

Effects of demographic variables on university students' digital media usage habits: An analytical study*

Demografik değişkenlerin üniversite öğrencilerinin dijital medya kullanım alışkanlıkları üzerindeki etkileri: Analitik bir çalışma

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Abdullah YILMAZ¹

Hakan Gökhan GÜNDOĞDU^{**2}

Çağlar KARAMAŞA³

Merve Esra ÖZER⁴

Sevde Nur ÖNSÜR⁵

Süleyman ŞEKER⁶

ABSTRACT: The rapid development of digital media has transformed the media habits of young people, necessitating the examination of factors influencing university students' information acquisition and media preferences. Although there are relatively few studies focusing on the media preferences of undergraduate students, this research aims to make a unique contribution by focusing specifically on students from the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences (FEAS). The primary objective of this study is to examine the relationship between the frequency of digital media usage among university students and various factors such as gender, family status, academic department, class level, and age. The study seeks to gain a deeper understanding of how these factors influence students' media usage habits, digital media preferences, and communication styles. To collect data, the study utilized a quota sampling method, targeting 500 FEAS students. Independent variables such as age, gender, and household income were considered to assess the levels of media usage. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS software, and T-tests and ANOVA were applied to examine the relationships between dependent and independent variables. The findings indicate that digital media usage among FEAS students varies significantly based on gender, academic department, and class level. Female students were found to use digital media more actively than their male counterparts, while students from social sciences departments reported reading news more frequently than students in other disciplines. Additionally, it was observed that as the class level increases, the frequency of digital media usage also rises.

Keywords: Digital media, Demographic factors, Media usage habits, Media usage preferences

ÖZ: Dijital medyanın hızla gelişmesi gençlerin medya alışkanlıklarını dönüştürmüş, üniversite öğrencilerinin bilgi edinimini ve medya tercihlerini etkileyen faktörlerin incelenmesini gerekli kılmıştır.

Lisans öğrencilerinin medya tercihlerine dair az sayıda çalışma bulunmakta olup, bu araştırma İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi (İİBF) öğrencilerine özgün bir katkı sunmayı hedeflemektedir. Bu araştırmanın temel amacı, üniversite öğrencilerinin dijital medya araçlarını kullanım sıklığının, cinsiyet, aile durumu, akademik bölüm, sınıf seviyesi ve yaş gibi faktörlerle ilişkisini incelemektir. Araştırma, bu faktörlerin öğrencilerin medya kullanım alışkanlıkları, dijital medya tercihleri ve iletişim tarzları üzerindeki etkilerini daha derinlemesine anlamayı hedeflemektedir. Araştırmada, İİBF öğrencilerinden oluşan 500 öğrenciye ulaşmak için kota örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmış ve anket verileri toplanmıştır. Öğrencilerin medya kullanım seviyelerini değerlendirmek için yaş, cinsiyet ve hanehalkı geliri gibi bağımsız değişkenler dikkate alınmıştır. Veriler SPSS yazılımı kullanılarak analiz edilmiş ve bağımlı ve bağımsız değişkenler arasındaki ilişkileri test etmek için T-testleri ve ANOVA yöntemleri uygulanmıştır. Bulgular, İİBF öğrencilerinin dijital medya kullanımının cinsiyet, akademik bölüm ve sınıf seviyesine göre farklılaştığını göstermektedir. Kadın öğrencilerin dijital medyayı erkek öğrencilere göre daha aktif kullandığı, sosyal bilimler öğrencilerinin ise diğer alanlardaki öğrencilere göre daha fazla haber okuduğu bulunmuştur. Ayrıca, sınıf seviyesinin artmasıyla birlikte dijital medya kullanım sıklığının da arttığı gözlemlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dijital medya, Demografik faktörler, Medya kullanım alışkanlıkları, Medya kullanım tercihleri

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¹Prof. Dr., Anadolu Üniversitesi, İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi/ Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü, abdullah_y@anadolu.edu.tr, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3711-6915>

^{**} Sorumlu Yazar / Corresponding Author

²Doç. Dr., Anadolu Üniversitesi, İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi/ Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü, hakangokhangundogdu@anadolu.edu.tr, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0656-4152>

³Doç. Dr., Anadolu Üniversitesi, İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi/ İşletme Bölümü, ckaramasa@anadolu.edu.tr, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2454-1824>

⁴Anadolu Üniversitesi, İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi/ Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü, merveesraozer@anadolu.edu.tr, <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-0777-1250>

⁵Anadolu Üniversitesi, İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi/ Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü, sevdenuroksur@anadolu.edu.tr, <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-8151-7737>

⁶Anadolu Üniversitesi, İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi/ Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü, suleymanseker@anadolu.edu.tr, <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-5971-6447>

GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Literatür taraması

Dijital medyanın hızlı gelişimi, özellikle üniversite öğrencilerinin medya kullanım alışkanlıklarını değiştirmiştir. Castells (1996), bu dönüşümü "ağ toplumu" olarak tanımlamış ve bilgi teknolojilerinin toplumsal yapıları dönüştürdüğünü vurgulamıştır. Dijital medya, hızlı erişim ve geniş bilgi sunumu sağlarken, basılı medya derinliği ve güvenilirliği ile hala önemli bir yer tutmaktadır (Saxena, 2019). Cumaoğlu ve ark. (2013), Türkiye'deki üniversite öğrencilerinin %62'sinin e-kitap okuduğunu ve bu medyanın özellikle araştırma için tercih edildiğini göstermiştir. Cherian ve Jacob (2013), çevrimiçi haberlerin popüler olduğunu ancak basılı medyanın hâlâ reklam gelirlerinde daha etkili olduğunu belirtmiştir. Vincent (2016), dijital teknolojilerin okuma ve yazma becerilerini değiştirdiğini ancak gazetenin kişisel ifadeler için hala değerli olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Baron ve ark. (2017), öğrencilerin basılı medyada daha iyi konsantre olduklarını ve dijital medyanın kolaylık sağlasa da göz yorgunluğu ve dikkat dağınıklığına neden olabileceğini göstermiştir. Mizrahi ve ark. (2018), basılı medyanın akademik okumada tercih edildiğini, dijital medyanın ise hızlı okuma için kullanıldığını tespit etmiştir. Sosyal medya kullanımı da geniş bir araştırma alanı olmuştur. Alamri (2019), sosyal medyanın akademik başarıyı olumlu etkilediğini, WhatsApp ve Twitter'ın (günümüzde X platformu) en çok tercih edilen uygulamalar olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Radmard ve ark. (2020), sosyal medya kullanımının öğrencilerin yaş, cinsiyet ve akademik başarı gibi değişkenlere göre farklılık gösterdiğini bulmuştur. Leeder (2019), öğrencilerin yanlış/yalan haberleri (dezenformasyon) tespit etme becerilerinin kritik değerlendirme stratejileriyle ilişkili olduğunu göstermiştir. Bringula ve ark. (2022), Instagram'daki siyasi paylaşımların yanıltıcı bilgilere duyarlılığı artırdığını belirtmiştir. Mevcut literatür, basılı ve dijital medyanın kullanımını geniş bir şekilde ele almakla birlikte, lisans öğrencilerinin medya tercihleri üzerine yapılan özgün araştırmalar sınırlıdır. Bu çalışma, Anadolu Üniversitesi İİBF öğrencilerinin medya tercihlerine odaklanarak, dijital medya kullanım düzeylerini, algılarını ve tutumlarını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu araştırma, öğrencilerin akademik disiplinlerine dayalı medya tercihlerini belirleyerek literatürdeki bu boşluğu doldurmayı hedeflemektedir.

Yöntem

Bu çalışmada, kota örnekleme yöntemi kullanılarak 500 öğrenciden oluşan bir örneklem oluşturulmuş ve anket verileri toplanmıştır. Öğrencilerin medya kullanım düzeylerini incelemek amacıyla yaş, cinsiyet, hane halkı geliri gibi bağımsız değişkenler göz önünde bulundurulmuştur. Verilerin analizi için SPSS programı kullanılmış olup, analizde T testi ve ANOVA yöntemleri uygulanmıştır. Bu yöntemlerle, bağımlı değişken ile bağımsız değişkenler arasındaki ilişkiler incelenerek, öğrencilerin medya kullanım alışkanlıklarına dair daha kapsamlı sonuçlara ulaşılması hedeflenmiştir. Bu süreç, öğrencilerin dijital medya kullanım alışkanlıklarını etkileyen faktörleri daha iyi anlamayı ortaya koymaktadır.

Bulgular ve tartışma

Bu çalışmanın bulguları, üniversite öğrencilerinin dijital medya kullanım alışkanlıkları hakkında önemli veriler sunmaktadır. Kadın öğrencilerin dijital medya kullanım sıklığının erkeklerden daha yüksek olması, önceki araştırmalarla paralellik göstermektedir (Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008; Urista et al., 2009). Kadınlar, dijital medya araçlarını daha çok sosyal etkileşim ve iletişim aracı olarak kullanmaktadır. Ancak, kadın ve erkeklerin haber okuma alışkanlıklarında fark bulunmaması, cinsiyetin medya kullanımındaki etkisinin azaldığını göstermektedir (Ito et al., 2009). Ayrıca, kadınların hobi ve eğlence amaçlı dijital medya kullanımının erkeklerden fazla olması, eğlence odaklı medya kullanımında cinsiyet farklılıklarının etkili olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır (Zillien & Hargittai, 2009). Annenin çalışma durumu ile dijital medya kullanımı arasında sınırlı bir ilişki bulunması, medya kullanımının daha çok kişisel tercihlere dayandığını düşündürmektedir. Babaların çalışma durumu ise dijital medya kullanımını etkilememektedir. Bölüm farklılıkları, siyaset bilimi ve kamu yönetimi öğrencilerinin dijital medya kullanımının daha fazla olduğunu göstermektedir. Sınıf düzeyi arttıkça dijital medya kullanımının arttığı, özellikle üniversite öğrencilerinin eğitimlerinin ilerleyen yıllarında medya kullanımının yoğunlaştığı gözlemlenmiştir. Yaş faktörünün etkisi sınırlıdır. Sonuç olarak, bireysel motivasyonlar ve sosyal etkileşimler dijital medya kullanımında daha belirleyici rol oynamaktadır.

Sonuç ve öneriler

Bu çalışma, üniversite öğrencilerinin dijital medya kullanım alışkanlıklarının cinsiyet, akademik bölüm ve sınıf düzeyine göre farklılıklar gösterdiğini ortaya koymuştur. Kadın öğrencilerin dijital medyayı erkeklere kıyasla daha aktif kullandığı, sosyal bilimler öğrencilerinin haber okuma sıklığının diğer alanlara göre daha fazla olduğu belirlenmiştir. Ayrıca, sınıf düzeyinin artışıyla dijital medya kullanımının da arttığı gözlemlenmiştir. Bu bulgular, öğrencilerin medya okuryazarlığının, akademik bölüme ve eğitim süresine bağlı olarak farklılık gösterdiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Araştırma, tek bir üniversiteyle sınırlı olduğundan, gelecekte daha geniş örneklemelerle ve sosyoekonomik faktörler dikkate alınarak dijital medya kullanım alışkanlıkları daha ayrıntılı şekilde araştırılabilir.

Introduction

The rapid technological advancements and the influence of globalization in the 21st century have profoundly transformed the lifestyles and habits of societies. One of the most significant areas affected by this transformation is media consumption habits. The widespread adoption of digitalization and the emergence of Industry 5.0 have advanced the technological innovations introduced by Industry 4.0, such as digitalization, automation, and the Internet of Things (IoT), by emphasizing human-centered approaches, sustainability, and social responsibility (Sung, 2018; Nahavandi, 2019; Demir & Turan, 2021; Haleem et al., 2022; Gündoğdu et al., 2023). This transformation has led to a paradigm shift in individuals' interest in media tools, moving consumption habits from traditional to digital platforms.

The global proliferation of the internet has resulted in a significant preference for digital media tools over print media. For instance, in the United States, daily newspaper circulation dropped from approximately 58 million between 1950 and 1990 to just 20.9 million by 2022 (Pew Research Center, 2023). Conversely, digital media consumption has surged; social media usage, which was merely 8% in 2005, increased to 77% by 2021 (Auxier & Anderson, 2021). This shift underscores the growing dominance of digital platforms, particularly among younger generations, who are more inclined towards digital media tools.

The rapid digitalization process has significantly influenced the media preferences of young individuals. Among those aged 15 to 24, the adoption of digital media tools has substantially reduced their interest in traditional print media. The increased accessibility and immediacy of digital media platforms have reshaped media consumption behaviors, as young people tend to favour digital tools that offer instant and interactive content (Ispir et al., 2013). The ability of digital media to provide a rapid flow of information and cater to personalized preferences has made it an indispensable part of daily life.

This study aims to examine the media consumption habits of university students, focusing on their preferences for digital media tools. Conducted with students from the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences (FEAS) at Anadolu University, the research explores whether media consumption preferences vary based on gender, academic department, and socioeconomic factors. The study seeks to analyze the effects of digital media on young individuals, contributing to the existing literature on media consumption trends. Moreover, the findings of this study are expected to offer insights that can guide practices related to media consumption habits and inform policymaking.

Data for this research will be collected through surveys employing a quota sampling method and analyzed using the SPSS program, utilizing T-tests and ANOVA to examine relationships between dependent and independent variables. Through this methodological approach, the study will generate a comprehensive understanding of university students' media consumption behaviors and the underlying demographic factors shaping these habits.

The primary motivation behind this study is to understand the evolving media preferences of young individuals in response to the rapid growth of digital media and the declining popularity of traditional media tools. Given the pervasive influence of digital media on individuals, it is crucial to explore the socioeconomic and demographic factors that contribute to young adults' media consumption patterns. Another key motivation of this research is to determine how shifts in media usage interact with educational and economic factors. A thorough analysis of the various media tools university students use for accessing information, keeping up with current events, and supporting their educational activities will provide valuable insights into emerging media consumption trends.

This study seeks to examine the underlying demographic, economic, and cultural determinants of university students' media preferences, contributing to the academic discourse on digitalization and media transformation. The increasing prominence of digital media necessitates timely research to capture its effects on young individuals' information acquisition and daily habits. Understanding these dynamics will offer valuable contributions to the field and inform future studies on media consumption. The research was conducted through a survey of 500 FEAS students, assessing the factors influencing their media preferences through statistical analyses and examining the relationship between media usage habits and career objectives. By presenting a detailed analysis of the factors influencing university students' digital media consumption, this study makes a significant contribution to the existing literature.

The statistical examination of the relationships among students' media preferences, personal characteristics, and usage purposes provides a deeper understanding of the dynamics shaping media consumption patterns.

Moreover, the research explores the social and psychological dynamics of media consumption by analyzing the roles of digital media popularity, parental influence, and environmental factors in shaping students' media preferences. Finally, by examining digital media usage habits within a comparative framework, this study contributes to a better understanding of new media trends and the transformative impact of digitalization on students. These findings provide valuable insights for both academic researchers and media industry professionals, helping to shape future research and policy recommendations in media consumption.

Literature review

The information revolution, which began in the late 20th century with advancements in information technologies, particularly in computers, the internet, and digitization processes, has fundamentally transformed access to and production of knowledge. Castells (1996) characterized this transformation as the "network society," emphasizing that information and communication technologies reshape economic, social, and cultural structures. The digitization of media has progressed in parallel with these developments, leading to a transition from print to digital media. While print media has traditionally been associated with reliability and depth, digital media has become the dominant medium due to its rapid accessibility, global reach, and interactive features (Saxena, 2019).

According to Eurostat (2022), digital media consumption is increasing significantly across Europe. For instance, digital newspaper and magazine readership has reached 62% in Germany, 66% in Turkey, 80% in Switzerland, 82% in Spain, and over 90% in Finland and Norway. These figures illustrate the growing preference for digital formats over traditional print media. However, print media remains relevant, especially for in-depth reading and academic purposes, as it allows for focused engagement without distractions.

Several studies have examined university students' preferences for digital versus print media. Cumaoğlu et al. (2013) analyzed e-book usage among students, finding that 62% preferred digital books due to accessibility, particularly for research purposes. Similarly, Baron et al. (2017) found that while digital reading is convenient, 92% of students concentrate better on print materials. Mizrahi et al. (2018) also observed that students favor print for academic study while using digital formats for quick reference and skimming.

Research by Vincent (2016) highlighted that digital technology is altering reading and writing habits across countries, although students still appreciate print for emotional and personal expression. Johnston and Salaz (2019) explored the reasons behind students' preferences for printed or digital course materials, concluding that print is preferred due to factors such as reduced eye strain, better focus, and ease of note-taking. On the other hand, digital materials are favored for their cost-effectiveness, environmental benefits, and convenience.

The influence of social media on information consumption has also been a subject of academic inquiry. Alamri (2019) examined undergraduate students' perceptions of social media for academic purposes, finding a generally positive attitude, with WhatsApp and Twitter being the most preferred platforms. Similarly, Leeder (2019) studied students' ability to evaluate fake news, revealing a gap between students' perceived and actual skills in identifying misinformation. Bringula et al. (2022) further explored this issue, identifying confirmation bias as a key factor influencing students' susceptibility to misleading information.

Another area of research has focused on the role of digital media in shaping students' academic behaviors. Abuloum et al. (2019) found that while students use electronic textbooks for quick reference, print is preferred for in-depth academic study. Rahman and Amir (2019) examined students' preferences for reading literary fiction, reporting that 62% favored electronic media for its accessibility and

practicality. Meanwhile, Radmard et al. (2020) analyzed social media usage among university students, concluding that their primary motivations include information gathering, entertainment, and social interaction, with preferences varying based on gender, age, and academic performance.

The relationship between social media use and addiction has also been investigated. Allahverdi (2022) found that 70% of university students perceived themselves as addicted to social media, with female students reporting slightly higher addiction levels. The study also noted differences in perceived addiction levels among students in different academic disciplines, with social science and engineering students feeling more addicted than those in natural sciences.

Although existing research provides valuable insights into media consumption patterns, there is a noticeable scarcity of studies specifically examining the preferences of undergraduate students within the FEAS. Most studies focus on general university student populations without considering the unique academic and professional needs of students from different disciplines. Furthermore, there is a lack of regional studies that compare digital media usage across different contexts.

In this context, the present study aims to address this gap by examining the media preferences of students in the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences (FEAS) at Anadolu University. In light of the rapid advancements in information and communication technologies, the research investigates students' levels of digital media usage, perceptions, and attitudes through an original field study. A key contribution of this study lies in its analysis of media preferences in relation to students' academic disciplines, offering a nuanced understanding of how digital and print media are employed for educational purposes. This research is expected to make a significant contribution to the literature by providing fresh insights into the evolving media consumption habits of university students.

Methodology

This study aims to analyze the digital media usage habits of 500 university students studying at the FEAS at Anadolu University, focusing on the relationship between these habits and various demographic variables such as gender, family status, academic department, class level, and age.

The sample for this research was determined using the quota sampling method. Within this framework, quotas were established based on key demographic characteristics, including gender (male/female), class level (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior), academic department (e.g., Economics, Business Administration, Public Administration, International Relations), age groups, and family status.

Data collection was conducted through a structured questionnaire, and the surveys were administered face-to-face during the Spring semester of 2024. The questionnaire included multiple-choice and open-ended questions designed to assess students' digital media usage habits and their relationship with demographic variables.

The population for this study consists of all students enrolled at the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences at Anadolu University, while the sample includes 500 students selected based on predefined quotas to ensure demographic diversity and equal representation of different subgroups.

This research was approved by the Ethics Committee of Anadolu University under protocol number 633076 on 31.10.2023. The study was conducted by ethical principles, and informed consent was obtained from all participants before their involvement.

However, it should be noted that the study is limited to a single university, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, socio-economic factors were not included in the analysis, potentially limiting the broader interpretation of the results. Future research should consider broader and more diverse sample groups to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of digital media usage patterns.

The research is structured around several key hypotheses:

1. There is a significant relationship between the frequency of students' use of digital media tools for communication and their gender.
2. There is a relationship between the frequency of students' use of digital media tools for reading news and their gender.
3. The frequency of students' use of digital media tools for hobbies and entertainment varies based on gender.
4. There is a relationship between the employment status of students' mothers and the frequency of their use of digital media tools for communication.
5. There is a significant relationship between the frequency of using digital media tools for reading news and the employment status of students' mothers.
6. There is a significant relationship between the frequency of using digital media tools for hobbies/entertainment and the employment status of students' fathers.
7. The academic department students are enrolled in has a significant effect on the frequency of their use of digital media tools for reading news.
8. The class level of students at university has a significant effect on the frequency of their use of digital media tools for communication.
9. There is a significant difference in the frequency of using digital media tools for reading news based on the year of students' enrollment in the university.
10. There is a significant difference in the frequency of using digital media tools for reading news among different age groups of students.
11. There is a significant difference in the frequency of using digital media tools for hobbies/entertainment based on the ages of the students.

The first six hypotheses will be tested using the T-test, while the remaining hypotheses will be analyzed using ANOVA. The research employs a quantitative methodology, utilizing a quota sampling method to form a representative sample of 500 students. Before conducting the analysis, the collected survey data underwent thorough examinations for normality, outliers, and missing values. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation calculations, were performed for each research question. Given that Anadolu University had 24,485 registered students in the 2023-2024 spring semester, the sample of 500 students represents approximately 2% of the total university population and 12% of the 4,300 students within FEAS. When forming the sample, care was taken to ensure that the distribution was proportionate to the number of registered students in each department within the FEAS. In this context, the sample included 20% quotas for the Political Science and Public Administration, Finance, and Labor Economics and Industrial Relations departments, while the Business Administration department was represented by 17.4%, the Economics department by 16.6%, the English Economics department by 3.4%, and the English Business Administration department by 2.6%.

The dependent variable in this study is the level of media usage, while the independent variables include age, gender, household income, parental education level, academic department, employment status, and media attitudes. The survey instrument was designed to assess students' purposes for media usage and was administered to 500 students. Data analysis will be conducted using SPSS software to identify patterns and relationships within the dataset.

Findings and discussion

Among the students participating in the study, 60.8% are female (304 individuals) while 39.2% are male (196 individuals). When examining the age distribution of the students, it is observed that 52.6% fall within the 21-23 age range (263 individuals), while 43.8% are aged 18-20 (219 individuals). In terms of monthly spending, 34% spend between 6,000 TL and 8,000 TL (170 individuals), 33.6% spend between 4,000 TL and 6,000 TL (168 individuals), and 32.4% spend between 2,000 TL and 4,000 TL (162 individuals). Regarding their fields of study, 20% are enrolled in Public Finance, Labor Economics and Industrial Relations, and Political Science and Public Administration (100 individuals each), while

17.4% study Business Administration (87 individuals), 16.6% study Economics (83 individuals), 3.4% study English Economics (17 individuals), and 2.6% study English Business Administration (13 individuals).

When looking at the years spent in university, 25.2% have completed two years (126 individuals), 25% have completed three or more (125 individuals each), and 24.8% have completed one year (124 individuals). Among the students, 34.4% of their mothers are primary school graduates (172 individuals), while 31.6% of their fathers are high school graduates (158 individuals); the remaining 170 individuals' parents also hold high school or vocational school degrees, making up 34%. Additionally, 66.6% of the students' mothers are not working (333 individuals), while 78% of their fathers are employed (390 individuals). Moreover, 53.2% of the students report that their family income level is 20,000 TL or higher (266 individuals), while 46.8% fall within the income range of 12,000 TL to 20,000 TL (234 individuals).

The findings of the study present a broad spectrum of the socio-economic and demographic profiles of the participating students, providing insights into various aspects such as age, gender, field of study, spending habits, parental education, and family income level. The predominance of female students in the research group and the significant concentration of ages between 21 and 23 indicate that the participating group consists primarily of young adult students.

The fact that students' monthly expenditures are largely concentrated in the 4,000-6,000 TL range suggests a considerable distribution of financial needs, while the generally higher family income levels of 20,000 TL and above point to students coming from families above minimum socio-economic conditions during the year of the study. A table summarizing the demographic and statistical findings of the students in the research is presented below.

Table 1: Socio-demographic profiles and monthly spending habits of students

Demographic characteristics	Data	N (%)
Gender	Female	304 (60.8%)
	Male	196 (39.2%)
Age range	18-20 years	219 (43.8%)
	21-23 years	263 (52.6%)
	2,000-4,000 TL	162 (32.4%)
Monthly spending amount	4,000-6,000 TL	168 (33.6%)
	6,000-8,000 TL	170 (34.0%)
	Political science and public administration	100 (20.0%)
Field of study	Public Finance	100 (20.0%)
	Labor economics and industrial relations	100 (20.0%)
	Business administration	87 (17.4%)
	Economics	83 (16.6%)
	English economics	17 (3.4%)
	English business administration	13 (2.6%)
Years spent in university	1 year	124 (24.8%)
	2 years	126 (25.2%)
	3 years	125 (25.0%)
	4 years and above	125 (25.0%)
Parental education status	Mother (primary school graduate)	172 (34.4%)
	Father (high school graduate)	158 (31.6%)
	Both parents (high school and vocational school graduates)	170 (34.0%)
Parental employment status	Mother (not employed)	333 (66.6%)
	Mother (employed)	167 (33.4%)
	Father (not employed)	110 (22.0%)
	Father (employed)	390 (78.0%)
Family income level	20,000 TL and above	266 (53.2%)
	12,000-20,000 TL	234 (46.8%)

The spending levels, distribution of economic resources, and the ways in which students utilize these resources provide significant data regarding their social lives and their capacity to meet needs while at university. Furthermore, an examination of parental education levels reveals that mothers are generally primary school graduates, while fathers have completed secondary education, indicating that the educational background of students' families is limited; however, it suggests that children pursuing higher education have the potential to overcome this trend. In this context, factors such as whether parents are employed or not and the overall family income level emphasize the financial support students may receive during their educational journey and the economic implications for their university attendance. Consequently, these findings illustrate the diversity of the socioeconomic structures among university students.

Results of the reliability analysis

The first aspect to be addressed in the analysis section is reliability analysis. The most commonly used measure for reliability analysis is Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. Generally, values of 0.7 and above are considered acceptable levels of reliability; however, it is noted that in some cases, values below 0.7 can also be scientifically acceptable. Particularly in social sciences, due to the complexity of human behaviors and the content structure of the survey, lower reliability coefficients, such as 0.6, may also be deemed acceptable. The reliability analysis conducted resulted in a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.61, which can be considered fairly reliable (Özdamar, 2004). Given that the scale related to the level of digital media usage being examined is newly developed, values of 0.6 and above can be regarded as acceptable (Nunnally, 1978; Schmitt, 1996; Kline, 1999; Hair et al., 2010).

Additionally, George and Mallery (2003) propose the following rules regarding the reliability coefficient:

- $\alpha > 0.9$: Excellent
- $0.8 < \alpha < 0.9$: Very Good
- $0.7 < \alpha < 0.8$: Acceptable
- $0.6 < \alpha < 0.7$: Questionable but acceptable
- $0.5 < \alpha < 0.6$: Low
- $\alpha < 0.5$: Unreliable

The reliability coefficient being between 0.6 and 0.7 can be attributed to factors such as the scale being newly developed, the complexity of the measured construct, and the nature of the questions. The outputs obtained from the reliability analysis are as follows:

The scale of digital media usage habits is composed of three factors. These factors are habits for communication purposes, habits for news, and habits for leisure and entertainment, respectively. Reliability statistics for these factors can be seen in the following table.

Table 2: Reliability statistics

Factors	Habits for communication purposes	Habits for news	Habits for leisure and entertainment
Reliability coefficient	0,603	0,626	0,601
Number of questions	3	3	3

Consequently, the Cronbach's alpha value of each factor obtained in the reliability analysis (0.603, 0.626, 0.601) is at the boundary of acceptability, especially in the field of social sciences. The average of Cronbach's alpha value is found as 0.610. Considering that the scale is newly developed and the complexity of the measured concept, this value can be deemed sufficient in terms of the reliability of the study. This finding indicates that the current measurement tool meets the basic reliability criteria, but it also suggests that improvements could be made to the scale in future studies to achieve higher levels of reliability.

Factor analysis results related to digital media usage habits are presented as below:

Table 3: Factor analysis results for digital media usage habits scale

Questions	Habits for communication purposes	Habits for news	Habits for leisure and entertainment
Question 1		0,621	
Question 2		0,647	
Question 3		0,559	
Question 4	0,573		
Question 5	0,639		
Question 6	0,545		
Question 7			0,524
Question 8			0,682
Question 9			0,565

Results of significance tests and interpretations

T-test results and interpretations

➤ 1. Hypothesis result and interpretation

To examine whether there is a significant difference in the frequency of digital media usage for communication purposes among students from the FEAS based on gender, an independent samples T-test was conducted. According to the analysis results, the average frequency of digital media usage for communication among female students was determined to be 4.26, while for male students, it was 3.97. In this study, which involved a total of 304 female and 196 male students, the Levene test indicated that the variances were equal. The T-test results demonstrate that the frequency of digital media usage for communication among female students is significantly higher than that of male students ($p = 0.001$).

Table 4: Analysis results of digital media usage habits for communication purposes by gender

Analysis	Variable	Average (female)	Average (male)	p value	Result
Levene test	Equality of variances	-	-	0.001	Significant difference exists between genders ($p < 0.05$)
T-test	Gender	4.26	3.97	0.865	No significant difference ($p > 0.05$)

Source: the authors

The Levene test is a statistical test that checks for equality of variances. The result indicating equal variances enhances the reliability of the data. The assumption of equal variances supports the validity of the T-test results (Field, 2013). The T-test results reveal that the frequency of digital media usage among women is significantly higher than that of men ($p = 0.001$). This finding aligns with previous research, which suggests that women use social media and digital communication platforms more than men (Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008; Urista et al., 2009). This trend indicates that women may be more inclined to utilize digital platforms effectively, particularly for strengthening social connections and being more active in communication.

➤ 2. Hypothesis result and interpretation

To evaluate whether there is a significant difference in the frequency of digital media usage for news reading between genders among FEAS students, an independent samples T-test was applied. The analysis showed that the average frequency of digital media usage for news reading among female students was 3.50, while for male students, this average was 3.61. The Levene test indicated that the variances were equal. However, the independent samples T-test results ($p = 0.269$) revealed no significant difference in the frequency of digital media usage for news reading based on gender.

Table 5: Analysis results of digital media usage habits for news reading by gender

Analysis	Variable	Average (female)	Average (male)	p value	Result
Levene test	Equality of variances	-	-	-	Equal ($p > 0.05$)
T-test	Gender	3.50	3.61	0.269	No significant difference ($p > 0.05$)

This finding indicates that digital media tools do not demonstrate a gender-based usage difference, suggesting that news reading habits are similar across genders. Moreover, the result of the Levene test showing equal variances enhances the analytical validity of the data and supports the reliability of the obtained results. The conclusion that gender is not a decisive factor in digital media usage contributes significantly to the existing literature. For instance, while some studies suggest that gender may influence digital media usage (LaRose et al., 2001; Hargittai, 2003), this research indicates that gender does not significantly affect news reading habits using digital media tools. This suggests that the influence of gender norms in digital media usage may be diminishing, or that the accessibility and usage of digital media tools are at similar levels for everyone. Consequently, it should be noted that the frequency of digital media usage for news reading among FEAS students is at similar levels regardless of gender, and future research should consider various demographic factors in this context. These findings can also serve as a foundation for broader studies on digital media and news consumption.

➤ 3. Hypothesis result and interpretation

An independent samples T-test was conducted to investigate the differences in digital media usage habits between female and male students and to examine the impact of gender on digital media usage. The analysis revealed that the average frequency of digital media usage for leisure and entertainment purposes among female students was calculated as 4.25, whereas for male students, this average was found to be 4.04. The Levene test confirmed the equality of variances, and the independent samples T-test results indicate that female students use digital media tools for leisure and entertainment significantly more than male students ($p = 0.014$). Additionally, the effect size of gender on digital media usage frequency was found to be 0.012, which is assessed as a small effect size according to Cohen (1988). These findings demonstrate that gender differences play a significant role in digital media usage, with female students utilizing these tools more for entertainment and leisure.

Table 6: Analysis results of digital media usage habits for leisure and entertainment by gender

Analysis	Variable	Average (female)	Average (male)	p value	Result
Levene test	Equality of variances	-	-	-	Equal ($p > 0.05$)
T-test	Gender	4.25	4.04	0.014	Significant difference exists ($p < 0.05$)

This research finding shows that gender is a determining factor in digital media usage, indicating that social media and other digital platforms are more intensively adopted as entertainment tools by women. Understanding these types of differences can significantly impact the design of digital media content and the identification of target audiences. A deeper understanding of the factors that increase women's usage of digital media for leisure and entertainment may open new avenues for future research.

➤ 4. Hypothesis result and interpretation

An independent samples T-test was performed to evaluate whether the frequency of digital media usage for communication purposes varies according to the mother's employment status. The analysis results indicated that the average frequency of digital media usage for communication among working mothers was determined to be 4.18, while for non-working mothers, it was 4.13. The Levene test confirmed the equality of variances, and the independent samples T-test results ($p = 0.576$) revealed that the mother's employment status does not create a significant difference in digital media usage frequency. These findings show that students' frequency of using digital media tools for communication remains at similar levels, regardless of their mothers' employment status.

Table 7: Analysis results of digital media usage frequency for communication by mother's employment status

Analysis	Variable	Average (working)	Average (non-working)	p value	Result
Levene test	Equality of variances	-	-	-	Equal ($p > 0.05$)
T-test	Mother's employment status	4.18	4.13	0.576	No significant difference ($p > 0.05$)

These findings suggest that digital media usage is shaped solely by individual factors and that family dynamics, particularly the mother's employment status, do not influence this usage. Previous research indicates that there are a variety of social and psychological factors that shape individuals' digital media usage habits (Zillien & Hargittai, 2009). However, stating that the mother's employment status does not have a significant impact on digital media usage habits implies that individuals' choices and needs are more decisive in this context. Ultimately, this finding emphasizes that the usage of digital media tools is more shaped by individual preferences and needs and that the overall family structure does not play a determining role in this usage. This means that students' interactions with digital media can develop independently of broader social contexts.

➤ **5. Hypothesis result and interpretation**

An independent samples T-test was conducted to investigate whether the frequency of digital media usage for news reading varies according to the mother's employment status. The results obtained indicate that the average frequency of digital media usage for news reading among working mothers was 3.54, and similarly, for non-working mothers, the average was also 3.54. The Levene test indicated that the variances were equal. However, the independent samples T-test results ($p = 0.989$) revealed that the mother's employment status does not create a significant difference in the frequency of using digital media tools for news reading. These findings demonstrate that students' frequency of using digital media tools for news reading remains similar, independent of their mothers' employment status. These results suggest that family dynamics have a limited effect on individuals' media usage and that the usage of digital media tools may be more closely related to individual preferences. In this context, further examining the impact of demographic factors, such as gender or family status, on digital media usage will be an important area for future research.

Table 8: Analysis results of digital media usage frequency for news reading by mother's employment status

Analysis	Variable	Average (working)	Average (non-working)	p value	Result
Levene test	Equality of variances	-	-	-	Equal ($p > 0.05$)
T-test	Mother's employment status	3.54	3.54	0.989	No significant difference ($p > 0.05$)

Additionally, these results highlight that individuals' media usage habits are influenced not only by family structure but also by personal interests and inclinations. While the mother's employment status and family structure are significant factors affecting children's media usage patterns, individual motivations and preferences play a more decisive role (Ito et al., 2009). These findings suggest that the demographic factors influencing digital media usage, particularly aspects such as gender and family status, require further examination. In conclusion, it appears that the impact of family structure on the usage of digital media tools is limited, and individuals' relationships with digital media are shaped according to personal needs and interests.

➤ **6. Hypothesis result and interpretation**

An independent samples T-test was conducted to examine whether the frequency of digital media usage for leisure and entertainment purposes varies according to the father's employment status. The analysis results indicated that the average frequency of using these tools for leisure and entertainment among

individuals with working fathers was 4.17, while for those with non-working fathers, it was calculated as 4.15. The results of the Levene test showed that the variances were equal. The independent samples T-test results ($p = 0.790$) revealed no significant difference in the frequency of using digital media tools for leisure and entertainment based on the father's employment status. These results indicate that students' digital media usage habits are independent of their fathers' employment status.

Table 9: Analysis results of digital media usage frequency by father's employment status

Analysis	Variable	Average (working)	Average (non-working)	p value	Result
Levene test	Equality of variances	-	-	-	Equal ($p > 0.05$)
T-test	Father's employment status	4.17	4.15	0.790	No significant difference ($p > 0.05$)

These results suggest that the effects of demographic and environmental factors on digital media usage may be limited, with individual motivations and social interactions playing a more decisive role. Additionally, the growing prevalence of digital media usage for entertainment, particularly among youth, indicates that media usage develops independently of socio-economic or familial circumstances. These findings call for a reassessment of the importance of external factors, such as family structure, in digital media usage and suggest that individual-centered analyses may yield more meaningful results.

ANOVA test results and interpretation

➤ 7. Hypothesis result and interpretation

To determine whether the frequency of using digital media tools for news reading varies by the students' academic department, a one-way ANOVA analysis was conducted. The analysis results indicated a significant difference in the frequency of digital media usage for news reading among different departments ($F(6, 493) = 3.656, p = 0.001$). This finding suggests that the academic department in which students are enrolled may influence their digital media usage habits. Thus, this result implies that media usage should be associated with individuals' educational backgrounds (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007).

To investigate which departments showed significant differences, the Scheffé test was applied, which is preferred when variances are equal. The test results reveal that students in the Political Science and Public Administration (PSPA) department use digital media tools for news reading significantly more than those studying Economics. This finding indicates that PSPA students may possess higher motivation or media literacy regarding information access. Research has shown that individuals' levels of media literacy can affect how they use media and which content they are drawn to (Buckingham, 2003). No significant differences were found among other departments. Additionally, the effect size of the independent variable, department, on the frequency of digital media usage for news reading was calculated to be 0.043, which, according to Cohen's (1988) classification, is considered a small effect.

Table 10: Analysis results of digital media usage frequency according to students' departments

Analysis	Statistical values
One-way ANOVA	$F(6, 493) = 3.656, p = 0.001$
Scheffé test result	Significant difference between PSPA and Economics students
Effect size (Cohen)	Cohen's $d = 0.043$ (Small effect)

These findings demonstrate that digital media usage habits cannot be explained solely by academic departmental differences but are also influenced by individuals' personal preferences and social environments (Ito et al., 2010). Consequently, these results suggest that while academic factors may affect digital media usage habits, individual motivations and media literacy also play a significant role.

➤ 8. Hypothesis result and interpretation

To examine whether the frequency of using digital media tools for communication varies according to the students' years in university, a one-way ANOVA analysis was performed. The results indicated that students' class levels have a significant effect on the frequency of using digital media tools for communication ($F(3, 496) = 6.084, p = 0.000$). This finding suggests that there may be differences in

digital media usage based on class level. To identify the source of the significant difference obtained, the Scheffé test was applied, and the results revealed that students who have spent four or more years in university use digital media tools for communication more frequently than those in their first or second year. No significant differences were found among other class levels. Additionally, the effect size of the independent variable on digital media usage frequency was calculated as 0.035, which is considered a small effect according to Cohen's (1988) classification. This indicates that while class level may contribute to digital media usage habits, its effect is limited. This finding is consistent with the literature indicating how factors such as age, experience, or academic progress can affect media usage habits.

Table 11: Analysis results of digital media usage frequency according to students' class levels

Analysis	Statistical values
One-way ANOVA	$F(3, 496) = 6.084, p = 0.000$
Scheffé test result	4th year and above - 1st year: $-0.464, p < 0.05$ 4th year and above - 2nd year: $-0.408, p < 0.05$
Effect size (Cohen)	Cohen's $d = 0.035$ (Small effect)

These differences in digital media usage frequency can be explained by the increasing digital literacy and interaction skills with media tools that come with the class level. For instance, Buckingham (2003) and Livingstone (2008) noted that media literacy skills increase with age and education level, emphasizing that familiarity with digital media tools grows over time. More advanced students may use digital media tools more effectively and frequently in alignment with their needs for information access and communication during their educational processes. However, the small effect size (effect size $d = 0.035$) suggests that class level may not be the sole determining factor, but rather one of several contributing elements. To achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the effects on media usage, it is recommended to consider other factors such as personal characteristics, social environments, access to technology, and levels of media literacy (Eynon & Malmberg, 2011).

➤ 9. Hypothesis result and interpretation

To determine whether the frequency of using digital media tools for news reading varies according to the students' years in university, a one-way ANOVA analysis was conducted. The results indicated a significant difference in the frequency of digital media usage for news reading based on the students' year in university ($F(3, 496) = 5.846, p = 0.001$). This finding suggests that as students' progress through their university years, their digital media usage habits may change. To identify which years showed significant differences, the Scheffé test was applied. The results indicated that students who have spent four or more years at university use digital media tools for news reading more frequently than those in their first and third years. No significant differences were found among other class levels. Additionally, the effect size of the independent variable on digital media usage frequency was calculated to be 0.034, which Cohen's (1988) classification considers a small effect. This suggests that while the year in university has some impact on digital media usage, this effect is limited. This situation indicates that as students advance in their education, their media literacy may increase, thereby influencing their inclination towards digital media tools. Research has shown that media literacy enhances individuals' skills in accessing, evaluating, and producing digital content (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007). Particularly, as education duration increases, students become more proficient in utilizing digital media, which affects their news reading habits (Buckingham, 2003).

Table 12: Analysis results of digital media usage frequency according to students' university year

Analysis	Statistical values
One-way ANOVA	$F(3, 496) = 5.846, p = 0.001$
Scheffé test result	Significant difference between third-year and fourth-year students
Effect size (Cohen)	Cohen's $d = 0.034$ (small effect)

The Scheffé test results indicate that significant differences exist only between specific class levels, suggesting that media usage habits become more pronounced at certain stages. This aligns with existing literature supporting the relationship between media usage and literacy, as young individuals'

interactions with media evolve and diversify throughout their educational processes (Thoman & Jolls, 2004).

➤ 10. Hypothesis result and interpretation

The one-way ANOVA analysis conducted demonstrates that age has a significant impact on the frequency of using digital media tools for news reading ($F(3, 496) = 4.954, p = 0.002$). This finding suggests that there may be variations in digital media usage based on age groups among students. Specifically, students aged 21-23 were found to use digital media tools for news reading more frequently than those aged 18-20.

According to the Scheffé test results, no significant differences were identified among the other age groups. This indicates that while age has a certain influence on digital media usage habits, the effect does not distinctly separate the various age groups. Additionally, the effect size of the independent variable (age) on the dependent variable (frequency of digital media usage) was calculated to be 0.029, which is considered a small effect according to Cohen's (1988) classification. These results indicate that age contributes to digital media usage habits, but the influence is limited.

Table 13: Analysis results of digital media usage frequency for news reading according to age groups

Analysis	Statistical values
One-way ANOVA	$F(3, 496) = 4.954, p = 0.002$
Scheffé test result	Significant difference between the 21-23 age group and the 18-20 age group ($p < 0.05$)
Effect size (Cohen)	Cohen's $d = 0.029$ (Small effect)

These findings align with the literature regarding media literacy and the use of digital tools; it is believed that as younger individuals develop their interactions with digital media, their media literacy also increases (Buckingham, 2003; Livingstone & Helsper, 2007).

➤ 11. Hypothesis result and interpretation

The one-way ANOVA analysis conducted to examine the effect of students' age on the frequency of using digital media tools for hobbies and entertainment revealed significant differences among age groups. The analysis results indicated that the total sum of squares was 12.602, with degrees of freedom (df) equal to 3 and a mean square value of 4.201. The F-value was calculated as 5.149, and the p-value was 0.002, indicating that age significantly affects the frequency of digital media usage.

To identify the sources of this significant difference, the Scheffé test was conducted, which found that students aged 21-23 used digital media tools for hobbies and entertainment significantly more than those aged 18-20. No significant differences were observed among other age groups. Furthermore, the effect size of the independent variable (age) on the dependent variable (frequency of digital media usage) was calculated to be 0.03, which is regarded as a small effect according to Cohen's (1988) classification. This suggests that while age affects digital media usage habits, this effect is limited.

Table 14: Analysis results of digital media usage frequency for hobbies and entertainment according to age groups

Analysis	Statistical values
One-way ANOVA	$F(3, 496) = 5.149, p = 0.002$
Scheffé test result	Significant difference between the 21-23 age group and the 18-20 age group ($p < 0.05$)
Effect size (Cohen)	Cohen's $d = 0.030$ (Small effect)

These findings consistently highlight the impact of age on individuals' technology usage habits. For example, the higher engagement of young adults (aged 18-24) with digital media can be attributed to their strong interest in social media and digital entertainment (Hargittai, 2010). It is suggested that individuals in the 21-23 age group have increased their interactions with digital media throughout their university experiences, resulting in greater familiarity. Consequently, these findings emphasize the significant role of age in digital media usage while also pointing to the need for further research into

how age differences interact with educational and social structures.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide significant data on the digital media usage habits of university students and align with certain trends in the literature. Notably, the significantly higher frequency of digital media usage among female students compared to male students parallels the findings of Hargittai and Hinnant (2008) as well as Urista et al. (2009). These previous studies have shown that women are more active users of social media platforms and demonstrate higher engagement in digital communication. In this context, women's usage of digital media has been adopted as a means for increased social interaction and communication, reshaping gender norms.

Simultaneously, the lack of a significant difference in news reading habits between men and women indicates a diminishing impact of gender norms. While previous research has often emphasized the determining role of gender in media usage, the results of this study suggest that media literacy and news access may become independent of gender (Ito et al., 2009). This finding implies that individuals can achieve a more equitable level in their information-seeking processes. On the other hand, the significantly higher frequency of digital media usage for leisure and entertainment among women indicates that they have adopted digital media tools more as sources of entertainment. This finding supports the notion that gender differences play a critical role in digital media usage and reinforces similar results in the literature (Zillien & Hargittai, 2009). Women's tendency to use social media and digital platforms more for entertainment is shaped by cultural and social contexts.

The conclusion that the mother's employment status has a limited impact on digital media usage reveals that family dynamics play a negligible role in determining media usage. This suggests that individuals' digital media habits are more influenced by personal interests and inclinations. These findings, which indicate a reduced impact of family structure, highlight that individual motivations and social interactions play a more decisive role. Previous research has noted the existence of a variety of social and psychological factors shaping individuals' media usage habits (Zillien & Hargittai, 2009). Moreover, the lack of significant differences in digital media usage frequency based on the father's employment status further strengthens the argument for the influence of individual motivations and social interactions. This result indicates that gender and individual motivations are determining factors in digital media usage, while family structure has a more limited effect. The findings from the T-test analysis suggest that digital media usage can develop independently of broader social contexts. Therefore, future research should critically explore individuals' interactions with digital media to better understand the effects of gender and family dynamics. In this context, examining gender and family dynamics in digital media usage will create a significant area for understanding individuals' relationships with media.

The findings obtained through ANOVA analysis further examined university students' digital media usage habits in relation to variables such as age, class level, and academic department. The obtained findings were discussed in comparison with research in the literature. Firstly, significant differences were found in the frequency of using digital media tools for news reading among the academic departments of the students. It was observed that students in Political Science and Public Administration utilized digital media more than those studying Economics. This finding suggests that media literacy and motivation to access information may be influenced by departmental differences. The literature indicates that students in social sciences have higher levels of media literacy compared to other fields (Buckingham, 2003; Livingstone & Helsper, 2007). However, the limited nature of this difference suggests that departmental distinctions do not have a significant effect on digital media usage.

Class level has also been identified as another factor influencing the frequency of digital media usage for communication purposes. Students who have been in university for four years or more were observed to use digital media more intensively compared to those in earlier years. The literature notes that as students progress through university, their digital media usage increases, correlating with a tendency to engage more with university communities and integrate further into social media networks (Lenhart et al., 2010). This study aligns with earlier findings indicating an increase in digital media usage as class level rises. The evolution of young adults' media habits over time can be explained by the advancement of media literacy skills throughout their university education.

The year in university also significantly influences the usage of digital media tools for news reading. In particular, it was found that third and fourth-year students engage more with digital media for news reading. This finding indicates that as students advance in class level, their media literacy competencies develop, supporting literature that highlights the positive effects of the educational process on media literacy (Buckingham, 2003; Livingstone & Helsper, 2007). Previous studies have also established a positive impact of university education on the use of media tools for news purposes (Metzger et al., 2003). On the other hand, age has a certain effect on the usage of digital media tools for news reading and entertainment purposes. Particularly, students aged 21-23 were observed to use digital media more than those aged 18-20. This finding may stem from the greater interest of young adults in social media and digital entertainment (Hargittai, 2010). Although the effect of age on media usage habits is limited, it aligns with previous studies. For instance, research from the Pew Research Center (2024) shows that age is a factor influencing media usage, albeit with limited impact. The lack of significant differences in media usage habits across age groups suggests that more dominant factors such as individual motivations and social environment play a crucial role.

In conclusion, the findings of the study largely align with research in the literature; however, the effects of departmental differences, class level, and age on media usage habits tend to be relatively small. This situation suggests that individual factors may play a more dominant role in media usage habits. Notably, providing media literacy training to all students could significantly contribute to the development of media usage habits.

Results and recommendations

This study provides valuable insights into how various demographic and educational factors shape FEAS students' digital media usage habits. The findings reveal that digital media engagement—particularly for news consumption and entertainment—varies significantly based on gender, academic discipline, and class level. Female students tend to use digital media more frequently than male students, especially for social interaction, which suggests a gendered dimension to media use. This pattern may be influenced by broader social and cultural dynamics that encourage greater digital connectivity among women, possibly reflecting a stronger emphasis on interpersonal communication in digital spaces.

Academic discipline also emerges as a key factor in media engagement, particularly for information consumption among FEAS students. Students in social sciences, such as Political Science and Public Administration, report higher levels of digital media usage for news compared to students in disciplines like Economics. This discrepancy may be attributed to the analytical nature of social science fields, where staying informed about current events is essential for academic and professional development. However, the relatively small differences between disciplines suggest that while the educational context influences media habits, it does not entirely determine them.

Class level further impacts digital media usage, with third- and fourth-year students exhibiting greater engagement compared to first- and second-year students. This increase suggests that digital literacy and confidence in media tools develop progressively throughout students' academic journeys. The correlation between academic seniority and higher digital media engagement highlights the role of growing academic and social integration within the university environment. Although age-related differences in media usage are present, they are relatively modest, implying that individual motivations and social environments exert a stronger influence on digital media interaction than age alone.

While demographic factors play a role in shaping media habits, this study underscores the predominance of individual and socially driven factors in digital engagement. Promoting media literacy across all FEAS student groups and disciplines could foster more balanced and effective digital media engagement, ultimately enhancing students' information literacy and critical thinking skills.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The sample is limited to a single institution (Anadolu University FEAS), which restricts the generalizability of the findings to students outside this specific context. Additionally, while key demographic and academic factors such as gender, age, and

academic discipline were considered, other influential variables—including socioeconomic background, geographic diversity, and prior media experience—were not examined. These unmeasured factors could provide a more nuanced understanding of digital media usage, as access to and familiarity with media tools can vary based on economic and environmental factors.

Another limitation is the reliance on self-reported data, which can introduce biases such as social desirability bias, where respondents might overstate or understate their media usage in ways they perceive to be more socially acceptable. Furthermore, self-reported data may lack precision, as participants might struggle to accurately recall their media behaviors. Future studies could benefit from incorporating objective measures, such as digital tracking tools, to obtain a more precise understanding of media usage patterns.

The findings of this study have both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the research contributes to existing literature by examining how demographic characteristics and educational factors intersect to influence digital media behaviors among FEAS students. By analyzing the role of gender, academic discipline, and class level, this study highlights the non-uniform nature of media literacy and engagement across student groups, providing a foundation for future research on the relationship between demographic factors and media habits.

Practically, the results emphasize the importance of tailored media literacy programs that address varying levels of engagement across disciplines and academic years. Given the study's focus on FEAS students, targeted training in digital media tools should prioritize the specific needs of these students, particularly those in non-social science fields or those in the early stages of their academic journey. Implementing faculty-specific initiatives that ensure equal opportunities for developing essential digital competencies can be instrumental in preparing students for the digital landscape. Additionally, fostering ethical and effective media use through digital literacy programs can contribute to students' academic success and informed engagement with contemporary information sources.

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Ethical approval

This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Anadolu University under protocol number 633076 on 31.10.2023.

Contribution rate of researchers

The authors contributed equally to the study.

Conflict of interest

There is no potential conflict of interest in this study.

Support information

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