Political Marketing, Word of Mouth Communication and Voter Behaviours Interaction*

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Abstract: *Political actors aim at persuading voters, who are the key elements of target market in order to win election by gaining a higher vote potential than their opponents. Whether voter preferences are shaped by political elements or by the effects of social environment has become the focus of the studies within the relevant literature. The main purpose of this study is to determine the effect of political marketing activities and word of mouth communication and to determine mediator role WOM communication on voter behaviours. The study is conducted in Konya on a sample consisting of 432 voters and the size of which is determined by convenience sampling method by using face-to-face survey method. Political marketing, word of mouth communication and voter behaviours are confirmed by structural equation modelling through confirmatory factor analysis. As a result of the study, political marketing activities and word of mouth communication are found to have a positive effect on voter behaviour. Furthermore, it is determined that word of mouth communication have mediator role in the effect of political marketing activities on voter behaviours.*

1. Introduction

Political marketing is an interdisciplinary concept that is influenced by politics, marketing and communication and examines political parties and voter behaviour (Scammell, 1999: 718). Political marketing emerges when political actors start using marketing concepts and theories in the analysis of political activities (Henneberg & O'Shaughnessy, 2009: 7).

Political marketing involves the analysis, development, implementation and management of strategic campaigns to achieve the goals of directing the public opinion to meet the needs and desires of the target voter groups, promoting party ideologies, winning elections, making law and referendums (Winchester, Hall & Binney, 2016: 260). More specifically, political marketing includes all of the techniques used to ensure the candidate/leader's compliance with potential voters, to promote political actors to as much voters as possible, to get ahead of the competitors and the opposition, to win a campaign with minimum tools, and to obtain the number of votes required (Orel & Nakiboğlu, 2010: 65). Political marketing is considered as a set of processes starting from voter analysis and including the development of the most appropriate political products, covering proper pricing, efficient distribution, and effective promotion to meet the needs of target voter groups (Polat & Kütler, 2008: 6). According to the definition, it can be said

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that the point of action in political marketing activities is the analysis of voter and voting behaviour in today's political marketing perspective. This means the adoption of a market-oriented perspective. Political actors can bring new horizons to their political marketing activities as long as they perceive voters as consumers and pay attention to establish and maintain a long-lasting sincere relationship with them (Reeves & De Chernatony, 2009). Therefore, being in an interactive relationship with voters and other target masses during the preparation and implementation of policies is inevitable for success in political marketing (Beznosov, 2007: 52). To maintain good communication with the target voter groups, one of the communication methods out of many for political actors to reach their goals is word-of-mouth (WOM) communication. To ensure positive and strong word-of-mouth communication will mainly depend on the efforts of political actors.

Word-of-mouth communication in traditional marketing is a concept that is used to spread commercial products or services among consumers and is regarded as a promotional tool in the literatüre (Argan & Argan, 2012: 71). The concept of word-of-mouth communication is defined as interpersonal advice and oral communication (Goyette, Ricard, Bergeron & Marticotte, 2010: 6). Word-of-mouth communication is the cornerstone of powerful marketing tool which is word-of-mouth marketing (Groeger & Buttle, 2014) and is expressed as a form of communication based on interpersonal and social interaction in which consumers exchange ideas about their experiences (Liang, Ekinci, Occhiocupo & Whyatt, 2013).

The importance of word-of-mouth communication is increasing day by day because of voters' voting decisions as well as disappearance of their ambiguity in their votes and provides a safer flow of information through experience. According to Kırım (2007), the most convincing communication method about a product/service is the convincing advice by people who used or heard the usage of this product/service to their immediate surroundings. In this respect, voting behaviour of voters will be affected by the positive and/or negative recommendations of the voters of any party for potential and existing voters in their voting, re-voting or decision changing behaviours. One of the reasons why word-of-mouth communication is important in political marketing is the fact that political marketers have the least reliability among all marketers (Adams, Ezrow & Topcu, 2011). On the other hand, a small number of voters believe in political marketing messages (messages conveyed through communication techniques such as advertising, sales promotion) that are spoken/advocated (Hopkins, 2013; Van Steenburg, 2015). In such a case, WOM messages passing through the correct communication channel and effective group members can be more convincing and reliable than classical methods, and they have the power on voter's behaviour to change their mind through different political parties (Iyer, Yazdanparast & Strutton, 2017).

Waller (1995) pointed out in his work that traditional communication models are insufficient to explain political communication. Within the scope of his research, he proposed a new model for political communication by expressing that there are more than one recipient and source in the process of political communication instead of a single recipient and a single source in traditional communication models. Additionally, in this proposed model, he argued that voters' voting behaviour is influenced by other voters and political actors in the process of political communication. In this context, it is theoretically expressed that voters who are interacting with the other voters and they are knowledgeable about politics have an influence on the voter's voting decision (O'Cass & Pecotich, 2005: 406-407), in other words, word-of-mouth communication affect the voter behaviour.

In light of these information, when the political marketing literature is examined, it is thought that word-of-mouth communication techniques are important in terms of increasing the efficiency of political marketing. Moreover, in the literature, there is limited number of studies evaluating the use of word-of-mouth communication in political marketing from different aspects (Güler & Ülker, 2010; Argan & Argan, 2012; Iyer et al., 2017) and most of these studies focus especially on e-WOM recently (O'Cass & Pecotich, 2005; Richey, 2008; Skoric, 2012; Gülsünler, 2014; Van Steenburg, 2015; Iyer et al., 2017;). Although there are works in the literature which studied the effects of political marketing activities and word-of-mouth communication techniques on voter behaviour, there is no practical study found which intent to measure the mediating effect. From this point of view, it is thought that this study will make an important contribution to the literature.

2. The Purpose, Models and Hypotheses of The Research

The purpose of this study is to determine the mediating role of word-of-mouth communication in the effect of political marketing activities towards voter behaviour. The other aims are to explain the effects of political marketing activities and word-of-mouth communication on voter behaviour. In this context, model of this study is shown in Figure 1. below.

Figure 1. Research Model
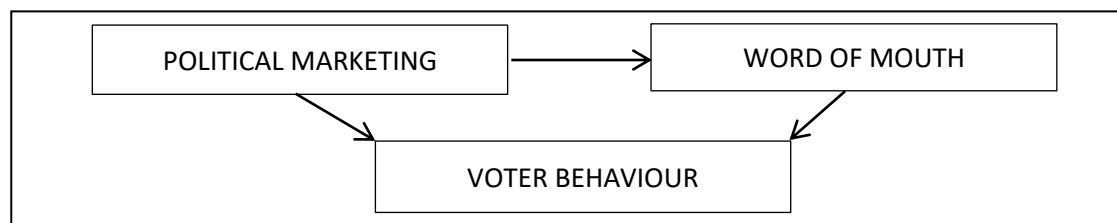
Based on the research objectives and considering the conceptual framework, the hypotheses developed for this research are listed below.

H_1: Political marketing has a statistically significant effect on voter behaviour.

H_2: Political marketing has a statistically significant effect on word-of-mouth communication.

H_3: Word-of-mouth communication has a statistically significant effect on voter behaviour.

H_4: Word-of-mouth communication has a mediating effect on the interaction between political marketing and voter behaviour.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Method of Data Collection

Data collections are fundamental for researches and in this research both primary and secondary (documentary) data as a source have been used. In the acquisition of the primary data, the survey method was used and the survey was conducted through face-to-face interviews. In the creation of questionnaire form, the questionnaires in the literature about political marketing, word-of-mouth communication and voter behaviour were evaluated. Most of the items in the questionnaire form are taken off the previous related studies. In addition to these items, new items were developed and these new items were scaled according to the literature. The following resources were used in the development of items of the questionnaire:

• **Political Marketing**: The political marketing scale designed to determine the political marketing activities conducted by political actors is considered in four dimensions as *political product*, *political price*, *political place* and *political promotion*. In this framework, various studies have been used (Kotler, 1975; Niffenegger, 1989; Çiftlikçi, 1996; Lock & Harris, 1996; Wring, 1997; Tan, 1998; Harris, 2001; Lees-Marshment, 2001; Baines, Harris & Lewis, 2002; İslamoğlu, 2002; O'Cass, 2002; Tan, 2002; Baines, Brennan & Egan, 2003; Henneberg, 2004; Polat, Gürbüz & İnal, 2004; Divanoğlu, 2007; Akyüz, 2015; Polat, 2015). Therefore, political marketing activities conducted by political parties were tried to be determined. All items are based on the 5-point Likert scale graded from 1 "Strongly Disagree" (coded as 1) to 5 "Strongly Agree" (coded as 5).

• **Word-of-Mouth Communication**: The word-of-mouth communication scale established by voters for political marketing activities has three dimensions as *recommendation*, *taking advice* and *communication structure* and in this framework; it has been benefited from various studies (Feick & Price, 1987; Podoshen, 2008; Goyette et al., 2010; Yılmaz, 2011; Çaylak & Tolon, 2013; Özyer, 2015). Likewise, these items are also in the form of 5-point Likert scale.

• **_Voter Behaviour_**_:_ The voter behaviour scales developed to determine the voting behaviour of the people are considered in three dimensions as _sociological_, _socio-psychological_ and _rational/economic voting_. In the development of the scale of voter behaviour, studies by Kalender (2005), Heywood (2006), Cwalina et al. (2011) and Boyraz (2012) were used. All items in the questionnaire that were answered by participants were formed as 5-point Likert Scale graded from 1 "Strongly Disagree" (coded as 1) to 5 "Strongly Agree" (coded as 5).

3.2. Selection of Sampling and Determination of Sampling Method

The universe of the research was determined as voters registered with the province of Konya. However, the lists contain personal information of voters, sampling framework could not be determined because they are not shared publicly by selection boards. For this reason, the non-probability sampling method is used. In this study, convenience sampling method is preferred because of its easy implementation in research design, and it is also less costly and not time consuming.

It is accepted sufficiently that the sample size can be taken as 384 when the universe of the research is one million or more as well as when the confidence interval is at 0.05 levels (Sekaran, 2003: 294). In the research, it was aimed to determine a sample size that can allow generalization on the universe. In this respect, voters aged 18 and above attained to the 26. Period General Elections in the province of Konya dated November 1, 2015 and numbers determined by the Supreme Election Council in Turkey as 1,436,847 people (http://www.ysk.gov.tr/ysk). When taking into account the same election results, it was determined that the number of registered voters in Konya city centre is 811,052 (http://www.ysk.gov.tr/ysk). Since there has not been a new election since the date of the survey, there is no information if there is any change in the number of the voters. Within the scope of the study, 500 surveys were conducted to the people registered in Konya city centre. 40 of the questionnaires were found to be inappropriate for analysis and 28 of them were not returned therefore, 68 surveys were taken off from the total number of surveys. A total of 432 questionnaires were obtained which were suitable for evaluation as a result of the survey implementation. In this context, the rate of return obtained is about 86.4% and the sample distribution is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

		f	%			f	%
Gender	Female	167	38.7		1,500 ₺ and under	114	26.4
	Male	265	61.3		1,501 ₺ – 2,500 ₺	124	28.7
Age	18-25	96	22.2	**Income**	2,501 ₺ – 3,500 ₺	91	21.1
	26-35	187	43.3		3,501 ₺ – 4,500 ₺	62	14.4
	36-45	80	18.5		4,501 ₺ and over	41	9.5
	46-55	37	8.6	**Education**	Literate	6	1.4
					Primary	56	13.0
	56-65	26	6.0		High School	96	22.2
					Vocational	47	10.9
	66 years and over	6	1.4		Undergraduate	178	41.2
Marital Status	Married	288	66.7		Postgraduate	49	11.3
	Single	144	33.3		**Total**	**432**	**100**

3.3. Methods Used in Data Analysis

In this study, structural equation modelling was used 248ort he analysis of data collected. SPSS AMOS (Analysis of Moment Structures) program was used 248ort he structural equation modelling. Exploratory factor analysis was first performed in the study by using SPSS program and then confirmatory factor analysis was applied to test the results. Finally, structural equation modelling is used for hypothesis testing. The information in Table 2 was used to interpret the results of the analysis (Karagöz, 2016: 975).

Table 2. Structural Equation Modelling Goodness of Fit Indices

Fit Indices	Good Fit Indices	Acceptable Fit Indices
χ^2 Fit Index	$1 \geq p > 0.05$	$0.05 \geq p > 0.01$
CMIN/SD	$\chi^2 / sd \leq 3$	$\chi^2 / sd \leq 5$
Comparative Fit Indices		
NFI	NFI ≥ 0.95	NFI ≥ 0.90
TLI (NNFI)	NNFI ≥ 0.95	NNFI ≥ 0.90
IFI	IFI ≥ 0.95	IFI ≥ 0.90
CFI	CFI ≥ 0.95	CFI ≥ 0.90
RMSEA	RMSEA ≤ 0.05	RMSEA ≤ 0.08
Absolute Fit Indices		
GFI	GFI ≥ 0.90	GFI ≥ 0.85
AGFI	AGFI ≥ 0.90	AGFI ≥ 0.85
Parsimony Fit Indices		
PNFI	PNFI ≥ 0.95	-
PGFI	PGFI ≥ 0.95	-
Incremental Fit Indices		
RMR	0 < RMR ≤ 0.05	0 < RMR ≤ 0.08
SRMR	0 < SRMR ≤ 0.05	0 < SRMR ≤ 0.08

4. Findings

4.1. Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The proposed measurement model data were tested for construct validity using confirmatory factor analysis. The measurement model including 102 items describing 13 latent construct: PRD, PRC, PLC, PRM, REC, TA, INT, PV, NV, CON, SPS, SOC, RE. The initial test of the measurement model were made construct revisions. After revisions of measurement model, 60 items were retained. The test of final measurement model demostrated a good fit between the data and the purposed measurement model. Construct validity values of each scales are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Construct Validity of Scales

Scales	Dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Total Items	Removed Items	Hold Items
Political Marketing (PM)	Product (PRD)		15	4	11
	Price (PRC)		5	2	3
	Place (PLC)		3	0	3
	Promotion (PRM)		13	7	6
Word of Mouth Communication (WOM)	Recommendation (REC)		9	5	4
	Taking Advice (TA)		14	6	8
	Communication (COM)	Intensity (INT)	2	0	2
		Positive Valence (PV)	3	0	3
		Negative Valence (NV)	3	0	3
		Content (CON)	4	1	3
Voter Behaviour (VB)	Sociopsychological (SPS)		10	5	5
	Sociological (SOC)		10	6	4
	Rational / Economic (RE)		11	6	5
TOTAL			**102**	**42**	**60**

As a result of confirmatory factor analysis, goodness of fit values of scales are given in Table 4. According to goodness of fit values of scales, reliability values of scale and sub-dimensions are shown in Table 5.

Table 4. Goodness of Fit Values

Variable	X^2	df	X^2/df	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
Political Marketing	525.86	226	2.32	0.90	0.93	0.06
Word of Mouth Communication	528.76	182	2.90	0.90	0.93	0.07
Voter Behaviour	243.37	74	3.29	0.93	0.93	0.07
Good Fit			*≤3*	*≥0.90*	*≥0.95*	*≤0.05*
Acceptable Fit			*≤4-5*	*≥0.85*	*≥0.90*	*≤0.08*

Table 5. Cronbach's Alpha Values

Dimensions	Dimensions Cranbach's Alfa	Sub-dimensions	Sub-dimensions Cronbach's Alfa
Political Marketing (PM)	**0.898**	Product (PRD)	0.896
		Price (PRC)	0.760
		Place (PLC)	0.823
		Promotion (PRM)	0.868
Word of Mouth Communication (WOM)	**0.944**	Recommendation (REC)	0.777
		Taking Advice (TA)	0.868
		Intensity (INT)	0.812
		Positive Valence (PV)	0.846
		Negative Valence (NV)	0.738
		Content (CON)	0.854
Voter Behaviour (VB)	**0.861**	Sociopsychological (SPS)	0.801
		Sociological (SOC)	0.747
		Rational / Economic (RE)	0.816

In this line, construct validity and reliability findings of variables are explained in below:

- **Political Marketing Mix:** In the structural equation modelling, confirmatory factor analysis was carried out separately on all of the product, price, place and promotion dimensions in order to measure path analysis and mediation effect. As a result of confirmatory factor analysis for political marketing scale, it was determined that the goodness of fit values were significant and within acceptable limits (p<0.05). The goodness of fit values for political marketing dimension is shown in Table 4. In addition, the validity values of the items are shown in Table 5. When the values in Table 5 are examined, it can be seen that the political marketing scale (0.898) is reliable at a high level (α>0.70). When the results of the analysis are evaluated, it can be concluded that the political marketing scale has internal consistency and provides structural validity.

- **Word-of-Mouth Communication:** In the structural equation model, in order to measure the path analysis and mediation effect, dimensions of word-of-mouth communication were grouped as recommendation, advice, intensity, positive valence, negative valence and content. As a result of confirmatory factor analysis for word-of-mouth communication dimensions, values of goodness of fit are significant and within the acceptable limits (p<0.05) shown in Table 4. In addition, reliability values are given in Table 5. When looking at the values in Table 5, it can be determined that the word-of-mouth communication scale (0.944) is reliable at high level (α>0.70). When the results of

the analysis are evaluated, it can be concluded that the word-of-mouth communication scale has internal consistency and it provides structure validity.

- **Voter Behaviour:** In the structural equation model, confirmatory factor analysis has been applied to the all dimensions of voter behaviour which are socio-psychological, sociological and rational/economic voting to be able to reach significant compliance values. In this respect, confirmatory factor analysis with the best goodness of fit values can be found significant and within acceptable limits (p<0.05). The values of goodness of fit for voter behaviour are shown in Table 4. Additionally, when the values in Table 5 are examined, it can be said that the voter behaviour scale (0.861) is reliable at a high level (α>0.70). When looking at the overall results, voter behaviour scale can be concluded as it has the internal consistency and it provides structural validity.

4.2. Testing Hypothesis

In the context of the structural equation model, the mediation model proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986) was used to determine the mediating role of word-of-mouth communication on voter behaviour and political marketing. The first phase of the model shows that the changes in the independent variable explain the reasons on changes in the predicted mediating variable significantly. In the second phase, the changes in the mediating variable should explain the reasons for changes in the dependent variable significantly. In the third phase of the model, the relationship between the independent variable and the mediator variable; the mediator variable and the dependent variable is under control, if the previous significant relationship between the dependent and independent variables becomes insignificant, it can be full mediation effect. However, under the same control, if the relationship between dependent and independent variable decreases, it can be partial mediation effect (Baron & Kenny, 1986: 1176). Within the scope of the research, political marketing as an independent variable, voter behaviour as a dependent variable and word-of-mouth communication as a mediator variable have been considered. In addition, the Sobel test was used to determine the mediating effect.

As a result of the structural equation model, the effects of the variables on each other and the goodness fit values and the coefficients of structural equation model are given in Table 6 and Table 7.

Table 6. Structural Equation Model Goodness of Fit Values

Variables	X^2	df	X^2/df	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
Political Marketing – Voter Behaviour	1,218.00	586	2.07	0.86	0.91	0.05
Political Marketing – Word of Mouth	1,655.72	807	2.05	0.85	0.91	0.05
Word of Mouth – Voter Behaviour	1,245.06	516	2.41	0.85	0.91	0.06
Good Fit			*≤3*	*≥0.90*	*≥0.95*	*≤0.05*
Acceptable Fit			*≤4-5*	*≥0.85*	*≥0.90*	*≤0.08*

Table 7. Structural Equation Model Coefficients

Variables	Standardize β	Standart Error	p	R^2
Political Marketing – Voter Behaviour	0.68	0.628	***	0.47
Political Marketing – Word of Mouth	0.59	0.485	***	0.35
Word of Mouth – Voter Behaviour	0.82	0.082	***	0.67

- **The Effect of Political Marketing on Voter Behaviour:** The goodness of fit values of the H_1 hypothesis developed within the scope of the research is shown in Table 6. The values in the table provide sufficient evidence that the goodness of fit values of the generated model is within acceptable limits and that the model is structurally appropriate. According to the developed model, standardized β

coefficients, standard error, p and R^2 values between the variables are shown in Table 7. When the values in Table 10 are examined, it can be seen that political marketing effects voter behaviour (β=0.68; p<0.05). In the light of this finding, it can be said that political marketing activities have a significant effect on voter behaviour. When the Squared Multiple Correlations (R^2) value of the model is examined, it is seen that 47% of voter behaviour is explained by political marketing.

- **The Effect of Political Marketing on Word-of-Mouth Communication:** The goodness of fit values of the H_2 hypothesis developed within the scope of the research is shown in Table 6. The values in the table provide sufficient evidence that the goodness of fit values of the generated model is within acceptable limits and that the model is structurally appropriate. According to the developed model, standardized β coefficients, standard error, p and R^2 values between the variables are shown in Table 7. When the values in Table 7 are examined, it can be seen that political marketing effects word-of-mouth communication (β=0.59; p<0.05). In light of this finding, the H_2 hypothesis, "Political marketing has a statistically significant effect on word-of-mouth communication." was supported within the scope of the research. When the Squared Multiple Correlations (R^2) value of the model is examined, it is seen that 35% of word-of-mouth communication is explained by political marketing.

- **The Effect of Word-of-Mouth Communication on Voter Behaviour:** The goodness of fit values of the H_3 hypothesis developed within the scope of the research is shown in Table 6. The values in the table provide sufficient evidence that the goodness of fit values of the generated model is within acceptable limits and that the model is structurally appropriate. According to the developed model, standardized β coefficients, standard error, p and R^2 values between the variables are shown in Table 7. When the values in Table 7 are examined, it can be seen that the word-of-mouth communication effects voter behaviour (β=0.82; p<0.05). In the light of this finding, it can be said that word-of-mouth communication has a statistically significant effect on voter behaviour. When the Squared Multiple Correlations (R^2) value of the model is examined, it is seen that 67% of voter behaviour is explained by word-of-mouth communication.

4.3. Mediation Role of Word-of-Mouth Communication in the Effect of Political Marketing on Voter Behaviour

The path analysis of the model with goodness of fit values is shown in Figure 2. The fit statistics of the H_4 hypothesis developed in this context are shown in Table 8. The statistics in the table provide sufficient evidence that the goodness of fit values of the generated model is within acceptable limits and that the model is structurally appropriate.

Table 8. Structural Equation Model Goodness of Fit Values - Mediation Role of Word-of-Mouth Communication on Voter Behaviour of Political Marketing

Variables	X^2	df	X^2/df	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
Political Marketing - Word of Mouth - Voter Behaviour	1,745.74	972	1.79	0.85	0.92	0.04
Good Fit			*≤3*	*≥0.90*	*≥0.95*	*≤0.05*
Acceptable Fit			*≤4-5*	*≥0.85*	*≥0.90*	*≤0.08*

Structural equation model coefficients for the findings in H_1, H_2 and H_3 hypotheses are given in Table 9 altogether.

Table 9. Structural Equation Model Coefficients – Political Marketing – Word-of-Mouth Communication – Voter Behaviour - Their Effects to Each Other

| Variables	Standardize β	Standart Error	p	R^2
Political Marketing – Voter Behaviour	0.68	0.628	***	0.47
Word of Mouth – Voter Behaviour	0.82	0.082	***	0.67
Political Marketing – Word of Mouth	0.59	0.485	***	0.35

Standardized β coefficients, standard error, p and R2 values between the variables according to the generated model are shown in Table 10.

Table 10. Structural Equation Model Coefficients – Mediation Role of Word-of-Mouth Communication on Voter Behaviour of Political Marketing

Variables	Standardize β	Standart Error	p	R^2
Political Marketing – Voter Behaviour	0.36	0.419	***	0.83
Word of Mouth – Voter Behaviour	0.65	0.086	***	
Political Marketing – Word of Mouth	0.60	0.549	***	0.35

When the findings of the research are examined, it can be seen that political marketing effects word-of-mouth communication (β=0.60; p<0.05). In this case, since Baron and Kenny's (1986) second stage is fulfilled, the third stage was also tested for the determination of the mediating effect. When the mediator is included in the model and the relation between mediator variable and dependent variable is p<0.05, it can be concluded with the partial mediation affect because of the effect of independent variable on dependent variable β coefficient decreases from 0.68 to 0.36. In this case, it can be observed that the third phase of Baron and Kenny (1986) is also fulfilled. When looking at the value of Squared Multiple Correlations (R^2) obtained from the model is examined, it can be seen that 35% of word-of-mouth communication is explained by political marketing and 83% of voter behaviour is explained by political marketing and word-of-mouth communication. According to the results of the Sobel test, the relationship between political marketing and voter behaviour is mediated by word-of-mouth communication (Sobel's SE=4.195, p<0.01). In the light of this finding, the H_4 hypothesis, which is developed as "Word-of-mouth communication has a mediating effect on the interaction between political marketing and voter behaviour'' is accepted within the scope of the research.

Figure 2: Structural Equation Model – Mediation Role of Word-of-Mouth Communication on Voter Behaviour of Political Marketing
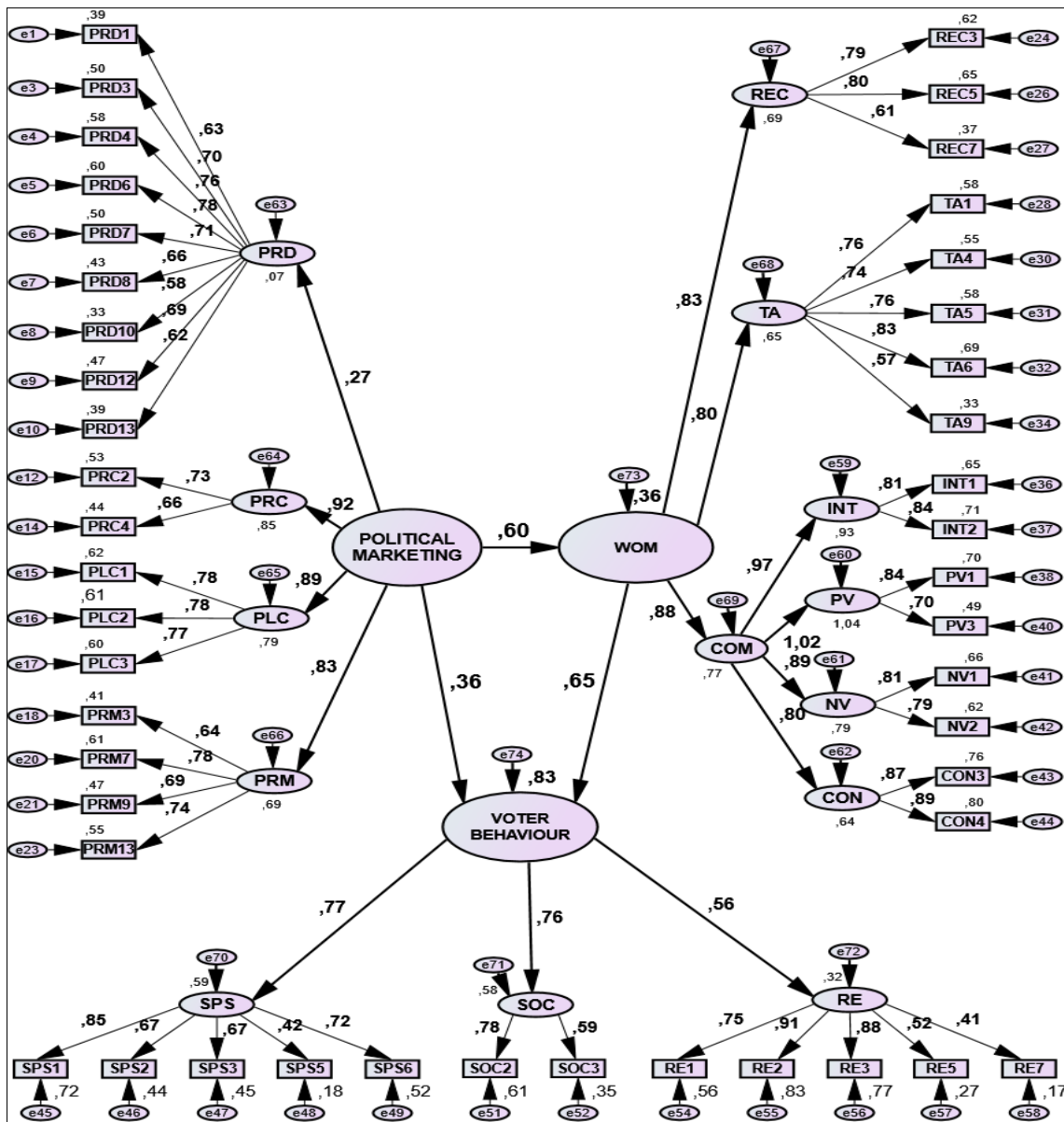
5. Results

The ultimate goal of political marketing activities for political actors is to win elections by receiving the support of the vast majority of voters. In this direction, it is necessary to establish the structure of political communication by analysing the factors effecting voter behaviour. With the development of technology, information on political activities is transmitted directly to voters via political actors, as well as this information reaches to the wider groups of voters by word-of-mouth communication techniques. Therefore, it becomes very important for the party and the candidate to ensure positive word-of-mouth communication.

The main purpose of this study is to determine the effect of political marketing activities and word-of-mouth communication techniques on voter behaviour, the effect of political marketing activities on word-of-mouth communication and to determine the mediating role of word-of-mouth communication in the effect of political marketing activities towards voter behaviour. Following findings can be drawn as a result of the research:

- As a result of confirmatory factor analysis in the survey, it was determined that the political marketing mix scale was collected under four dimensions as product, place, price and promotion. Word-to-mouth communication scale emerges in three sub-dimensions as recommendation, taking advice and communication structure. The communication structure was determined with the four sub-dimensions which are intensity, positive valence, negative valence and content. Voter behaviours were found in three dimensions as socio-psychological voting, sociological voting and rational / economic voting. Results show that the dimensions obtained through the study are variables can explain the scales used in the research and the results are statistically significant.
- The effect of political marketing activities on voter behaviours was found statistically significant and positive ($p<0.05$; $\beta=0.68$; $R^2=0.47$). These results and the previous studies in the literature show similarity.
- It was concluded that political marketing activities have a statistically significant effect on word-of-mouth communication ($p<0.05$; $\beta=0.59$; $R^2=0.35$). Some studies in the literature have provided close results to the results of this research.
- A statistically significant effect of word-of-mouth communication on voter behaviour was found ($p<0.05$; $\beta=0.82$; $R^2=0.67$) in the study. Similar research results have been obtained from various studies in the literature.
- Finally, the mediation effect of word-of-mouth communication were found in the effect of political marketing activities on voter behaviour ($p<0.05$; $\beta=0.36$; $\beta=0.65$; $R^2=0.83$).

Overall results show that word-of-mouth communication has a partial mediation effect on voter behaviour. Therefore, the political marketing activities performed by political parties in order to influence voter behaviour become very important while they are also contributing to this process by being active in engaging positive word-of-mouth communication. In this regard, parties and/or candidates in addition to the modern marketing activities, they can be in a relationship marketing activities with voters which can trigger communication and provide appropriate ground for positive word-of-mouth communication. During the political marketing process, it can be important step to identify strong, popular, and recognized opinion leaders, to develop strong ties with them and to take advantage of these opinion leaders in campaigns to influence each target groups. In addition, providing high-level relationships with various social groups can ensure that the right messages are transmitted quickly towards voters. Word-of-mouth communication can be face to face or it can also be via phone, email or social media. In addition to classical methods, political actors should also use the web environment effectively and create an impressive communication network especially with fans or volunteers via e-mail, video or social media, enabling rapid sharing of messages that can allow rapid dissemination of receivers. In this context, it is necessary to utilize the technology especially for the Y and Z generation and to use the electronic word-of-mouth communication as the political marketing tool.

The following limitations must be taken into consideration in interpreting the results of the research. The first limitation is the universe and sampling method. In other words, voter lists could not be reached because of the personal information content, the non-random sampling method is chosen and the research have been done in Konya. The second limitation is the design and scale. The fact that other elements that may affect voter behaviour in the study are kept stable and that the questionnaire is formed by various studies can be an important limitation. In addition, the research is only evaluated with a given time period of data. Therefore, the findings must be interpreted within these limits.

As a recommendation, considering the questions asked in the research and the hypotheses put forward, it may be advisable to carry out on-going studies in future. Furthermore, when the limitations of the research are taken into consideration, similar or different samples can be studied in different geographical regions in future studies. Finally, in the light of information obtained as a result of this study, political relationship marketing can be taken as a new topic to discover.

End Notes

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