

## The Marketing Concepts in The Developing Media and The Effects of Influencers on Youth

DOI: 10.26466/opus.810726

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### Abstract

*The sense of curiosity in people has developed over the years as they reach knowledge. Moreover, this has always led people to research and study individuals. Especially with the invention of the computer and the internet, a new era has begun; with technological infrastructure development, the distribution and access of information have become more comfortable. People have connected to research from more intensive or different perspectives according to their interests. With the technology that developed after Web 2.0, people not only read but started to "get involved." Since human beings are social creatures, they need to share, learn, develop, be liked, and be admired. Although sometimes this is a lifestyle, it has come at the point of a significantly developing new business area. Every year, dozens of people have become "influencing people or an individual with a follower," As they share their new experiences as they produce content, they have been followed and sometimes imitated. The purpose of this quantitative research is to measure university students' trust in social media influencer before purchasing and the impact of social media influencer on purchasing decisions. It has been observed that the vast majority of university students, who are their focal points, regularly follow social media influencers.*

**Keywords:** *Influencer Marketing, Lifestyle Marketing, Social Media, Marketing Communication*

## Gelişen Medya Düzeninde Pazarlama Konseptleri ve Fenomenlerin Gençler Üzerindeki Etkileri

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### Öz

Bilgiye ulaştıkça insanlardaki merak duygusu da yıllar içerisinde daha da gelişmiştir. Ve bu da kişileri hep araştırmaya ve bireyleri incelemeye yönlendirmiştir. Özellikle bilgisayar ve internetin icadı ile yeni bir devir başlamış, teknolojik alt yapının gelişmesiyle bilginin dağılımı ve ulaşımı kolaylaşmış, insanlar ilgi alanlarına göre daha yoğun ya da daha farklı perspektiflerden araştırma yapmaya başlamışlardır. Web 2.0 sonrasında gelişen teknoloji ile insanlar sadece okumakla kalmamış, 'dahil olmaya' başlamışlardır. İnsanoğlu sosyal bir varlık olduğundan paylaşma, öğrenme, gelişme beğenilme ve beğenme ihtiyacı duyar. Bazen bu yaşam tarzı olsa da oldukça gelişen yeni bir iş alanı noktasında gelmiştir. Her yıl onlarca insan 'insanları etkilemek ya da takipçisi olan bir birey' haline gelmiş, içerik ürettikçe yeni deneyimlerini paylaştıkça da takip edilen bazen de taklit edilen kişiler olmuşlardır. Bu nicel araştırmanın amacı üniversite öğrencilerinin satın alma öncesinde sosyal medya fenomenlerine olan güvenlerini ve satın alma kararlarında sosyal medya fenomenlerinin etkisini ölçmektir. Odak noktası olan üniversite öğrencilerinin büyük bir çoğunluğunun düzenli olarak sosyal medya fenomenlerini takip ettiği gözlemlenmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Fenomen Pazarlaması, Yaşam Tarzı Pazarlaması, Sosyal Medya, Pazarlama İletişimi

## Introduction

With the rapid development of the new media, the communication process has undergone a significant change. The new media that shape communication technologies have their main features. Researchers could not achieve a partnership in terms of features as they approached new media from a different perspective. The most important reason why the 2000s became the "new media age" is that technological developments direct the masses. The impact of globalization and the strengthening of large-scale international companies are other essential factors that accelerate the new media age (Baudrillard, 2004, p.19).

New media; it has been a variable, individualized connectivity, independent and control-deploying environment. On the other hand, new media is not just digital media or the digitalized form of other media (images, videos, text), but an independent interactive medium or distribution form in which more information is spread. The points where new media and traditional media differ; It is expressed as "changing," "bringing together," and being instant" in the sense of information accessed or transmitted (Akar, 2011, p.9-10).

The division and digitization of the media in various sections have also changed the traditional media economy's functioning structure. Traditionally, economic activities have now been forced to continue on their way by changing and transforming into the new media field. Now, advertising activities carried out for the audience in traditional media are carried out for the individual in new media. Brands that have found themselves in mass media have also added new media to their advertising efforts. New media and social media, especially addressing the new economy, are the primary media brands should use for their promotion and marketing activities (Gürçan and Kumcuoğlu, 2017). The group formed by the students, especially addressing the youth audience, are very interested in digital platforms. For this reason, changes can be seen in faster buying habits. The research will first examine whether social media influencers affect young people's purchasing decisions by examining the transition from traditional media to new media and talking about social media improvement.

## Development of Media Through Marketing

The emergence of the newspaper has an ancient history dating back to BC. The newspaper, which was created for people to announce and learn the news, provided the opportunity to receive news by continuing with the first period publications of the 17th century and continuing with the rapid development. The development of communication tools in the face of the need to learn and learn about people, countries, and crucial moments has taken on identity in the 19th century and gained new forms with the effect of rapid development in technology in the 20th century (Ergin, 2015).

There have been significant developments in the field of communication with the invention of the radio. Radio was the most critical communication and propaganda tool, especially by the states that participated in the war during World War II. When we look at the history of the media, television is one of the most revolutionary inventions. Television, newspaper, and radio that spread after the 1950s were adopted more. Being both visual and auditory distinguished it from other mass media and increased its credibility in the news (Coşar, 2018).

If today's economic system is implemented in the world in a way accepted by the majority, the power of communication tools cannot be denied. The development of communication tools has made McLuhan's "World Village" prediction, which was once considered a utopia, alive today. This integration causes us to be affected by the economic problem that is kilometers away from us, which has entered our lives economically. Besides, our economic activities' movement area has improved, and the circulation speed of capital has increased (Askeroğlu and Karakulakoğlu, 2019).

All these changes have made information the most valuable commodity and made the name of the age we live in becoming the "Information Age." Considering that information gains such importance and circulates as goods, it is useful to underline the place and importance of mass media in information circulation. Media globalization has caused changes and developments in information and communication technologies. Thanks to cable, digitalization, direct broadcast satellites, and the Internet, a large amount of information transfer can be done in seconds worldwide. (Coşar, 2018)

Traditional media is an environment where content is transferred to the masses in one way. These audiences consume content that is broadcast uni-

laterally to large audiences, and these audiences cannot be customized. The contents of traditional media cannot be touched, commented on, or changed. The messages it reaches the audience are received unilaterally, and the communication process ends in this way. Traditional media tells the masses everything from what, how to do, how much to consume, even when to use them. Individuals are entirely passive consumers in the face of mass media. Continuous media content is focused on consumer individuals adopting the advertisement and getting their consent. The ads, which have accelerated the transition to the consumer society, which needs the global world order, have started to become widespread with the Industrial Revolution (Coşar, 2018).

Traditional media has also benefited from social media in live television programs by benefiting from the essential contributions of social media in information and sharing and ensuring the audience's participation with the power of social media. Thus, social media started to change traditional media's one-way mass communication structure, albeit a little. The shaping of the program contents enabled the virtual environment to provide support by providing live broadcast content feedback. However, most of the news sharing on social media is taken from traditional media is an indication that there is no ideological difference between social and traditional media (Ergin, 2015).

With the mass media expressed as "new" in the world, there is almost a transformation. Transformation manifests itself in the technological field, but it is also experienced in economic, political, and sociological environments. With the phenomenon of individualization offered by the new media to the masses, their lifestyle has changed. The transformation in technology has facilitated access to the media deemed inaccessible in the past and created a civilian control mechanism. Another important factor that brought the new title to the media is "convergence." This concept means that multiple technologies are used simultaneously and together, and all technologies act as one tool. Almost every individual has met the phenomenon of convergence directly or indirectly in our age. Convergence and new media are in a close relationship (McPhillips and Merlo, 2008, p.237). In other words, as we mentioned before, the most important reason for technology to highlight information is the 'distribution' factor provided by technology for the same purpose.

New media; it has been a variable, individualized connectivity, independent and control-deploying environment. On the other hand, new media is not just digital media or the digitalized form of other media (images, videos, text), but an independent interactive medium or distribution form in which more information is spread. The points where new media and traditional media differ; It is expressed as "changing," "bringing together," and being instant" in the sense of information accessed or transmitted. In Web 1.0, web pages are created by a small number of authors for a more significant number of readers; that is, content creators are few, and users are mostly just consumers of the content. It is almost non-existent to contribute to any interaction or content. Web 2.0 allows each participant to be a content creator (Akar, 2011, p.18-19).

Web 1.0 has a predominantly read-only feature. It includes features such as reading and getting information. It is also not possible to share information and share experiences to comment on the web 1.0. It also has a non-dynamic web page (such as fixed corporate web pages). It enables one-way information transfer. It focuses on teaching with advertising. It is the first method that forms the basis of information technologies and contributes to developing other web technologies (Cormode and Krishnamurthy, 2008, p.2-3). With the developments in the process, there has been a transition from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 as of 2004. In other words, the only reading environment offered by Web 1.0 has left its place to an environment that is both read and written, ideas and information shared, and open to interaction. Web 2.0 defines second-generation internet services - social communication sites, wikis, communication tools, etc. - the systems created by internet users collectively and by sharing.

Marketing 1.0 has emerged as an approach aiming to develop production ability with information and communication technologies (Kotler et al. 2012, p.56). The Web's main principle in Marketing 1.0 is to offer offline businesses products and services (Erragcha and Romdhane, 2014: 137). Users are passive, and all they can do is click through the pages. The primary purpose of businesses is to produce and sell more. Customer expectations are not very important for businesses. Marketing is the heart of marketing products in 1.0. In Marketing 1.0, communication is provided in traditional ways (such as TV, radio, e-mail) (Erragcha and Romdhane, 2014: 138).

In the pre-Web 2.0 era, the media was in human life as a one-way communication tool, several large media groups' monopoly. As a media consumer, he could only choose one or more of the various but limited options available to the individual and consume content for the individual not controlled by these large groups. In traditional media, such as television, radio, and newspaper, the consumer was passively "exposed" to the content offered to him. In social media, it is seen that the consumer can act in line with his own choices and interactively. With social media, control has taken over individuals rather than institutions (Ergin, 2015).

With Web 2.0, new developments and changes are seen in internet technology. The basic principles of Web 2.0 include using the Web as a platform to run applications instead of the operating system, giving users control over their content, and using new methods to share the content more easily. Web 2.0 platforms provided the opportunity to share content and data created online more quickly. Also, web 2.0 is designed to create data and share the created content. In Web 2.0 technology, content can be created and shared as quickly and seamlessly as possible (Whittaker, 2009, p.2-3).

Marketing 2.0 sees customers as users who receive messages and actively participate in all marketing (Erragcha and Romdhane, 2014, p.138). Marketing 2.0 enables the sharing of information both between customers and businesses and among customers. Marketing 2.0; web 2.0 consists of social media and creative customers (Berthon et al., 2012, p.263). The form of Web 2.0 seen by customers is called "social media" (Yazıcı, 2014, p.23). Communication with customers on the Web provides interactive channels such as blogs, microblogs, forum sites, social networks, wikis, podcasts, and content sharing communities (Yazıcı, 2014, p.24).

Web 3.0, also called the Semantic Web, is defined as the smart Internet that recognizes users. A database that all the registered information, keeps searches in its memory, ensures users reach the most accurate and fastest results thanks to a system that records the information such as what they have researched before. As a result of the product search done on a shopping site, the user's products are automatically presented to the searcher thanks to the information recorded when entering the same site for the second time. In this way, it offers the opportunity to follow suitable subjects for people's interests and provide fast access without searching many times (Askeroğlu and Karakulakoğlu, 2019).

Marketing 3.0 is a new online environment where the user's data to create new meaning is combined (Erragcha and Romdhane, 2014, p.138). Improved customer focus, including a collaborative, cultural, and spiritual marketing approach, requires marketing 3.0 (Erragcha & Romdhane, 2014, p.139). Marketing 3.0 places the concept of marketing into human aspirations, values, and feelings. It suggests that consumers be a complete person whose other needs and hopes should never be neglected. This marketing view complements emotional marketing with social spirit marketing. For this reason, marketing practices are affected by changes in consumer behavior and attitude. (Durukal, 2019)

Marketing 3.0, 3 waves are mentioned in his book. The first is the Agriculture age, and the second is the industrial age, the third is the information age and the technology age we are entering. This age of technology has revealed creativity, engagement, and rapid access to information. Their triggers are stated as cheap computers/smartphones, cheap internet usage, and open sources. These facilities provided the rise and even the rise of social media. Thus, two types of social media approaches have emerged as expressive and collaborative. (Kotler et al. 2011)

It can be said that with the increasingly expressive feature of social media, the power of influencing other consumers will increase by transferring the opinions and experiences of the consumers. Accordingly, the power of shaping the consumption of company advertisements will decrease (Kotler et al., 2011, p.21). In addition to expressing their thoughts in writing on social media, people can express themselves even with only the 'like' button (Romele, 2013).

Social media; It can be classified into various platforms such as collaborative projects (Wikipedia), content communities (YouTube), social networking sites (Facebook, MySpace, Instagram), blog and microblogs (Blogger, Twitter, etc.) and virtual games and social environments (World of Warcraft) (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p.62). Wiki allows users to create new pages, make edits to pages, and link them. Wiki refers to a collective and collaborative communication environment. Wikis, which have a very dynamic appearance, are the environments where the encounters and exchanges in the virtual environment are intense, but they lack a particular and unchanging architectural structure. Wikipedia is the best known of these wikis (Aslan, 2011, p. 22).



## **Alternative Marketing Strategies In New Media Order**

The concept of new media has comprehensive coverage. New media incorporating all-new communication technologies; can be defined as "environments that direct the media, in general, to interactively transform it into digital data and provide production, distribution and sharing via computer" (Manovich, 2001, p.19).

As can be understood from the definition, with the emergence of new media, all traditional media formats existing in the past have become integrated with digital technology (0 and 1). The partnership created by digital technology with 0's and 1's made it easier for the new media to reach large masses (Tocci et al., 2007, p.11-13).

Poster puts traditional media within the 1st Media Age scope and expresses the new media age as a central, one-way, state-prone period. According to the Poster (1995: 3), at this age, the participants have a passive mass feature. Stating that the interaction element was at the forefront with the transition to the 2nd Media Age, Poster declared that the majority in this age was mostly able to communicate and interact.

In addition to all these; He added that the 2nd Age of Media has a democratic feature based on decentralized bilateral and multi-faceted communication, free from state intervention. As it can be understood from their opinions, Poster pointed out that the interaction factor is at the forefront in the new media era and described the users as active individuals (Poster, 1995, p. 3-4).

The new media has made some changes in the production, distribution, and use of information. Accordingly, the new media has features such as digital, interactive (interactive), hyper-textual, networked, virtual, and simulation (Lister et al. 2009, p.13).

The content found in social media tools shape consumer behavior and social media marketing. Consumers are affected by the content created by the user or company on social media at the point of purchase. Thus, how and how a product/service is spoken on social media becomes essential for businesses. At this point, it is crucial to examine the effect of social media on consumer behavior. Consumers share in virtual media by using these media's social features, staying connected with other users, and becoming a party to interactive communication (İşlek, 2012). In this field, which can be

updated at any time, knowing what the future is waiting for us and following them should be one of our most important works. Some of the alternative marketing techniques can be listed as follows:

Whisper Marketing / Viral Marketing / Word of Mouth Marketing / Buzz Marketing

Buzz marketing is also known as a whisper or gossip marketing. With globalization, communication technology has developed rapidly so that people can share their experiences more quickly. Institutions try to create exciting news spoken by everyone to achieve the results they want to achieve. The purpose of institutions to do this is because they believe that the news will spread rapidly in gossip. Gossip marketing is considered one of the most powerful tools in the world. "The purpose of rumor marketing for gossip purposes is the same in terms of core values. Increasing sales by creating a rumor about a product/service, raising ideas about the product/service with buyers, and improving product service or company credibility (Özer, 2009)

World of mouth communication is the oldest form of communication and is a form of communication that is not formal and takes place outside its control. Oral to mouth marketing is defined as a form of verbal communication between two or more consumers interested in a brand good or service without a commercial purpose (Çepni, 2011). Since today's consumer is under intense message bombing in his daily life, not every subject can think and do detailed research. For this reason, they tend to benefit from the thoughts of the people who have experience before. This word-of-mouth marketing process saves time for consumers and enables them to obtain more reliable information (Gülmez, 2010). In a word of mouth communication, it is seen that people share their purchasing experiences and find the information they obtain in this way more reliable. It is possible to see the total share in this case. Because today's consumer needs to live in the information age, he faces so much information and messages in daily life that he does not have time to think and investigate such intense information and messages (Silverman, 2001, p.9).

Word of mouth communication on the Internet is clear conversations, mostly in online opinions and reviews (Amblee and Bui, 2007). Because online communicators show less shyness, exhibit less social phobia/anxiety,

and act more freely than those, who communicate face-to-face (Sun et al., 2006, p.1106).

Consumers may experience tension when using a product or service, and one way to reduce this tension is that people tend to talk about products they love or dislike. Chat helps to relieve the narrator's satisfaction or to spread the excitement caused by using the product. For example, consumers are often influenced by something new and feel that they need to convey how beautiful the product they found to other people (Loudon and Bitta, 1994, p.330). Also, people may feel uncomfortable when they buy an expensive product. One way to reduce this discomfort is to talk to others around them to justify their own decisions. A person who buys a new car is likely to tell other people about the advantages of this car and the information they receive from reliable sources that support their own decisions (Rosen, 2000, p.56).

Another reason is message commitment. Message loyalty is inherent in advertising. Oral-to-mouth marketing is often encouraged by-products shown through advertising, but it is unnecessary to rely on the speaker's experience with the product. It is thought that the subject of speech can be creative and entertaining, especially since some individuals believe that they are experts on effective advertising and can speak like a critic (Loudon and Bitta, 1994, p.331).

Buzz marketing aims to create a message with them rather than convey a message to the consumer. It aims to make consumers a part of the campaign and turn them into a brand ambassador. In this way, consumers become the salespeople of the organization. Oral marketing, which stands out as an alternative method with the recognition of the importance of the advice, which is the oldest marketing method, has taken its place in today's marketing world by proving its effectiveness (Dağdaş, 2013).

### ***Emotional Marketing***

Anger is one of the emotions that make people talk. While the consumers share their negative experiences, they also share their anger, reduce tension, prevent others from experiencing their problems, and receive advice on solving problems. People want to ease their feelings by sharing their negative experiences and anger with other people and warning them not to en-

counter the same event. Institutions cannot prevent consumers from sharing their negative experiences. However, institutions can turn crises into opportunities if they can manage the process they will experience after their negative experiences (Toros, 2016).

Emotional marketing has emerged as an essential marketing and branding paradigm since the 1990s. As pressing needs are eliminated, emotional needs, which make their impact felt deep, bring emotional orientations in product and service preferences. Emotional brands' propositions are created using the product and service based on the meaning that the consumer will add to the consumer's life compared to the functional (product and price) benefits (Alemdar, 2012).

Consumers shopping or browsing websites act either for "solving their problems" or "for fun and joy, for realizing their dreams and fantasies, for pleasure and emotional pleasure." Even for consumers acting directly for a specific purpose, researchers try to observe and examine the details of consumers' purchasing behavior based on their emotional experiences during shopping and the instrumental activities they are satisfied with (Öztürk, 2013, p. 64).

Libert and Tynski (2013), in their research on raw emotions used in viral marketing, concluded that emotions with vigorous emotion intensity in advertising messages would contribute to the possibility of sharing the ad message. This means that the emotion in the advertisement may cause the advertisement to turn into a corner.

### *Social Network Marketing*

Social networking sites can be defined as websites where people can convey content prepared by users interactively. These contents are transmitted through personal information (profile), blogs, and discussion lists in the network among friends (Yağmurlu 2011, p.7). Social networking sites are designed to encourage interaction in a virtual environment. In general, communication is facilitated through information stored on a profile (i.e., user page), which provides information about the person's identity, identifies what they care about, and usually photos of their members. Users who are members of the social networking site can see each other's profiles and

communicate through various applications such as e-mail or online message boards (Pempek et al. 2009, p. 228).

One of the latest examples of groups that have come together through a communication channel is social networks. Environments created by the coming together of people in such places as everyone knew each other are like parks or cafes. People are in these circles to communicate with their acquaintances. Other people are included if they say something interesting to the conversation that occurs in their environment. Otherwise, they are ignored. The importance of public space in social life is paramount. It is one of the most important reasons social networking sites get so much attention (Akyazı and Ateş, 2012, p. 182-183).

The first social networking site was founded in 1997 under the name SixDegrees.com. This site offers users the opportunity to create profiles and lists their friends. In 1998, he allowed surfing on friends lists. Between 1997-2001, sites where various ethnic groups shared their personal, professional, and dating profiles appeared. In 1999, Live Journal, AsianAvenue, Black Planet, LunarStorm; In 2000, MiGente; Cyworld and Ryze in 2001; In 2002, Fotolog and Friendster, Skyblog; In 2003 Couchsurfing, LinkedIn, Tribe.net, Open BC / Xing, MySpace, Last.FM, Hi5, Orkut, Dogster; In 2004 Flickr, Piczo, Mixi, Facebook (only at Harvard University), Multiply, Smallworld, Dodgeball, Care2 (social networking site added), Catster, Hyves; In 2005 Yahoo! 360, Youtube, Xanga, Cyworld, Bebo, Facebook (high school networks), AsianAvenue, BlackPlanet (re-release). In 2006, QQ, Facebook (open to corporate networks), Windows Live Spaces, Cyworld, Twitter, MyChurch, Facebook (public) (Boyd, Ellison, 2007). As can be seen, it is observed that the sites with dense users in the world mostly appeared in 2003-2006 (Onat & Alikılıç, 2008).

One of the essential features of social networks is that sharing is facilitated. Information spread more quickly due to features such as likes, resharing, notifications. Before social networks became popular, people directed their e-mail messages to each other, but the spread of information on social networks was more effective than e-mail (Qualman, 2011, p.110).

Social networks create a media environment that allows users to create virtual identities and exist in virtual social groups based on interaction. In other words, the virtual environment allows users to build a new identity outside their real identity for various purposes. In social sharing platforms

that provide privacy and anonymity to the users, individuals can realize their virtual identities through their virtual identities, which have been created with their real identity. Therefore, there may be significant differences in attitudes and behaviors based on real identities and virtual identities (Zinderen, 2020).

### *Experience Marketing*

Depending on the rapidly changing technology, the economic values obtained from goods and services change. Economic values among social transformations have reached the present day as products (goods), services, and experiences. Consumption culture is based on the concept of experience, which is the last stage. In parallel with these changes, Pine and Gilmore (1999) introduced the experience economy concept. They stated that businesses are moving from selling goods and services to an understanding of selling experience based on consumer experience. On the other hand, Schmitt (1999) developed the experience economy concept and revealed the experiential marketing approach as consumers are evaluated not only as rational decision-makers but also as individuals who act with their emotions and consume in this direction. He stated that, unlike traditional marketing strategies, today's practices are directed towards experiential marketing strategies that appeal to the customer's feelings.

Research shows that 85% of managers believe that differentiation with traditional tools such as price, product, quality, and distribution network is not a sustainable competitive advantage; customer expectations in these areas have already reached a certain standard, after which the competition will continue through the experiences provided to the customer (Shaw & Ivens, 2002).

In the 2006 square, in the Times square, mobile toilets with P&G products were used to control Procter & Gamble hygiene products, and this experiential activity provided more than 464 million media exhibitions worldwide. All three organizations aimed to overcome these experiential marketing activities and the perceived barriers of consumers who do not know that this is marketing communication (Pine and Gimore, 2007).

### *Lifestyle Marketing*

Lifestyle is an essential factor in the individual's method of spending time and money. Individuals' lifestyle is influenced by their past experiences, demographic characteristics, beliefs and attitudes, and personality. Even individuals who have the same income and education level and are grown in the same culture have different lifestyles. For this reason, lifestyle helps to determine the characteristics of the group. Because the attitudes, beliefs, ways of living, views of life, needs, and desires of individuals in a similar lifestyle group are similar (Erciş et al. 2007).

In their daily lives, people talk about products, services, or brands, make comments, make evaluations, and advice. Advice is the basis of word of mouth marketing. Consumers share any information or evaluation related to the product or service with other consumers who are close to them or whom they trust, give advice, and speed up consumers' decision-making process at the purchasing decision stage. It is much more effective than other marketing methods because the person who recommends the product does not work in an organization that sells it (Toros, 2016).

Factors affecting the purchasing decision process are categorized under four general headings: cultural, social, personal, and psychological. The concept of "lifestyle," which is one of the personal factors, is also essential for understanding consumer behavior. Explain the buying behavior of demographic variables, determine the causes of brand loyalty, learn consumers' attitudes towards new products, motivate in purchasing decisions, research the importance of attitudes and status, etc. Personal and psychological factors have become essential variables of consumer behavior research in recent years (Erdal, 2001, p.37).

### *Influencer Marketing*

With the digital age we are in, consumer behavior and the situations affecting these behaviors have changed drastically. Although traditional media tools on consumers continue, the new generation media order is shaped by social media tools. Social media users have become people who can produce by drinking in this new media layout. It has become much more accessible and increasingly widespread to produce video content on social media platforms in recent years. Enterprises use social media influencers in addition to

their famous use in product advertisements. Factors that comment, give advice, and convey their experiences on many different topics, such as travel, shopping, food, beauty, and makeup products, attract businesses' attention. In terms of the impact of consumers on purchasing behavior and the impact it has created, influencer marketing has been one of the current approaches that are included in the marketing agenda (Armağan and Doğaner, 2018).

The word Influencer is used for "affecting, mentioned, remembered, influential" people in English, and there is no exact equivalent in Turkish. Although the most popular of the words used instead of Influencer is the "influencer," there are also equivalents such as "opinion leader, impressive." The Influencer can significantly shape the customer's purchasing behavior but are third parties responsible for the product or service purchased (Brown and Hayes, 2008, p. 50).

An Influencer is a person whose values and thoughts are valued and valued more than others on the same platform, than people in the environment or society. Social media is the medium where the concept of the Influencer is used the most. They are actively present on many social media sites; they have high followers. Influencers can be briefly defined as useful or remembered people (Bayuk and Aslan, 2018, p.177).

In terms of the economic aspect of Influencer marketing, according to the research conducted by an Influencer Marketing firm named Creatorden; Users with significant influence on social media, namely influencers, are used for marketing and product promotion purposes. 48% of Influencer Marketing activities realized in Turkey were realized on Instagram. This rate also confirms that Instagram is the most trendy medium. Following Instagram comes Influencer Marketing activities on Facebook with 21%, Youtube with 16%, and Twitter with 15%. Influencer Marketing activities take place in beauty and makeup at a rate of 19%, while in fashion, 18%. Immediately afterward, categories of travel with 13% and life and food with 12% stand out. In other words, the target audience of Influencer Marketing is generally women. These rates are also reflected in Influencer's specialties. 10% of Influencers operating in Turkey are in life, 6% in fashion, family, beauty, and 5% in entertainment, travel, business, and health. Influencers' followers generally outweigh Facebook. While the average follower rates on Facebook, which is the place where Influencers are followed the most, were



63 thousand, respectively 59 thousand on Twitter, 47 thousand on Instagram, and 41 thousand on Youtube (<https://creatorden.com/2017-turkiye-influencer-marketing-raporu/>).

Unlike celebrities, influencers are easily accessible and can be found anywhere, and at any time, so they frequently interact with their followers. The Influencer who listens to understand, respond, think, and respect their comments increase their influence by reaching more followers over time (Can and Koz, 2018, p.449).

## **Method**

The changes and developments in communication technologies, the increase in the young population, and the increase in internet use have caused some changes in marketing. The fact that consumers base most of their purchasing decisions on advice makes social media influencers' comments about product/service on different platforms more valuable. The concept of trust comes to the fore, and social media influencers become one of the most critical stakeholders in consumer purchasing decisions.

### ***Purpose of the research***

This study aims to measure university students' trust in social media influencers before purchasing and the impact of social media influencers on their purchasing decisions. Research questions are determined as follows:

1. Research Question 1: Does the social media influencer followed to impact consumers' purchasing decisions?
2. Research Question 2: Do consumers find the advice of the social media influencer they follow reliable?
3. Research Question 3: Is there a positive and meaningful relationship between the variable of trust in the shared social media influencer about any product/service and that unfamiliar person are followed as an influencer?

### ***Research Sample***

In the product/service purchasing process, the survey sample was conducted to examine the trust in social media influencers' recommendations to social media's new opinion leaders. The effects on purchasing decisions are

the most widely used by university students. The research was carried out among students of public relations, advertisement design and communication, and new media and journalism undergraduate students at Üsküdar University on the Anatolian side of Istanbul. From the 180 forms answered, "Is there any social media influencer you follow?" 145 forms that answered "yes" to the question were analyzed. The data obtained from the questionnaire was evaluated through the SPSS for Windows 21.0 statistics program. The research was conducted between 01 - 29 October 2019. Likert scale was used in the research.

### *Limitations*

This study investigates the effects of social media influencer on consumers' purchasing of products/services and is limited to Üsküdar University on the Anatolian side of Istanbul.

### **Findings**

The data obtained for demographic variables such as gender, age, education level, Net monthly income, and marital status are given in Table 1 to better interpret the study.

*Table 1. Demographic Features of the Participants*

| Demographic variables     | Demographic Features | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------|----------------|
| <b>Gender</b>             | Female               | 102       | 56,5           |
|                           | Male                 | 78        | 43,5           |
| <b>Age</b>                | 18-25                | 175       | 97             |
|                           | 25-32                | 5         | 3              |
| <b>Education Level</b>    | University Student   | 100       | 100            |
| <b>Net monthly income</b> | Less than 1000 TL    | 16        | 9              |
|                           | Between 1000-2000 TL | 49        | 27             |
|                           | Between 2000-3500 TL | 61        | 34             |
|                           | Between 3500-5000 TL | 37        | 20,5           |
|                           | 5000 TL and plus     | 17        | 9,5            |
| <b>Marial Status</b>      | Married              | -         |                |
|                           | Single               | 100       | 100            |

As stated in Table 1, 56.5% of the participants are men, and 43.5% are women. Considering the age variable, the group with young people between 18-25 stands out with a significant 97% difference. Young people between the ages of 25-32 make up only 3%. All of the mentioned partici-

pants are single. When looking at the monthly net income variable, it is 2000-3500 TL. Students with income levels constitute 34% of the participants.

**Table 2. Follow-Up Rates of Social Media Influencers**

| Are there any social media influencers you follow? |           |                |
|--|-----------|----------------|
|  | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
| Yes  | 145       | 80,5           |
| No   | 35        | 19,5           |

"Are there any social media influencers you follow?" 80.5% of the respondents answered yes to the problem. It is assumed that students are more likely to be affected by these influencers due to this situation, highlighting university students' interest in social media influencers.

**Table 3. Frequency of Following Social Media Influencers**

| I look at the social media account of the influencer I follow at least once every day. |           |                |
|--|-----------|----------------|
|  | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
| Strongly agree   | 89        | 49,5           |
| Agree  | 62        | 34,5           |
| Undecided  | 12        | 6,5            |
| Disagree   | 10        | 5,5            |
| Strongly disagree  | 7         | 4              |

Considering the frequency analysis table created using the five-point Likert scale, 61.5% of the participants stated that they look at the influencers' social media accounts at least once every day with the answer "strongly agree." The rate of those who answer "agree" is 18.5%. This shows that the majority of university students regularly follow the social media accounts of social media influencers.

**Table 4. Platforms Following Social Media Influencer**

| Which social media platform do you prefer to follow social media influencer? |      |   |
|--|------|---|
| Youtube  | 1,60 | 1 |
| Facebook   | 2,45 | 2 |
| Instagram  | 3,08 | 3 |
| Twitter  | 3,27 | 4 |
| Snapchat   | 4,57 | 5 |

According to the evaluation where the difference between the averages is taken, Youtube is the platform where social media users follow social media influencers. Youtube is followed by Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat, respectively.

**Table 5. Trust in Recommendations of Social Media Influencer**

| <b>I trust the recommendations of the social media influencer I follow for any product or service</b> |                  |                       |
|---|------------------|-----------------------|
|   | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
| <b>Strongly agree</b>   | 89               | 49,5                  |
| <b>Agree</b>  | 42               | 23,5                  |
| <b>Undecided</b>  | 26               | 14,5                  |
| <b>Disagree</b>   | 16               | 9                     |
| <b>Strongly disagree</b>  | 7                | 3,5                   |

While 25% of the participants are very confident with social media influencers' recommendations regarding any product or service, the rate of those who express their trust in social media influencers by replying "I agree" is 27.5%. The rate of those who do not trust social media influencers remains at 7%.

**Table 6. Effects of Social Media Influencer on Consumer Purchase Decisions**

| <b>The advice of the social media influencer I follow leads me to purchase that product/service.</b> |                  |                       |
|--|------------------|-----------------------|
|  | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
| <b>Strongly agree</b>  | 63               | 35                    |
| <b>Agree</b>   | 67               | 37,2                  |
| <b>Undecided</b>   | 22               | 12,2                  |
| <b>Disagree</b>  | 20               | 11,1                  |
| <b>Strongly disagree</b>   | 8                | 4,5                   |

53.5% of the participants stated that with the answers of "absolutely agree" and "agree", they preferred to buy any product/service upon the recommendation of the social media influencer they followed. The proportion of those who are "undecided" is 22%, while those who "do disagree" and "Strongly disagree" are 24.5%. This shows that the recommendations of social media influencer are also effective in today's marketing world, where the power of advice cannot be denied.

**Table 7. Effects of Social Media Influencer on Informing Consumers**

| <b>I learned information about many products / services from the sharing of the social media influencers I followed</b> |                  |                       |
|---|------------------|-----------------------|
|   | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
| <b>Strongly agree</b>   | 59               | 32,5                  |
| <b>Agree</b>  | 61               | 34                    |
| <b>Undecided</b>  | 18               | 10                    |
| <b>Disagree</b>   | 26               | 14,5                  |
| <b>Strongly disagree</b>  | 16               | 9                     |

42.5% of the respondents stated that with the answers "Strongly agree" and "agree", the rate of those who are "undecided" 26.5%, "agree" and "the percentage of those who answered "Strongly disagree" is 31% in total.

**Table 8. Source Factor (Famous Social Media Influencer)**

Among the social media influencers I follow are journalists, artists, messengers and actors.

|                   | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Strongly agree    | 102       | 57             |
| Agree             | 58        | 32             |
| Undecided         | 10        | 5,5            |
| Disagree          | 8         | 4,5            |
| Strongly disagree | 2         | 0,1            |

Considering the results of "Strongly agree" and "agree" are 61.4% as total, it is seen that artists, journalists, journalists, and actors are accepted as opinion leaders by the participants, and therefore, they trust their advice.

**Table 9. Source Factor (Unfamiliar Social Media Influencer)**

There are people who are not famous among the social media influencer I follow.

|                   | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Strongly agree    | 42        | 23,5           |
| Agree             | 84        | 46,5           |
| Undecided         | 21        | 11,5           |
| Disagree          | 29        | 16             |
| Strongly disagree | 4         | 2,5            |

With the answers "Strongly agree" and "agree," it is seen that the participants accept the unfamiliar social media forms as opinion leaders. Therefore, it is observed that famous people and people who come to the fore through social media become opinion leaders.

**Table 10. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis Results Conducted to Determine the Relationship between the Variable of Confidence in Sharing the Followed Social Media Influencer on Product / Service and the Follow-up of Non-Famous People as an Influencer**

|  |                     | Trust in Social Media Influencer's Product / Service Sharing | Following the Artists, Actors, Journalists and Messengers as a Social Media Influencer |
|--|---------------------|--|--|
| Trust in Social Media Influencer's Product / Service Sharing                           | Pearson Correlation | 1  | ,596**   |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed)     |  | 0  |
|  | N                   | 145  | 145  |
| Following the Artists, Actors, journalists and Messengers as a Social Media Influencer | Pearson Correlation | ,596**   | 1  |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed)     | 0  |  |
|  | N                   | 145  | 145  |

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

It has been found that there is a positive and significant relationship between the Pearson product-moment correlation analysis results, which was conducted to determine the relationship between the followed social media influencer, the variable of trust in sharing with a product or service, and the follow-up of loved actors/journalists/reporters as an influencer. ( $r = 0.596$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). According to this result, it was concluded that as the trust in the Influencer followed increases, the shares for the product/service will increase, and the social media influencer will play the role of the public opinion leader.

*Table 11. Pearson's Multiplication Moment Correlation Analysis Results Conducted to Determine the Relationship Between the Following Social Media Influencer Confidence in Product / Service Sharing and Their Following as an Influencer*

|  |                     | Trust in Social Media<br>influencer's Product /<br>Service Sharing | Following Non-Famous<br>People as Social Media<br>Influencer |
|--|---------------------|--|--|
| Trust in Social Media<br>Influencer's Product /<br>Service Sharing | Pearson Correlation | 1  | ,612**   |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed)     |  | 0  |
|  | N                   | 145  | 145  |
| Following Non-Famous<br>People as<br>Social Media Influencer       | Pearson Correlation | ,612**   | 1  |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed)     | 0  |  |
|  | N                   | 145  | 145  |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

A positive and significant relationship was found between the Pearson product-moment correlation analysis results performed to determine the relationship between the followed-up social media phenomenon, the variable of trust in sharing the product/service, and the follow-up of people who are not famous as a social media phenomenon ( $r = 0.612$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). It is concluded that as the trust in non-celebrities, who are phenomenal, increases, the sharing of products/services will also increase.

## Results and Discussion

As a result of the research, it has been revealed that even if the person followed is not a journalist or an artist, people who are accepted as high-follower social media influencers are trusted.

It is becoming increasingly common for people to turn to social media to help them make big or small decisions. As social media platforms expanded

and evolved, the advertising industry had to change and adapt to reach consumers. The number of social media users has continued to grow over the years, with billions of internet users using social networks today.

Accordingly, influencer marketing has become a collaboration between brands and people with knowledge or social impact at the expertise level. People with access to a broad audience have created feelings of trust, admiration, or curiosity over people with whom they interact over time, based on their originality and reach, and then promoting products and/or services.

In this research, it has been observed that the majority of university students, whose focus is, regularly follow social media influencer. Even when they are purchasing, the effects of the social media influencer they trust in their decisions have been observed. It has been observed whether the famous greeners and those who can reach the majority via social media become opinion leaders. The research demonstrated the effects of influencer marketing if brands' target audiences include university students.

According to this result, social media influencers that are not famous but followed by consumers also undertake the role of public opinion leaders, and their posts are compelling. By looking at both results, these posts' effectiveness is not related to whether they are famous or not, but rather to their self-confidence.

Influencer marketing will continue to evolve as a new field of research with more potential to be discovered. Future research can examine influencer marketing across many age groups and businesses, not just among college students.

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#### Kaynakça Bilgisi / Citation Information

- Toros Ntapiapis, N. (2021). The marketing concepts in the developing media and the effects of influencers on youth. *OPUS–International Journal of Society Researches*, 17(35), 1580-1606. DOI: 10.26466/opus.810726