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Practices of Social Media and Influencer: A Research Based on Influencers' Followers

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ABSTRACT

Influencers can be attributed as the people who direct the thoughts and behaviors of individuals and convey their experience on a particular subject. In this sense, differences have arisen in our social media usage practices with the inclusion of influencers in our lives with social media applications. It can be said that the brand collaborations of the influencers and the content they offer to their followers increase the follower - influencer interaction.

The general purpose of this study is to reveal the personal social media usage and following practices of the influencer followers. For this purpose, a questionnaire, which is one of the quantitative research methods, was applied. In this context, an online questionnaire was applied within one (1) week between 21-28 May 2020. In this context, an online questionnaire was applied to the students who studied at Near East University and followed the influencer in the 2019-2020 Spring Semester. According to the findings, individuals participating in the research spend less than 1 hour to follow the influencer, and the time spent on social media varies between 1-3 hours. It was observed that female followers followed the influencers in the category of beauty and fashion, and male followers in the game/entertainment and technology category. Instagram was the platform where followers follow the most influencers. In addition, it has been determined that influencers are more interested in their story sharing, brand advertisement sharing and individual sharing on Instagram than content sharing such as discounts and raffles.

Keywords: Influencer, Influencer communication, influencer and brand collaboration, social media.

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Sosyal Medya ve Influencer Uygulama Pratikleri: Influencerların Takipçilerine Dayalı Bir Araştırma

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ÖZ

Influencerlar, bireylerin düşünce ve davranışlarına yön veren, belirli bir konu hakkında deneyimini aktaran kişiler olarak atfedilebilmektedir. Influencerların, sosyal medya uygulamalarıyla birlikte hayatımıza dâhil olmasıyla, sosyal medya kullanım pratiklerimizde farklılıklar ortaya çıktığı söylenebilir. Influencerların marka işbirlikleri, takipçi kitlesine sundukları içeriklerin takipçi- influencer etkileşimini arttırdığı söylenebilir.

Bu çalışmanın genel amacı, influencer takipçilerinin kişisel sosyal medya kullanım ve takip uygulamalarını ortaya çıkarmaktır. Bu amaçla nicel araştırma yöntemlerinden biri olan anket oluşturulmuştur. Bu kapsamda Yakın Doğu Üniversitesi'nde 2019-2020 Bahar Dönemi'nde öğrenim gören ve influencer takip eden öğrencilere 21-28 Mayıs 2020 tarihleri arasında çevrimiçi anket uygulanmıştır. Elde edilen bulgulara göre, influencer tarafından paylaşılan içerikleri takipçilerin takip etme süresinin 1 saatten az, sosyal medyada geçirilen sürenin ise 1-3 saat arasında değiştiği görülmektedir. Güzellik ve moda kategorisinde kadın takipçilerin, oyun/eğlence ve teknoloji kategorisinde ise erkek takipçilerin influencerları takip ettiği gözlemlenmiştir. Instagram, takipçilerin en çok influencer'ı takip ettiği platform olmuştur. Takipçilerin Instagram hikaye gönderileri, marka reklamları ve bireysel içerikler, indirim kodları ve influencerlardan gelen hediyelerle ilgilendikleri belirlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Influencer, influencer iletişimi, influencer ve marka iş birliği, sosyal medya.

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INTRODUCTION

With the social media applications taking place in our lives, it is seen that there are differences in our daily practices. With the involvement of influencers in this process, it is witnessed that individuals' social media usage practices become even more different. It is seen that the concept of influencer is sometimes defined as "phenomenon", sometimes as "influencer" and sometimes as "experiencer or influential person". Influencers are referred to as individuals who are largely knowledgeable about a particular product or brand and who have the power to guide the brand or its followers' opinions, behaviours and attitudes towards the product (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). Influencers share their product and brand experiences and interact with their followers in their own naturalness. In this context, brands that want to play an active role in social media realize this guiding power of influencers. Therefore, brands that wish to take part in social media applications in order to direct their followers to their brands/products are becoming influencer collaborators. In terms of brand perspective, the fastest ways to gain insight into ideas about their products are the comments of followers on product and brand sharing of Influencers (Glucksman, 2017). Accordingly, it can be stated that there is a communication process carried out by the influencers.

It can be predicted that influencers are effective on social media, and that they create differences in the usage practices of the people who follow them. Therefore, it is desirable to collect data at many points such as what individuals pay attention to in the process of following influencers, which influencers they follow more effectively, for what purpose they follow influencers and which influencer categories they are interested in. In this context, it is thought that up-to-date information can be obtained in terms of social media use and influencer practices and the study will contribute to this field, which has limited information in the literature.

SCOPE OF INFLUENCERS

One of the concepts that social media has brought along is influencers. According to Business Dictionary (2019), "influencer are individuals who have influence on other people's product purchasing power because of their competencies, knowledge, status or relationship." Influencers are seen as individuals with a new third-party status that governs, guides, and shapes the vision and behavior of a crowd, based on their content produced through social media applications (Fredberg et al., 2010, p. 1). Influencers include their experiences through certain products and brands in the contents they produce, as well as making these contents by communicating systematically with their followers. At this point as a result of bringing the elements of personal persuasion to the forefront, it is seen that the influencers direct their followers to the product or brand he or she has introduced (Veissi, 2017, p. 10; Non Business Advisor, 2015, p. 6, Gedik, 2020; Rundin & Colliander, 2021). In this context, influencers need to actively produce content in order to maintain their presence on social media platforms. In this direction, the number of followers is increasing and it is attributed as a strong influencer (Ecmercer, 2015).



According to Gross and Wangenheim (2018), influencers have categories that operate in many fields. These types are collected under 4 main headings: Snoopers, Informers, Entertainers and Infotainers (pp. 32-35).

- 1. Snoopers:** Creates and shares content from social media profiles. They frequently refresh their content and place personal thoughts and informations.
- 2. Informers:** They are people who can share information and education about the field in which they have knowledge and expertise through their social media profiles.
- 3. Entertainers:** They are the ones who include posts with fun and personal information in order for individuals to have a good time through their social media profiles.
- 4. Infotainers:** They offer their sharing of information and expertise through their social media profiles, while at the same time producing content that allows individuals to have a good time (Gross and Wangenheim, 2018, pp. 32-35).

One of the main elements that ensures the popularity of influencers is that their followers identify them with themselves, due to the fact that they share same interests. Therefore, as a result of influencer interacting with the followers, they are capable of making changes in their thoughts and behaviour (Li et al., 2014). In this context, followers see influencers as a friend and acquaintance, so sharing their experiences is seen as the advice of a sincere and trustworthy person.

There are many different areas and definitions under the umbrella of the influencer concept (See figure 1).

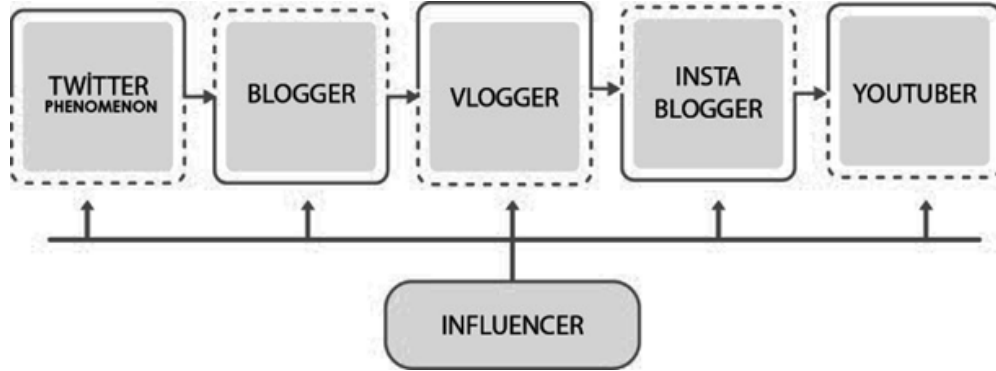


Figure 1. Influencer Background Field.

Source: Bor and Erten, 2019.

1. Twitter Phenomenon: Twitter is an application where people can share their own feelings and thoughts in line with the letter limit. They are individuals who have become influencers as a result of liking and sharing the shares of followers through this platform (Coskun, 2018, pp. 50-51). Its regular use increases the number of followers and there is a situation of guiding individuals.

2. Blogger: The blogger concept derives from the blog platform. Blog stands for network log. Bloggers post their own feelings, thoughts and experiences on the website to their



followers (Narci, 2017, pp. 282). It is thus also referred to as the articles in which the individual's everyday experiences are taking place.

3. Vlogger: Vlogs emerge as a result of individuals conveying their experiences in daily life via video. In that direction, vlog holders offer content to their followers. In these contents they may stand alone or face cameras with many other people (Faith and Courage, 2018, p. 70).

4. Instablogger: Instagram enables instant images, photos, videos, reels, itv-like features to enable instabloggers to provide content and share with their followers. Brand collaborations are generally conducted through the instagram app, so instabloggers are more preferred (Coskun, 2018, p. 56; Salomon, 2013, p. 408).

5. YouTuber: People who produce content through the YouTube platform are called YouTubers. Ratings and subscriptions are increasing as a result of systematically sharing videos to followers via YouTube (Holtz, 2006; By Haridakis & Hanson 2009, p. 317; Bor and Erten, 2019, p. 24).

INFLUENCERS AND BRAND COLLABORATION

Looking at the literature on influencers and brand collaborations, Boerman and his colleagues shared the ad on Facebook where the product is promoted by the brand and the ad featuring the influencer. As a result of the study, it was concluded that the promotion collaborated with the influencer affected the followers more (2017, p. 92). By realizing this directing power of the influencers, brands are trying to identify influencers that may be suitable for their products. In this process, which is carried out with Influencers, brands are able to receive positive or negative approaches as feedbacks towards their product from the followers in a short time (Gülay & Sabuncuoğlu, 2014, p. 5; Yaylagül, 2017, p. 223; Sönmez, 2019, p. 81).

According to CreatorDen (2020), brand collaborations with influencers occur in four processes (p. 25):

1. **Access:** Influencers followed through social media applications are respected and reliable people in the eyes of their followers. Influencers are specialized as a result of producing content in areas they see fit. In this context, the brand can choose the appropriate influencer in order to cooperate with.
2. **Action:** Influencers share the experience of a product with their followers through their own social media profiles. In this direction, they become a reliable person as a result of sharing their experiences with her followers. Influencers who wants to interact, expects their followers to like and comment on the content they share thus, they get the chance to read the opinions and thoughts of their followers about the brand.
3. **Convert:** Influencers announce various campaigns with their collaborations through their profiles. In addition, special discount codes can be given to the followers and draws can be organized. In this context, potential customers are created by including the items requested by the followers in the shared contents as a result directing them to the brand.
4. **Intercation:** A social connection emerges between influencers and their followers. This bond contains mutual trust and loyalty. In case brands decide on influencer



collaboration, they should be careful in the process of choosing the influencer. It is important for brands to choose the appropriate person to get the best out of the promotion.

In this context, CretorDen has stated the reasons for brands collaborating with influencers according to their 2018 Turkey data. According to this data, within the scope of influencer communication, it was concluded that 40% of brands use influencer communication for launch communication, 27% uses to increase brand recognition, 18% use influencers to create interaction, and 15% prefer it because it is a guiding factor in purchasing products (CretorDen, 2018) (See figure 2).



Figure 2. Influencer Marketing Preference Ratios.
Source: CretorDen, 2018.

In another study conducted in line with the subject, when the content of social media influencers was examined, it was stated that the wall between the brands that preferred influencers and their followers was destroyed and a more positive interaction was achieved. On the other hand, it has been observed that the fact that influencers are unique, trustworthy and interactive increases the rate of positive interaction (Glucksman, 2017, p. 86). Accordingly, it is also presented statistically in line with the researches that influencers play an effective role in reaching the target audience.

In the annual survey study titled Influencer Marketing 2019: Key Statistics from Our Influencer Marketing Survey, in line with the information obtained from 2018 data, brands express that influencers are much more effective in the marketing process by 35%. Contrary to these views, 5% of marketers think that influencer collaborations are ineffective (Mediakix, 2019) (See figure 3).

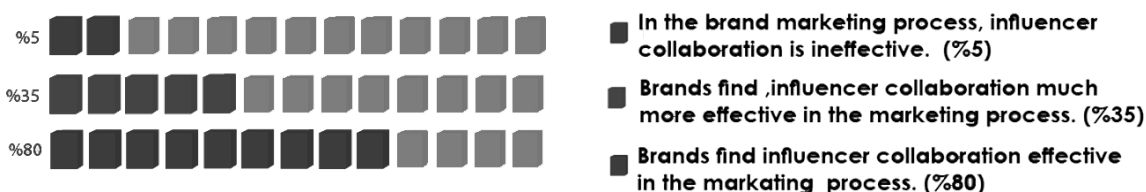


Figure 3. Reasons to Choose Influencer in Brand Marketing Process.

Source: Mediakix, 2019.

INFLUENCER COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Influencer communication is a communication activity carried out through social media tools and environments. One of the most important elements in influencer communication is to interact with the follower. The main factor that makes brands want to take part in the influencer communication process is the opportunity to receive feedback for the brand and product instantly. In this context, brands are able to determine a road map for their approach towards the brand and the product. In influencer communication, the focus is on the transfer of the product and brand experience by the influencer itself. Therefore, instead of promoting the brand with traditional advertising processes, a personalized communication activity emerges by transferring the brand through a person who experiences the product (Bor & Erten, 2019, pp. 124-125).

When considered within the scope of public relations and advertising activities, it can be said that the brand recognition and image comes to the fore with the influencer process. As a result, it is stated that brands in Influencer communication can reach more masses. In this context, according to the data obtained by the 2019 Influencer Marketing Global Survey Consumers, it is stated that 49% of individuals who follow influencers have discovered a new product and brand in line with the recommendations of influencers (Rakuten Marketing, 2019).

As stated in the Influencer brand collaboration, it is seen that the processes of promoting the products of brands develop and transform themselves day by day. It is seen that the use of influencers as a communication tool by the brands is beneficial. Accordingly, statistically significant gains are obtained in the economic sense as well. In other words, it can be stated that influencer collaboration has turned into purchasing. Influencers are also in an effort to create a sincere bond between the brand and the masses. In order to protect this bond, the campaign process is desired to be carried out in its own naturalness with the influencer chosen. Therefore, it can be said that the influencer directs many people to the brand and product by transferring their experiences. In this context, it can be stated that via social media platforms, influencers have turned into a communication tool that creates their own content, directs the content, uses their own style and shapes this whole process from their own profile.





METHODOLOGY

The Purpose of the Study

Influencers, which are positioned as communication tools in personal and corporate dimensions, are the people who attract attention. Therefore, the social media usage practices of the followers of the influencers gain importance. From this point of view, the main purpose of the study is to reveal the influencer following and personal social media usage practices of the users who follow the influencer in social media tools and environments.

Data Collection Tools

Quantitative method was used within the scope of the research. In this context, a questionnaire form was created. The questionnaire applied in the aforementioned study consists of demographic questions including variables such as gender, age, educational status, monthly income, and marital status. Questions about social media usage practices were adapted to this study by benefiting from the master's thesis titled "The Role of Social Media in the Purchasing Decision Process: An Application in Giresun" prepared by Gamze Kütükoğlu (2019). In addition, there are questions about influencer following practices and relevant literature has been used.

Universe and Sample

Within the scope of the study, only the participants who followed influencers were included in the study. The universe of the research consists of people who follow the influencer. Therefore, purposeful sampling was used to determine the sample of the study. It is the sampling type where suitable people are determined as a result of the researcher's observations in line with the problematic of the research (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2018, p. 132). In this context, within a one (1) week period between 21-28 May 2020, an online questionnaire was applied through Facebook, to the students studying at the Near East University in the spring semester of 2019-2020 and following influencers.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study are as follows:

- The study is limited to influencer-following students studying in the Spring Semester of the Near East University 2019-2020 academic year.
- The data obtained in the study are limited to 271 people who voluntarily participated in the study.
- The study was limited to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.
- There is no limitation for any influencer category in the study.
- The fact that the participants form a sample group with certain characteristics is also a limitation of the study.





FINDINGS

Findings regarding the personal and social media usage practices of influencer followers are given below.

Descriptive Findings

The research included demographic information regarding gender, age, income level and education level.

The participants of the study is consisted of 64, 6 % (175) women and 35.4% (96) men (See table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of the Participants by the Gender Variable.

Gender	Freq.	Percentage (%)
Female	175	64, 6
Male	96	35, 4

93.7% (254) of the participants in the study are between the ages of 18-28, 4.4% (12) are between 29-39, and 1.8% (5) are between the ages of 40-50 (See table 2).

Table 2. Distribution of the Participants in the Age Variable.

Age	Freq.	Percent. (%)
Between 18-28	254	93,7
Between 29-39	12	4,4
Between 40-50	5	1,8

Among the participants in the study, 77.9% (211) had undergraduate education, 15.1% (41) had post graduate, 7.0% (19) had Ph. D education (See table 3).

Table 3. Distribution of the Participants in the Education Variable.

Education level	Frekans	Percent. (%)
Undergraduate	211	77,9
Post graduate	41	15,1
Ph.D	19	7,0

The study consisted of 45,4 % (123) of people with 2000 TL and below income, 40,2 % (109) of people between 2001-4000 TL income, 11,1 % (30) of people between 4001-6000 TL income, 3,3 % (9) of people with 6000 TL and above monthly income (See table 4).





Table 4. Distribution of the Participants in the Income Variable.

Monthly Income	Freq.	Percent (%)
2001-4000	109	40,2
2000 TL and below	123	45,4
4001-6000	30	11,1
6001 TL and above	9	3,3

5.5% (15) of the participants in the research are married and 94.5% (256) are single (See table 5).

Table 5. Distribution by Marital Status of the Participants.

Marital Status	Freq	Percent (%)
Married	15	5,5
Single	256	94,5

As seen in Table 6, it was observed that 97.4% of the participants preferred Instagram as the most preferred social media platform, and afterwards, WhatsApp and Facebook were the most preferred social media platforms, respectively. On the other hand, it has been determined that the least preferred social media platforms are blogs and the others. The distribution of the participants' use of social media is given below.

Table 6. Distribution of Participants' Social Media Accounts.

Social Media	Freq.	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Facebook	229	18,2	84,5
YouTube	173	13,7	63,8
WhatsApp	263	20,9	97,0
Instagram	264	21,0	97,4
Twitter	134	10,6	49,4
Linkedin	26	2,1	9,6
Google+	142	11,3	52,4
Blog	19	1,5	7,0
Other	9	0,7	3,3

It was observed that Instagram was the social media platform mostly used by the participants, and then the most used social media platforms were WhatsApp and YouTube, respectively (See table 7).





Table 7. Distribution of Participants' Most Used Social Media Accounts.

Social Media	Freq.	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Facebook	101	12,0	37,3
YouTube	152	18,0	56,1
WhatsApp	218	25,8	80,4
Instagram	247	29,3	91,1
Twitter	66	7,8	24,4
Linkedin	3	0,4	1,1
Google+	48	5,7	17,7
Blog	8	0,9	3,0
Other	1	0,1	0,4

When looking at the time spent on social media of the participants; it was observed that 47.2% spent 1-3 hours, 34.7% spent 4-6 hours, 12.5% spent 7 hours or more and 5.5% spent less than 1 hour (See table 8).

Table 8. Distribution of the average time spent on Social Media by the Participants.

Time	Freq.	Percent (%)
Less than 1 hour	15	5,5
Between 1-3 hours	128	47,2
Between 4-6 hours	94	34,7
7 hours and above	34	12,5

It was observed that approximately 95% of the participants in the study followed their social media accounts on their mobile phones (See table 9).

Table 9. Distribution of Devices Used by Participants in order to access their Social Media.

	Freq.	Percent
Computer	13	4,8
Mobile Phones	256	94,5
Tablet	2	,7

It was determined that the individuals participating in the study mostly used social media to communicate with people, to follow people and institutions, to obtain information and to learn new things. It was observed that the participants used social media to make friends the least (See table 10).

Table 10. Distribution Regarding What Purposes Participants Use Social Media Tools.

	Freq.	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Make friends	44	3,1	16,2
Communicate with people	210	14,7	77,5



Follow the trends	141	9,9	52,0
Follow people and institutions	178	12,5	65,7
Learn new things	177	12,4	65,3
Shopping	121	8,5	44,6
Share instant status	137	9,6	50,6
Obtain information	184	12,9	67,9
Game and entertainment	105	7,4	38,7
Personal Development	127	8,9	46,9

It was determined that all individuals included in the study were at least one influencer follower. On the other hand, it was found that the participants followed the influencers at most 70.8% (192) on the Instagram platform, followed by 24.0% (65) on Youtube and 5.2% (14) on Facebook, respectively (See table 11).

Table 11. Distribution of The Social Media Influencer Followers and The Social Media Platforms Where They Mostly Follow Influencers.

Influencer	Freq.	Percent (%)
Yes	271	100
Social Medya Platforms		
YouTube	65	24,0
Instagram	192	70,8
Facebook	14	5,2

The most followed influencers by the participants were Danla Biliç (57.9%), Duygu Özaslan (36.2%) and Barış Özcan (29.9%), respectively. The least followed were (1.5%) Melis Palali, (1.5%) Barbaros Dikmen and Bir Matmazel (See table 12).

Table 12. Distribution of Influencers Followed by the Participants.

Influencer	Freq.	Perent(%)	Cumulative Percent
Duygu Özaslan	98	9,6	36,2
Danla Bilic	157	15,4	57,9
Orkun Işıtmak	74	7,3	27,3
Barış Özcan	81	8,0	29,9
Damla Altun	37	3,6	13,7
Selin Balarası	33	3,2	12,2
Reynmen	85	8,4	31,4
Merve Özkaynak	49	4,8	18,1
Melis Palali	4	0,4	1,5
Cansu Dengey	16	1,6	5,9
Pervin Dinçer	15	1,5	5,5
Fındık Ezgi	24	2,4	8,9
Doğan Kabak	23	2,3	8,5
Sude Alkış	26	2,6	9,6



Deli Mi Ne	40	3,9	14,8
Burcu Bakdur	6	0,6	2,2
Barbaros Dikmen	4	0,4	1,5
Bir Matmazel	4	0,4	1,5
Enes Batur	45	4,4	16,6
Kübra Kus	6	0,6	2,2
Tolgahan Çağla	5	0,5	1,8
Melis Fıs	5	0,5	1,8
Sebibebi	13	1,3	4,8
Cansu Akın	36	3,5	13,3
Melodi Erbilller	25	2,5	9,2
Cocobolinho	34	3,3	12,5
Berkcan Güven	58	5,7	21,4
Meryem Can	14	1,4	5,2

It has been observed that more than 50% of the individuals participating in the study spend less than 1 hour for influencer monitoring. It was found that 40.6% of the participants spent 1-3 hours, 5.9% spent 4-6 hours, and 0.4% spent more than 7 hours (See table 13).

Table 13. Distribution Regarding The Time Spent on The Content Shared By The Influencers.

Time	Freq.	Percent (%)
Less than 1 hour	144	53,1
Between 1-3 hours	110	40,6
Between 4-6 hours	16	5,9
7 hours and above	1	,4

It was determined that the individuals participating in the study were more interested in the story posts, brand ad shares and individual posts on Instagram by the influencers compared to content sharing such as discounts and draws or give aways (See table 14).

Table 14. Distribution Regarding Which Content Influencer Followers Give Attention.

Content	Freq.	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Brand Ad/Posts	143	18,5	52,8
Instagram Story Posts	193	25,0	71,2
Personal Posts	173	22,4	63,8
Discount Codes Post	50	6,5	18,5
Product Give Away / Draws	66	8,5	24,4

It was observed that the individuals participating in the study followed the influencers in the fashion/trends and beauty / makeup categories. It was concluded that less influencers were followed in the Food/Recipe and Game/Entertainment categories (See table 15).





Table 15. Distribution Regarding Which Influencer Category Is Followed The Most By The Participants.

	Freq.	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Beauty/Make up	147	17,5	54,2
Fashion/Trends	150	17,9	55,4
Life-Style	123	14,7	45,4
Food/Recipe	68	8,1	25,1
Trip/Travel	140	16,7	51,7
Technology/Science	117	14,0	43,2
Game/Entertainment	93	11,1	34,3

When we look at the distribution of the category in which the participants follow the most influencer according to the gender variable, it was seen that women were at a higher level compared to men in the beauty (96.5%) and fashion/trends (92%) categories. In addition, females were found to have higher following rates than males in the life style (73.9%), recipe (79.4), and travel/travel categories. It is concluded that males have a higher proportion of followers in technology/science (59.9%) and games/entertainment related categories compared to females. Accordingly, it can be said that female participants are more interested in influencer content in beauty/make-up, fashion/trends, life-style, recipe and travel travel, and men are more interested in technology/science and game/entertainment related content (See table 16).

Table 16. Distribution Regarding Which Influencer Category Is Followed The Most By The Participants In The Context Of Gender.

	Female	Male	Total
Beauty/Make up	142 (96,5 %)	5 (3,5 %)	147
Fashion/Trends	138 (92 %)	12 (8 %)	150
Life-Style	91 (73,9 %)	32 (26,1 %)	123
Food/Recipe	54 (79,4 %)	14 (20,6 %)	68
Trip/Travel	89 (63,5 %)	51 (36,5%)	140
Technology/Science	47 (40,1 %)	70 (59,9 %)	117
Game/Entertainment	27 (29 %)	66 (61 %)	93

With 57.9% of the participants following the influencers, it can be said that the prominent purpose is to get information about the brand and the product, and then to learn about the trips and travels. In addition, it can be said that the rates of those who follow influencers for purposes such as information sharing, discount and technology/science are at a high level (See table 7).





Table 17. Distribution of Participants Regarding for What Purpose They Mostly Followed the Influencer.

	Freq.	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Information About Brand or Product	157	13,1	57,9
Follow Fashion and Trends	117	9,7	43,2
Trip / Travel Informations	149	12,4	55,0
Follow Technology and Science	128	10,7	47,2
Personal Development	104	8,7	38,4
Life-style Posts	58	4,8	21,4
Discount Code Posts	143	11,9	52,8
Experince / Knowledge posts	144	12,0	53,1
Wondering / Like	82	6,8	30,3
Game / Entertainment Posts	117	9,7	43,2
Following Beauty / Makeup	2	0,2	0,7

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

It can be said that with the inclusion of influencers in our lives with social media applications, differences have arisen in our social media usage practices. Influencers can be attributed as the people who direct the thoughts and behaviours of individuals and convey their experience on a particular subject. At this point, the content that the influencers offer to the audience with their brand collaborations and the fact that they are the focus of the communication increases the interaction with the followers. Therefore, the follower is exposed to influencer contents in a certain order resulting in changes of social media usage. With the active participation of influencers on social media platforms, it is seen that there are differences in the usage practices of individuals in social media applications. In this direction, the aim of the study is to reveal the findings about the social media use of individuals who follow influencers and their following practices.

In general, within the scope of the purpose of the study, the most preferred social media platforms of the participants were Instagram, WhatsApp and Facebook, respectively. According to İren's study, it was determined that the first choice of the participants was the Instagram platform (İren, 2019). Also, in the study conducted by Kiran et al., it was concluded that the participants actively use Instagram in their daily lives (2019). Regarding to the data obtained, it should be stated that the first three of the social media accounts mostly used by the participants are Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube. According to the study of Vrontis et al., concluded that Instagram ranks first among the platforms most preferred and viewed by the participants (Vrontis et. al., 2020). Comparing these findings with Şiker (2019), Youtube took the first place while Instagram took the second place. When looking at the duration of social media usage, it was found that 47.2% of the participants used it between 1-3 hours and 34.7% between 4-6 hours. In the study of Kütükoğlu (2019), 1-3 hours was determined as the most time spent among the participants. Compared to İren's study, it was found that the time spent on social





media platforms is mostly 4 hours or more (İren, 2019). It was concluded that the majority of the participants followed their social media accounts via their mobile phones. It was also found that the participants followed the social media in order to communicate, follow people and institutions, obtain information, and learn new things. The participants stated that they followed the influencers mostly through Instagram. Danla Biliç, Duygu Özaslan, Barış Özcan were determined to be the first three mostly followed influencers. It was concluded that the participants followed the content shared by the influencers mostly for less than 1 hour and then between 1-3 hours.

It has been determined that Instagram Story Sharing, Personal Sharing, Brand and Ad Sharing, Product Give Aways Sharings and Discount Code Sharings are more remarkable for the influencer followers. In the study of Jargalsaikhan and Korotina (2016), brand promotion, product recommendation and discount code were found as the most admired and followed features for influencers. When looking at the distribution of the category of influencer followed by the participants, the top three ranks were determined as Fashion/Trends, Beauty /Makeup and Trip/Travel. According to another study, the influencer categories that users follow the most; it can be seen that life-style, food and fashion categories take the first place (Lou & Yuan, 2019). When this situation was examined by gender, it was determined that women mostly followed influencers in beauty and make-up, Fashion/Trends, Life-Style, Food/Recipe and Travel categories, while men were found to mostly follow influencers in the Technology / Science, Game and Entertainment categories. Yaman's study determined that participants mostly follow influencers in the field of personal care and clothing (Yaman, 2021). The findings of Rakuten Marketing 2019, stated that women who follow influencers are more interested in Beauty, Entertainment and Fashion categories. The most followed influencer category by men was determined as Game, Technology and Entertainment (2019). According to another study, fashion, make-up and beauty, healthy lifestyle, magazines and books categories stand out as mostly followed influencer categories for women. On the other hand technology and sports are the categories that stand out for men (Kıran, et. al., 2019). Within the scope of the study, when looking at the findings regarding the purpose for why the influencers are followed, it was determined as obtaining information about the Brand / Product, getting information about the Trip / Travel, Sharing Information / Experience, Sharing Discount Code and finally following Technology / Science. According to Süren's study, the participants stated that they saw influencers as people they were curious about, whom they found close to them, and who they also took as role models. In addition, it has been concluded that finding influencers beautiful, liking their taste and style and gaining information about discounts and brand campaigns by the influencer are among the reasons for following (Süren, 2021). It is recommended to conduct studies on intergenerational social media and influencer following practices, which are not included in this study.

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