# SOSYAL MEDYA KULLANIM, ALGI VE ÇIKARIMLARI

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## ÖZ

Sosyal medya ve sosyal ağlar firmalar için yeni pazarlama aracına ve insanların ürünler hakkında tutum ve fikirlerini beyan ettikleri bir yere dönüşmüştür. Dolayısıyla, firmalar bu tüketicilere yakın olmak için sosyal medya programları yapmaktadırlar. Fakat, tüketicilerin firmalar kadar hevesli olup olmadığı konusu fazla irdelenmemiştir. Aslında, birçoğu firma yada markalara bağ hissettikleri için kullanmamaktadırlar.

Bu makale sosyal medyanın tüketici ve yöneticiler tarafından nasıl kullanıldığını ve algılandığını araştırmakta ve sosyal medyanın potansiyelinden faydalanmak için firmaların, tüketicilerin zaman, dikkat ve bilgisi karşılığında somut değer veren deneyimler tasarımlamaya ihtiyaç duyduklarını göstermektedir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Sosyal medya, Sosyal MİY, Sosyal Ağ

**Jel Kodları:** M30 M31 M37

# SOCIAL MEDIA USE, PERCEPTION AND IMPLICATIONS

## ABSTRACT

Social media and social networks have turned into new marketing tools for companies and a place where people can express their opinions and attitudes about products. Accordingly, companies are building social media programs to get closer to these consumers. But are consumers as enthusiastic as companies? Actually, most of them do not use social media simply to feel connected to brands or companies.

This paper investigates how social media is used and perceived by both consumers and executives and shows that to exploit the potential of social media, companies need to design experiences that deliver tangible value in return for consumers time, attention and data.

**Keywords:** Socialmedia, Social CRM, Social Network

**Jel Classification:** M30 M31 M37

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Internet has provided a new paradigm for communication and empowered millions of people to network socially beyond the confines of geographical proximity. In recent years, we have witnessed a fast growth of Web usage with new user-centric applications and media-rich services. Online social networking has moved from a niche phenomenon to mass adoption.

The last few years have brought impressive growth to the field of communication technologies. Mobile devices have evolved with great speed, smart phones are becoming a commodity, and wireless access to the Internet is becoming omnipresent. Some predict that by the end of 2015 the mobile web will surpass the desktop Internet connections (IBM IBV, 2010). Inseparably linked to the growth of mobile is the growth of social networks. As the growth of the mobile web is impressive, the growth of social networks is also impressive. In 2010 there were more than 500 million active users on Facebook, 70 percent outside the United States (Facebook, 2011). By March 2010, more than 10 billion messages, or Tweets, had been sent through Twitter since its launch in 2006. By July, that number had doubled to 20 billion (Anderson, 2010). And in the Asia-Pacific region, 50 percent of the total online population visited a social networking site in February 2010, reaching a total of 240.3 million visitors (.comScore, 2010). In addition more than 60% of Fortune 500 companies are now using social media as marketing tools and the number is growing. Time spent on social networks has increased in 2010 with 82% over the previous year (Williamson, 2010).

Accordingly, based upon the usage rate and statistics, there is no question that companies are quickly incorporating the use of social networking sites into their marketing communication strategy.In order to create marketing strategies suitable for their customers, firms must first understand what the customer is influenced by during the decision-making process. This might be the most important way to learn how and where to correctly invest main marketing efforts. Recently, it has become evident that large organisations are beginning to appreciate the importance of social media and social networking. However, these networks can be used more effectively in order to create efficient marketing strategies (Baird and Parasnis, 2011; 32).

Social networks represent web applications that use the Internet for communication and the idea of a social graph in order to allow easy communications between its users. A social graph is mapping of the relations between groups of people. What is important to take away from this is that social networks are based on relations. The nature of the relation can vary greatly, from friendship, to professional and common interests in a topic. Many companies recognize that social networking is about linking people with common interests (Reda, 2008). The challenge for companies is to learn how to use social networks to the greatest benefit. Many companies used such social networking sites as Facebook.com, to utilize an application that the network labels "events". Other companies created events to encourage customers to visit their online as well as brick-and-mortar sites in order to take advantage of special promotions(Baird and Parasnis, 2011; 34).

Galeotti and Goyal (2009: 36) showed that companies who use social media networking see higher sales and greater profits. Furthermore, Harridge-March and Quinton (2009: 129) suggest that not only does social media networking allow for communication between consumers, but also allow companies to develop a relationship with their customers. In this way, consumers remain loyal to company, and social media marketing provides an opportunity for companies to develop a communication mix that is less costly, and reach consumers via a channel they want. All the signs point out that social media will continue to grow. It will find a way into our daily lives, just as e-mail did. Understanding and using correctly these tools is a

must for any organization. The challenge is to identify how this digital word of mouth influences, as well as who the influencers are.

## II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The social media is the place where consumers are being gathered and businesses can easily be. Because, the social media holds enormous potential for companies to get closer to customers and, by doing so, facilitate increased revenue, cost reduction and efficiencies. As expected social media initiatives are quickly springing up across organizations getting aware that integrating social features into their own sites opens up considerable opportunities to create new value, from increasing sales to enhancing customer loyalty(Baird and Parasnis, 2011; 35). A sound social media strategy combines engagement through social networks like Facebook with building social capabilities into a brand's own site. Today, the marketing community appears to be split in its approach to social media. On the one hand, there are the 'traditionalists', who combine a well tested but traditional mindset on how marketing works with 'a new channel' that is, social media. On the other hand is a new generation of marketers that see social media not only as a new channel, but as a completely new way of approaching marketing. The traditionalists are inclined to look primarily at external social networks and focus on how to reach these huge audiences to build brand advocacy and protect brand reputation. The new generation is taking a more holistic and radical approach, considering how to connect external social network engagement with their own social enabled sites to increase commerce, trust and loyalty, deliver greater insight (Parvatiyar and Sheth, 2001; 28). In other words, the new generation understands that the emergence of the social customer impacts many areas of sales and marketing, and that successfully integrating these capabilities into their businesses will be critical to success.

Accordingly, using social media comes also with additional challenges; in the social media environment companies are no longer in control of the relationship. Instead, customers and their highly influential virtual networks are orienting the conversation faster than a company's marketing, sales and service efforts. So, instead of managing customers, the role of the companies became facilitating collaborative experiences, understand and dialogue what customers' value (Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006; 350; Schultze et al. 2007; 350). This is the first step towards building a Social CRM strategy. What makes a customer seek out a company or brand via social media? What would make a customer reluctant to interact? And does social engagement influence customers' feelings of loyalty?

## III. METHOD AND RESULTS

In order to have some answers for these research questions and to shed light to some of the issues about social media CRM that companies need recommendations. An online survey is conducted in May 2011; this first step of the research was completed by 1.112 consumers in Turkey. Participants represented a distribution of ages among 18 to55 with annual household incomes from 18.000 TL/year to more than 100,000 TL/year. In addition, to capture data from companies, face-to-face interviews, with 22 business executives responsible for social media programs, are realized. In the questionnaire, main questions where designed as multiple-choice questions prepared according to questions used in similar studies (Sonia, 2007: 9). These questions asked the participants why they go to social media or social networking sites, their usage habits, and opinions about their social media interactions.

The answers to questions about the reasons to use social media or social networking sites, showed that 68 percent of consumers (756 consumers) chose ''Connecting with network of friends and family,'' while only 25 percent (278) noted ''interacting with brands.''

The participants that qualify themselves as a "heavy user" of social media users are more prone to interact with companies (47 percent, 523 user), but even this group of participants rank the interaction with companies well behind ''Connecting with friends and family'' receiving a 87 percent. Accordingly, it should be noted that 56 percent of the participants (623 participants) stated that they do not engage with brands or companies using social media due to privacy concerns (40 percent, 249 participants) and spam (38 percent, 237 participants). Third of this group is saying that they are generally disinterested in the brands/companies. However, the participants interacting with the brands/companies in this media platform affirm that they need to feel a company is communicating honestly before they interact (180 participants).

It should also be noted that only 5 percent of heavy users always respond to comments and regularly post their comments. Others respond or post their own content occasionally. There is also a group of participants at 20 percent level who have accounts, who read but do not participate and have never contributed to a conversation or posted their own content.

Even these primary findings (shortly summarized in Table 1) have multiple implications for businesses hoping to use social media to get closer to customers. Innovative companies are identifying these "heavy users" in order to collaborate with them and leverage their influence as opinion leaders. Even the users that are disinterested in brands/companies constitute a group with the potential to engage. Companies should view this as an opportunity to reach out to new and existing customers using a targeted, multichannel campaign that rewards customers for using a social option with further incentives to motivate them to interact.

Regarding the social media engagement of the participants, when asked their reason to interact with businesses or brands via social media, they affirm that "getting discounts or coupons"' and "purchasing products and services"' are their main reasons. They rank ''reading reviews and product rankings'' third, which is also often part of the purchasing process as customers research product information before purchase. So, it is clear that consumers are willing to interact with businesses if they believe it is to their benefit. They also consider social media is the right channel to use to get the value they seek, in form of a coupon or information (Sullivan, 2008; 18). Additionally, the interaction may end with an emotional tie with the brand/company but privacy is the main concern for consumers. However, social commerce is quickly becoming a major force in social media, and cost savings, exclusive offers and special discounts can easily outweigh privacy fears. Consumers are increasingly using social media to gain recommendations, reviews and opinions from friends, family, experts and the community. Once they access this content, it can trigger the impulse to purchase. Actually, more companies are offering products/services delivered through third-party social platforms such as Facebook.

**Table 1: Consumer and company perception differences on social media**

| | Differences of social interaction reasons | |
|---|---|---|
| | from consumer perspective (%) | from company perspective (%) |
| Connecting with network of friends and family | 68 | 64 |
| Interact with brands | 25 | 66 |
| Discount | 59 | 58 |
| Purchase | 52 | 58 |
| Reviews and product rankings | 49 | 66 |
| General information | 55 | 72 |
| Detailed information | 46 | 65 |
| Learn about new products | 54 | 68 |
| Submit opinion on current products/services | 41 | 72 |
| Customer service | 36 | 63 |
| Event participation | 32 | 61 |
| Feel connected | 31 | 64 |
| Submit ideas for new products/services | 30 | 60 |
| Be part of a community | 22 | 65 |

Source: Produced by authors.

## IV. COMPANY PERSPECTIVE

Unfortunately, majority of the executives surveyed for this study believe that getting discounts and purchasing products or services as the two things customers were least interested in doing. They think that consumers are interested in interacting with them to feel as a part of a community or of the brand. In fact, this reason is the least interesting from a consumer's perspective. Company executives also state that social media interactions help increase customer loyalty (72%). However, consumers don't consider social media interactions as impressive as executives think. Only 33 percent feel social media interactions with a brand/company will have a favorable influence on their loyalty to that company, 32 percent are neutral and as many as 35 percent say their social media interactions will not make them feel more loyal to that brand/company. In this context, we must emphasize that the social interaction with a brand/company influence consumer's purchase decision. 47 percent affirm that their engagement would possibly lead to future purchases with that brand/company. Nevermore, liking the brand/company is a prerequisite for engaging with that company using social media according to 66 percent of respondents. So, the majority of consumers are inclined to interact only with brands they already know and like.

In spite of these findings, we must add that even if the consumer likes the brand/company, the interaction by social media does not necessarily result in increased loyalty or spending. Another point is that the brand/company should be recognized as sincere in its messages. Although, sixty-seven percent of companies say they have a culture that endorses transparent communications with customers; many struggle with transparency and find it difficult to interact with the authenticity that has become a must for business-customer interactions in social media.

### V. IMPLICATIONS

The social media presents an uncertainty, a change for every company willing to use new technologies in their CRM efforts. Our findings indicate companies are aware of this global phenomenon, are feeling intense pressure to get in on the action and are establishing the foundations of Social CRM (Trusov et al., 2009: 97). The majority (74%) of the executives

affirm that the competition is already fierce in the social media and that they need to carefully consider how they can create a social media experience that is unique to their brand, offer customer value and exploit the power of the social community (Palmer, 2010).

As companies design their social media programs, they need to think of their customers holistically and consider their social media interactions in the context of other customer touch points with the company. The social CRM program should not be devised as an isolated standalone program, but needs to be thoughtfully integrated with other customer-facing initiatives. The traditional model of managing the customer relationship needs to adapt to the reality that the customer is now in control.

Dialogue and participation is what social media is all about. The brand/company should get the consumer's insight to get them invested in the outcome and build the brand attractiveness (Thompson and Sinha, 2008; 72). For marketers with limited involvement with social media to date, the question they ask most frequently is 'how do I achieve a Return On Investment (ROI) on my social media investment?' Social media and e-commerce offers one of the most direct routes to demonstrate a return for organizations, by applying the concept of word-of-mouth to e-commerce (Storbacka, 2000; 571). Social commerce is all about giving online shoppers the confidence to purchase through sharing the experience (41%) of other shoppers and having access to engaging content that supports effective decision making. Shoppers expect more engaging and informative product-related information together with greater transparency and interaction. Hence, the most common social commerce features are reviews and online ratings. Increasingly, decisions on everything from travel to consumer electronics are made based on feedback from others.

### VI. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this work was to investigate how social media is used and perceived by both consumers and executives. The consumer side shows that they are willing to be active in this new platform as long as it is to their benefit with potential cost savings, exclusive offers, special discounts and possible recommendations, reviews and opinions from other users. Accordingly the company side is also aware of the situation and in order to build better relationships with their consumer and to get closer to them they are rapidly using social media as it is also an easy way to create innovative social commerce programs, improve customer care and streamline customer research. Social CRM, the integration of CRM systems with social media, is one of the clearest examples of how 'social' is and will become increasingly integral to how companies operate. Once again, it is based on stimulating conversations with and between customers, and using these to build relationships sooner than would traditionally have taken place, in order to catch opportunities more effectively and produce a higher return. In order to maximize the value of investment in their social media strategy, companies need to look at how they can connect their sites to the most popular social networks. This approach, sometimes referred to as 'social bridging', can quickly enhance the user experience and unlock new value. Rather than requiring users to create new profiles in different communities, their profiles become portable, as do their network of friends (Dellarocas, 2006; 1580). Similarly, users can easily take content and experiences back to their social network environment. The benefits can include increasing site traffic leading to customer acquisition, improved customer engagement from enriching the community and enhancing the brand (Bernoff, 2010; 12).

Social media has made huge strides forward in the past few years. It exploded with time spent on social networks growing at three times the overall internet rate and the 'social customer' has emerged in record time, turning the world of marketing upside down and challenging companies to adjust their approach. However, for most companies, the business impact and changes required have only just begun. They will have to integrate social into many

parts of their business to remain relevant and competitive. The companies understand the potential value and competitive advantage of creating and implementing a comprehensive social business strategy and try to reposition company culture, processes and resource deployment to respond to the newly empowered, social customer.

Until not so long ago the only way to get feedback was by going out and doing a market research. Social media is a new tool where the data is publicly available and its many users constantly inform their followers about their opinions and beliefs. Users create, consume and share information and all these interactions are a snapshot of what happens in the world at every single moment. It is a stream of thoughts and opinions that can be harnessed to identify very accurately what people think about a product or service. Additional potential benefits include bolstering the brand by embracing social media and being ready to listen, being able to address issues and concerns in their infancy and demonstrating that the company is paying attention to customer concerns and cares about addressing them.

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