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THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR: THE CROSS-NATIONAL COMPARISON

SOSYAL MEDYA'NIN TÜKETİCİ DAVRANIŞLARI ÜZERİNDE ETKİLERİ: ÜLKELER ARASI KARŞILAŞTIRMA

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Abstract: As early as twenty years ago, social media (SM) entered and integrated into people's lives by becoming an essential part that can't be separated, hence having a great impact on them, especially on consumers. Also, marketers strategically utilize SM to reach audiences and potential consumers since SM became one of the best mediums for attracting consumers by suppressing all traditional communication methods. Different SM applications started to spread gradually in different societies and culturally specific SM tools were developed rapidly. SM use has been an important part of daily life in every culture, except in closed societies. This study aims to reveal the effect SM has on consumers and their online behavior from a cross-cultural perspective. In the study, it is assumed that electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) and SM advertisements are affected by independent factors. Consumers' online decision-making styles are included in the research as another question that needs to be answered. It is assumed that the cultural factors that affect online consumer behavior and consumers' decision-making styles will differ between cultures. This study uses data from a survey of 300 Turkish consumers in Turkey and 250 Russian consumers in Russia. According to the data, 55.7% of the Turkish and 56.4% of Russian participants reported having purchased some products after a month of being exposed to adverts.

Keywords: Consumer Behavior, Social Media, Digital Marketing, Online Advertisements, Electronic Word-of-Mouth.

JEL: M30, M31, M37

Öz: Son yirmi yılda sosyal medya (SM) insanların ayrılmayın temel parçası haline gelerek hayatlarımıza girip entegre olarak, özellikle tüketiciler üzerinde büyük bir etki yaratmaya başladı. Pazarlamacılar da SM'nin tüm geleneksel iletişim yöntemlerini bastırarak tüketicileri çeken için en iyi mecralardan biri haline geldiği için, potansiyel tüketicilere ulaşmak için SM'yi stratejik olarak kullanmaya başladı. Farklı toplumlarda farklı uygulamalar da giderek yayılmaya başladı ve kültüre özgün sosyal medya araçları geliştirildi. Her kültürde, dışa kapalı toplumlar hariç, SM kullanımı günlük hayatının önemli bir parçası olmuştur. Bu çalışma, SM'nin

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tüketiciler ve çevrimiçi davranışları üzerindeki etkisini kültürler arası bir bakış açısıyla ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada elektronik ağızdan ağıza pazarlama (E-WOM) ve SM reklamların bağımsız faktörlerden etkilendiği varsayılmıştır. Tüketicilerin çevrimiçi karar verme stilleri, cevaplanması gereken başka bir soru olarak araştırmaya dahil edilmiştir. Çevrimiçi tüketici davranışının ve tüketicilerin karar verme tarzlarının üzerinde etkili olan kültürel faktörlerin kültürlerarası farklılık göstereceği varsayılmıştır. Çalışmanın evreni bu nedenle Türkiye ve Rusya olarak belirlenmiştir. Türkiye'de 300 ve Rusya'da 250 anket yapılmıştır. Türk katılımcıların %55,7'si; Rus katılımcıların %56,4'ü bir ay SM reklamlara maruz kaldıktan sonra bazı ürünleri satın almaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Tüketici Davranışı, Sosyal Medya, Dijital Pazarlama, Çevrimiçi Reklamlar, Elektronik Ağızdan Ağıza Pazarlama.*

1. Introduction

Digitalization has become a part of human evolution in the 21st century. People became dependent and, in some way, addicted to various electronic devices, especially phones and PC. However, the biggest reason that stood behind this addiction is SM platforms. Smart algorithms of SM platforms make users stay online and catch their attention for hours. According to Hootsuite (2021), the average time that a user spent on SM is 2h 57m. Hence, SM became a powerful tool for marketers to influence consumers. On the other hand, consumer behavior (CB), which has always been a part of curiosity, has also been involved in this process of change. Knowledge about CB helps marketers to develop a functional strategy and achieve quick results. Organizations strive to know everything about their customers or potential ones to send them highly profitable personalized advertisements (ads) and get the highest value from them. They want to know their consumer's professions, marital status, emotional state, income level, geographical position, psychographic values, and many more. The best way to study CB is through SM platforms as people leave a lot of data about themselves consciously or unconsciously. All these data are collected to improve machine learning algorithms that study patterns of human behavior by technological companies. Afterward, these data are sold to organizations and used in the development of successful marketing strategies. Moreover, SM enables the consumer to establish an emotional connection with the brand and support their loyalty to the brand (Salvarli & Kartal, 2021: 710). For these reasons, CB can be influenced by the smart algorithms of SM platforms as well as organizations' online activities. Therefore, researchers and decision-makers focused on the question of how consumers are affected by SM platforms. As a result of this, increasing numbers of studies have been conducted on this issue (Huynh, 2020: 2; Voramontri & Klieb, 2019: 210; Ki & Kim, 2019: 905; Mason et al., 2021: 6; Zhao et al., 2019: 855; Irshad et al., 2020: 1196).

Cultural factors apply a broad and profound impact on CB. Marketers need to realize the role played by the buyers' social class, culture, and subculture (Armstrong et al., 2014: 167). Fundamentally, culture is part of every society and is the significant cause of individual wants and behavior. The impact of culture on buying behavior differs from one country to another. For this reason, marketers have to be extremely cautious in analyzing the culture of different groups, regions, and countries. In the Russian Federation, e-commerce spending was estimated to be \$39.68 billion while twice less

in Turkey \$17.78 billion in 2021. As for SM ads, it was spent \$801.1 million in Russia while only \$203.7 million in Turkey in 2021. In Russia, consumers' primarily channels for brand research are search engines 59.9%, consumers review 51.3% while search engines (63.7%), SM (54.5%) in Turkey in 2021 (Datareportal, 2021). From these findings, it is obvious that the cultural difference may affect CB greatly since Russian consumers show huge online spending on consumption goods and ads campaigns in comparison with Turkey.

In recent years, studies on SM and CB have been frequently encountered. However, there are not enough studies in the literature that make cross-cultural comparisons in the context of SM ads and e-WOM. Hence, to take a deep insight and reveal the mystery about why consumers buy a cross-national comparison of online CB between Turkish and Russian consumers is done.

The aim of this study is to determine the attitude and behavior of consumers in different cultures using different SM channels and to shed light on the relevant stakeholders with the findings obtained.

2. Literature Review

2.2.1 Digital Marketing

American Marketing Association (2021) defines digital marketing (DM) as any marketing method carried out through electronic devices. Additionally, this encompasses online marketing efforts conducted on the internet. DM involves strategic utilization of various digital mediums and tools such as SM, blogs, websites, search engines, video, email etc., used by marketers in order to reach prospective customers. One of such mediums is SM platforms that emerged thanks to the invention of the second generation of websites (Web 2.0), where all content is interactive and generated by consumers. Evans (2010: 4) mentioned that *most organizations extend very much beyond marketing and communications*. What's more, Kohli et al., (2014: 37) suggest that *"SM is consumer-generated media that covers a wide variety of new sources of online information, created and used by consumers intent on sharing information with others regarding any topic of interest"*. Given the visible influence of digital technology in marketplaces across the globe, the utilization of SM is now accepted as a "must-have" in businesses. Most organizations use SM to reach their customers and stakeholders by launching consumer engagement process that could be a key to success. Furthermore, they apply special strategies such as social media marketing (SMM) in order to promote products or services.

SMM is used across sectors and refers to *"the utilization of SM technologies, channels, and software to create, communicate, deliver, and exchange offerings that have value for an organization's stakeholders"* (Tuten and Solomon, 2017: 48). There are many choices of effective marketing strategies to implement to achieve high-profit revenue for businesses on SM. As observed by Song (2001), displaying ads is a powerful marketing tool for building brands and increasing traffic for organizations to achieve success through SM. Advertisements are the essential tools influencing CB on SM platforms. Nowadays, online advertising became the world's main channel for promotion of products and services, estimating 355.6 billion dollars of total digital ads expenditure, and 97.66 billion dollars of total SM ads expenditure in 2020 (Datareportal, 2021). In general, all online ads are called digital display advertising.

The main goal of display ads is to deliver brands' message to users in order to turn them from potential customers into real ones. (Searchengineland, 2021). There are many categories of displaying advertising such as Photo ads, Video ads, Stories ads, Carousel ads, Collection ads, and Playable ads (Hootsuite, 2021). Moreover, marketers use paid ads or targeted ads to sell products effectively. However, Speicher et al. (2018: 6) assure that targeted ads are the potential for discrimination caused by the ability of a marketer to use the extensive personal (behavioral, interests, and demographic) data. In addition, SM offers the unique opportunity to use word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing to different audiences, supporting C2C communications and improving brand awareness through a widespread SM (Kozinets et al., 2010: 85). Recently, the new term of WOM communication has transformed into electronic word-of-mouth (Yang, 2017: 93). As reported by Kitapcı et al. the reliability of e-WOM among individuals is lower than that of traditional WOM, since the source of the information presented on the internet is not clear (Kitapcı et al., 2012: 269). Therefore, consumers now feel safer and more influential since SM and the internet empowered consumers and allowed them a quick way of exchanging information so that the role of SM should not be underestimated.

2.2.2 Decision-Making Styles (DMS)

Антонова and Патюша (2018: 125), argue that the consumer, satisfying his needs in the process of everyday consumption, acquires habits and stereotyped forms of behavior. They further refer to Bettman et al. (1998: 188), who described such stereotypical CM in which the consumer does not behave rationally, but relies on simple strategies when making a decision. Gradually, such habitual forms of behavior form a style of consumer behavior that includes habitual patterns of solving everyday consumer problems-strategies of CB. Sproles and Kendall (1986) defined "**a consumer decision-making style as a mental orientation characterizing a consumer's approach to making choices. It has cognitive and affective characteristics (for example, quality consciousness and fashion consciousness). In essence, it is a basic consumer personality, analogous to the concept of personality in psychology**" (p. 268). This concept is vital to marketing since it determines CB and is relevant for market segmentation (Sproles & Kendall, 1986:268; Walsh et al., 2001: 120). Further, Sproles and Kendal (1986: 268) put forward three ways to characterize consumer styles such as the consumer typology approach, the psychographic or lifestyle approach, and the consumer characteristics approach. The psychographic approach counts over 100 characteristics relevant to CB.

The psychographic or lifestyle approach refers to a personal manner of living with consistency and is manifested in different aspects of personal activities, interests, and opinions (AIO) (Kotler, 1976). Kaynak and Kara (2001: 455), analyzed the lifestyle characteristics of consumers from an ethnocentric point of view. That's why they used AIO statements to analyze Azeri and Kyrgyz consumers. Wells, (2011: 4), argues that the lifestyle and psychographic approach adds a useful and interesting increment to the standard demographic profile since this approach allows to create a detailed, "humanized" portrait of consumers.

The consumer characteristics approach is one of the best approaches for evaluating the psychological orientations of consumers. Sproles and Kendall (1986: 267), developed Consumer Styles Inventory (CSI) which is a comprehensive instrument

used for evaluating consumer DMS. CSI examines the affective, psychological, and cognitive orientations related to a consumer's shopping comparison, information seeking, and shopping preferences during their consumption. In this study, CSI was improved to examine consumer DMS of Russian and Turkish consumers on SM. To be able to develop CSI, they benefited from the findings of previous studies. As a result of their evaluations and analyses, they revealed eight standard consumer decision-making characteristics, each of which represented a vital mental approach to consumption independently. Eight characteristics are represented below (Walsh et al., 2001: 118);

- 1) **Perfectionism, high-quality consciousness:** is characterized by consumers' search for the best or highest quality while choosing products.
- 2) **Brand consciousness:** is characterized by consumers' beliefs. They believe that a higher price means better quality and thus they prefer buying more expensive and famous national brands.
- 3) **Novelty-apparel consciousness:** is characterized by consumers' taking pleasure from searching for new things, which is so-called novelty seekers.
- 4) **Hedonistic, recreational shopping consciousness:** characterized consumers who view shopping as entertainment and recreation.
- 5) **Price Conscious, 'value for money shopping consciousness:** is characterized by consumers' search for sale prices. They are sensitive to lower prices and are probably comparison shoppers.
- 6) **Impulsiveness:** is characterized by consumers who don't make any plans before shopping and they don't care about how much money they spent.
- 7) **Confusion from over choice:** is characterized by consumers who have difficulties in choosing products because there is a variety of competitive brands.
- 8) **Habitual, brand-loyal orientation:** is characterized by consumers who go for their favorite brands and have formed habits while choosing these brands respectively.

Thus, these approaches are utilized to segment and target potential customers in a market, as well as to develop a product positioning strategy resulting from delivering the highest value for customers.

3. Materials and Methods

This study aims to reveal the mystery that stays behind SM platforms and consumer behavior. Thus, the research is guided by one central research question: "How does the SM influence the consumer behavior of Russian and Turkish consumers?". Firstly, it is important to reveal the influence of online SM ads and E-WOM on consumers from socio-demographic perspective, and time spend online. Secondly, the research attempts to find SM influence on consumers impacted by different variables such as cultural backgrounds and especially nationalities. These are of interest since consumers might have predispositions to be more or less influenced by SM according to their cultural backgrounds. Online DMS of consumers is another question to

answer. Online survey method was used because of the appropriate strategy in order to answer the research question.

3.3.1. Population and Sampling Design

This study was interested in making references to consumers aged from 18 to 65 in the Russian Federation and the Turkish Republic. Additionally, these consumers are users of SM platforms. A survey was conducted with 250 Russian and 300 Turkish SM users between January and April 2021.

3.3.2. Data Collection Methods and Research Design

The survey included 27 questions, out of which "22" close-ended questions, "1" open-ended question, and "3" a 5-point Likert scale that was based on the research objectives and "1" question was a control question. The first 5-point Likert scale was designed by Bambauer-Sachse and Mangold (2011: 38), which measures e-WOM. The second 5-point Likert scale, which is also adapted in accordance with the research, was introduced by Sproles and Kendall (1986: 272), which uses eight-factor CSI.

Table 1. Likert scales

Bambauer-Sachse and Mangold (2011:38)	5-point Likert scale measures e-WOM.
Sproles and Kendall (1986:272)	5-point Likert scale measures CSI.

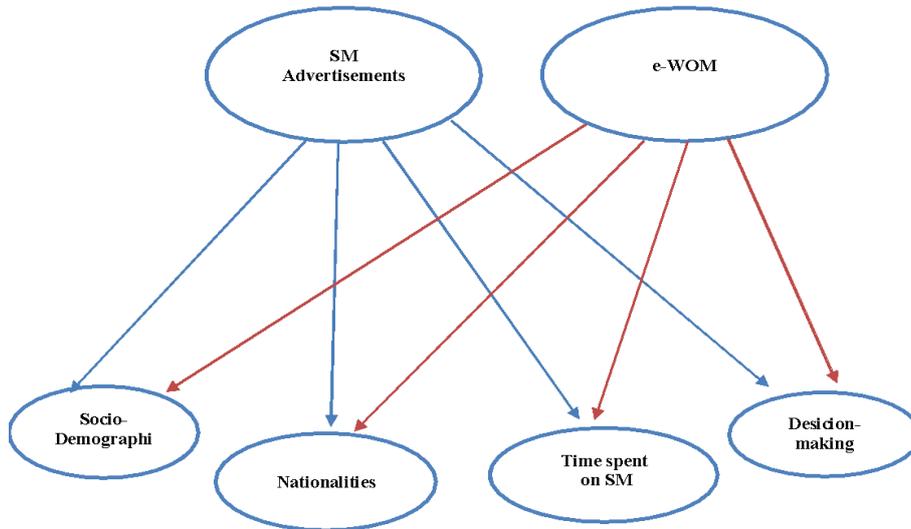


Figure 1. Research Design

The 8 hypotheses were conducted in both countries;

H1: There is a significant difference between SM ads and socio-demographic variables.

H2: There is a significant difference between SM ads and time spend on SM

H3: There is a significant difference between SM ads and decision-making styles.

H4: There is a significant difference between e-WOM and socio-demographic variables.

H5: There is a significant difference between e-WOM and time spend on SM

H6: There is a significant difference between e-WOM and decision-making styles.

H7: There is a significant difference between e-WOM and nationalities.

H8: There is a significant difference between SM ads and nationalities.

3.4. Data Analysis Methods

There is a systematic procedure for conducting the data analysis appropriately. A few quantitative analyses have been conducted by the researcher such as descriptive statistics and frequency distribution. Also, exploratory factor analysis was used for data reduction. In order to test the hypothesis, the researcher has applied nonparametric tests so that to gain an enhanced understanding of the relationship between dependent variables and independent variables respectively. A series of Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis tests were performed.

4. Results and Discussions

Descriptive data are given in table 2. Participants were mostly women. In both countries, the number of participants in the middle age group stands out. In Turkey, those with a personal income below \$410 are in majority, and in Russia 28% of the participants were earning between 411-684\$, 28.4% of respondents had the income between 685-958\$.

Table 2. A Cross-Cultural Descriptive Analysis Outputs (%)

Gender	Turkey		Marital Status			Turkey		Russia	
Russia									
Male	28.7	31.2	Married	49.7	44.0	White-collar			
Female	71.3	68.8	Bachelor	50.3	56.0	senior executive	4.7	4.8	
						White-collar			
Age	Turkey		Family members			Turkey		Russia	
Russia									
18-25	28.3	28.4	1	4.3	7.2	middle manager	22.3	15.2	
26-30	11.0	19.2	2	19.0	25.2	Blue-collar			
31-40	27.7	24.8	3	31.7	37.2	workers	20.3	36.4	
41-50	24.0	17.2	4	32.0	19.6	(public and private sector workers)			
51 >	9.0	10.4	5	9.7	7.2	My own business	20.0	13.6	
			6>	33.0	3.6	Unemployed	32.7	30.0	
Income	Turkey		Income			Russia		Education	
< 410 \$	29.7		< 410 \$		27.2	Secondary School	0.7	14.0	
411\$ - 684 \$	17.7		411 \$ - 684 \$		28.0	High-School	12.3	28.8	
685 \$ - 958\$	15.0		685 \$ - 958 \$		28.4	Graduate	60.3	44.8	
959 \$ - 1.369\$	15.3		959 \$ -1.369 \$		11.6	Post-Graduate	26.7	12.4	
>1.370\$	22.3		> 1.370 \$		4.8				

In Turkey, 81.3% of the participants reported using the internet for the purpose of SM usage. These findings are in agreement with that of Russian. Turkish participants spent daily between 1-3 hours on SM platforms. In Russia, on the other hand, most of

the participants (44.4%) spent from 3 to 7 hours per day (Table 3). Besides, most of the Turkish participants (74.0%) responded that their SM usage increased during Covid-19 lockdowns. So, most of the participants (74.0%) responded that their SM usage increased. A similar observation was made by Hootsuite (2021) indicating that there is a huge increase in online and digital activities due to the changes which were brought about by the pandemic. However, these results are slightly different from those of Russian users that didn't change and it stayed at the same at 58.4%. This has resulted from the fact that lockdown lasted only a month in Russia, for this reason, there can be no change.

The majority of Turkish participants stated that they use the following SM platforms at most: Instagram, Whatsapp, Facebook. These results differ somewhat from those of Russian users which indicates that WhatsApp, Vkontakte-VK, and Instagram are the most popular SM platforms. Vkontakte is preferred by Russians over Facebook because VK was developed natively by a Russian citizen Pavel Durov and it caters to the needs of Russians.

Table 3. Social Media Usage (%)

Time	SM Time spend			The most-used SM			
	Turkey	Russia	Rank	Turkey		Russia	
>1	7.3	12.0	1	Instagram	44.7	WhatsApp	28.8
1-3	37.7	40.8	2	WhatsApp	32.3	Vkontakte	24.4
3-5	30.7	28.4	3	Facebook	8.0	Instagram	21.6
5-7	18.3	12.0	4	Twitter	7.3	Telegram	6.4
7>	6.0	6.8	5	YouTube	6.7	YouTube	6.0

Almost two-thirds of the participants (67.3%) said that they follow or search for news (42.3%) about education, and (41 %) career or jobs on SM in Turkey. These findings are in line with Russian data. In Russia ads in the news-stream are the most popular category with 34.8% whereas 15% in Turkey.

Instagram story ads are among the most popular types of advertisements since 31.3% of consumers click on them in Turkey and 33.6% in Russia. 55.7% of the Turkish and 56.4% of Russian participants reported having purchased some products after a month of exposure to these ads. As Datareportal (2021) reports, Instagram has more than 1.22 billion users. Belanche et al. (2019: 70), Instagram Stories is an extremely innovative new SM development that was launched in August 2016. With regard to design and appearance, they are different from most SM walls, where users have to scroll down, Instagram Stories are shown on the whole screen for 15 s. Each story is followed by another story. In turn, advertisers present their ads within the Stories feature which is the same as an original users' story but labeled as "advertising" on the top left of the screen. These types of ads also allow users to click on them to access more information on a brand profile due to the fact searching the information is an important part of the shopping for the decision-making process. Moreover, 18.3% of Turkish consumers reported that they click on Carousel ads, including 18% of Russian. Carousel ads include three to five images of the product that can be scrolled left or right, which increases the engagement rate of users. Similarly, product collection and catalog ads are also among the popular types of ads. Video ads click almost equal to ads in the news stream. However, in Russia ads in the news stream are the most popular category with 34.8%. This is confirmed by Deloitte (2020),

saying that ads in the news feed and banners are considered to be the most acceptable types of advertising on SM in Russia. This explains that 458\$ million was spent on banner ads in Russia while only 116\$ million was spent on banner ads in Turkey in 2020 (Datareportal, 2020). Nevertheless, in this study, banner ads occurred to be an inefficient and bad investment so only 8.4 % of Russian click on them. Consequently, findings concerning banner ads are not supported in this study. Furthermore, the Turkish and Russian participants reported having purchased some products during a month after exposure to these ads whereas 39.3% and 43.6% of them said that they clicked on the ads but didn't make a purchase. According to Wojdynski (2016: 219), ads in the news feed typically integrated communication into the user's SM feed in a way that resembles the rest of the feed content.

Table 4. The Rates of Exposure to Advertisements (%)

	Turkey	Russia
Story ads	31.3	33.6
Carousel ads	18.3	18.0
Product collection and Catalog ads	17.3	7.6
Video ads	15.3	18.8
Ads in the news stream	15.0	34.8
Following ads	13.3	15.2
Banner	7.0	8.4
Pop-up ads	7.3	7.6
Games ads	4.7	4.8

SM advertising is a powerful tool in reaching a necessary audience for companies and organizations so that consumers reported having purchased some products during a month after exposure to these ads 60.7% in Turkey and 56.4% in Russia. Furthermore, 27.3% of the interviewees stated that they purchased clothing or underwear, which makes it the most popular category to be purchased on SM. Furthermore, 19.7% of them bought products from the personal care or cosmetics category which is followed by shoes or bags, books, and kitchenware. However, only a small number of respondents indicated that they bought home textiles, children's products, and household appliances. These results differ somewhat from the data of Russian consumers, which shows clothing 30.4%, shoes and bags 18.4%, and accessories 16.8% are the most spread types of purchased products.

Table 5. Purchased Products (%)

	Turkey	Russia
Clothing / underwear	27.3	30.4
Personal care / Cosmetics	19.7	14.8
Shoes / Bag	17.3	18.4
Electronic	14.0	12.2
Books	12.3	10.8
Kitchenware	11.7	2.0
Accessory	10.7	16.8
Food	10.7	3.6
Furniture	9.0	4.4
Sports products	8.7	2.8
Cleaning / Disinfectant products	7.7	2.8
Education	8.7	2.4
Home textiles	7.0	2.4
Children's products	7.0	7.2
Household appliances	5.0	8

These are the findings of question 17 in the survey about e-WOM as a response to the statement (*"I consider the product/service suggestions of the phenomenon/influencers I follow"*) in the survey, 51.2% of Russian consumers answered sometimes, often, and always respectively, while only 34% of Turkish consumers approved this statement. This indicates that Russian consumers rely on influencers' suggestions about the products more than Turkish consumers. Besides, another statement was (*"If I don't read consumers' online product reviews when I buy a product/brand, I worry about my decision"*) in the survey, 68% of Turkish participants responded sometimes, often, and always and 54.4% of Russians. This means that online product reviews are extremely important for consumers in both countries.

Table 6. E-WOM of Turkish/Russian Consumers (%)
(T- Turkish; R- Russian)

	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Always	
	T	R	T	R	T	R	T	R	T	R
I consider the product / service suggestions of the phenomenon / influencers I follow	35.7	25.2	27.3	23.6	25.0	30.0	9.0	15.2	3.0	6.0
I often consult other consumers' online product reviews to help choose the right product/ brand	16.3	14.4	24.3	21.6	32.3	33.6	20.3	23.6	6.7	6.8
To make sure I buy the right product/ brand, I often read other consumers' online product reviews	10.0	14.8	17.7	20.0	20.0	26.8	31.0	25.6	21.3	12.8
When I buy a product/brand, consumers' online product reviews make me confident in purchasing the product/brand	7.3	17.2	18.3	15.2	14.0	20.4	27.3	31.6	33.0	15.6
If I don't read consumers' online product reviews when I buy a product/brand, I worry about my decision	11.7	25.2	20.3	20.4	31.3	28.0	19.7	16.4	17.0	10.0
I am happy if other people make a purchase decision by reading my reviews	18.7	28.0	18.7	21.2	17.7	24.0	18.3	16.8	26.7	10.0
I make an effort to get a product that goes viral on social media	52.0	42.4	27.0	24.4	14.7	18.8	4.7	6.8	1.7	7.6
I often read other consumers' online product reviews to know what products/brands make good impressions on others	16.0	18.4	21.3	27.2	18.3	26.4	22.0	16.4	22.3	11.6
Reliability Statistics Turkish consumers										
Cronbach's Alpha	.875	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items				.869	N of Items	8		
Reliability Statistics Russian consumers										
Cronbach's Alpha	.813	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items				.810	N of Items	8		

4.4.1. Factor Analysis

In the light of these data, factor analysis was implemented to the CSI Likert scale for Turkish and Russian consumers. The items were first examined in terms of their

reliability to the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity for both countries. The results of the KMO of sampling adequacy analysis showed that, there is a sufficient level of correlations between items were suitable to perform factor analysis.

Table 7. KMO and Bartlett's Test Turkey and Russia

KMO and Bartlett's Test		Turkey		Russia	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	of	.888		.874	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		Approx. Square	Chi- 3.340.318	Approx. Chi-Square	2.485.764
df		210		171	
Sig.		.000		.000	

According to the factor analysis results, the scale of CSI used in the present study consists of five dimensions for both Turkish and Russian consumers. For Turks, the total variance explained is 65,88% and the explained variance of the scale is 39,059 % for the first dimension (Novelty-Fashion Consumer-N&FC)) (Table 8), For Russians, the total variance explained is 67,562 % and the explained variance of the scale is 39,242 % for the first dimension (Ad Marionette) (Table 9).

Basic component factor analysis was applied to the "Consumer Style Inventory Scale", which measures consumer purchasing styles used as a measurement tool in the study. The original version of the scale, developed by Sproles and Kendall (1986: 272), consists of 8 sub-dimensions as stated in the previous sections of the study. Within the scope of the present study, 28 items given with the measurement tool were interpreted by taking into account the factor loads greater than 0.30 and eigenvalues greater than 1, which are widely applied in the literature in the factor analysis of the principal components. As a result, 7 items and 9 items out of 28 were excluded from the analysis for Turkish and Russians respectively because they didn't meet the condition. According to the data obtained from the analysis results, one different factor was obtained as "Ads marionette consumer " was different from the original scale. Similarly, in the study of Bikari (2013), who adapted the scale to Turkish, it was observed that 21 of the 40 items were excluded from the analysis because they did not meet the relevant conditions, and the scale was reduced to 3 sub-dimensions.

Table 8. Exploratory Factor Analysis Turkey¹

	N&FC	AdMC	P& HQCC	I&CC	COC
I use SM to find the latest fashion products / services / brands	.799				
I like to discover new brands in SM	.769				
I try to stay up-to-date by following the products / services / brands in SM	.755				
I try to find as much information as possible about products / services / brands in SM	.696				
SM helps make the perfect choice regarding a product or service	.649				
SM helps me evaluate all options regarding products / services	.632				
I always have a chance to find an interesting product or service in SM	.617				
Ads in SM are so personalized that they whet my appetite to buy the product / service		.787			
I feel the advertisements in SM pushing me to buy something		.768			
Ads in SM like a magician always know what I want		.749			
I take the time to shop carefully to find the best product			.820		
I go to the same stores every time I go shopping			.749		
My standards and expectations for the products I buy are very high			.739		
Usually, I regret careless shopping			.471		
After I saw products/services on SM platforms I: "I would buy this product when I would see it in the store or online"				.880	
After I saw products/services on SM platforms I: "I would actively seek out this product in the store or online in order to purchase it"				.793	
After I saw products/services on SM platforms I: "I would like to try this product/service"				.694	
I'm confused by all the information I get about different products in SM					.704
The more I learn about products at SM, the harder it is to make the best choice.					.672
I change the brands I buy regularly					.622
SM is like a slot machine since it is not clear which product or service will come across there					.566
Variance (%)	39,059	8,288	7,651	5,672	5,205
Reliability	.918	.833	.724	.775	.698
Eigen Value	8.202	1.740	1.607	1.191	1.093

¹ Novelty-Fashion Consumer (N&FC); Ads Marionette consumer (AdMC); Perfectionistic, High-Quality Conscious Consumer (P&HQCC); Impulsive, Careless Consumer (I&CC); Confused by Overchoice Consumer (COC)

Table 9. Exploratory Factor Analysis Russia²

	AdMC	PCC	N&FC	I&CC	P&HQCC
I feel the advertisements in SM pushing me to buy something	.743				
Ads in SM are so personalized that they whet my appetite to buy the product / service	.806				
Ads in SM like a magician always know what I want	.764				
Searching for products or services at SM whet my appetite	.699				
I always have a chance to find an interesting product or service in SM	.583				
SM is like a slot machine since it is not clear which product or service will come across there	.660				
SM helps me evaluate all options regarding products/ services	.550				
I take advantage of special product or service offers /discounts on SM		.672			
Product / service prices in SM are more reasonable		.785			
I usually choose lower priced items		.782			
I go to the same stores every time I go shopping		.704			
I like to discover new brands in SM			.732		
I use SM to find the latest fashion products / services / brands			.798		
I try to stay up-to-date by following the products / services / brands in SM			.793		
After I saw products/services on SM platforms I: "I would like to try this product/service"				.817	
After I saw products/services on SM platforms I: "I would buy this product when I would see it in the store or online"				.764	
After I saw products/services on SM platforms I: "I would actively seek out this product in the store or online in order to purchase it"				.710	
I take the time to shop carefully to find the best product					.785
My standards and expectations for the products I buy are very high					.769
Variance (%)	39,242	10,730	6,228	5,884	5,478
Reliability	.879	.771	.898	.804	.497
Eigen Value	7.456	2.039	1.183	1.118	1.041

² Ads Marionette consumer (AdMC); Price conscious consumer (PCC); Novelty-Fashion Consumer (N&FC); Impulsive, Careless Consumer (I&CC); Perfectionistic, High-Quality Conscious Consumer (P&HQCC)

4.4.2. Hypotheses Tests

This study aims at defining the difference between dependent and independent variables. For this reason, the test of normality has been applied in order to identify which hypothesis tests would be used. SM ads and e-WOM are used as the dependent variable. Test of normality was applied to independent variables (socio-demographic, time spent on SM, decision-making styles). All of these variables have not been distributed normally. Thus, non-parametric tests (Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis), were implemented for both countries.

As indicated in Table 10. hypothesis tests for Turkey. The mean rank for *Novelty fashion consumers*, *Ads Marionette consumers*, *Perfectionist consumers*, *Impulsive consumers*, *Confused by Overchoice consumers* is significantly higher than for the rest of the groups. H6 hypothesis is accepted and H3 hypothesis is accepted only for Novelty fashion consumer. H2, H4, H5 hypotheses are not accepted.

Novelty fashion consumers tend to be impacted by e-WOM more since they search for more information about products or services on SM. But the mean rank of this factor is low for SM ads, indicating that consumers with low novelty fashion characteristics more presumably purchase a product after seeing it in SM ads. This results in consumers' need for something new and they are likely to buy a new fashionable product after seeing it in the SM ads but they don't burden themselves with searching for a great deal of information. *Ads Marionette consumers* tend to be impacted by e-WOM more since consumers with this characteristic are simply trusting what other consumers or influencers say about products, and based on their pieces of advice they are likely to buy the product. *Perfectionist consumers* give more importance to e-WOM since it is natural for them to compare products and search for the best value for their money. *Impulsive consumers* make impulsive purchases after they read some consumers' reviews on a product or listen to an influencer's advice on some product since the significant value is high for e-WOM. Impulsive consumers, who make careless purchases, probably make a purchase after being exposed to SM ads as well since the significant value is very close to p-value ($p = .062$). This means that consumers of impulsive shopping orientation are also more emotionally sensitive to SM ads, and they may buy quickly as soon as they have seen an attractive digital ad on SM. *Confused by Overchoice consumers* have significant high value relating e-WOM. The main reason behind this is that the more consumers search for and listen to various information about the products or services the more they become confused.

The mean rank for *secondary school graduate consumers* is significantly higher than of the rest of the education levels. This means that consumers who completed secondary school are more likely to believe other people's opinions about the product and this group is easily impacted by strategies of influence marketing which is e-WOM.

Table 10. Hypotheses Tests Turkey

	e-WOM Asymp. Sig.	Accept/Reject	SM ADS Asymp. Sig.	Accept/Reject
Novelty fashion consumer	.000*	H6 Accepted	.027*	H3 Accepted
Ads Marionette consumer	.000*	H6 Accepted	.654	H3 Rejected
Perfectionist consumer	.000*	H6 Accepted	.486	H3 Rejected
Impulsive consumer	.000*	H6 Accepted	.062**	H3 Rejected
Confused by Overchoice consumer	.000*	H6 Accepted	.893	H3 Rejected
Gender	.744	H4 Rejected	.829	H1 Rejected
Age	.730	H4 Rejected	.616	H1 Rejected
Education	.055**	H4 Rejected	.110	H1 Rejected
Income	.602	H4 Rejected	.221	H1 Rejected
Occupation	.064	H4 Rejected	.106	H1 Rejected
Household size	.259	H4 Rejected	.068	H1 Rejected
Time spent	.289	H5 Rejected	.106	H2 Rejected

*<p-value (p =0,05) ** close to p-value

As indicated in Table 11. hypothesis tests for Russia. The mean rank for high *Ads Marionette consumers*, *Price-conscious consumers*, *Novelty-fashion consumers*, *Impulsive consumers*, *Perfectionist consumers* group is significantly high for e-WOM dependent variable while the mean rank for low *Ads Marionette consumers*, *Price-conscious consumers*, *Novelty-fashion consumers*, *Impulsive consumers*, *Perfectionist consumers* group is significantly high for SM Ads dependent variable. H6 and H3 hypotheses are accepted.

Ads Marionette consumers tend to blindly obey someone else's will and, consequently, they are strongly impacted by e-WOM. However, consumers with fewer *Ads Marionette* features tend to purchase products after they have seen them on SM ads. *Price-conscious consumers* are more likely to do research about the product by reading others' consumer reviews and listening to opinion leaders or experts' opinions regarding the product. Nevertheless, consumers who score low on price-conscious are presumably buying products after they have seen a promotion of it in SM ads. *Novelty-fashion consumers* are more likely to be impacted by e-WOM since influencers and experts usually present the best, the latest, and trendy products, and it is natural for this group to follow these opinion leaders on SM. *Impulsive consumers* do shopping more carelessly when they are exposed to e-WOM. But those consumers who score low on impulsive shopping, buy products after they have been exposed to SM Ads. *Perfectionist consumers* are more likely to be impacted by e-WOM since they may rely on other people's opinions about the qualities of the products without doing long research easily.

The mean rank for *26-30 years old consumers*, *consumers whose income is between 685 \$- 958 \$*, *retired consumers*, for *consumers who spent less than one hour* is significantly higher than that for the rest of the groups. *26-30 years old consumers* are more frequently using SM platforms in comparison to other groups as a result they are easily impacted by e-WOM. Therefore, H4 hypothesis is accepted for income and age.

As for *retired people*, they have lots of free time for using SM so that they read reviews from other consumers to trust products they would like to purchase. In addition, this situation with the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted retired people and

they prefer to order products online than going to the offline store. H1 hypothesis is accepted for occupation.

Consumers who spent less than one hour on SM platforms can experience the phenomenon of ad blindness since the significant value is high regarding SM ads. Resnick and Albert (2014: 1037), describe the phenomenon of banner blindness which occurs when users don't notice the presence of an ad banner on the web page. They also add that it occurs because of the fact that users know where on-page the ad is usually located and they don't choose to view it purposefully since they don't expect to get useful information there. Therefore, users who spend more time online are getting used to the location of the ads more quickly and, for this reason, ignore them. H2 hypothesis is accepted for time spent.

Table 11. Hypotheses Tests Russia

	e-WOM Asymp. Sig.	Accept/Reject	SM ADS Asymp. Sig.	Accept/Reject
Ads Marionette consumer	.000*	H6 Accepted	.005*	H3 Accepted
Price conscious consumer	.000*	H6 Accepted	.000*	H3 Accepted
Novelty fashion consumer	.000*	H6 Accepted	.000*	H3 Accepted
Impulsive consumer	.000*	H6 Accepted	.000*	H3 Accepted
Perfectionist consumer	.000*	H6 Accepted	.003*	H3 Accepted
Gender	.339	H4 Rejected	.584	H1 Rejected
Age	.009*	H4 Accepted	.984	H1 Rejected
Education	.599	H4 Rejected	.869	H1 Rejected
Income	.013*	H4 Accepted	.436	H1 Rejected
Occupation	.680	H4 Rejected	.024*	H1 Rejected
Household size	.960	H4 Rejected	.220	H1 Rejected
Time spent	.145	H5 Rejected	.033*	H2 Accepted

*<p-value (p =0.05)

The difference between Turkish and Russian consumers regarding SM Ads and e-WOM is significant (p = .018 and p = .000). H7 and H8 hypotheses are accepted. It indicates that, in general, Russian consumers are impacted more by e-WOM since the mean rate is higher for Russia (283.18) than for Turkey (256.11). It means that e-WOM marketing strategy is the most influential on SM in Russia. However, Turkish consumers are impacted more by SM Ads since the mean rate is higher for Turkey (324.67) than for Russia (216.50). For this reason, it would be reasonable to launch SM ads campaigns more on SM for businesses and organizations in Turkey (Table 12).

Table 12. Hypotheses Tests Nationalities

	e-WOM Asymp. Sig.	Accept/Reject	SM ADS Asymp. Sig.	Accept/Reject
Nationalities	.018*	H7 Accepted	.000*	H8 Accepted

*<p-value (p =0.05)

5. Conclusion

Undoubtedly, the share of technology is very high in the new age where consumption is rapidly globalizing, and consumerism is accompanied by it. A better understanding of the similarities and differences in cross-national consumerism, a large and unlimited market, helps global businesses make decisions and increase consumer

satisfaction. Global demand is increasing and international research is gaining popularity because comparing and revealing consumer preferences in different cultures are meaningful ways to provide new insights into consumer behavior (Nathan et al., 2021: 17). This article is derived from consumer behavior surveys in Turkish and Russian to show how consumption-related social media use and the growing importance of SM advertising play a role in consumption.

The period of the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the usual order of things in the life of every person. Online shopping has become increasingly popular due to the changes that were brought by Covid-19. In 2019, the average popularity index of online shopping behavior for all types of products was 45% in Russia. In 2020, this percentage rose up to 63%. This increase has impacted all types of products equally, and it is higher than in the previous year (15–20%) (Deloitte, 2020). Besides, improved online products or services impacted people's living in remote areas positively since they were able to buy products and services online which they couldn't buy before the pandemic. In Turkey, the number of e-trade commerce organizations increased to 275% (from 68.457 to 256.861) from 2019 to 2021 (Eticaret, 2021). This is a huge increase in e-trade commerce and online shopping behavior. Thus, the findings of the study show that 74.0% of respondents in Turkey stated that their SM usage increased during the pandemic. However, these results are slightly different from those of Russian users. The participants on the whole demonstrated that their SM behavior during the pandemic didn't change and it stayed at the same rate (58.4%). For this reason, considering the international scope of the study, it would be wise to focus on an online presence on SM for organizations in Turkey in particular.

There are many ways to present product ads on SM, but it is not always clear what the most efficient kinds of ads to be chosen for companies' advertising campaigns are. Thus, this study found that Story ads are among the most popular types of advertisements on SM. Tarasova et al (2020) defined online advertising as an innovative marketing activity for Russian consumers. Ads in the news stream or native ads are the most popular category in Russia, however, it is not that popular in Turkey. But banner ads occurred to be an inefficient and bad investment in both countries. Therefore, organizations should focus on these popular kinds of ads when launching their ad campaigns first.

This study also aims at revealing the influence of two factors such as e-WOM and SM Ads on consumer behavior. The findings of this study indicate that Russian consumers rely on influencers' suggestions about the products more than Turkish consumers. In a study comparing original and non-original SM influencers, original SM influencers were found to have a more positive effect on purchase intentions among high-confidence users (Piehler et al, 2022). Consumers don't rush to buy extremely popular products that go viral in both countries. *Consumers who spent less than one hour on SM platforms can experience the phenomenon of ad blindness in Russia since the significant value is high regarding SM ads. Considering that users with shorter time allocations need to perform targeted actions quickly, ads may not be noticed (İralı, 2022). Businesses that want to overcome ad blindness, which is when a large number of ad bands begin to escape the user's attention after a certain point, should choose styles that will increase the harmony of the product and brand with the site and will not disturb the user.*

Another important aim of this study is to understand the influence of e-WOM and SM ads on decision-making styles. The factor of Novelty-fashion consumers occurred to be a dominant factor for SM ads. For this reason, organizations should focus on Novelty-fashion shopping orientation at most in Turkey. The ad creators should emphasize the newness and the trendiness of products in their ad campaigns in order to attract the attention of this group.

In addition, this study identified five main DMS of Russian consumers. Out of them, Ads Marionette occurred to be a dominant factor for e-WOM and SM ads. Thus, companies should create persuasive ads and implement retargeted ad strategies to influence their audience efficiently.

5.5.1. Limitations

The researcher faced ample limitations while conducting the research. The major accessibility problems have been experienced during the collection of the primary data because of COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns. It was not possible to distribute questionnaires in public places so online questionnaires were sent to the participants.

5.5.2 Recommendations for Future Research

Considering the scope of this study, some theories related to the thesis were covered in general perspective in order to provide a big picture for readers. Hence, in-depth studies may be conducted for further investigations. The influence of SM ads on consumers should be investigated. More research should be done to unravel their content and what type of ads are the most influential. Especially, the various group categories of products, which are sold the most because of SM, should be explored. Moreover, the impact of SM ads on different socio-demographic factors should also be examined.

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