

## Perception Management through the Press Office in TRNC: Analysis of TRNC President Ersin Tatar's Educational Activities and Statements

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### Abstract

With the development of technology, the circulation of information around the world has accelerated. Journalism has now entered social media and mobile phones and has started to accompany people everywhere. The role of the media in education helps to learn, develop and keep alive a culture, and then transfer it to new generations. Media messages prepared for educational purposes aim to educate the individual and society on certain issues.

The media is integrative with publications that raise awareness of the country, state and nation, make people popular, protect and protect national values. Thanks to the developing technology, politicians benefit from the educational role of the media by using new media tools as well as traditional media.

In this study, the concepts of communication and media are explained in detail. In the continuation of the study, it was tried to reveal what needs to be done about the realization of a successful corporate perception management by mentioning the importance of corporate perception management in public administration by making use of the developing technology.

Using content analysis, the interviews of the President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Ersin Tatar, in the TRNC and universities in Turkey in October 2023 were examined.

**Keywords:** Press Office, Perception Management, Education, Content Analysis

### Introduction

Thanks to the developing technology, it is easier to reach the masses today, and educational and instructive information is conveyed. Thanks to communication tools, perception management is carried out more quickly.

Thanks to perception, which is the process by which people make sense of the world, the individual makes sense of what is happening around him. Perceptions show what we see, what we believe, how we interpret anything, and how we behave. Perception is the design created in the mind by the information obtained by the sense organs. Perception management, which is used to guide people and bring them to the desired thought by applying it systematically, refers to the process of controlling the data reception that comes to our mind from the outside world through the sense organs. Perception management, which controls how people's information should be perceived by people, directs people's thoughts and tries to bring their thoughts to the desired point.

Corporate perception management, on the other hand, is the process of creating the most effective messages and conveying them to people through the most powerful channels so that they can effectively explain the activities carried out by institutions to the target audience. Corporate perception management, which is the communication method used by organizations to protect or improve their reputation and image, is a broad concept that covers the strategies created to direct people to a certain perception about the institution.

Perception management is an important phenomenon that shapes thoughts and behaviors and affects the individual from the society. Successful management of perception covers a wide range of areas, from the creation of a positive reputation and image from an institutional point of view to ensuring social unity and integrity. This situation makes it necessary for the public administration, which refers to the states and their service providers, to manage the perception institutionally.

This article addresses an important topic in the field of news reporting and perception management. Through the press office of the Presidency, news that is informative and expressive of individuals' opinions is examined.

## Method

In this study, the educational role of TRNC President Ersin Tatar in the speeches made by TRNC President Ersin Tatar at universities in the Republic of Turkey and the TRNC on the Cyprus problem and national politics was examined by using content analysis and content analysis on the Official Website of the Presidency between 04-30 October 2023. In general, it focuses on the title of the news, the spot, the detail of the news, the news photo and the analysis of the message to be given.

## Communication, Technology and New Media

According to Schultz (2001), communication is defined as the transfer of information between people and has an important role in all areas of social life. Individuals communicate for reasons such as sharing with other people, influencing and interacting with others (Demirci, 2002).

According to another definition, communication; it is the exchange of messages or thoughts through speech, sign (signal) or writing (Kaya, 2003).

The biggest factor of success or failure in communication is persuasion. The purpose of persuasion is to change attitudes or motivate them to take action" (Kaya, 2003).

Persuasive communication is mostly done through mass media and is aimed at reinforced, changing or eliminating people's attitudes. In persuasive communication, the source sending the message, the scope of the message and the characteristics of the recipient of the message are important. The persuasive communication technique is used to change attitudes and to behave contrary to attitudes. Since persuasive communication is related to the structure of the human psyche, it is one of the effective factors in changing attitudes. (South 2012).

Media, which derives from Latin in origin; It is derived from the plural of the word medium, which means environment, vehicle. Concept; It is defined as the whole of visual and auditory tools that have basic responsibilities such as informing, educating, etc., which take place through the transfer of all kinds of information to individuals or communities. The concept of media includes elements such as written media, visual media, and audio media. In this context, elements such as information, news, comments, etc. in the media can be conveyed to people in visual, auditory and written forms (Soydan, Alpaslan, 2014).

New media is considered as the creative combination of computer technology, telecommunications and content in order to create services and products that can be consumed by users using digital channels and to market them effectively (Gürbüz, 2010)

Ease of access and portability, personalization, fast and cheap media, storage and archive facilities reveal the general structure of new communication technologies (Çakır, 2009).

New communication environments offer possibilities that are quite different from the one-way communication features of traditional media. Users have ceased to be mere readers and have become people who contribute to existing content, comment, and express their opinions and suggestions (Zelan, 2014).

Unlike traditional media environments where individuals are message recipients or can make limited interventions in the communication process, the internet offers opportunities for individuals to participate in the communication process as active subjects (Çevikel, 2010).

The internet, which is an ever-evolving communication network, is a technology that has emerged after people's increasing desire to "store/share the information produced and access it easily". With the help of this technology, people can access information easily, cheaply, quickly and safely (Erbaşlar, 2013).

## The Contribution of Technology and Communication to Education

Communication tools that have developed due to technological developments have provided speed and convenience to communication and at the same time turned communication into mass communication. Today, mass media such as newspapers, radio and television have become integral parts of communication (Özkök 1985). Developments in technology enable people to gain the opportunity to obtain information, especially in the electronic environment, and the gains we have achieved with our senses play an important role in our perceptions. In the struggle and debate over information, perception management is one of the important factors for success (Friman, 1999).

Developing communication technologies eliminate the limitations created by time, space and geographical distance factors; It has evolved in such a way that it is possible to integrate all information transfers in the form of sound, images, moving images and data into a single and flexible network. (Basaran, 2013)

Communication tools, which have rapidly gained new forms with the effect of technological developments, have developed in response to the need of individuals to receive news and learn. After this development, it has enabled the development of the communication network of individuals with each other, and with the development of the internet, being able to communicate with each other has become an important element in terms of communication, as well as receiving news and learning. The opportunities provided by the developing internet technologies to individuals have enabled the emergence of new media tools (Canan, 2013).

The main reason why the pre-internet mass media is called traditional media is that the flow of information in traditional media is one-way, that is, the feedback opportunities are very limited (Gürcan and Birsen, 2000). Individuals who are exposed to messages in these communication environments are mostly only message recipients or can only make limited interventions in the communication process (Çevikel, 2010). In this environment, where it is difficult for people to respond or react to the news, it is also very difficult for them to check the reliability of the information they obtain from these tools. In addition, it is easy for governments and various authorities to manipulate information or prevent access to information (Çıldan et al., 2012)

### **The Role of Media in Public Opinion Formation and Education**

Media messages prepared for educational purposes can be in different fields such as traffic education, health education, basic sciences. For these programs, which aim to educate the individual and society on certain issues, television, in particular, is very important because it is economical and easily accessible (Bilici, 2017; Kara, 2024). Education systems based on distance communication have become widespread, and people have the opportunity to continue their school life by following their lessons from these tools by using technology and communication and mass media (Alav, 2001)

It is emphasized that societies and cultures and nations and states can survive as long as the processes of learning, developing and keeping alive a culture and then transferring it to new generations continue (Arslan, 2004). The integrative function of the media in society; facilitating the achievement of the pluralism of messages necessary for all individuals, groups and nations to mutually recognize and understand each other, and to understand the conditions, views and aspirations of others (MacBride et al., 1993).

The media provides accurate news and information, motivates the society in a positive way, and prepares a democratic and positive discussion environment for the individual and society. The media also preserves cultural values, entertains and relaxes them and ensures their socialization. In addition to this, the media also has an integrative function as a result of the broadcasting approach that raises awareness of the country, state and nation, makes it popular, protects and protects national values (Alav, 2011).

### **The Concept of Perception, Perception Management and Its Importance**

Perception is the process of organizing and interpreting the sensory data carried by our sense organs and giving meaning to the stimuli consisting of objects and events around human beings. Emotional data coming from different sense organs such as sight, hearing, smell and taste independently of each other turn into a meaningful whole through this perception process (Arkonaç 2005)

Perception, influenced by expectations, categorizes in the mind the knowledge that the person initially acquired, the actions and motives of other people. As additional information comes in, it updates this information and performs social perception activity (Arkonaç, 1998). While these activities are taking place, body language, words used, clothing style, and environment are important factors for perception. The combination of all these factors creates a value in the mind of the perceiver and enables him to comment (Baltaş, 2007).

Perception is an individual's sensory experiences of their environment and in the world. It involves recognizing environmental warnings and actions in response to those alerts. Through the process of perception, the individual learns about characteristics and environmental elements that are critical to survival. Of the factors that tend to influence the way people perceive, the most appropriate ones are those that are idiosyncratic, such as habits, motivation, learning, expertise, and social background (Otara, 2011).

Perception management, which has a long historical background, was systematically defined for the first time by the US Department of Defense. According to this definition, perception management is defined as "the dissemination and/or stopping of selected information by influencing the emotions, thoughts, goals, logic, intelligence systems and leaders of the masses; as a result, the target behaviors and thoughts are directed in line with the wishes of the target (Ersadi, 2011).

Perception management can be defined as the kneading of the meanings obtained about individuals with organizational processes and the use of the perception element in a way that contributes to the realization of the goals of the organization and the individual (Uğurlu, 2008).

According to Nye (2005), perception management is the skillful use of persuasion. Groups' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors are influenced by perception management. For this reason, perception management is also a form of psychological operation.

According to Siegel (2005), Perception Management has three objectives. These are: To create public opinion both at home and abroad in order to gain and maintain legitimacy, to make adversaries believe what will happen to them as a result of their actions, and to influence the behavior and attitudes of the target audience in the desired direction

Perception management, which includes activities to influence opinions, aims to ensure that reactions develop in the desired direction. The main thing is to direct, to change attitudes and behaviors through perception (Tutar 2008).

Perception managers include individuals and states, non-governmental organizations, political parties, illegal organizations, media organizations, associations, agencies, companies, etc. Those named use Perception Management applications in line with their predictions and purposes and many tools are used (Özarslan, 2014). Corporate perception management includes steps such as "understanding how the policies, strategies, programs and models determined by organizations create a perception on individuals, controlling the perception created, shaping and directing the perceptions of the target audience in line with the determined goals, and maintaining the perception created" (Çalış, 2018, p. 34).

According to Simon Anholt, a country's reputation and perception cannot progress in its own rhythm, and if a country cannot manage its own reputation and perception, it becomes governed by others (Sanberk & Altınay, 2008).

Since the public administration has to protect and improve its corporate reputation and image, it is important that the services it provides are accepted by the society. Managing reputation and image is of strategic importance for institutions. Managing reputation and image is possible by closely following the ability to analyze, strategic information and conjectural developments. It is absolutely necessary to benefit from perception management in the management of reputation and image in organizations. Communication strategies developed to direct people to a certain perception about the institution should be used effectively, negative perceptions about the institution should be eliminated and positive perceptions should be reinforced (Özkan, 2009, p. 76-83).

## Results

### News Image



Picture1.

**News Title:** President Ersin Tatar gave a conference on "The Strategic Importance of the TRNC in the Turkic World" in Giresun

**News Spot:** President Tatar was awarded an honorary doctorate at Giresun University

**Detail of the News:** President Ersin Tatar was awarded an honorary doctorate at Giresun University on 05.10.2023 during his visit to Turkey. At the ceremony, President Tatar gave a conference on "The Strategic Importance of the TRNC in the Turkic World". He drew attention to the investments made in the TRNC and its place in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Turkish world and the world. He emphasized the TRNC, which was established as a result of the struggle in Cyprus.

#### **Analysis:**

President Ersin Tatar addressed the academics and students present in the hall and the large masses who were not in the hall with the help of technology through the media.

He gave an educational speech by explaining the history of Cyprus, the Cyprus problem and the new two-state policy for a solution. By informing the public, he carried out perception management on the politics carried out on behalf of the state.

It was stated that the TRNC is a developing and strengthening state with its air and sea space, water project from Turkey, new airport, energy investments, education, agriculture and tourism investments, emphasizing its place in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Turkish world and the world. The country's reputation and image have been raised. In the selection of photographs, attention was paid to the display of the academic outfit worn by President Ersin Tatar after receiving an honorary doctorate, the microphones of the TRNC Presidency, the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation and the state official agency Anadolu Agency, and the screen using the flags of Turkey and the TRNC in the image.

#### **News Image**



**Picture 2.**

**News Headline:** President Ersin Tatar attended the 2023-2034 Academic Year Opening Ceremony of METU Northern Cyprus Campus

**News Spot:** President Ersin Tatar attended the Middle East Technical University Northern Cyprus Campus 2023-2024 Academic Year Opening Ceremony and delivered a speech.

**Details:** President Ersin Tatar emphasized the importance of lifelong education and access to information in his speech on 07.10.2023 at the Middle East Technical University Northern Cyprus Campus. In his speech in which he shared his own experiences, he advised METU students, "You will never give up." He said that it is necessary to continue on the road in order to achieve the goals in a healthy way, and that it is necessary to benefit by taking advantage of the opportunities to achieve the goals.

#### **Analysis**

President Ersin Tatar stood in front of the students as a member of the highest office of the state and made an encouraging and motivating speech and communicated directly with the students.

By removing the distance, he allowed the students to listen to him more carefully and sincerely. He strengthened his own reputation and image by gaining sympathy for him.

He shared his own experiences about his academic career and personal development and shared knowledge and culture. Emphasizing the importance of lifelong education and access to information, he undertook the role of a role model that attaches importance to education.

Sincerity was emphasized in the photograph of President Ersin Tatar addressing academics and students with his right hand open in the hall of the university.

### News Image



Picture 3.

**News Title:** "The events in Palestine have once again shown us the importance of security, tranquility and peace"

**News Spot:** President Ersin Tatar attended the Girne American University 2023-2024 Academic Year Opening Ceremony and gave the first lecture.

**Detail of the News:** In his speech at Girne American University on 20.10.2023, President Ersin Tatar touched upon the events in Palestine and emphasized that similar sufferings were experienced in Cyprus in the past, so the importance of Türkiye's guarantorship. He asked foreign students to learn about the Cyprus issue and explain it in their countries.

### Analysis

In the lecture he gave to the students, President Ersin Tatar explained the history of Cyprus through the ongoing war in Palestine and helped them learn about the political situation in Cyprus.

Referring to the past sufferings in Cyprus and trying to convince them of the justification and importance of Turkey's continuation of its guarantorship, he appealed to the senses and emotions.

In addition to the message given to the public at home over the suffering in Palestine, he also addressed foreign students and made an attempt to create public opinion abroad by asking them to explain the Cyprus problem in their countries.

In addition to his speech in the hall, he tried to influence the behavior and attitudes of his target audience in the direction he wanted with the news to be included in the press . The importance of Turkey for the Turkish Cypriots was emphasized by using the photograph with the flags of Turkey and the TRNC in the foreground.

### News image



Picture 4.

**News Headline:** President Ersin Tatar was presented with an honorary doctorate at Afyon Kocatepe University.  
**News Spot:** President Ersin Tatar gave the first lecture on "Cyprus and its Future in the Light of Current Problems" at the university

**Detail of the News:** President Ersin Tatar, who was awarded an honorary doctorate at Afyon Kocatepe University on 24.10.2023, attended the Academic Year Opening Ceremony and gave the first lecture on "Cyprus and its Future in the Light of Current Problems".

He gave a speech on the history of Cyprus, the Cyprus Problem, the events in Palestine and the continuation of the guarantor of the Republic of Turkey and the two-state solution policy. Talking about the importance of the TRNC in the Turkic World and the Blue Homeland, he explained its potential.

### Analysis

President Ersin Tatar gave a speech at the university that raised the image of the TRNC in the foreign public by mentioning the Turkish Cypriots' love for Turkey and Atatürk. It conducts perception management by providing information about the history of the Republic of Turkey and the TRNC, appealing to the senses, transferring strategic information and sharing conjectural developments.

He reminded the sufferings in Palestine and reinforced the importance of Turkey's guarantor in Cyprus and the two-state solution policy with examples in order to prevent the same suffering in Cyprus.

Informing the public, talking about the policies and strategies determined by the state, and making his speech in order to strengthen the perception that if Turkey's guarantor is abandoned, there will be suffering in Cyprus and to bring those who think otherwise to this point.

While he did not wear an academic outfit here, as in other universities where President Ersin Tatar received an honorary doctorate, he used a suit and red tie as usual.

While President Ersin Tatar was speaking at the podium, the logo of the school and the photograph with the subject of his speech were used.

### News Image



Picture 5.

**News Headline:** President Ersin Tatar was awarded an honorary doctorate in Çanakkale.

**News Spot:** President Tatar attended the 2023-2024 Academic Year Opening Ceremony of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University and gave the first lecture on "The Strategic Importance and Position of the TRNC in the Blue Homeland".

**Detail of the News:** President Ersin Tatar, who was awarded an honorary doctorate at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University on 27.10.2023, attended the Academic Year Opening Ceremony and gave the first lecture on "The Strategic Importance and Location of the TRNC in the Blue Homeland". Referring to the epic struggle in Çanakkale, he stated that the Turkish Cypriot people also had a share in this struggle, and that the martyrs of Çanakkale lie in Famagusta in the TRNC. In addition to the struggle for freedom and existence in Cyprus in the past, today it is the 5th anniversary of the TRNC. He noted that as President, he fought for the just cause of the

Turkish Cypriot people and worked to protect their rights. He stated that Turkey did not leave the Turkish Cypriot people alone during the years of the national struggle and that they explained the two-state solution policy with the support of Turkey.

### Analysis

President Ersin Tatar, in his lecture at the university, draws attention to the fact that the Republic of Turkey and the TRNC were established as a result of the struggles. By stating that the Turkish Cypriots are also connected with the struggle and martyrs in Çanakkale, he establishes a similarity and connection between the Turkish Cypriots and the people of Anatolia, and ensures that his speech is watched with interest. He makes a statement about the reputation and image of the Turkish Cypriots. It teaches those living in Turkey that there is also a Çanakkale martyrdom in Cyprus.

While talking about the strategic importance and position of the TRNC in the Blue Homeland in the Eastern Mediterranean, the strategic information and conjectural developments conveyed to those in the hall and those watching the speeches through the media, that they act together with Turkey, that the national interests in the region are protected.

It applies the institutional perception method by explaining the continuation of Turkey's guarantor and the two-state solution policy, talking about the policies and strategies determined by the state, reminding this perception created, and following steps such as shaping, directing and maintaining the perceptions of the target audience.

A photograph of President Ersin Tatar giving a speech in the outfit he wore after being awarded an honorary doctorate, with the flags of Turkey and the TRNC together, and the microphones of national television channels were used. With the logo of the school in the photo, it is explained that it is at Çanakkale 18 Mart University.

### News image



Figure 6

**News Headline:** President Ersin Tatar gives the first lecture of EMU fall semester

**News Spot:** President Ersin Tatar attended the opening ceremony of the Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU) 2023-2024 Academic Year Fall Semester and gave the first lecture at the Mustafa Afşin Ersoy Hall.

**Detail of the News:** In his speech at Eastern Mediterranean University on 30.10.2023, President Ersin Tatar gave a speech on the History of Cyprus, the Cyprus Problem, the events in Palestine and the continuation of the guarantor of the Republic of Turkey and the two-state solution policy. He talked about the importance of EMU and addressed the university students and said, "Never give up on your principles. Move forward on the path you believe in without giving up. Improve yourself by working tirelessly and receiving lifelong education."

### Analysis

In addition to the message given to the public at home over the suffering in Palestine, President Ersin Tatar also addressed foreign students and asked them to explain the Cyprus problem in their countries, making an attempt to create public opinion abroad.

As one of the highest authorities in the state, he stood in front of the students and gave an encouraging and motivational speech. He allowed the students to listen to him more carefully and sincerely. He strengthened his own reputation and image by gaining sympathy for him.

By making speeches in support of the perception of the continuation of Turkey's guarantor and the continuation of the two-state solution policy. He did corporate perception management.



While President Ersin Tatar was speaking, a wide-angle photo was preferred, in which students and academics listened to him.

### Result

President Ersin Tatar gave educational and instructive lectures at 3 universities in the TRNC and 3 universities in the Republic of Turkey in order to announce the policies of the TRNC to large masses by making use of the developing technology and to inform students about the history of Cyprus, the Cyprus Problem and the situation of the TRNC.

In the news on the Presidency website, President Ersin Tatar receiving an honorary doctorate and teaching in the academic year was generally used as the headline, while a different title was used in only one news article. In the speeches made by President Ersin Tatar both in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and in the Republic of Turkey, the continuation of Turkey's guarantor and the two-state solution policy were tried to be conveyed to the domestic and foreign public opinion.

With the end of the guarantorship, it was stated that the suffering experienced in Palestine in Cyprus could be realized, and perception management was applied.

Corporate perception management was used by emphasizing the strategic importance of the TRNC in the Turkish World and the Blue Homeland, where it was established as a result of great struggles and its reputation and image increased day by day with the investments made. Speeches were made to promote and protect the country, state and nation awareness of the country, state and nation, to protect and protect national values.

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