



The Effect of Social Media on Prepared Food Consumption of Generation X and Y Consumers: A Case Study for Turkey

Bahar AYDIN CAN ¹, Sait ENGİNDENİZ ²

Abstract

In line with consumers' ever-increasing workload and time constraints worldwide, prepared food products have started to play an even more prominent role in human life. Thanks to the developing technology, Internet and social media use has increased. Social media has become influential in consumption decisions and growing in popularity and importance among consumers. This study aimed to determine and evaluate the level of prepared food consumption and social media use in Generation X and Generation Y consumers and examine the effect of social media use on prepared food consumption. In this study, Generation Y was chosen because it is the generation that develops with technology and actively uses social media. On the other hand, Generation X is the generation that follows technology behind. The primary material of the research consists of the data collected by the survey conducted on 687 consumers who purchased prepared food products and used social media in Kocaeli, Turkey. The study demonstrated their socio-demographic structure with frequency distributions in the data obtained. In addition, statistical analysis methods (factor analysis, ANOVA test, t-test) were used for data evaluation. A 5-point Likert scale was employed to determine the attitudes of consumers. It was found that prepared food consumption generally increases with the time spent on social media. Generation Y consumers consumed prepared food products more often than Generation X consumers.

Keywords: Prepared food, Generation X, Generation Y, Social media, Consumption

Jel Codes: M3, M31, Q18

X ve Y Kuşağı Tüketicilerinin Hazır Gıda Tüketiminde Sosyal Medyanın Etkisi: Türkiye'den Örnek Bir Araştırma

Özet

Tüm dünyada artan yoğun iş temposu ve tüketicilerin günlük hayattaki zaman kısıtları ile birlikte hazır gıda ürünleri hayatımızda önemli yer almaktadır. Gelişen teknoloji sayesinde internet ve sosyal medya kullanımı da artış göstermiştir. Tüketiciler tarafından popülerliği ve önemi artan sosyal medya, tüketim kararlarında da etkili olmaya başlamıştır. Çalışmanın amacı, X Kuşağı ve Y Kuşağı tüketicilerde hazır gıda tüketimi ve sosyal medya kullanım düzeyinin değerlendirilmesini ve sosyal medya kullanımının hazır gıda tüketiminde etkisinin olup olmadığını incelemektir. Bu çalışmada Y Kuşağı teknoloji ile gelişen ve sosyal medyayı aktif şekilde kullanan kuşak olduğu için, X Kuşağı da teknolojiyi geriden takip eden kuşak olduğu için tercih edilmiştir. Araştırmanın ana materyalini, Türkiye'nin Kocaeli ilinde hazır gıda satın alan ve sosyal medya kullanan 687 tüketici üzerinde yüz yüze anket yöntemi ile toplanan veriler oluşturmuştur. Elde edilen verilerde tüketicilerin sosyo-demografik yapısı frekans dağılımlarıyla ortaya konulmuştur. Ayrıca verilerin değerlendirilmesinde istatistik analiz yöntemlerinden (faktör analizi, anova testi, t-testi) yararlanılmıştır. Araştırmada X ve Y kuşaklarındaki tüketicilerin tutumlarını belirlemek amacıyla 5'li likert ölçeğinden yararlanılmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda, hazır gıda tüketiminin genel olarak sosyal medyada geçirilen zamana paralel olarak arttığı tespit edilmiştir. Y kuşağı tüketicileri, hazır gıda ürünlerini X kuşağı tüketicilere göre daha sık tüketmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Hazır gıda, X kuşağı, Y kuşağı, Sosyal medya, Tüketim

Jel Kodu: M3, M31, Q18

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¹ Lec.Dr., Kocaeli University, İzmit Vocational School, Department of Crop and Animal Production, Kocaeli / Kartepe, Turkey, **EMAIL:** baharcan@kocaeli.edu.tr **ORCID:** 0000-0003-1096-7875

² Prof.Dr., Ege University, Faculty of Agriculture, Department of Agricultural Economics, İzmir / Bornova, Turkey
EMAIL: sait.engindeniz@ege.edu.tr **ORCID:** 0000-0002-7371-3330

1. INTRODUCTION

Developing technology and globalization have led to an increase in Internet use in Turkey, just like in other parts of the World. The Internet has eliminated regional distances and added a different dimension to the market, where buyers and sellers meet. Mobile applications and online services have enabled consumers to reach easily, in a shorter time, whatever product they want to buy at a more affordable price (Onurlubas and Ozturk, 2013).

Social media, a widespread source of information, has caused extensive changes in companies' communication strategies, allowing consumers to gain more control over information (Mangold and Foulds, 2009). Using the power of technology, consumers share their product experiences with other consumers instantaneously through social media. Besides, social media has significantly influenced consumer behaviors and decisions during the coronavirus crisis (Taha et al., 2021).

We Are Social's report for the second quarter of 2020 indicates that, of the world population, 4.57 billion (59%) are Internet users, 3.81 billion (49%) are social media users, and 5.16 billion (66%) are mobile users. The number of social media users has increased by 8.7% compared to the same period of the previous year. The most used social media platform is Facebook, followed by YouTube and Instagram, and WhatsApp is the leading messaging platform.

There are 54 million social media users in Turkey (64% of the population), according to Digital 2020 reports of We Are Social and Hootsuite for January. In Turkey, YouTube ranks first, followed by Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook, respectively. Furthermore, based on global averages, a person spends 2 hours and 24 minutes daily on social media.

Today, compared to conventional means of communication, such as face-to-face and telephone conversation, social media enhances consumer interaction and participation (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2015). A comparison of social media platforms demonstrates how consumers are influenced based on their different demographic characteristics (Meyer, 2017), helping segment consumers more efficiently, reaching the target audience, and understanding consumer behavior in the retail industry (Hanna et al., 2011). For this reason, businesses must identify people and groups that influence the consumer's purchase decisions through social media (Permatasari and Kuswadi, 2018).

Every person in the World adopts the cultural and social characteristics of the years in which they live and act and behave accordingly. Generation means a community of people born at about the same time, sharing the conditions and problems of the same period, and having similar characteristics (Cemberci et al., 2014). For marketers, generations are crucial in determining consumer preferences. It is seen that there are differences in the literature regarding the periods to which generations belong. In the research, Generation X covers the individuals born between 1965 and 1979, and those born between 1980 and 2000 constitute Generation Y (Miller, 2011; Arslan and Baycan, 2018). Generation X, who witnessed a period when television channels began their broadcasting activities, numerous inventions were made, and consumption increased rapidly, is known to be a contended generation (Levickaite, 2010; Engizek and Sekerkaya, 2016). On the other hand, Generation Y, who has a large share of the world population, is known as a generation that likes to spend money, is mentioned by consumption, and both influences and is influenced by those around them in terms of consumption (Arslan and Baycan, 2018).

Generation Y regards the Internet as an essential medium of communication (Chester, 2003) and keeps abreast of technology (Arhin, 2009; Eisner, 2005). Being prolific social media users, Generation Y consumers tend to repurchase after experiencing a satisfactory recovery (Soares et al., 2017). Generation Y stands out with its mixed pleasures, shopping behaviors, and consumption-oriented nature (Holtzhausen and Styrdom, 2006; Wolburg and Pokrywczynski, 2001). For marketers,

reaching Generation Y is a means of reaching Generation X and Baby Boomers, and social media serves as an intermediary between generations (Bento et al., 2018).

Today, with the development of technology, people's work pace has increased, while the time they set aside for themselves has decreased. In the face of a busy schedule, meeting nutritional needs has become a critical problem, propelling the working class to consume prepared food to use time more effectively. The cooking process at home involves planning, purchasing, preparing, cooking, eating, and waste disposal. This long and demanding process has led to a rise in the need for prepared food for consumers. Besides, meeting nutritional needs with prepared food products is usually cheaper and more practical than cooking at home.

The social media campaigns organized for prepared food products and the social media shares of consumers about their experiences influence potential consumers. Permatasari and Kuswadi (2018) suggested that perceived value in social media has become the most important criterion for consumers' purchase intention. Generation Y, who use social media more, are more open to innovations and technology and, as a result, more inclined to try different prepared food products. Generation X, the closest generation to Generation Y, learns a lot of new information from Generation Y. As middle-aged consumers have experienced rapid digital transformation, they are relatively less familiar with the current social media environment than young consumers (Hwang and Nam, 2021).

People's food consumption habits change with the effect of changing living conditions, changing culture, globalization, and advancing technology (Yıldırım and Cengel, 2013; Hanus, 2018; Kadioğlu, 2019; Nemeth et al., 2019). Social media also has a significant impact on the said change. The research, comparing the effect of social media on the prepared food consumption of Generation X, who lag behind but follow and get to know innovations from Generation Y, reveals the attitude differences between these two generations. Determining the effect of social media on prepared food consumption preferences is important for marketers because it is supposed to shape the next generations' preferences.

There are studies on social media usage habits and perception (Nuzulita and Subriadi, 2020; Matusikova and Stanouska, 2020; Hwang and Nam, 2021), the impact of social media on purchasing behavior (Onurlubas and Ozturk, 2018; Arslan and Baycan, 2018; Permatasari and Kuswadi, 2018; Taha et al., 2021), the brand perception in social media (Bento et al., 2018; Yoshida et al., 2018; Zubair et al., 2020) both in Turkey and across the World. There are also several studies on prepared food consumption, most of which have been conducted in recent years (Tengiz, 2018; Sonneveld, 2019; Mafame, 2019; Sapic et al., 2019; Menegassi et al., 2019; Celik and Celik, 2020; Gönül and Karlı, 2020; Calmasur and Dostan, 2020; Moosburger et al., 2020) The number of studies on the intergenerational comparison of food consumption is limited (Dolekoglu and Celik, 2018; Kamenidou, 2019; Asik, 2019). However, no study on the effect of social media on prepared food consumption has been encountered.

2. PURPOSE AND HYPOTHESES

The purpose of this research is to compare the demographic characteristics of Generation X and Y consumers living in Kocaeli, the biggest industrial city in Turkey, their habits of social media use, and the effect of social media on their prepared food consumption preferences. The results obtained identified problems, and solutions were offered to present the information that may be used by the investors trying to reach consumers through social media.

The hypotheses of this research are listed below;

H1a: The frequency of use of social media tools by the X and Y generations is effective on the level of social media use.

H1b: The generation of consumers is effective at the level of social media usage.

H2a: Social media impacts the consumption of prepared food in the X and Y generations.

H2b: Social media research impacts prepared food consumption in X and Y generations.

H2c: Gender has an effect on social media research on prepared food consumption in X and Y generations.

H2d: Age has an effect on social media research on prepared food consumption in X and Y generations.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Located in Kocaeli province in The Marmara Region of Turkey, after Istanbul with 541 people per km², 2nd is the province with the most population density. Kocaeli is the largest industrial city in Turkey, with a population of 1,953,035 (TurkStat, 2019). This research collected the data through face-to-face interviews with selected consumers living in Kocaeli, born between 1965 and 1979 and between 1980 and 2000, who purchased prepared food products and used social media.

The proportional sampling method was used to calculate the sample size in the study (Newbold, 1995). By this formula, Kocaeli's sample size was about 665. At 99% confidence level and 5% error level with $p = 0.5$ and $q = 0.5$ is used for getting the maximum sample size. However, 687 surveys were conducted in the study, and all were evaluated.

$$n = \frac{Np(1 - p)}{(N - 1)\sigma^2_{px} + p(1 - p)}$$

n = Sample size

N = Total population in Kocaeli

p = Proportion of consumers who buy prepared food products

σ^2_{px} = Variance

Conducted in May 2019, the survey consisted of 36 questions. The questionnaire form used in the research consists of three parts. In the first part, there are questions (8 questions) about socio-demographic characteristics. In the second part, there are questions (10 questions) to measure the level and manner of social media use. In the third part, there are questions (18 questions) to determine the frequency of consumption of ready-made foods, reasons for preferring prepared food, searching for prepared food on social media, and its effect on purchasing prepared food, etc. In the evaluation of survey data, consumers were analyzed by comparison in two groups, Generation X and Generation Y. Before collecting data, the questionnaires were piloted on a consumer sample.

The questionnaire form of the research was created by using a 5-point Likert scale for the questions to determine the perspectives and attitudes of consumers towards purchasing ready-made food and the effect of social media. Responses were taken on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1= Strongly Disagree, 5= Strongly Agree).

SPSS 22.0 statistical analysis software package was used to analyze the data obtained. Consumers' socio-demographic structure was demonstrated with frequency distributions. Besides, the

relationship between consumers' level of social media use and opinions on prepared food products and their demographic characteristics was analyzed through a variance analysis (One Way Anova). Prior to the use of these statistical tests, the data were analyzed after being subjected to the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to see whether or not they exhibited a normal distribution. To analyze the factors affecting the purchase of prepared food products by generation, a t-test and factor analysis were performed.

Factor analysis is a mathematical tool used to examine a wide range of data sets. Many statistical methods study the relationship between independent and dependent variables. Factor analysis is different; it is used to explore the relationship patterns among many dependent variables and to discover the nature of the independent variables that affect them, even though those independent variables were not measured directly (Sharma, 1996).

4. RESULTS

4.1. Socio-Economic Characteristics of Consumers

As part of the research, 687 (266 Generation X and 421 Generation Y consumers) living in Kocaeli were interviewed face-to-face. Of all consumers, 353 (51.4%) were female. The 44-54 age group had the largest share (44.4%) of Generation X consumers. On the other hand, of the Generation Y consumers, the 26-31 age group had the largest share (37.5%) (Table 1).

In terms of the level of education, 235 consumers (34.2%) were high school graduates, and 169 consumers (28.5%) had an associate's or bachelor's degree. 35.7% of the Generation X consumers were living in a district center and 40.6% of the Generation Y consumers were living in the provincial center. Of all consumers in the research, 274 (39.9%) were employees, and 39.2% had a monthly income of 4,500 TRY and above.

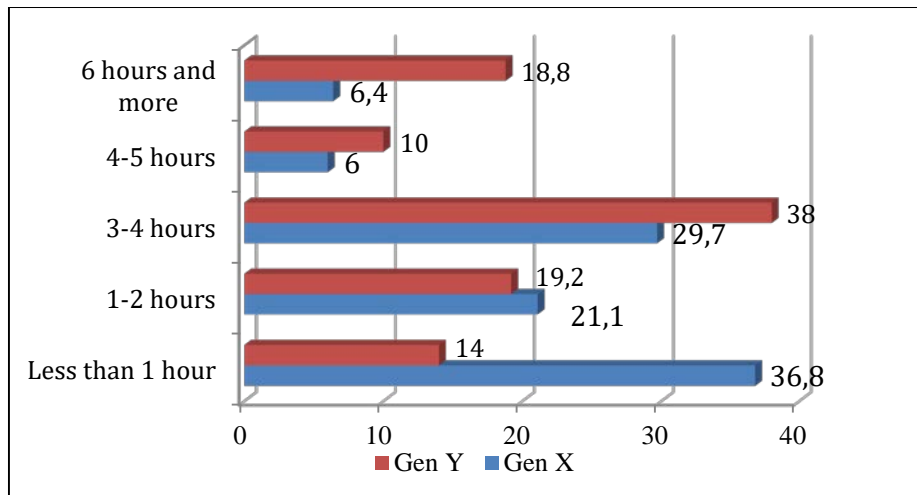
4.2. Social Media Use by Consumers

As seen in Figure 1, the consumers surveyed were asked about their daily time on social media. Generation X consumers who used social media for less than 1 hour had the biggest share(36.8%). However, of the Generation Y consumers, those who used social media for 3-4 hours per day had the biggest share (38%). Therefore, the H1b hypothesis was accepted. 89.1% of Generation X and 90% of Generation Y consumers said they accessed the Internet through a mobile phone while using social media. Generation Y regards the Internet as the most important mass medium (Chester, 2003; Kaderli et al., 2017) and keeps abreast of the technology (Eisner, 2005; Arhin, 2009). The average time spent on social media per day was 3.6 hours for males and 4 hours for females of Generation X consumers, while it was 4.9 hours for males and 3.62 hours for females of the Generation Y consumers

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Consumers

	Generation X		Generation Y		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
<i>Sex</i>						
Female	127	47.7	226	53.7	353	51.4
Male	139	52.3	195	46.3	334	48.6
<i>Age</i>						
20-25	-	-	136	32.3	136	19.8
26-31	-	-	158	37.5	158	23.0
32-37	-	-	64	15.2	64	9.3
38-43	53	19.9	63	15.0	116	16.9
44-49	118	44.4	-	-	118	17.2
50 and above	95	35.7	-	-	95	13.8
<i>Educational Background</i>						
Illiterate	4	1.5	1	0.2	5	0.7
Literate	2	0.8	16	3.8	18	2.6
Primary school	68	25.6	34	8.1	102	14.8
Secondary school	69	25.9	43	10.2	112	16.3
High school	88	33.1	147	34.9	235	34.2
Associate and bachelor's degree	33	12.4	163	38.7	196	28.5
Master degree	2	0.8	17	4.0	19	2.8
<i>Place of living</i>						
Provincial center	84	31.6	195	46.3	279	40.6
District center	95	35.7	169	40.1	264	38.4
Town/village	87	32.7	57	13.5	144	21.0
<i>Profession</i>						
Employee	86	32.3	188	44.7	274	39.9
Self-employed	46	17.3	45	10.7	91	13.2
Student	2	0.8	98	23.3	100	14.6
Housewife	76	28.6	57	13.5	133	19.4
Retired	38	14.3	2	0.5	40	5.8
Unemployed	18	6.8	31	7.4	49	7.1
<i>Family income</i>						
1,500 TRY and below	8	3.0	8	1.9	16	2.3
1,501 TRY- 3,000 TRY	100	37.6	126	29.9	226	32.9
3,001 TRY -4,500 TRY	62	23.3	114	27.1	176	25.6
4,500 TRY and above	96	36.1	173	41.1	269	39.2

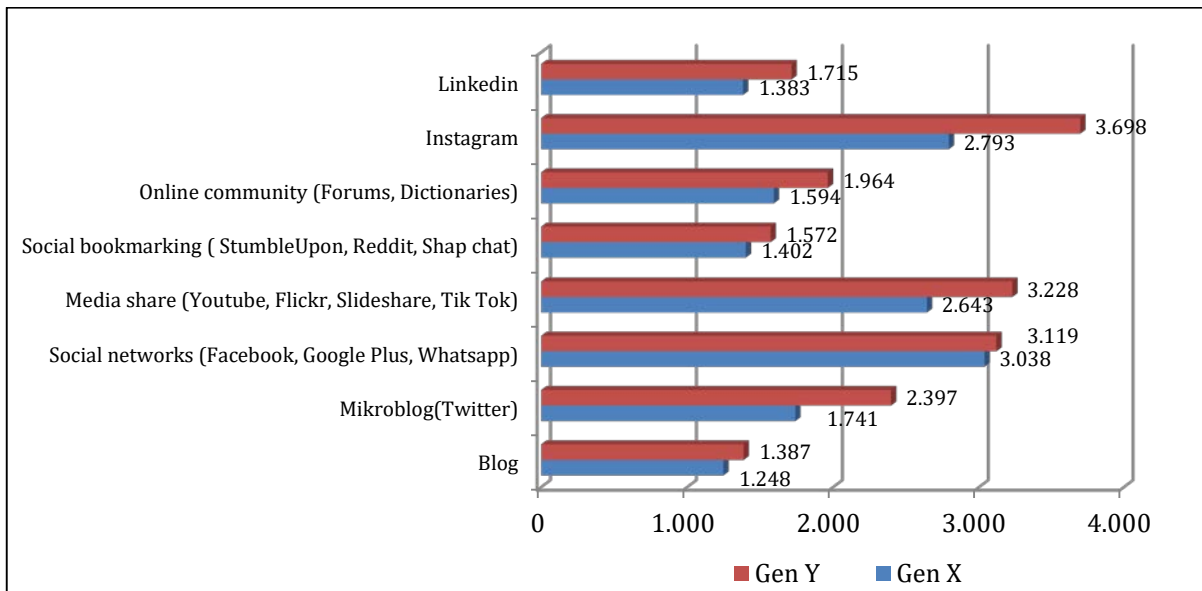
Figure 1: Time Spent on Social Media by Generation X and Y Consumers (%)



Of all Generation X and Y consumers, 36.1% reported using social media for less than one year, 31.6% for two years, and 32.3% for more than three years. They were asked about the mass medium on which they spent their time most, and female consumers said it was social media (52.7%), television (43.3%), newspaper (2.8%), and radio (1.1%), respectively. On the other hand, of the male consumers, 49.1% responded as social media, 42.8% as television, 4.5% as newspaper, and 3.6% as radio.

A 5-point Likert scale was used to evaluate the frequency of use of social media tools by the consumers surveyed. In the evaluation, attitude statements were graded as "1-Never", "2-Rarely", "3-Sometimes", "4-Often", and "5-Always", and weighted averages were found (Figure 2). The social media tools used most by Generation X are social networks (Facebook, Google Plus, WhatsApp), with an average point of 3.03. On the other hand, Generation Y uses Instagram the most, with an average point of 3.69. Therefore, the H1a hypothesis was accepted. Brands have included Instagram in their social media marketing strategies because it has been one of the best social media applications in recent years, and the number of Instagram users is increasing daily (Onurlubas and Ozturk, 2018).

Figure 2: Frequency of Use of Social Media Tools by Generation X and Y Consumers



4.3. Opinions of Consumers on Prepared Food Consumption

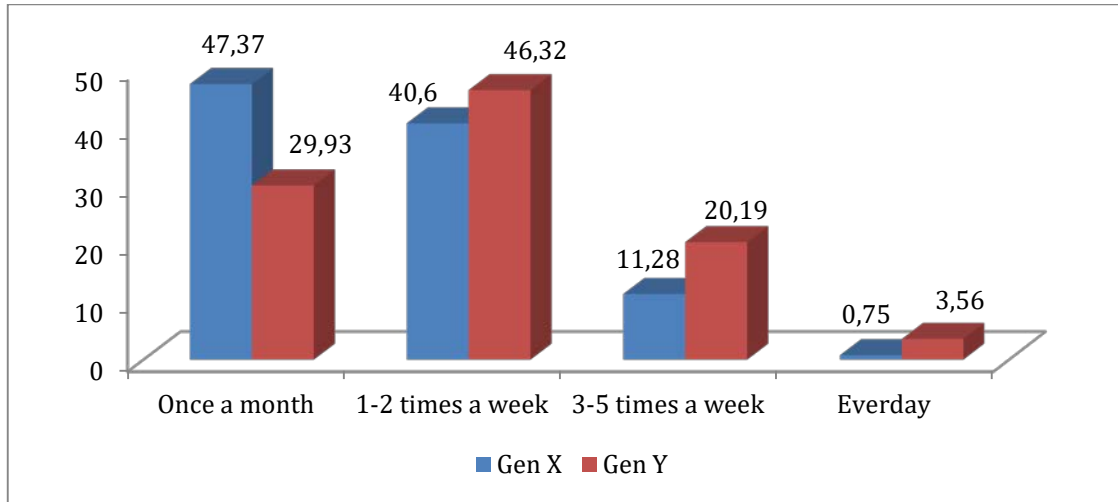
As part of the survey, consumers were asked about the family member doing food shopping for the family. While the "me" answer constituted the highest share (31.7%), the "others" answer constituted the lowest share (3.6%) among consumers. For both Generation X and Generation Y consumers, the family member who preferred prepared food products most was kids.

To the question "Do you ever not cook at home" 34.81% of Generation X and 65.19% of Generation Y consumers said "yes." Since Generation Y consumers are more social and active and spend more time outside the home, so they consume more prepared food products outside the home than Generation X. Eating out offers certain advantages, such as eating quickly without waiting for service and walking away after paying (Boudan, 2006). That's why it is preferred particularly by young people because it is not demanding and serves to meet the need for food quickly.

Prepared food consumption frequencies are given in Figure 3. As can be seen in the Figure, of the Generation X consumers, 47.37% consumed prepared food products "once a month," 40.6% "1-2 times a week", 11.28% "3-5 times a week," and 0.75% "every day." Of the Generation Y consumers, those who consumed prepared food products "1-2 times a week" (46.32%) constituted the largest

group. Therefore, the H1b hypothesis was accepted. Likewise, Tutar and Yazırlı, in a study they carried out in 2016, found the percentage of eating out at least once a week to be 41.5%.

Figure 3: Prepared Food Consumption Frequencies of Generation X and Y Consumers (%)



The consumers who participated in the survey were asked their main reason for preferring to eat out. Of the Generation X consumers, 151 responded as "desire to eat in a different environment" and 118 as "having a good time." Of the Generation Y consumers, 222 responded as "having a good time" and 207 as "desire to eat in a different environment." "Gaining reputation," "difficulty of cooking at home," and "being fast" were among the other main reasons for preferring to eat out. Given the studies conducted on eating out, it is seen that reasons such as being a form of entertainment, an expression of taste and status, and an indication of differentiation (Warde and Marten; 2003), as well as demand by kids and practicality (Akarçay and Sugur, 2015), make eating out attractive for consumers.

Survey participants were also asked about the factors affecting their purchase of prepared food products. A t-test was carried out for both Generation X and Generation Y consumers, and the results of the t-test are given in Table 2. The most influential factors in purchasing prepared food products were ease of preparation and demand by kids for Generation X consumers and ease of preparation and saving time for Generation Y consumers. According to the results of the t-test regarding the factors affecting prepared food consumption, the factors of saving on time ($p<0.01$), ease of preparation ($p<0.01$), being tasty ($p<0.01$), being affordable ($p<0.01$), habits ($p<0.05$), diverse product range ($p<0.05$), a working mother ($p<0.05$), not liking cooking ($p<0.01$) and being of the same quality at all times ($p<0.05$) were found to be statistically significant. Many studies on prepared food and out-of-home food consumption have also found time-saving, diverse product range, and ease of preparation to be important factors affecting consumers (Hamsioğlu, 2012; Canbolat and Cakır, 2016; Calmasur and Destan, 2020)

Table 2: Differences by Generation X And Generation Y, Between The Factors That Affect The Decision to Buy Prepared Food Products

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Gen</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Saves time	X	266	2.632	1.5491	3.282	685	0.001*
	Y	421	3.029	1.5412			
Easy to prepare	X	266	2.910	1.5045	3.269	685	0.001*
	Y	421	3.285	1.4407			
Tasty	X	266	2.338	1.2967	6.147	685	0.000*
	Y	421	3.000	1.4209			
Affordable	X	266	2.222	1.2796	2.779	685	0.006*
	Y	421	2.508	1.3392			
Nutritious	X	266	1.944	1.1787	1.349	685	0.178
	Y	421	2.071	1.2266			
Habits	X	266	2.447	1.3057	2.261	685	0.024**
	Y	421	2.689	1.3992			
Influence of ads	X	266	2.207	1.2703	1.514	685	0.131
	Y	421	2.368	1.4158			
Hygienic	X	266	2.154	1.3156	1.504	685	0.133
	Y	421	2.316	1.4083			
Diverse product range	X	266	2.571	1.4578	2.166	685	0.031**
	Y	421	2.822	1.4878			
The mother works and does not have time to cook	X	266	2.124	1.4020	2.086	685	0.037**
	Y	421	2.359	1.4564			
Demanded by kids	X	266	2.835	1.4829	0.691	685	0.490
	Y	421	2.755	1.4523			
Recommended by others	X	266	2.436	1.3348	1.235	685	0.217
	Y	421	2.538	1.3838			
I don't like cooking	X	266	1.974	1.2288	3.553	685	0.000*
	Y	421	2.354	1.4461			
Of the same quality at all times	X	266	2.241	1.3579	2.237	685	0.026**
	Y	421	2.485	1.4135			

Note(s): five-point Likert scale; 1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree;

*, **Statistically significant at 0.01 and 0.05 level, respectively

Table 3 shows the relationship between generations and the frequency of eating out. The relationship between the reasons for eating out and generations was found to be statistically significant. As can be seen in Table 3, 26.3% of the Generation X consumers and 29.7% of the Generation Y consumers “sometimes” ate out when they were stressed, 33.8% of the Generation X consumers and 50.6% of the Generation Y consumers “usually” ate out when they were going to meet their friends, 20.3% of the Generation X consumers and 24.7% of the Generation Y consumers “usually” ate out when they were busy, 27.8% of the Generation X consumers and 30.1% of the Generation Y consumers “usually” ate out when they were going to celebrate a special occasion, and 18.8% of the Generation X consumers and 28% of the Generation Y consumers “usually” ate out when they wanted to be

somewhere different. Consumers seem to prefer to eat out when they want to meet their friends. Of all consumers who chose to eat out with their friends, 56.1% of Generation Y were female, and 50.5% of Generation X were male

Table 3: Comparison of The Frequencies of Eating Out By Generation X and Y Consumers

<i>Time to eat out</i>	<i>Generation X</i>		<i>Generation Y</i>		<i>Total</i>		<i>χ² (p-values)</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	
<i>When I'm stressed</i>							
Never	158	59.4	193	45.8	351	51.1	14.747(0.001)**
Sometimes	70	26.3	125	29.7	195	28.4	
Usually	38	14.3	103	24.5	141	20.5	
<i>When I'll meet my friends</i>							
Never	89	33.5	75	17.8	164	23.9	27.155(0.000)**
Sometimes	87	32.7	133	31.6	220	32.0	
Usually	90	33.8	213	50.6	303	44.1	
<i>When I'm busy</i>							
Never	167	62.8	211	50.1	378	55.0	10.574(0.005)**
Sometimes	45	16.9	94	22.3	139	20.2	
Usually	54	20.3	116	27.6	170	24.7	
<i>When I'll celebrate a special occasion</i>							
Never	132	49.6	199	47.3	331	48.2	1.108(0.575)
Sometimes	60	22.6	89	21.1	149	21.7	
Usually	74	27.8	133	31.6	207	30.1	
<i>When I want to be somewhere different</i>							
Never	159	59.8	211	50.1	370	53.9	8.516(0.014)*
Sometimes	57	21.4	92	21.9	149	21.7	
Usually	50	18.8	118	28.0	168	24.5	

Note: *statistically significant (p<0.01), **statistically significant (p<0.05)

A factor analysis was performed to determine the factors affecting the purchase of prepared food products by the consumers taking part in the research. Factor analysis is a widely used multivariate statistical analysis technique to transform multiple interrelated variables into fewer significant independent factors (Kleinbaum et al., 1998). To determine whether a factor analysis could be conducted or not, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value and Barlett's Test of Sphericity were taken into account. KMO value should be above 0.5 because the higher the value, the better the data set for factor analysis (Sharma, 1996). KMO value was found to be 0.847, and the result of Barlett's Test of Sphericity was $p = 0,00 < 0.05$.

The factor analysis results identified three factors with a high eigenvalue (higher than 1) (Table 4). The eigenvalue for a given factor measures the variance in all variables calculated by that factor. The ratio of eigenvalues means the ratio of factors' explanatory significance by variables. A factor with a low eigenvalue contributes little to the explanation of variances in variables and can be ignored because it is unnecessary with more significant factors (Engindeniz, 2006).

Factors 1, 2 and 3 explained 41.47%, 14.28% and 10.12%, of the variance. These factors cumulatively explain 65.87% of the variance.

According to rotation results of factor analysis, it saves time (during and after preparation), is easy to prepare, and is tasty form Factor 1. This factor was named "practicality and flavor." Affordable, nutritious, and hygienic form Factor 2, and this factor was called "health and accessibility." Recommended by others, I don't like cooking of the same quality, and I don't make an effort to prepare form Factor 3 and this factor was named "convenience and standard" (Table 5).

Table 4: Factor Analysis Results of The Research

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Factor</i>	<i>Eigenvalue</i>	<i>Variance</i>	<i>Cumulative variance</i>
Saves time (during and after preparation)	1	4.147	41.474	41.474
Easy to prepare	2	1.428	14.276	55.750
Tasty	3	1.012	10.116	65.866
Affordable	4	0.655	6.551	72.416
Nutritious	5	0.610	6.101	78.518
Hygienic	6	0.547	5.466	83.984
Recommended by others	7	0.499	4.988	88.972
I don't like cooking	8	0.456	4.556	93.528
Of the same quality at all times	9	0.386	3.864	97.392
I don't make an effort to prepare	10	0.261	2.608	100.00
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy			0.847	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	chi-square	2384.604		
	df	45		
	p	0.000		

Table 5: Rotation Results of Factor Analysis

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Factor 1</i>	<i>Factor 2</i>	<i>Factor 3</i>
Saves time (during and after preparation)	0.860	0.017	0.225
Easy to prepare	0.872	0.080	0.180
Tasty	0.673	0.456	0.094
Affordable	0.428	0.640	0.138
Nutritious	-0.002	0.824	0.159
Hygienic	0.082	0.716	0.289
Recommended by others	0.189	0.209	0.678
I don't like cooking	0.010	0.215	0.795
Of the same quality at all times	0.163	0.468	0.595
I don't make an effort to prepare	0.360	0.034	0.678
Eigenvalue	4.147	1.428	1.012
Variance	23.351	21.464	21.251
Cumulative variance	23.351	44.615	65.866

4.4. Direction and Level of Effect of Social Media on Consumers' Prepared Food Consumption

It was seen that, of all consumers participating in the research, Generation Y used social media more actively than Generation X. As a result of the normal distribution test (Kolmogorov-Smirnov), intended to demonstrate the relationship between consumers' age groups and to search for prepared food on social media, the variables were found to have a normal distribution. Accordingly, the relationship between consumers' age groups and searching for prepared food on social media were analyzed by analysis of variance (Table 6). The analysis results were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, H2b and H2d hypotheses were accepted. The largest group who searched for prepared food on social media consisted of females in both Generation X consumers (60.63%) and Generation Y consumers (68.14%). In both generations, compared to male consumers, female consumers searched more for prepared food on social media. Therefore, the H2c hypothesis was accepted.

Table 6: Results of The ANOVA Test Conducted Between The Search for Prepared Food Products on Social Media and The Age Groups

<i>Age group</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
20-25	136	2.574	1.3643	2.437	0.033*
26-31	158	2.766	1.2728		
32-37	64	2.844	1.3359		
38-43	116	2.879	1.3459		
44-49	118	2.729	1.2721		
50+	95	2.284	1.3579		

Note: Statistically significant at 0.05 level, respectively

Table 7 shows the statements that measure the effect of social media on the consumption of prepared food products by Generation X and Y consumers, scale items, percentages, and average points. All consumers were asked to assess the statements. Given the average points, the statements the consumers agreed most strongly with were "Whether a prepared food company has contacted me on social media" (4.24) and "Campaigns organized by prepared food companies on social media" (4.16). It is understood that consumers are inclined to think more positively of a prepared food product if they feel an interest in a campaign organized by the company or if the company contacts them. Sobhanifard and Eshtiaghi conducted a study in Iran in 2021 on the confidence in the messages about organic food on social media. They highlighted that organic food producers' social media shares regarding product content, valid warranties, certificates, valid information about product advantages, emphasis on naturalness, contact with previous buyers, etc., positively affected the confidence level.

Table 7: Differences by Generation X and Generation Y, Between The Effects of Social Media on Prepared Food Consumption

<i>Statements</i>	<i>Generation</i>	<i>1</i>		<i>2</i>		<i>3</i>		<i>4</i>		<i>5</i>		<i>Average</i>
		<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	
Searching on social media	X	109	41.0	55	20.7	50	18.8	37	13.9	15	5.6	2.378
	Y	148	35.2	78	18.5	93	22.1	51	12.1	51	12.1	
Reaching reliable and accurate information on social media	X	78	29.3	44	16.5	62	23.3	54	20.3	28	10.5	2.699
	Y	115	27.3	74	17.6	97	23.0	83	19.7	52	12.4	
Information created by consumers on social media	X	48	18.0	28	10.5	64	24.1	68	25.6	58	21.8	3.282
	Y	64	15.2	43	10.2	97	23.0	129	30.6	88	20.9	
Information created by sellers on social media	X	63	23.7	55	20.7	75	28.2	59	22.2	14	5.3	2.693
	Y	81	19.2	92	21.9	137	32.5	85	20.2	26	6.2	
Recommendations by the people whom I already know on social media	X	37	13.9	43	16.2	90	33.8	68	25.6	28	10.5	3.108
	Y	66	15.7	50	11.9	120	28.5	121	28.7	64	15.2	
Recommendations by popular users (having a high number of followers or friends) on social media	X	18	6.8	11	4.1	61	22.9	111	41.7	65	24.4	3.790
	Y	20	4.8	16	3.8	96	22.8	173	41.1	116	27.6	
Whether I like and follow the products of prepared food companies on social media	X	8	3.0	12	4.5	42	15.8	104	39.1	100	37.6	4.095
	Y	10	2.4	15	3.6	51	12.1	179	42.5	166	39.4	
Whether a prepared food company has contacted me on social media	X	3	1.1	2	0.8	28	10.5	131	49.2	102	38.3	4.242
	Y	10	2.4	4	1.0	32	7.6	200	47.5	175	41.6	
Campaigns organized by prepared food companies on social media	X	1	0.4	7	2.6	38	14.3	144	54.1	76	28.6	4.163
	Y	1	0.2	15	3.6	39	9.3	203	48.2	163	38.7	

Note(s): five-point Likert scale; 1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree;

As a result of the normal distribution test (Kolmogorov-Smirnov), intended to demonstrate the relationship between the consumption frequency of prepared food products and the time spent on social media, the variables were found to have a normal distribution. The results of the ANOVA test conducted between the consumption frequency of prepared food products and the time spent on social media were found to be statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). Table 8 shows that those who consumed prepared food products 3-5 times a week spent 6.36 hours/day on social media, those who consumed prepared food products everyday spent 4 hours/day on social media, and those who consumed prepared food products 1-2 times a week spent 3.76 hours/day on social media, and those who consumed prepared food products once a month spent 3.15 hours/day on social media. Generally, prepared food consumption increases with the time spent on social media. Therefore, the H2a hypothesis was accepted.

Of all consumers with an income level of 4500 TRY and above, 129 (47.9%) consumed prepared food products 1-2 times a week and 49 (18.2%) 3-5 times a week, indicating that the frequency of prepared food consumption increases in direct proportion to the level of income.

126 (47.4%) Generation X consumers reported they consumed prepared food products once a month, and 195 (46.3%) Generation Y consumers 1-2 times a week, constituting the largest group. Compared to Generation X, Generation Y consume prepared food products more frequently, probably because Generation Y consumers have a more social and active life.

Table 8: Results of The Anova Test Conducted Between The Consumption Frequency of Prepared Food Products and The Time Spent on Social Media

<i>Frequency of prepared food consumption</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Once a month	252	3.156	4.1119		
1-2 times a week	303	3.766	2.5828	5.677	0.001*
3-5 times a week	115	6.368	3.7355		
Everyday	17	4.000	28.076		

Note: Statistically significant at 0.01 level, respectively

5. CONCLUSION

Having been on the rise in line with globalization and rapidly-advancing technology, social media has made it easier for people to reach each other. In the face of the ever-growing number of consumers using social media platforms, companies, in a competitive market environment, need to actively use social media to follow consumers, inform them about their campaigns, evaluate their feedback in a shorter time, and communicate with them quickly. In online shopping, the importance and number of users increase daily, and the share of social media grows.

Changing living conditions, busy work pace, urban life, and an increasing number of women working in families may sometimes cause changes in preferences for substantial factors in human life such as nutrition. Given the time consumers spend on social media, posts about the prepared food products included in their diet, consumer comments, ads, etc., may considerably affect their consumption decisions. In this research, the effect of social media use by Generation Y, who were born into technology and use social media actively. Generation X, who closely follow Generation Y, on prepared food consumption was investigated.

According to the survey results, consumption by family members is a significant factor in choosing prepared food products for both Generation X and Generation Y. Besides, Generation X consumers decide on consumption through experience, primarily through taste tests. At the same time,

Generation Y is influenced by their friends and makes their choices accordingly. Generation Y is also more willing to eat out by 65.2%.

The top factors influencing consumers to purchase prepared food products are ease of preparation, demand by kids, and saving on time. Employees have the largest share of all respondents who consume prepared food 3-5 times a week (39.1%). Employees, in particular, tend to consume prepared food to avoid spending time preparing food.

Of the respondents researching prepared food on social media, 60.6% of Generation X and 68.1% of Generation Y are female. It is considered that, since most women are more active in cooking at home than men, they are more interested in research on social media.

According to research findings, while deciding on consuming a prepared food product by which they are influenced on social media, consumers instead take into consideration whether or not the producer gets into contact with them and informs them about its campaigns as well as the comments of users with a high number of followers.

A busy lifestyle has led consumers to eat in a less tiresome, more accessible, and faster manner. Consumers have become more desirous of consuming prepared food products because the variety and number of prepared food products have increased. Shopping malls occupy an important position among all places of socialization in Turkey, and prepared food products are heavily consumed in shopping malls.

The time spent on social media responding to consumers is 1-2 hours for 19.9%, 3-4 hours for 34.8%, and 5 hours and above for 22.4%. Generation Y spends 3.84 hours on social media, while it is 2.45 hours for Generation X on average. The most used social media platform is Facebook for Generation X and Instagram for Generation Y. Generation X follow and learn about technological innovations and recent social media applications from Generation Y.

Consumers share images of the food and places they eat on social media, positively impacting potential consumers. Such shares have an influence, especially on Generation Y, who are active social media users. A positive social media share means companies' natural advertisement and consumer information repository.

Today, social media, along with technology, is indispensable for Generation Y and has become increasingly crucial for Generation X. They are influenced by and learn a lot from Generation Y because it continues to arouse interest in middle-aged and older people. However, the majority of social media users are relatively young people all around the World.

In conclusion, nutrition is the most vital physiological need and indispensable for us. It is seen that the consumption of prepared food, which has come into our lives with the development of technology, is higher among the youth. The progressive increase in social media users is a fundamental factor for marketers. Correct analysis and interpretation of reliable social media shares can play a crucial role in determining consumer preferences for prepared food producers. Since social media may influence consumers, reliable social media shares by public authorities, especially about the content of prepared food products, may benefit consumers. The use of social media is necessary for marketing both present and future. Companies should take advantage of this situation. Useful and accurate social media shares regarding prepared food products for consumers may create significant opportunities in product demand for today and future generations. The results of this study are a comprehensive picture of the impact of social media on generations in prepared food consumption.

Declarations and Disclosures

In this study, the participants whose data were collected were guaranteed to be informed about the purposes and benefits of the research, their rights to data protection, how to use the data, and volunteering and withdrawal rights. All participants provided written informed consent before participation.

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