfie. A middle-aged woman is depicted laughing under a blossoming tree. A large crowd carrying Turkish and CHP flags gathers at a rally in İzmir’s Gündoğdu Square. At a party assembly meeting, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu delivers a speech from the podium while party members applaud him.

Connotation 2: This section of the advertisement emphasizes themes of social unity and transformation. The interaction between the young man and the middle-aged man references the phrase "Take out your phone," which was widely used in previous years, suggesting a decrease in social divisions through the act of taking a selfie together. The image of the woman laughing under the blossoming tree symbolizes renewal and a hopeful future. The dominant use of the color red at the rally in İzmir’s Gündoğdu Square reinforces a sense of national unity and political allegiance, while also conveying the message that the CHP enjoys strong popular support.

**Table 5.** Section 5 and Indicators in the Advertisement Narrative

Section 5	Elements in the Advertisement
Advertisement Scene	The scenes between the 34th second and the 1st minute 18th second of the political advertisement.
Characters	The advertisement features a young girl, a young man, a middle-aged man, a middle-aged rural woman standing under a blossoming tree, fishermen, two young men and a young woman leaving the same house, a young artist playing the tulumba, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu at the party assembly podium, party members applauding, a young artist playing the guitar, two elementary school students embracing while walking, two young women also embracing, young people waving Turkish flags, lighting torches, and singing, a young woman dancing, young people singing and dancing in TikTok videos, two young women lying among the grass and flowers while sunbathing, another young person singing, a middle-aged couple from Segment 4 arriving at a school to vote, a disabled individual accompanied by a young man, and a young man riding a motorcycle.
Verbal Content	Young man: "Come on, for us. Come on, for tomorrow." Middle-aged man: "Take out your phone... Let's take a selfie." Middle-aged rural woman: "(Laughs) Come on..." Song lyrics: "Come on, for abundance. Come on, let's win." Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu: "I am Kemal. I am coming." Song lyrics: "That side, this side—there is no side here. One should take a side for justice and goodness. Come on, take action, let abundance come. Share the enthusiasm with everyone, let the whole nation breathe. Can we do it? We can. We will turn a new page. I promise you, together, we will save the century. Come on!"
Visual Content	-A middle-aged man suddenly appears next to a young man and says, "Take out your phone." At that moment, the young man is in the sunlight while the middle-aged man stands in the shade. When they take a selfie, the middle-aged man also moves into the sunlight. -A middle-aged rural woman standing under a blossoming tree, as seen at the beginning of the advertisement. -A rally held by the CHP at İzmir’s Gündoğdu Square. -Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu standing at the podium during a party assembly meeting. -Individuals waiting in line to vote in front of a rural school.
Key Indicators	-The phrase "Take out your phone, let's see which brand it is," frequently used by middle-aged individuals in street interviews criticizing economic conditions, is referenced here. However, instead of ending with criticism, the phrase leads to a "selfie," implying a reduction in social divisions. -The middle-aged rural woman laughing and saying "Come on!" under the blossoming tree serves as a renewed symbol of rebirth and hope. -The extensive presence of red, created by Turkish and CHP flags at the İzmir Gündoğdu Square rally, reinforces the message of unity and solidarity. -Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu’s position at the podium strengthens his leadership image, while the standing ovation from party members reinforces his acceptance as a leader.



**Figure 5.** The scenes between the 34th second and the 1st minute 18th second of the Advertisement

**Denotation 6:** In this segment of the advertisement, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu and young individuals appear on the TikTok screen. Middle-aged individuals are shown casting their votes at a ballot box set up in a school. A business owner hangs a sign on his shop door stating, "I went to vote, I will be back." Young individuals are depicted standing under a blossoming tree with expressions of disappointment and melancholy. Subsequently, the leaders of the Table of Six appear under the same tree.

**Connotation 6:** The appearance of Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu alongside young individuals on the TikTok screen suggests his close engagement with the younger generation and his ability to communicate within the digital sphere. The depiction of middle-aged individuals voting, along with the business owner's sign reading "I went to vote, I will be back," highlights the importance of electoral participation and serves as a reminder of civic responsibility. The presence of disheartened young individuals beneath the blossoming tree, reinforced by the song lyrics "Gone is our youth," symbolizes lost hope among the youth.

**Table 6.** Section 5 and Indicators in the Advertisement Narrative

Section 6	Elements in the Advertisement
Advertisement Scene	The scenes between 1'19" and the end of the political advertisement.
Characters	Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu and young individuals appearing on TikTok screens. A middle-aged man casting his vote at a ballot box set up in a school and the election officials. A middle-aged man drinking tea at a coffeehouse before heading to vote and a male worker at the coffeehouse. Young individuals standing under a blossoming tree. A mother and daughter embracing as they go to vote. Young people playing instruments and singing by the Bosphorus. The Table of Six leaders standing under a blossoming tree. A young woman playing the bağlama by the lake.
Verbal Content	Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu: "My Türkiye, how beautiful it will be." <i>Song lyrics: "Gone is our youth, gone. Gone are our efforts, gone. Come on, let's win, come on."</i> Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu: "Come on, let's all go to the ballot box together. I promise you! Türkiye will win." The Table of Six leaders: "Come on!" <i>Song lyrics: "Come on, Türkiye. Come on!"</i>
Visual Content	-Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu and young individuals appearing on TikTok screens. Middle-aged individuals casting their votes. -Young individuals standing under a blossoming tree with melancholic and expressionless faces. -The advertisement concluding with the words "Come on, Türkiye, come on!" and Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu's name on the screen.
Key Indicators	-The depiction of Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu on TikTok signifies his engagement with young people and familiarity with their digital culture. -Despite standing under a blossoming tree—a symbol of renewal—young individuals appear despondent, reinforced by the song lyrics "Gone is our youth, gone," conveying a message that hopelessness will soon end. -The final scene, featuring Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu's name alongside "Come on, Türkiye, come on!" serves as a final call to action, reminding voters of the importance of casting their votes.



Figure 6. Scenes Between the 1st minute 19th second and the End of the Advertisement

## CONCLUSION

This study analyzed election advertisements prepared by the AK Party and the CHP for the May 14, 2023, General Elections, specifically targeting young voters from Generations Y and Z. Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis method was used to deconstruct the advertisements. The research focused on the election strategies employed by the two parties—one representing the ruling party and the other the opposition both hold contrasting ideological positions.

This topic was chosen due to the increasing political influence of young voters in Türkiye, particularly those from Generations Y and Z, whose voting behaviors remain underexplored in comparative studies of political advertising. By focusing on these age groups, this study aims to fill a gap in the literature regarding generationally targeted election campaigns and their semiotic construction.

In the AK Party's advertisement, national, cultural, religious, and traditional symbols are prominently featured alongside modern and innovative elements. The ad underscores the fusion of tradition and modernity, cultural identity and nationalism, as well as globalization and shared cultural experiences. The lyrics frequently evoke themes of shared history, cultural heritage, lifestyle, and unity. Nationalism, local culture, traditional landmarks, political messages, and leadership are recurrent motifs. Notably, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is consistently placed at the forefront through visual imagery, photographs, and song lyrics dedicated to him. His leadership is directly linked to large-scale infrastructure projects, with young individuals affirming this connection. Furthermore, the advertisement highlights young people's trust in Erdoğan through discourse, and the significant presence of youth in the ad reinforces the notion that the new generation supports his leadership. The wedding scene implies that Turkey has entered a new era under Erdoğan's leadership, one characterized by unity and solidarity. At the conclusion of the advertisement, Erdoğan's voice states, "He who works tirelessly will not get tired," reinforcing the idea that he serves the nation with unwavering dedication, thereby strengthening his perceived connection with the people.

The advertisement's soundtrack integrates both traditional Turkish musical instruments, such as the tulumba, saz, and clarinet, and Western instruments, including the violin, drums, and guitar. The ad features individuals of various age groups, predominantly young people. The ad portrays a young shepherd living in isolation, later being embraced by a group of young people, emphasizing the power of social inclusivity and collective action. The continuation of the song across different scenes strengthens themes of unity and solidarity, reinforcing a call for collective effort. The reference to the phrase "take out your phone" signals a reduction in social divisions, as depicted through the subsequent group selfies. A woman laughing beneath the blossoming tree is presented as a symbol of renewal and an optimistic future. The imagery of young people enthusiastically waving flags conveys the notion that electoral victory will bring about a celebratory and transformative atmosphere in society. The inclusion of a TikTok scene highlights CHP's engagement with younger audiences and its presence on social media. The ad's central messages emphasize the end of youth disillusionment, the possibility of change through democratic participation, and the importance of unity.

The AK Party's and CHP's election advertisements targeting young voters exhibit significant thematic and narrative differences. The AK Party's ad integrates nationalist and traditional values with modern elements, constructing a leader-centered narrative, whereas the CHP's ad adopts a more inclusive, hopeful, and change-oriented approach. In the AK Party's advertisement, Erdoğan's leadership and

large-scale projects are reinforced by the trust of young people, while the CHP's ad conveys hope for the future through messages of individual and societal transformation. These differences are also reflected in musical choices: while the AK Party's ad blends traditional and Western musical elements, the CHP's ad aligns with contemporary musical and social media trends appealing to young audiences.

Overall, this study contributes to the field of political communication by demonstrating how generational targeting shapes the semiotic construction of election advertisements in Türkiye. Compared to previous studies, it uniquely examines two parties with opposing ideologies, two different elections, and the specific messages directed at young voters. For future research, scholars could expand this analysis to include other political parties, regional differences, or cross-national comparisons of generational political advertising to better understand global youth engagement strategies.

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