

An Analysis on the Ways Brands Are Featured in Celebrity Posts on Instagram and the Level of Sponsorship Disclosure*

ABSTRACT

Brands are partnering with celebrities in both traditional and new media. Instagram is one of the widely used social media platforms where brands are trying to reach their target audiences. Celebrities are using this platform not only to connect with their fans, but also partner with brands. This study examines the posts made by Turkish celebrities on Instagram and aims to reveal the ways brands are featured in these posts. In addition, this study aims to reveal the level of sponsorship disclosure on these posts. A content analysis was conducted and 354 posts of 36 celebrities were found to include a visible or audible brand name, logo, slogan or an identifiable product and product package. Most prominent way of featuring a brand in a post was found to be “@mention” with 62,7%. It was also found that in 66,9% of the posts, celebrity was pictured with the brand. Out of the 354 branded posts made by celebrities, only 3,7% found to be including a sponsorship disclosure although regulations prohibit covert advertising and stipulates disclosure of product placement.

Keywords: Sponsorship Disclosure, Celebrity Endorsement, Social Media, Instagram, Paid Partnership

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Ünlülerin Instagram Gönderilerinde Markalara Yer Verme Biçimleri ve Sponsorluk Bildirimi Yapma Düzeylerine Dair Bir Analiz*

ÖZET

Markalar ünlülerle hem geleneksel hem de yeni medya ortamlarında iş birlikleri gerçekleştirmektedir. Bu yeni ortamlardan biri olan Instagram ünlüler tarafından sadece hayranları ile bağ kurmak için değil, aynı zamanda markalarla anlaşmalı pazarlama iletişimi çalışmaları yapmak için de kullanılmaktadır. Bu çalışma Türk ünlülerin Instagram'da yaptıkları paylaşımları ele almaktadır. Çalışmada ünlülerin Instagram gönderilerinde markalara yer verme biçimlerinin ve sponsorluk bildirimi yapma düzeylerinin ortaya konulması amaçlanmaktadır. Çalışmada içerik analizi yapılmış ve bir milyondan fazla takipçisi olan 36 ünlü ele alınmış, bu ünlülerin toplam 354 gönderisinin görüntülü ya da sesli olarak bir marka adı, logosu, sloganı ya da tanınabilir bir ürün ya da ürün ambalajı içerdiği bulgusuna ulaşılmıştır. Bir markanın gönderilerde yer alma biçimleri arasında %62,7 ile en yaygın olanın "@mention" olduğu, bunu %39 ile hashtag'lerin izlediği bulunmuştur. Bunlara ek olarak, gönderilerin %66,9'unda ünlü ile ürünün birlikte görüldüğü bulgusuna ulaşılmıştır. İlgili yönetmelikler örtülü reklamı yasaklamakta ve ürün yerleştirmelerde açıklamayı şart koşmakta olduğu halde ünlülerin yaptığı 354 markalı gönderinin sadece %3,7'sinde sponsorluk bildiriminin bulunduğu görülmüştür.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Sponsorluk Bildirimi, Ünlü Desteği, Sosyal Medya, Instagram, Ücretli Ortaklık

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INTRODUCTION

Brands are spending a lot of money for celebrities and they are prevalent on TV commercials and magazine ads (Belch & Belch, 2018, p. 193). However, in addition to traditional advertising media, consumers, as well as celebrities, are spending more and more time on social media (Statista, 2020). Instagram is one of these media. It is an image and video sharing platform which is suitable for celebrities to share their lives with their fans. In this platform, celebrities not only share their lives, they also share the brands in their lives. The shoes they wear, the places they dine in, and the cars they choose to drive are all shared along with the rest of their lives. The problem is, it is not clear if they are getting paid for sharing posts about brands. This lack of transparency, made Federal Trade Commission (FTC) of the United States of America to send letters to celebrities, warning about not to forget sponsorship disclosures on their social media posts (Chacon, 2017).

Sponsorship disclosure is letting users know that the content they are exposed to contains marketing communications efforts aimed at them. It is important for consumers, as it is about giving consumers a chance to defend themselves against these efforts, by letting them distinguish sponsored content from other types of content (Boerman, van Reijmersdal, & Neijens, 2014, p. 215). If the persuasive intent is hidden, it becomes “covert advertising”, which is prohibited under Article 22 of “Regulation on Commercial Advertising and Unfair Commercial Practices” (Ticari reklam ve haksız ticari uygulamalar yönetmeliği, 2015).

The topic of sponsorship disclosure has been explored in various studies. Boerman et al. (2012) studied sponsorship disclosure on TV, Van Reijmersdal et al. (2016) on blogs and Campbell and Evans (2018) in the context of native advertising. The rise of Instagram led some researchers to focus on disclosure of sponsored content on this platform. Evans et al. (2017) examined the sponsorship disclosure language and its effects on recognition of persuasion intent i.e., advertising recognition. Yıldız and Avcı (2019) examined effects of sponsorship disclosure in Instagram influencers’ posts on brand attitude and purchase intention.

This study examines the posts sent by Turkish celebrities on Instagram to reveal their ways of endorsing brands and the level of sponsorship disclosure. There are many ways to feature brands on an Instagram post, ranging from interactive options like location sharing, tagging and mentioning to simply writing about the brand in plain text. In addition, transparency

of persuasive intent, i.e. sponsorship disclosure is important in every medium, especially for sources like celebrities. There are many ways to disclose a sponsorship. It can be said that any disclosure is better than no disclosure but clearly some types of disclosures may be better in conveying the persuasion intent as Evans et al. (2017) have demonstrated in their study. Instagram lets celebrities and brands place a “paid partnership” text on top of posts. The celebrity might also use hashtags such as “#sponsored” and “#paid ad” or add photo tags on post visuals that indicate a partnership with the tagged brand. There is also the chance to express the sponsorship in the text below the post, or on the post, visually or verbally. This study investigates the ways employed by Turkish celebrities.

CELEBRITY AND CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT

A celebrity is a famous or well-known person, whose status arises from talent and skill in a particular area, lineage, or self-generated attention (Page-Winterich & Grewal, 2018, p. 71). Drake and Miah (2010, p. 52) defines celebrity as a “mediated public persona”. Schiffman, Kanuk, & Hansen (2012, p. 301) lists film stars, television personalities, popular entertainers and sports icons among celebrities.

According to McCracken (1989, p. 310) a celebrity endorser is an individual who is recognized by the public and uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good. Kardes, Cline, & Cronley (2011, p. 322) proposes a similar definition: A celebrity endorser is “an individual who enjoys public recognition and uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer product by appearing in an advertisement or engaging in some other marketing tactic”.

Celebrities are used effectively by advertisers to communicate with their target markets and they can help in creating interest or actions toward advertised products and services (Schiffman, Kanuk, & Hansen, 2012, p. 301)

There are obvious benefits of celebrity endorsement, like increased attention. Celebrities help in attracting and maintaining attention of the consumers (Erdogan, 1999, p. 295). Celebrity endorsement may help in brand recognition, enhance message recall, trustworthiness, likeability and persuasion, and it may reduce perceived purchase risk (Kardes, Cline, & Cronley, 2011, pp. 322-323). It may also increase information processed: Consumers process more information when the message source is someone they know or admire (Solomon, 2018, p. 191).

An apparent risk of celebrity endorsement is the potential of scandals that the celebrity might get involved in. Controversial behavior, an unpleasant tweet, substance abuse or cases of domestic violence might put celebrities under fire, along with brands sponsoring them. Marketers, in an aim to protect their brands, include moral clauses in endorsement contracts to be able to terminate deals (Kardes, Cline, & Cronley, 2011, pp. 323-324). Other risks include overexposure, image change (of celebrity), overshadowing the brand, and the expense comes with working with a celebrity (Erdogan, 1999, pp. 295-296).

There are three main approaches related to celebrity endorsement in advertising: Source models, match-up hypothesis, and meaning transfer model. According to source models, the source of a message can impact its acceptance by receivers. There are two main components of source models: Credibility and attractiveness. Source credibility is a source's expertise, objectivity, or trustworthiness. Source attractiveness is the social value recipients attribute to a source (Solomon, 2018, pp. 306-308). Attractiveness is not limited to physical attractiveness; it has three dimensions, namely, similarity, familiarity and liking (Shimp & Andrews, 2013, p. 293). According to match-up hypothesis there should be a fit between the celebrity image and the brand. High congruence leads to greater advertiser and celebrity believability (Erdogan, 1999, p. 302). Lastly, according to McCracken's (1989, pp. 313-316) Meaning Transfer Model, people, objects and contexts in an advertisement convey meanings, which are transferred first to the advertised product, then to the consumer via consumption.

INSTAGRAM AS AN ADVERTISING PLATFORM

Instagram started as a photo sharing platform limited to iOS based mobile devices. It is one of the most popular social media platforms with 1 billion monthly active users (Clement, 2020). Instagram users were limited to one square shaped photo per post at the beginning, but after the acquisition by Facebook Inc., they quickly introduced more ways for Instagram users to engage with their audience including but not limited to video, stories and video (Quesenberry, 2019, p. 147). It can be said that Instagram became an all-encompassing social media platform, rivalling Twitter, Snapchat, and maybe, its owning platform, Facebook itself.

There are various ways for brands to reach their target audience using Instagram. The first and easiest way is to open an account on the platform. Brands can then start sharing brand related information freely (Miles, 2014, pp. 48-49). They can also use Instagram for two-way communication; gathering feedback, responding to consumer questions and engaging with the

users of their brand. They can build a following if their brand is popular and if their Instagram account provides value.

Another way of reaching people on Instagram is advertising. Instagram initially did not provide an official way to brands to advertise on its platform. Two years after opening the platform for advertisers, Instagram reported that it reached two million monthly advertisers on its platform (Instagram, 2017). Brands can advertise on Instagram to appear among the posts in the feed, or among the stories.

Brands may also skip the official channel of advertising on Instagram and partner with popular Instagram users. This is no different from partnering with YouTubers or influencers on other social media sites. There are three types of popular accounts on Instagram: Thematic accounts, which share posts on a subject (such as accounts on science or astronomy); influencers, which are ordinary people who have built a large following on social media; and celebrities. Celebrities are different from the first two since they already had fame before joining a social media platform. Thematic accounts and influencers on the other hand owe their existence to social media (Mediakix, n.d.).

Brands partnering with celebrities to have them share posts about their brands. One of the simplest ways is to share an ad that is already used in another medium: the image of a print ad or the video for a TV commercial. However, a better way might be to make the celebrity talk about, advice and use the brand. When celebrities share snippets of their lives with their fans on Instagram, brands want to be a part of these posts so that the meaning transfer McCracken (1989, pp. 313-316) described can take place.

SPONSORSHIP DISCLOSURE

Arens and Weigold (2018, pp. 5-8) breaks the definition of advertising, and one of these components is “identified sponsor”. However, practices like product placement and native advertising are blurring the lines between overt and covert advertising. According to article 4-k of “Regulation on Commercial Advertising and Unfair Commercial Practices”, covert advertising is placement and presentation of brand names, logos or distinctive shapes and statements in any article, news piece, broadcast or program without clear disclosure of the advertising intent. Article 22 of the same regulation prohibits covert advertising (Ticari reklam ve haksız ticari uygulamalar yönetmeliği, 2015). A separate regulation on media services states

that proper disclosure is mandatory for product placements (Article 14) (Yayın hizmeti usul ve esasları hakkında yönetmelik, 2011).

The goal of sponsorship disclosure is to aid consumers in accessing their persuasion knowledge by making sponsored content distinguishable from editorial content. Sponsorship disclosure is important because consumers might not always be aware of the persuasive intent, and they might fail to activate their cognitive defenses (Boerman, van Reijmersdal, & Neijens, 2014, p. 215).

When FTC sent letters to several celebrities in the US and influencers publishing sponsored posts on Instagram without clear disclosures in 2017, it was regarded as a warning and a crackdown on deceptive marketing on social media. FTC advises clear wording about sponsored posts. Adding a hashtag which reads “partner” or “thank you” is not enough, for instance. The proper hashtags are “ad” and “sponsored”. It is also advised to keep disclosure visible. They should not be hidden in places where users have to click to reveal like the “read more” button on Instagram posts. Similarly, disclosure should not be hidden in a pile of hashtags. According to FTC, social media platforms’ built-in disclosure systems might not be enough if they are not easy to notice and understand (Chacon, 2017).

Several studies have examined sponsorship disclosure.

Boerman et al. (2012) studied duration of sponsorship disclosure on TV. Their findings indicate that sponsorship disclosure can increase persuasion knowledge. In another study, Boerman et al. (2014) studied timing of sponsorship disclosure on TV. They found a significant effect of sponsorship disclosure on recognition of advertising. However, their results suggest that recognition of advertising is enhanced only when disclosure is displayed prior to or concurrent with the content. Their study also shows that sponsorship disclosure negatively effects brand attitude. Another study by Boerman et al. (2017) concluded that sponsorship disclosure is needed especially on posts made by celebrities since consumers can not easily tell the persuasive intent of such posts.

Campbell and Evans (2018) studied sponsorship disclosure in the context of article style native advertising. They concluded that presence of an advertising banner enhanced recognition of advertising and consumers respond more negatively to native ads when they recognize them.

However, they argue that consumer response can become positive if advertising recognition occurs along with a perception of sponsorship transparency.

Van Reijmersdal et al. (2016) studied disclosure of sponsored content in blogs. According to their findings, disclosure activates persuasion knowledge, and this triggers resistance strategies against the sponsored content. The result is lower purchase intention and decreased brand attitude.

Evans et al. (2017) examined the sponsorship disclosure language of Instagram influencers. They studied the effect of disclosure language on the consumers' ability to recognize the content as sponsored and the attitude toward the brand. They found that using clear language (such as including a "Paid Ad" hashtag) in sponsored posts improves advertising recognition. However, such clear disclosure statements degrade attitudes and post sharing intentions. Kim and Kim (2020) studied influencer advertising on social media and found that "sponsorship disclosure indirectly affected product attitude in a negative direction". Stubb et al. (2019) investigated the effect of disclosing sponsorship compensation justification and found that providing such normative reasons positively effect message and source credibility.

Aslan and Ünlü (2016) studied the relationship between influencers and advertisers. They have conducted semi-structured interviews with 36 influencers. They conclude that brands see influencers as an important way of reaching their target audiences.

Öztürk et al. (2016) studied product placement in Instagram posts of 9 "instabloggers". They found that 65,4% of the posts contained the product itself or its package. Another finding of their study is that on 40,7% of the posts, instabloggers were interacting with the product.

Yıldız and Avcı (2019) conducted a survey on 520 participants to examine the effects of Instagram influencers' posts on brand attitude, intention of brand switching and intention to spread as electronic word of mouth marketing. One of their findings is that sponsorship disclosure affects brand attitude and purchase intention negatively according to participants' self-reported answers.

METHOD

A content analysis of celebrity accounts on Instagram is conducted. Content analysis can be defined as the "systematic, objective, quantitative, analysis of message characteristics"

(Neuendorf, 2002, p. 1). Research questions, sampling procedure, coding scheme and reliability analysis are discussed below.

Research Questions

The following research questions have been purposed:

RQ1: Which product or service categories can be encountered in Instagram posts made by celebrities?

RQ2: In which ways brands can be encountered in Instagram posts made by celebrities?

RQ3: Do celebrities disclose sponsorship in any way?

RQ4: In which ways celebrities disclose sponsorship?

RQ5: Can the celebrity be seen with brands?

Sampling Procedure

A content analysis of celebrity Instagram accounts is conducted. To determine which celebrities to study, at first, students enrolled in Public Relations and Advertising departments of Necmettin Erbakan University were asked to list celebrities that came to their minds. It should be noted that they were asked to list only celebrities, not influencers. In addition to the resulting list, celebrities with high number of Instagram follower counts were added to the list. After inspecting Instagram accounts of the celebrities in the list, celebrities that have lower than 1 million followers were omitted. Additionally, four accounts were omitted from the study since they did not feature mentions of any brand. At the end of this process, a total of 36 accounts were selected (see Table 1 for the list of celebrities).

For each celebrity, posts between January 1st 2018 and July 7th 2018 were analyzed. The posts without any brand were omitted, limiting the total number of “branded posts” to be included in this study to 354.

Coding Scheme and Reliability

In this study, any post with a visible or audible brand name, logo, slogan or an identifiable product and product package is labelled as a “branded post” regardless of any paid

sponsorship agreement among the brand and the celebrity (since it is not clear for the consumer).

The coding form consisted of two essential parts: The first part is about the way brands were featured and the second part is about the way sponsorship was disclosed in the post. A preliminary examination of Instagram posts made by celebrities was conducted to develop the coding scheme.

This analysis revealed eight different ways celebrities inject brands into their posts. Sometimes the celebrity can be seen with the brand in the post visuals: Such as wearing branded clothes, consuming certain soft drink brands, or posing in ways that expose logos of the products in the frame. Other times they might mention the brand in the text section below the post visual with “@mention”, which creates a clickable link to the mentioned brand account. Sentences such as “Follow @brandname for a chance to win” or “You all asked about my shoes, you can find them on @brandname” can be given as examples to the usage of @mentions. Hashtags are clickable links like mentions, but instead of taking the user to a specific account, they take user to a mix of photos from various accounts that use the hashtag. Celebrities might specify brand names, slogans or words related to the product or service category as hashtags. Photo tags are clickable links on the post visuals that take the user to a specific account. These are similar to mentions but an additional click is required to reveal them. Location sharing is another way to feature a brand in a post, especially for brands with brick-and-mortar stores. Brands might also be seen in the post visual or brand names might be audible. Videos posted by celebrities were analyzed to reveal if they contain any mention of brands. There is also the simplest way of mentioning a brand in a post: Just writing about it in plain text. The full list of items can be seen in Table 2.

The second part of the coding form is about the way celebrities disclosed that there was a sponsorship. Items were “Paid partnership”, “#hashtag”, “photo tag”, “in image or sound” and “plain text”. Most of these disclosure approaches use the same tools available to feature a brand in a post. The celebrity might use #sponsored hashtag next to a #brandname hashtag or mix the @mention with a plain text disclosure to form sentences such as “Sponsored by @brandname”. Instagram also helps brands and celebrities in disclosing sponsorship agreements by displaying a special text above the post that reads “Paid partnership”.

All items were dichotomous (Yes/No questions). More than one value might be coded as yes in the case of multiple disclosures. The same is true for mentions of brands: If a post made by a celebrity talked about a brand in the text section of the post in addition to sharing a hashtag about a brand, plain text item and #hashtag item were both coded as “Yes”.

Percent agreement was calculated to determine inter-coder reliability of the two coders. The values for all coding categories was found to be 98,2%.

RESULTS

There were varying numbers of branded posts in the 36 celebrity accounts analyzed. Some celebrity accounts contained more than 40 branded posts (See Table 1). It should be stressed that these are the posts that contain identifiable brand names, logos, slogans or products. Some of these branded posts may not be sponsored but without proper sponsorship disclosure, it is not easy to distinguish ads from casual photos. In addition, there were multiple brands in some of these posts. Out of 354 posts, 35 included two or more brands in one post.

Table 1. Number of branded posts by celebrities

Celebrity	N	Celebrity	N
Burcu Esmersoy	45	Sinem Kobal	6
Meryem Uzerli	43	Buğra Gülsoy	6
Mert Fırat	25	Ahmet Kural	6
Neslihan Atagül	17	Murat Dalkılıç	6
Demet Akalın	15	Şükrü Özyıldız	5
Cem Yılmaz	15	Hazal Kaya	4
Serenay Sarıkaya	14	Kadir Doğulu	4
Gülben Ergen	14	Barış Arduç	4
Fahriye Evcen	12	Murat Boz	4
Tarkan	12	Serkan Çayoğlu	4
Hande Erçel	11	Elçin Sangu	3

Pelin Karahan	11	Burak Deniz	3
Mustafa Ceceli	11	Kerem Bursin	3
Erkan Petekkaya	11	Özge Özpınırçı	2
Ozan Güven	10	Tolga Sarıtaş	2
Burak Özçivit	8	Aras Bulut İynemli	2
İrem Derici	7	Murat Yıldırım	1
Seçkin Özdemir	7	Tolgahan Sayışman	1
		Total	354

Branded posts by celebrities are split according to sectors. Most encountered sectors are textile (24,2%) and accessories (19,5%). These are followed by magazines (13,1%), beauty and cosmetics (9,09%), food and beverages (6,7%), restaurants and cafes (4,8%), finance sector (4,3%), shoes (3,6%) and others (14,4%).

Types of Branded Posts

Instagram is a photo-oriented platform and one of the simplest ways to endorse a brand is to be seen with the brand. Our analysis revealed that the celebrity was pictured with a brand in 66,9% of the branded posts. It should be noted that this figure does not include the branded posts which feature a product, without the celebrity. As it can be seen in Table 2, the ratios are higher for branded posts made by female celebrities (79,9%), than male celebrities (49,3%). In other words, among the branded posts in our sample, female celebrities post pictures or videos that they can be seen alongside a brand, more than male celebrities.

Instagram lets its users give link to other users' accounts via @mentions. Clicking on @mentions will bring the user to the associated account. Brands may want to be @mentioned by celebrities, since their accounts on Instagram are akin to their web pages on the internet. When a user is forwarded to the brands account, she or he may browse more of the brands post (like going through a product catalog); engage with the brand (follow, like, comment) or even buy one of the offerings via Instagram's shopping links. Among the branded posts by celebrities in our sample, 62,7% of the posts mentioned the brand by linking to the brand account

(@mention). Among the posts by female celebrities 67,2% of the posts found to be using @mention. This is more than the posts made by male celebrities (56,7%).

Hashtags are labels that let users define and categorize their posts. They also let all users of the platform to find posts with same labels. This makes hashtags important for brands. Brands often create hashtags for their ongoing campaigns or use slogans as hashtags. Celebrities, when posting sponsored content, may use hashtags to help their fans find more about the brand. Among the branded posts that were posted by celebrities 39% mentioned the brand or brand slogans using hashtags. Among the posts made by female celebrities 30,9% use hashtags. This ratio is 50% for male celebrities: Half of the male celebrities use hashtags in their branded posts.

Table 2. Celebrities' ways of featuring brands on Instagram posts

Ways of Featuring Brands		Female	Male	Both
Celebrity can be seen with the brand	N	163	74	237
	%	79,9%	49,3%	66,9%
@mention	N	137	85	222
	%	67,2%	56,7%	62,7%
#hashtag (including brand slogans or brand specific hashtags)	N	63	75	138
	%	30,9%	50%	39%
Tagging in the photo	N	85	5	90
	%	42,7%	3,3%	25,4%
Brand mentioned in plain text	N	27	25	52
	%	13,2%	16,7%	14,7%
Location shared	N	2	16	18
	%	1%	10,7%	5,1%
Brand name or symbol is visible or audible (including @BrandName in reposts)	N	50	66	116
	%	24,5%	44%	32,8%

The post features an ad (Such as a TV commercial or a magazine ad)	N	52	30	82
	%	25,5%	20%	23,2%

Another way of linking to brand accounts is using tags on photos. Among all celebrities in our sample, 25,4% tagged and linked to the brand account on the photo. Tagging is similar to @mentions, but it requires an extra step to reveal, making it less obvious to users. This may be the reason for lower usage of tagging. However, it should be pointed out that it is fairly popular among female celebrities (41,7%), while it is male celebrities (3,3%) who are lowering the overall ratio.

Celebrities may also simply write about brands in plain text. Our analysis revealed that a brand was mentioned in plain text in 14,7% of the posts. The ratios are higher for posts made by male celebrities (16,7%), than female celebrities (13,2%). It should be noted that all of posts in our sample contain some sort of brand communication, so the results suggest that writing about brands in plain text is not favored by celebrities as other ways to mention a brand.

Instagram also lets people share the location that the photo is taken. This may be very helpful for smaller brands, especially brands that are tied to one location like restaurants and cafes. Location was shared in 5,1% of the branded posts. 10,7% of the posts made by males, and 1% of the posts made by females shared the brand location.

Some of the posts made by celebrities are videos. Thus, in some posts, a brand logo might be visible in the packshot or it might be mentioned in the audio. In 32,8% of the branded posts, a brand name or logo was shared in the image or sound. Among the posts made by female celebrities 24,5% shared the brand name or logo in the image or sound while this ratio is 44% for male celebrities.

Some celebrities shared ads (such as TV commercials and magazine ads) that they featured in their accounts. Among the branded posts we analyzed, 23,2% was such advertisements that were professionally produced for a brand. This ratio is higher for female celebrities (25,5%) than male celebrities (20%).

Sponsorship Disclosure

Only 3,7% of the posts have any type of disclosure which states that post is sponsored by a brand. Two of these posts belong to male celebrities and eleven to female celebrities. “Paid partnership” statement exists in only one of the posts (0,3%).

Table 3. Types of sponsorship disclosure employed by celebrities on Instagram

Type of Sponsorship Disclosure		Female	Male	Both
“Paid partnership with BRAND NAME” above the post	N	1	0	1
	%	0,5%	0	0,3%
As a #hashtag (words like advertising, ad, commercial, sponsored, partnership)	N	0	0	0
	%	0	0	0
“Tap to view products” tag on the image	N	0	0	0
	%	0	0	0
In the image or sound	N	0	0	0
	%	0	0	0
In plain text	N	10	2	12
	%	4,9%	1,3%	3,4%
Any type of sponsorship disclosure from above (Total)	N	11	2	13
	%	5,4%	1,3%	3,7%

As seen on Table 3, “Advertisement” statement exists in twelve of the posts (3,4%) as plain text. No disclosures were found in hashtags, images or sound. Some Instagram posts might include tags over product images to indicate that the product is a few clicks away from purchase. Such an indication of partnership with brands were not observed in any of the posts celebrities made.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this study, 36 Instagram accounts that belong to celebrities with more than 1 million followers were selected and among the posts that these accounts made between 01.01.2018 and 07.06.2018, 354 posts were found to feature a brand. As it is not clear for the consumer that these celebrities were paid or not to feature these brands in their Instagram accounts, any post with visible or audible brand name, logo, slogan or an identifiable product and product package were labelled as a branded post.

The first research question asked which product or service categories can be encountered in Instagram posts made by celebrities. Textile (24,2%), accessories (19,5%) and magazines (13,1%) were the most prominent categories. These are followed by beauty and cosmetics (9,09%), food and beverages (6,7%), restaurants and cafes (4,8%), finance (4,3%) and shoes (3,6%).

The second research question asked the ways celebrities feature brands in their Instagram posts. Brands were featured in many ways including mentions (62,7%), hashtags (39%), tags (25,4%) and plain text (14,7%). Location sharing was not favored (5,1%). Mentions are the most preferred way of celebrities to feature a brand in their posts. Mentioning or “@mentioning” an Instagram user means writing that user’s account name with an “@” prefix. This creates a clickable link. It is beneficial for the brands to get mentions from celebrities, since clicking that mention will take consumers to the brand’s Instagram account. This may lead consumer to browse the brand’s account and even purchase one of the displayed products. Some posts featured ads that were professionally produced (23,2%). This is another way to feature a brand in an Instagram post. There is no way to tell a celebrity’s intention in posting such content without a disclosure.

Research question 3 asked if the celebrities disclose sponsorship in any way. It was found that only 3,7% of the branded posts disclosed sponsorship. In relation to this research question, the fourth research question asked the ways celebrities disclose sponsorship. Instagram’s standard “Paid Partnership” disclosure was to be found in just one post among 354 branded posts (0,3%). No disclosures were found in hashtags, images or sound. Most of the sponsorship disclosures were stated in the plain text below the image (or video) of the post (3,7%).

The low rate of disclosure is sure to create confusion: Are the celebrities getting paid for sharing posts about brands or not? Are they “celebrity endorsers” or causal users of brands? This is not clear. There is a transparency problem. Evans et.al. (2017) found that when the disclosure is clearly stated, it negatively affects brand attitude, purchase intention and intention to spread (as electronic word of mouth – eWOM). Brands and celebrities might fear about these negative effects. In addition, celebrities might think that it is obvious that they are getting paid from brands for some posts. In fact, some advertising professionals working with influencers have the assumption that “everyone knows it’s paid” (Childers, Lemon, & Hoy, 2019, p. 270). If the commercial intent of a sponsored content is hidden, consumers might not activate their cognitive defenses (Boerman, van Reijmersdal, & Neijens, 2014, p. 215). It becomes a guessing game when the disclosure is missing, and the consumer should not be forced to play this game. The responsible thing to do for a celebrity to properly disclose sponsorship deals. Disclosing sponsored posts is not only for the benefit of the consumer, but also for the celebrity, since their followers might stop treating every post with a brand logo as an advertisement.

The last research question asks whether the celebrity can be seen with the brands in these branded posts. It was found that in 66,7% of the branded posts, the celebrity is pictured alongside the brand. It should be noted that these posts are not limited to celebrity, interacting with the product, such as holding, wearing, touching or using it.

According to the findings of this study, there is clearly a lack of sponsorship disclosure among posts made by celebrities. In Turkey, article 4-k of “Regulation on Commercial Advertising and Unfair Commercial Practices” defines “Covert Advertising” and article 22 of the same regulation prohibits the use of covert advertising on any kind of communication vehicle. As Özdemir and Doğanay (2019, p. 320) emphasizes, such kind of definition includes internet and social media too. However, there is no particular mention of social media in the regulation. This might be an important implication for legislators. The aforementioned advertising regulation should be updated with clear wording on sponsorship disclosure on social media in Turkey, in addition to employing better control mechanisms to prevent violations, for the benefit of Turkish consumer.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

This study is limited to posts made by celebrities. Future studies should also take “stories” shared by celebrities. Stories feature can be found on several social media platforms.

On Instagram, this feature complements traditional posts with content that disappears after certain amount of time. It also offers more interactive content. Future studies should also analyze posts made by influencers. Influencers are famous people whose fame is originated in social media. In addition, there are several studies exploring the effects of sponsorship disclosure in the U.S. and other countries; however there is little research on this topic in Turkey. It can be studied in the context of celebrities as well as influencers.

GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Reklamda ünlü kullanımı geleneksel mecralarda sıklıkla başvurulan bir yöntemdir. Sosyal medyanın ortaya çıkışı ile ünlüler hayatlarını ve hayatlarındaki markaları sosyal medya platformlarına taşımaya başlamışlardır. Bu platformların en önemlilerinden biri olan Instagram, ünlülerin hayranları ile etkileşim kurması için pek çok imkân sunmaktadır. Ancak ünlüler hayatlarının her anını Instagram’da paylaşıırken, bu paylaşımlarda yer alan markalar ile nasıl bir ilişki içinde oldukları anlaşılamamaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı ünlülerin Instagram’da paylaştıkları marka içeren gönderilerde markalara ne şekilde yer verdiklerini ve sponsorluk bildirimini ne düzeyde yaptıklarını ortaya koymaktır.

Ünlü desteği (celebrity endorsement), toplum tarafından bilinen bir kişinin bu bilinirliği bir marka adına kullanmasıdır. Pazarlama iletişimi çalışmalarında ünlü kullanımının aşikâr olan faydaları vardır, bunların başında ünlülerin dikkat çekme gücü gelmektedir. Ünlüler insanların dikkatini çekmekte ve elde tutmakta başarılıdırlar. Reklamda ünlü kullanımı marka bilinirliği, mesajın hatırlanırılığı, güven, sevmeye ve ikna konularında olumlu yönde etki ederken, algılanan satın alma riskinin düşmesinde de yardımcı olmaktadır. Bunlara ek olarak, mesajın kaynağı alıcının bildiği ya da beğendiği biri olduğunda, tüketicilerin işlediği bilgi miktarı da artmaktadır. Elbette ünlü kullanımı ile ilgili riskler de söz konusudur. Ünlülerin skandallara karışması en temel risklerden biridir. Tartışmalı bir davranış, hoş olmayan bir sosyal medya gönderisi, madde kullanımı ya da aile içi şiddet gibi konularla gündeme gelen ünlüler, onlarla çalışan markaların da olumsuz olarak etkilenmesi riskini doğurmaktadır. Buna ek olarak, ünlünün çok fazla reklamda yer alması ya da birden fazla marka ile çalışması, ünlünün imaj değiştirmesi, markayı ve reklam mesajını gölgede bırakması ve yüksek meblağlar talep etmesi gibi riskler ve dezavantajlar söz konusu olabilmektedir.

Instagram kullanımı giderek yaygınlaşan sosyal medya platformlarından biridir. Markalar bu platformda Instagram'a reklam vererek yer alabilecekleri gibi, ünlülerle ya da fenomenlerle sponsorluk anlaşması yaparak da yer alabilirler. Ünlüler sosyal medya hesaplarını hayatlarından anlar paylaşmak, hayranları ile etkileşim kurmak için kullanabilmektedir. Bu "hayattan kesit" gönderilerinin içinde markalar da yer alabilmektedir. Markalar gönderilerin içerisinde sponsorluk anlaşmaları gereği yer alıyorsa, sponsorluk bildirimini (sponsorship disclosure) yapılarak bu durum tüketicilere beyan edilebilmektedir. Instagram bu durumda "Marka ile ücretli ortaklık" ifadesini kullanma imkânı sunmaktadır. Buna ek olarak ünlüler hashtagler arasında #reklam #sponsorlu #ücretliortaklık gibi ifadeleri kullanarak, fotoğraf üzeri etiketlemeler yaparak ("ürünleri görmek için tıklayın"), görüntüde ya da seste sponsorlu olduğunu belirterek ya da düz metinde bahsederek sponsorluk bildirimini yapma imkanına sahiptir. Sponsorluk bildirimini, tüketicilerin ikna bilgilerine ulaşmalarına yardımcı olmaktadır. Sponsorluk bildirimini olmadığında, bir içeriğin ikna çabası içerdiği anlaşılabilir ve tüketiciler bilişsel savunma mekanizmalarını harekete geçirmeyebilirler. Sponsorluk bildiriminin olmaması yapılan pazarlama iletişimi çalışmasının Ticari Reklam ve Haksız Ticari Uygulamalar Yönetmeliğine göre yasaklanmış olan "örtülü reklam" sınıfına girmesi riskini doğurmaktadır. Ürün yerleştirme çalışmaları da Yayın Hizmeti Usul ve Esasları Hakkında Yönetmeliğe göre kurallara tabidir ve ürün yerleştirme yapıldığı belirtilmek zorundadır.

Bu çalışmada ünlülerin Instagram hesaplarında paylaştıkları gönderiler ele alınmaktadır. Bir milyondan fazla takipçisi olan 36 ünlü belirlenmiş ve bu ünlülerin 1 Ocak 2018 ile 7 Temmuz 2018 tarihleri arasındaki gönderileri incelenmiştir. Bu çalışmada "markalı gönderi" olarak tanımlanan gönderiler, görülebilir ya da duyulabilir bir şekilde bir marka adı, logosu, sloganı ya da tanınabilir bir ürün ya da ürün ambalajı görüntüsü içermektedir. Ünlülerin markalı gönderi tanımına uyan paylaşımlar yapmak için gönderide bulunan markalarla anlaşma yapıp yapmadığı tüketici için açık ve net değildir.

Çalışmada ele alınan 36 ünlünün belirtilen tarih aralığında paylaştığı toplam 354 gönderisinin yapılan markalı gönderi tanımına uyduğu tespit edilmiştir. Bu gönderiler içerisinde 35 gönderinin birden fazla marka içerdiği; en çok markalı gönderinin tekstil (%24,2) ve aksesuar (%19,5) sektörlerinde olduğu bulgusuna ulaşılmıştır. Gönderilerin %66,9'unda ünlü ürün ile birlikte görülmekte, %62,7'sinde "@mention" yapılmakta, %39'unda hashtaglerde marka adı ya da sloganı gibi markaya özgü hashtag'ler kullanılmaktadır. Bunlara

ek olarak, gönderilerin %32,8'i marka adını ya da sembolünü görselde ya da seste içermektedir. Bu orana markalardan yapılan "repost"lardaki marka isimleri de dahildir. Gönderilerin %25,4'ünde markalar fotoğrafın üzerinde etiketlenmiş, %23,2'sinde TV ya da dergi reklamı gibi profesyonel olarak üretilmiş bir reklam doğrudan paylaşılmış, %14,7'sinde markadan düz metin içerisinde bahsedilmiştir. Konum paylaşımı gönderilerin sadece %5,1'inde görülmektedir.

Ünlülerin markalı gönderilerinde sponsorluk bildirimini ne şekilde yaptıklarına bakıldığında ise, 12 gönderide düz metin içerisinde açıklama yapıldığı, 1 gönderide ise Instagram'ın sağladığı "Ücretli Ortaklık" yazısının kullanıldığı bulgusuna ulaşılmıştır. Sponsorluk bildirimini toplam 13 gönderide yapılmıştır ve bu rakam tüm markalı gönderilerin %3,7'sine tekabül etmektedir.

Sonuç olarak, ünlülerin Instagram'da sponsorluk bildirimini yeterli düzeyde yapmadıkları söylenebilir. Sponsorluk bildiriminin yapılması, markaların kasıtlı ikna çabalarını içeren gönderiler ile ünlülerin hayatlarında sıradan bir şekilde var olan markaların birbirinden ayrılmasını sağlamaktadır. Sponsorluk bildirimini bu nedenle tüketiciler için oldukça önem arz etmektedir. İlgili yönetmeliklerde örtülü reklam yasaklandığı, ürün yerleştirme kurallara bağlandığı halde sosyal medyada bu durumun ortaya çıkması dikkat çekicidir. Bu yönetmeliklerde her türlü iletişim mecrası kapsama alınmaktadır, ancak "sosyal medya" ifadesinin eklenmesinin ve daha etkili denetim mekanizmaları üzerinde çalışılmasının Türk tüketicisinin yararına olacağı söylenebilir.

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