

# Social Media Application in Local Governments: Sample of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality

*Yerel Yönetimlerde Sosyal Medya Uygulaması: Gaziantep Büyükşehir Belediyesi Örneği*

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## ÖZET

Web 2.0 teknolojisi ile birlikte kullanıcılar karşılıklı bir etkileşim sürecinin içerisinde yer almışlar ve Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Telegram, Youtube gibi sosyal medya araçları ile tanışmaya başlamışlardır. Bu süreçte halka en yakın birimler olan belediyeler de sosyal medya araçlarını yine halka daha yakın olabilmek, faaliyet ve etkinliklerinden kamuoyunu haberdar etmek ve geleneksel medya araçlarından çok daha fazla kişiye erişim sağladığı için tanıtım çalışmalarında kullanmak yönünde politikalar izlemişlerdir. Bu doğrultuda belediyeler ile halk arasında yeni, dijital iletişim aracı olarak öne çıkan sosyal medya platformları her geçen gün daha fazla önemsenmektedir. Son günlerde belediyeler marka kent olabilmek sürecinde de gerçekleştirdikleri faaliyetleri halk ile paylaşmak ve kentin tanıtımını yapmak amacıyla sosyal medya uygulamalarını yoğun bir biçimde kullanmaktadır. Bu çalışmada belediyelerde sosyal medya araçlarının kullanım nedenleri sorgulanmış, sosyal medya araçlarının sunulan hizmetleri iyileştirme yönünde katkısının olup olmadığı araştırılmıştır. Çalışmada amaç yeni medya aracı olan sosyal medya kullanımının halka ve belediyeye etkisinin ne yönde olduğunu ortaya koymaktır. Bu bağlamda sosyal medya kavramı ve gelişim süreci ele alınmış, belediyelerde sosyal medya uygulamalarına yer verilmiş ve Gaziantep Büyükşehir Belediyesi örneği anlatılmıştır. Çalışmada nitel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmış olup yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme tekniği ile Gaziantep Büyükşehir Belediyesi İletişim Daire Başkanlığına form gönderilmesi suretiyle on iki adet soru sorulmuştur. Araştırma sonuçları sosyal medya kullanımının kentlerin tanıtımına, yönetişime katkı sağladığını ortaya koymakta, belediye yönetimlerinin sosyal medyadan gelen istek ve tepkilere yönelik olarak hizmet sunumunda iyileştirmelere gittiğini ve yönetim politikalarını değiştirdiğini tespit etmektedir.

## Anahtar Kelimeler:

Sosyal Medya,  
Yönetişim,  
Facebook,  
YouTube,  
Instagram,

## ABSTRACT

With the Web 2.0 technology, users have been involved in a mutual interaction process and have started to meet social media tools such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Youtube. In this process, municipalities, which are the closest units to the public to inform the public about their activities and events and to use social media tools in promotional activities as they provide access to many more people than traditional media tools. In this process, municipalities, which are the closest units to the public, have also followed policies to be closer to the public, to inform the public about their activities and events, and to use social media tools in promotional activities as they provide access to much more people than traditional media tools. Accordingly, social media platforms, which stand out as a new digital communication tool between municipalities and the public, are becoming more and more important every day. Recently, municipalities have been using social media applications intensively in order to share their activities with the public and to promote the city in the process of becoming a brand city. In this study, the reasons for the use of social media tools in municipalities were inquired, and it was investigated whether social media tools contributed to the improvement of the services provided. The aim of the study is to reveal the effect of the use of social media, which is a new media tool, on the public and the municipality. Qualitative research method was used in the study and twelve questions were asked by sending a form to Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality through a semi-structured interview technique. The results of the research revealed that the use of social media contributed to the promotion of cities and governance, and revealed that municipal administrations made improvements in service delivery and changed their management policies in response to requests and reactions from social media.

## Keywords:

Social Media,  
Governance,  
Facebook,  
YouTube,  
Instagram,

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the 1990s, with the widespread use of computers and the introduction of the internet into our lives, communicating digitally has become a new habit. With the discovery of the cell phone in the 2000s, a new perspective was brought to communication, social life, promotion and media platforms. Recent developments, combined with the structure of Web 2.0 technology that allows content production, public institutions and municipalities, which are the service interlocutors of the public, have started to carry out activities such as information, governance, promotion, etc. through this channel. Social media encourages participatory and transparent municipal governance. Municipalities also use social media platforms as public relations tools. This is because mutual communication naturally leads to the public relations process. Social media platforms have facilitated the public relations process and made it possible to reach large masses.

The use of social media in municipalities is important in terms of establishing a two-way communication with citizens. It is necessary to raise the use of social media in municipalities to a conscious level, and the management and staff should be aware of the benefits to be gained from the use of social media. Research shows that municipalities use social media to provide public service, to announce their projects to the public, and to inform about municipal activities. (Kaya and Demirdöven, 2019:2407).

According to some researchers, the use of social media in the public sector is seen as a reform movement. In this sense, an understanding of public administration is being established with a focus on Citizen Centered Public Administration. In this context, public institutions and citizens are in cooperation. Citizens are active partners in the design of public policies and services. In this respect, citizen engagement is important (Sobacı and Hatipoğlu, 2017:690) within the scope of citizen-oriented service delivery, it is important to care about the needs of citizens, prioritize service improvement, and focus on citizen satisfaction. Citizen satisfaction is considered an important criterion in the citizen-oriented service approach. Municipalities adopt uninterrupted, continuous service delivery to meet the service needs of citizens (citizenfirst.ca, 2022) and use social media platforms as tools in this sense.

Social media is a set of platforms that mediate the struggle of individual citizens to exist beyond the mass society. It gives the opportunity to express one's own opinion on current and instantaneous events and to comment on the service without any intermediary to the administration. Rational and strategic administrations take steps to provide the necessary improvements by evaluating citizen reactions outside of manipulative influence. Social media is an important opportunity for municipalities to promote their activities. In order to actively participate in this field, municipalities continue to work increasingly every day. In terms of participation, social media is a suitable environment for both local people and municipalities.

It allows large masses of people to communicate directly with both the municipal administration and the mayor. Municipal administrations also have the opportunity to carry out governance mechanisms in this direction. Reactions to social media posts can have a directive effect on the service performance of municipalities. Listening to the public, following strategies in line with the demands of the public, and turning the city into a brand give municipalities the ability to act proactively.

## 2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In social media, users communicate with other users via the internet on platforms such as micro blogs and websites. Users' sharing of information, ideas, personal messages, videos and images are considered in this context (Britannica, 2022). Social media is defined as tools, services and applications that enable people to communicate with each other through the use of network technologies (Boyd, 2008:92).

Social media consists of online communities, peer-to-peer communication, mobile games, and media-sharing technologies. Blogging, forums, e-mails, virtual worlds, messaging and social networking sites are all gathered under the umbrella of social media. Social media is also referred to as social software, social programming, computer-mediated communication. In social media applications, the content is completely determined by users and there is interaction with users. It is a communication platform where interaction independent of time and space is essential (Bostancı, 2010:36).

In social media, users are instrumental in the creation, evaluation and dissemination of information to large masses. Users who can create personal social networks also have the opportunity to observe the activities of other users they follow. These innovations lead to a new paradigm and are called social information processing. It provides a solution to users' difficult information processing problems (Lerman, 2007:19).

Social media are internet-based platforms where users can introduce themselves and their interests on social networks interact with different users by sharing videos, information and ideas, follow current events, and create a historical and popular archive with the tags created. Social media, which changes the usual rules in the traditional media sector, emerges as a platform that transforms the habits of users.

Bloggers create personal newspapers on their own sites, Youtube personalizes its broadcast content, and Twitter, which is a news agency, provides users with the world's current news. When the investments of capital owners are combined with the innovative ideas of technology leaders, social media platforms that offer differentiated services to the user and prioritize the user in terms of promotion are constantly emerging.

These platforms create an environment for the public and private sectors to meet with users. Social media is united with life for many segments. Social media companies also produce various strategies to take more places in the lives of individuals or organizations or to influence their lives more. In addition, all opportunities are utilized to make sharing on social media a privilege by utilizing technological developments.

## 3. HISTORICAL PROCESS

The emergence of social media has taken place as the internet and technological innovations started to take place in our lives. Email and chat programs emerged in the early 1970s. Permanent communities emerged with Usenet. It was in 1995 that the sites that enabled social media to become a widespread culture came to life. Classmates.com, which brought together high school and university students and alumni, was the first social networking site. In 1997, the social networking site SixDegrees.com was launched. On this platform, more than three million members were allowed to create profiles, and it was possible to determine friend lists and exchange messages through the system. The popularity of social media sites coincides with the beginning of the 21st century. In this period, social networks such as Friendster and Myspace allowed family members and friends to connect online (Britannica, 2022).

Social media went through many stages and witnessed many developments until it became what it is perceived as today. The realization of this change is related to the development of the Internet over time, the demands of users, and the change of social media accompanied by technological developments and strategies (Bostancı, 2010:37-39).

**Table 1.** Timeline of The Launch Dates of Many Major Social Network Sites (1997-2008)



Source: Boyd and Ellison, 2008:212 and updated by author.

As seen in Table 1, the history of social networking sites started in 1997 and has gone through the following stages (Boyd and Ellison, 2008: 212-230);

- **BBSs- Bulletin Board Systems (Bilgisayarlı Bilgi Sistemleri):** These are systems that result from a connection to a modem via a telephone. Through this software, it is possible to send messages to other users, read incoming messages, send files and play games. Users can interact with each other by logging in to the system. The system, which turned into an online platform in the late 1970s, has taken its place in history as an information system that attracted the attention of users in those years.
- **Forums:** Popular since the 1970s with their user-friendly interfaces, forums have been on the stage of history as the closest structures to the features of social media platforms.

- **Usenet-User's Network:** Usenet, short for User's network, was created in 1979 by Tom Truscott and Jim Ellis of Duke University. It includes multiple users in the same network. Usenet, the first form of social media, allows the creation of user-based content and allows users to exchange messages with each other (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2009:60-65; Britannica, 2022).
- **Online Services:** In this period, corporate online services such as CompuServe, Prodig, AOL (American Online) and Genie came to the fore. In CompuServe, the chat program became operational for the first time. Founded in 1985, the online platform named Genie was created under the management of General Electric. With Genie, users received gaming, shopping, mail and forum services. AOL enabled the Internet to reach a wider user base in the USA.
- **IRC (Internet Relay Chat), ICQ (I seek you) and Instant Messaging:** IRC is the first form of instant messaging and was introduced in 1988 with chat and file sharing content. ICQ is an instant messaging program that was launched in 1995. These platforms later pioneered many other instant messaging programs. Users acquired the messaging culture with these programs, and more advanced instant messaging programs were created according to their demands.
- **Dating Sites:** On these sites, which aim to make new friends, users interact more and share profile photos. Personal characteristics are collected in profile information and users interact according to this information.

In 1997-2001, platforms such as AsianAvenue, BlackPlanet and MiGente enabled the creation of dating profiles. Introduced in 1999, LiveJournal displayed an innovative profile by introducing a structure where privacy settings could be managed by the user. Cyworld, a virtual universes website launched in Korea, was launched in 1999. In 2001, it adopted the structure of social media sites. The site named LunarStorm was renewed in 2000 in the form of a friends list and diary pages and turned into a social network structure (Boyd and Ellison, 2008:215-216).

Ryze.com, Tribe.net and LinkedIn were created to contribute to the formation and development of business networks, but it was LinkedIn that gained popularity and survived by constantly renewing itself. Later, Myspace in 2003 and Facebook in 2004 came to the forefront by contributing to the discovery of the concept of social media, which gained popularity with the increase in internet speed (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2009:60-65).

A level-based classification of social media platforms reveals that the platforms where users find the opportunity to express themselves well are blogs, social networking sites such as Facebook and virtual social worlds such as Second Life. The platforms where they express themselves at a low level are collaborative Social media platforms such as Wikipedia, content communities such as YouTube and virtual game worlds such as World of Warcraft (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2009:62).

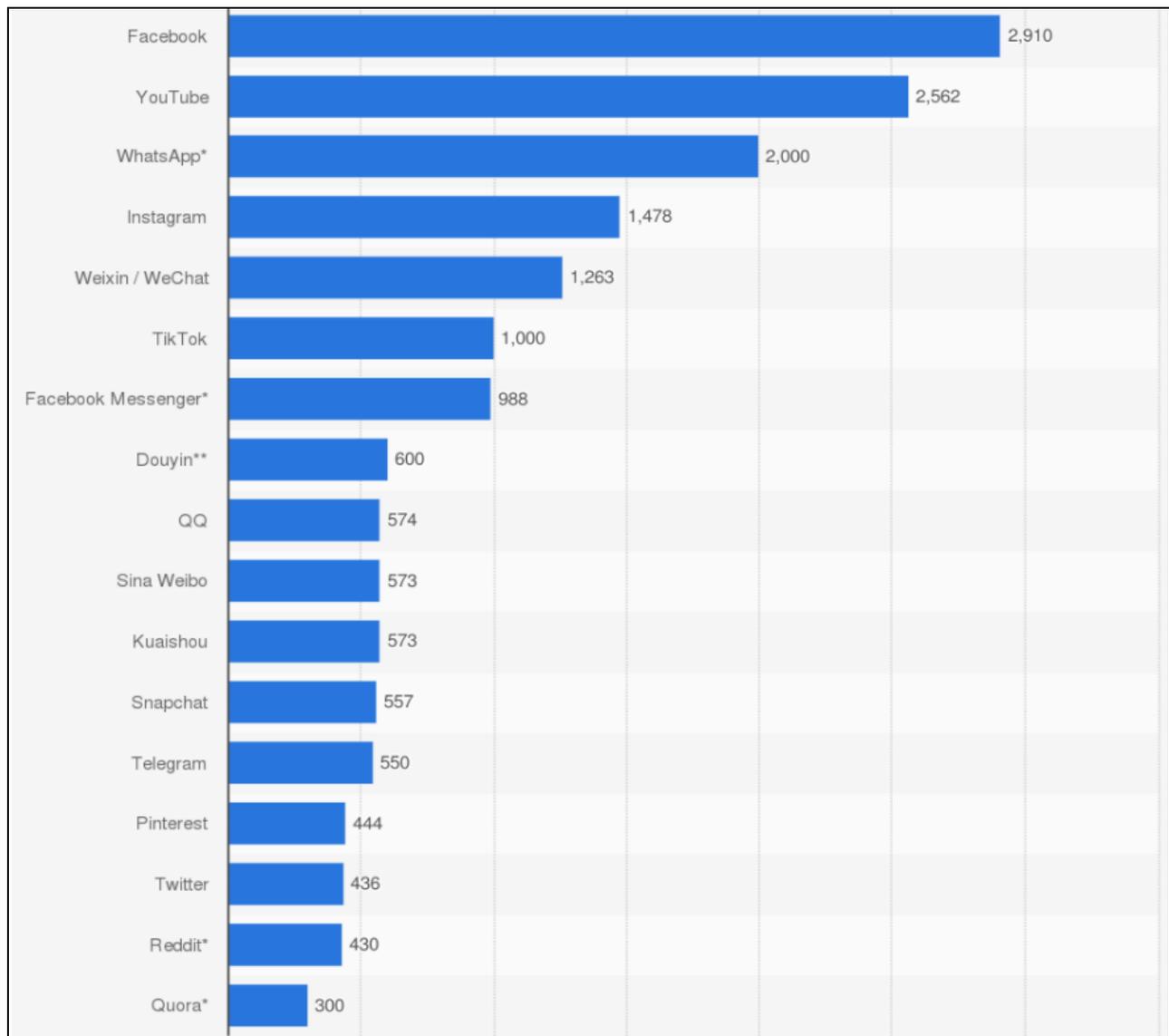
#### 4. SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS AND ADVANTAGES

Social media platforms, defined as internet-based information dissemination and sharing channels such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Youtube, have become popular trends today. The most common social media platforms are as follows (Uluç and Yarıç, 2017:89-90);

- **Facebook (Meta):** Founded by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004. Users have the opportunity to expand their networks and communicate through social networks. This platform, which maintains its popular identity today, gives its users many opportunities such as socializing, entertainment, communicating, sharing, obtaining information, following the agenda, and becoming a publisher in the virtual world. Towards the end of 2021, Facebook Ltd. changed its name to Meta Platforms Inc. and plans to play an important role in metadata, which is referred to as the internet of the future. Facebook includes applications such as Instagram, Messenger and WhatsApp. As of 2021, the company's revenue was measured over 117 billion dollars. Facebook has been identified as the most successful social network in terms of brand awareness and number of users. In the first quarter of 2022, it had three billion monthly users (Dixon, 2022; about.fb.com, 2021).
- **Twitter:** Founded in 2006 by Jack Dorsey and friends. Twitter, which means bird chirping in English, is a platform for sharing texts of 140 characters. Its instant message sharing feature has made it a popular and effective platform. In 2008, it was used extensively by Barack Obama during the US presidential elections. The user base includes statesmen, politicians, intellectuals, writers, artists, and institutions.

- **Youtube:** A social media site that allows millions of users to share and watch videos. YouTube, where many institutions have opened channels, allows live broadcasts as an alternative to television.
- **LinkedIn:** It is a communication network that has been in service since 2003 where users share their education, work experience, knowledge and skills. This medium, which is offered to professionals, allows communication with a wide business environment.
- **Instagram:** A social media platform that caters to users' visual sharing and was founded by Kevin Systrom in 2010. The app, which is Facebook's image and video-based application, is mostly associated with celebrity stalking. However, the results of the research conducted with Instagram users in the first period of 2022 showed that more than 50% of users want to see entertaining posts on the application, while 48% prefer creative content. As of December 2021, Instagram reached two billion monthly active users (Dixon, 2022).
- **TikTok:** The application, which appeals mostly to young users, has gained popularity for recording dances, doing playback. In 2021, it surpassed social media giants Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp and Snapchat in terms of app downloads. It was found to be the most popular application among women aged 18-24. Another important issue is that Generation Z spends time especially on the TikTok application. According to 2021 data, 63% of Generation Z in the US used TikTok, while 57% used Instagram every week (Dixon, 2022).

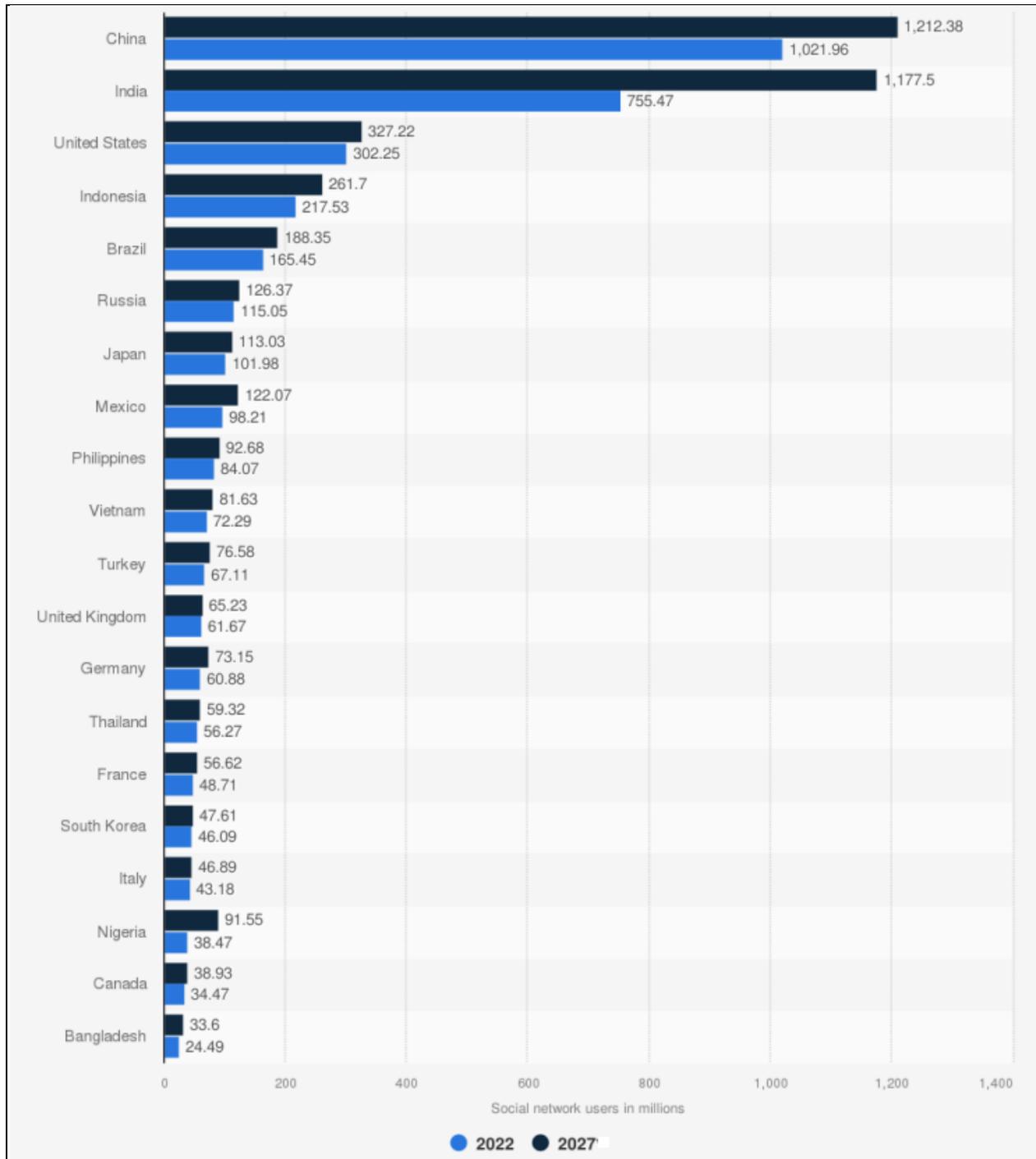
**Table 2.** Most Popular Social Networks Worldwide as of January 2022 (Ranked by Number of Monthly Active Users- in Millions)



Source: Statista, 2022.

As seen in Table 2, the most widely used social media platforms in the world are Facebook, Youtube, WhatsApp, Instagram, WeChat and TikTok.

**Table 3.** Number of Social Network Users in Selected Countries in 2022 and 2027 (in Millions)



Source: Statista, 2022.

As indicated in the table, China is the pioneer in social media use. Turkey ranks 11th in the world in social media use. In 2027, the number of users is expected to increase from 67.11 million to 76.58 million.

Social media has gained more popularity over the years. It has come to the forefront as an important socialization tool, especially in isolated lives after COVID-19. For many users, it has become an effective way of communication, entertainment, information, making friends, maintaining kinship ties, and communicating with brands. When we look at the use of social media in Turkey, it is observed that the number of users is on a continuous upward trend. Statista Digital Market Outlook estimates that the number of social media users will exceed 76 million in 2027. It is observed that social media has an important share in internet usage, especially for the majority of teenagers and young adults. When social media platforms are evaluated; Facebook remains

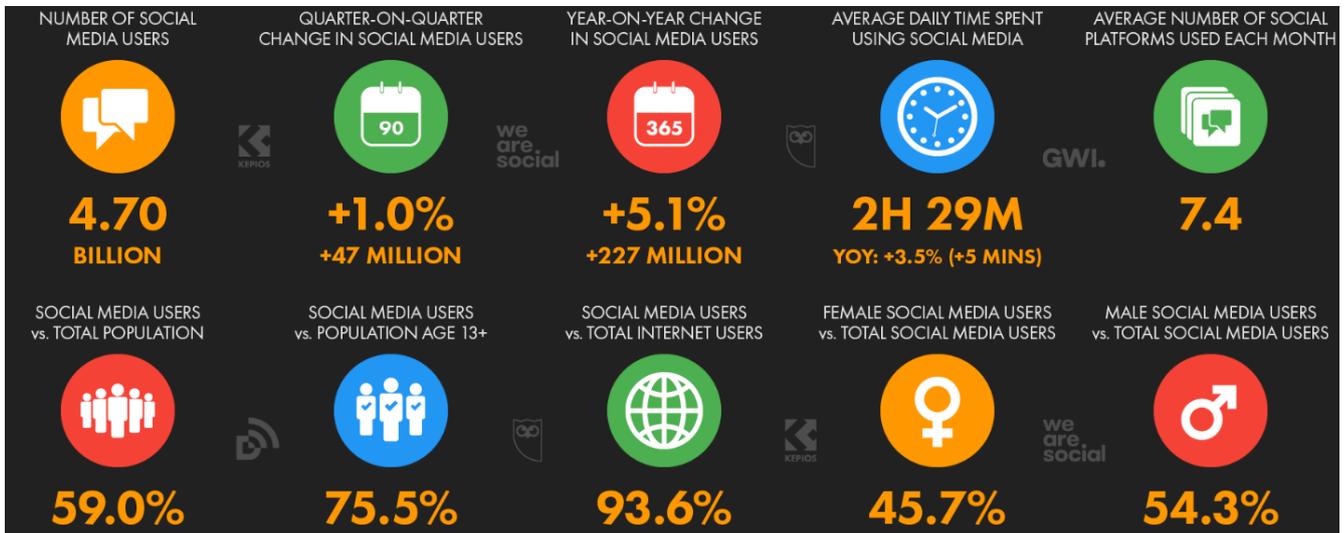
the most used platform among social media platforms. WhatsApp is also the most used platform by social media users with a penetration rate of 93%. In the ranking of the most popular social networking services, Youtube ranks first and Instagram ranks second.

In social media ad spending, the US has become the leading market with 56.68 billion dollars in 2021. China ranks as the leading market with 45.1 billion dollars and the UK with 8.2 billion dollars. Facebook is the leading advertising and promotion platform worldwide. Instagram and LinkedIn follow Facebook as promotional tools. In addition, one in every ten marketers uses TikTok for advertising. The reason why TikTok is the favorite of the advertising and promotion sector is that users' discovery motive is higher on social media and the sharing intensity of users is high. Other statistics are listed below (Dixon, 2022);

- Time spent on social media (daily) is 147 minutes
- The most downloaded app: TikTok
- The country with the highest number of Facebook users: India
- Facebook's daily active users: 1.96 billion
- Number of monthly active users on Instagram: 2 billion
- User audience: 25-34 years old
- 57% of TikTok users are women

When social media users are analyzed; staying at home due to the pandemic, the feeling of loneliness, and the desire to be in touch have caused social media channels to be used more. This has also been the case in Turkey. More than half of the population uses social media to read news. In the near future, the use of social media platforms is expected to increase even more. There are currently 67.11 million social media users in Turkey. While Instagram is the favorite social media platform, 18.8 hours are spent on TikTok per month. Twitter had a 26% market share as of January 2020, while its market share was 9% as of May 2022 (Dierks, 2022).

**Table 4.** Overview of Social Media Use (Global Overview)



Source: <https://datareportal.com/social-media-users>, 2022.

As seen in the table, the number of social media users in the total world population is 4.70 billion. Users over 13 years of age constitute 75.5% of the population. 54.3% of users are male. 93.6% of internet users are social media users.

The use of the internet and social media is increasing due to population growth in the world. Users access all kinds of information through social media platforms. Social media has become a part of life for users. On a global level, it stands out as an element that transforms the interaction of users with each other. In the first period of the spread of social media, the interest of young people was great. Over time, social media has become an area of interest for all age groups and continues to be used in many areas such as business, socialization, politics, daily communication, etc. According to a 2021 study, it was found that half of social media users prefer social media to communicate with family and friends. It has been observed that they prefer it for reasons such as

spending leisure time, reading news, etc. Social media is seen as a popular news source in many countries. More than 70% of adults in Kenya, South Africa, Malaysia and the Philippines use social media to access news. As of March 2021, it has been determined that people in the 40-44 age group spend the most time on social media with 60 minutes a day. Users aged 19 and under spend an average of 49.12 minutes a day on social media applications (Dixon, 2022).

Innovation is changing the existing order to create added value. The fact that social media applications are created by the users themselves, that the content gives the user freedom and supports a participatory structure reveals the innovative aspect of social media platforms.

In traditional media, audio, images and video are spread depending on time and space. However, in social media, such sharing has no time and space limitations (Uluç and Yargıcı, 2017:90). Before the emergence of social media, users had no control over traditional media channels. In these channels, content is determined by publishers. Since users are the publishers on social media platforms, unlike traditional media, the number of publishers is high and the amount of content is quite significant. Unlike traditional media channels, users on social media do not need permission, license or financial resources to broadcast (Bostancı, 2010:43).

Sharing content with social media takes less time than traditional media tools. Responding to any request or complaint is done quickly. In the context of news, it is easy and fast to inform the whole world about an event. Social media does not cause any cost loss other than internet access and device costs. Creating an account on social media platforms is free of charge. Social media can be said to be more reliable as users can express their reactions to any product or service. Social media facilitates communication and has become the preferred choice of many organizations and companies. In addition, they are suitable platforms in terms of responding to user demands instantly. As social media contributes positively to the image of companies (Bostancı, 2010:45-46), it also affects the image of local governments in towards improvement.

Social media allows many users to reach more audiences and make more effective advertising and promotion. It is also an effective tool in the process of city branding. With social media contributing to the promotion of the city, users' sharing pictures and videos about the city also comes to the fore. The contribution to the promotion of the city on social media leads to an increase in the number of tourists coming to the city (Taşkın et al., 2021:277).

## **5. SOCIAL MEDIA PRACTICES AND OBSERVATIONS IN MUNICIPALITIES**

The main characteristics of social media platforms are that they are interactive, have high access to large audiences and are amenable to manipulation. Research on social media has found that these platforms provide a free and wide environment for intercultural communication. The impact of social media on society is currently being researched. This field, which is very different from traditional media, dynamic with its own characteristics, and constantly evolving with innovations (Uluç and Yargıcı, 2017:98-99), is a meaningful set of platforms for local governments.

According to the research, the purposes of metropolitan municipalities in using social media are as follows (Kaya and Demirdöven, 2019: 2417-2418);

- Openness and transparent governance. In this context, municipalities publish their activities such as tenders, council meetings, etc. on social media.
- Sharing meetings, visits, condolences, commemorations
- Informing the public about services and projects
- Promotion of municipalities and mayors. Especially during election periods, this objective comes to the forefront and the number of posts in this context increases.
- Sharing celebration messages for important days and weeks
- Providing information. In this context, municipalities prepare public service announcements and share what is being done in their cities and events on a weekly basis.
- Events such as concerts, theater, symposiums held in the city are announced
- Defining the city. Posts are shared about the natural and historical beauties of the city.
- Ensuring public participation. This includes surveys, exchanges of ideas and comments on posts

When the results of the research are evaluated, it is seen that municipalities use Social media platforms for only a few purposes and therefore do not use them consciously. Accordingly, the diversity of the use of Social media platforms should be increased. In addition, mayors should be prevented from re-sharing their posts on the official account of the municipality, and municipalities should stop focusing on the purposes of forming public opinion and reporting news, which are the purposes of traditional media tools (Kaya and Demirdöven, 2019:2417-2418).

Social media should be used effectively in a process of branding cities where negative situations that increase the quality of life of city residents are minimized. It should be aimed to inform people about the changes that the city is exposed to, to promote the city and to make it a brand. The speed of city branding accelerates with the use of social media accounts. In the research covering the cities of Manisa, Uşak, Kütahya and Afyonkarahisar, it was revealed that social media has a high impact on city promotion. In this context, it is seen that Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Youtube are used a lot. It has been observed that tourists visiting the city promote the city with their posts and that travel research in this direction is requested to be carried out by municipalities or other official institutions. The most liked post of Afyonkarahisar Municipality was "*gastronomy*", the most liked brand city element of Kütahya Municipality was "*private sector and other institutions*", the most liked brand city element of Uşak Municipality was "*local government policy and foreign relations*", and the most liked brand city element of Manisa was "*climate*" (Taşkın et al., 2021:286-287).

Social media applications in municipalities appear as a meaningful platform when evaluated in terms of the continuity of activities (İlgin, 2018:66). Research shows that metropolitan municipalities are aware of the use of social media. However, it has been determined that they have deficiencies in crisis management, social media strategies, informing and directing citizens, and governance (Kaya and Demirdöven, 2019:2407). The Social media platforms most commonly used by metropolitan municipalities are given in the table below. (Kaya and Demirdöven, 2019:2414).

**Table 5.** Most Used Social Media Platforms by Metropolitan Municipalities (Thousand)

Metropolitan Municipality	Social Media Account							
	Facebook		Twitter		Instagram		Youtube	
	Followers	Amount of Likes	Followers	Posts	Followers	Posts	Subscribers	Videos
Adana	123,8T	118B	62,2B	11,06B	69,7B	5603	None	None
Ankara	92,8T	79B	760B	3890	99B	2372	None	None
Antalya	102,5T	99,9T	252,2B	23,9T	69B	2895	1,87B	98
Aydın	42,4T	40,9B	36,7B	2404	None	None	None	None
Balıkesir	51,4T	50,2T	15,6T	14,8T	None	None	None	None
Tursa	50,3T	48,9T	255,2T	11,1T	38,6T	3374	2,27T	267
Denizli	30,7T	30T	16,9T	6185	13T	251	None	None
Diyarbakır	67,5T	65,3T	35,5T	667	None	None	1T	51
Erzurum	74,2T	73,8T	30,4T	5661	None	None	None	None
Eskişehir	93,2T	89T	68,6T	3473	52,2T	943	1,08T	72
Gaziantep	140,2T	140,4T	105,5T	17,4T	74T	1712	2,71T	448
Hatay	72,7T	69,8T	33T	7209	33,4T	527	None	None
İstanbul	179,7T	156,8T	1,1M	34,8T	201T	1576	20,8T	380
İzmir	175,9T	165T	264,3T	8069	211T	2304	None	None
Kahramanmaraş	52,9T	51,8T	11,4T	10,5T	32,6T	3453	725	721
Kayseri	37,8T	37,1T	37,3T	12,1T	None	None	1,32T	55
Kocaeli	136,9T	136,9T	58,1T	23,8T	39,1T	2179	2,46T	898
Konya	62,9T	59,9T	195,8T	8778	19,2T	391	1,04T	221
Malatya	17,1T	16,6T	18,8T	12,4T	16,3T	3152	None	None
Manisa	110,7T	110,5T	12,7T	30,7T	17,7T	186	None	None
Mardin	6,5T	6,3T	16,1T	15,3T	None	None	350	62
Mersin	88,4T	83,5T	25,4T	8088	49,1T	1995	1,85T	2530
Muğla	59,1T	57T	21,8T	2849	19,3T	506	2,28T	162
Ordu	39,7T	37,2T	17,4T	7800	12,5T	1060	1,74T	1179

Sakarya	52,1T	52T	10T	13,4T	None	None	None	None
Samsun	7,3T	7T	4260	1298	1139	436	None	None
Şanlıurfa	35,4T	34,2T	31,6T	35,5T	25,8T	4278	None	None
Tekirdağ	30,2T	29,6T	19,2T	7214	12,1T	481	729	286
Trabzon	7,1T	6,7T	14,1T	555	4876	384	None	None
Van	23,8T	22,7T	27,8T	2774	5764	452	150	100

Source: Kaya and Demirdöven, 2019:2414.

According to the table, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality has the highest number of followers due to its high population compared to other provinces. Twitter is mostly used by Şanlıurfa Metropolitan Municipality. Instagram is largely used by Adana Metropolitan Municipality and Youtube is mostly used by Mersin Metropolitan Municipality (Kaya and Demirdöven, 2019:2413-2415). In 2017, a study conducted on the basis of metropolitan and provincial municipalities concluded that the level of interaction of municipalities with citizens is low, two-way communication and governance mechanisms are weak (Sobacı and Hatipoğlu, 2017:689).

**Table 6.** Municipalities and Level of Engagement

	Municipality	Engagement		Municipality	Engagement
1	Eskişehir Metropolitan Municipality	52,63	33	Antalya Metropolitan Municipality	6,51
2	Kars Municipality	44,38	34	Denizli Metropolitan Municipality	6,49
3	Ardahan Municipality	22,38	35	Bilecik Municipality	5,88
4	Sivas Municipality	18,70	36	Adıyaman Municipality	5,70
5	Kırıkkale Municipality	17,38	37	Artvin Municipality	5,63
6	Burdur Municipality	15,95	38	Rize Municipality	5,39
7	Kastamonu Municipality	15,60	39	Muğla Metropolitan Municipality	5,20
8	Van Metropolitan Municipality	15,20	40	Tokat Municipality	5,00
9	Mardin Metropolitan Municipality	15,16	41	Kahramanmaraş Metropolitan Municipality	4,64
10	Kırklareli Municipality	13,85	42	Bolu Municipality	4,54
11	Amasya Municipality	13,07	43	Karaman Municipality	4,37
12	Ordu Metropolitan Municipality	13,01	44	Adana Metropolitan Municipality	4,35
13	Bitlis Municipality	12,99	45	Şanlıurfa Metropolitan Municipality	4,28
14	Bayburt Municipality	12,80	46	Tekirdağ Metropolitan Municipality	4,28
15	Erzincan Municipality	11,12	47	Düzce Municipality	4,09
16	Elazığ Municipality	9,71	48	Kilis Municipality	3,94
17	Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality	9,61	49	Hatay Metropolitan Municipality	3,78
18	Muş Municipality	9,39	50	Kocaeli Metropolitan Municipality	3,73
19	Siirt Municipality	9,36	51	Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality	3,41
20	Mersin Metropolitan Municipality	9,27	52	Kayseri Metropolitan Municipality	3,22
21	Kırşehir Municipality	8,91	53	Aksaray Municipality	2,99
22	Edirne Municipality	8,73	54	Karabük Municipality	2,84
23	Kütahya Municipality	8,64	55	Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality	2,58
24	Sinop Municipality	8,14	56	Afyonkarahisar Municipality	2,57
25	Osmaniye Municipality	7,63	57	Niğde Municipality	2,55
26	Tunceli Municipality	7,53	58	İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality	2,54
27	Malatya Metropolitan Municipality	7,26	59	Çorum Municipality	2,44
28	Çanakkale Municipality	7,14	60	Manisa Metropolitan Municipality	2,33
29	İzmir Metropolitan Municipality	7,11	61	Konya Metropolitan Municipality	2,25
30	Erzurum Metropolitan Municipality	6,99	62	Bursa Metropolitan Municipality	1,31
31	Giresun Municipality	6,97	63	Sakarya Metropolitan Municipality	0,68
32	Yalova Municipality	6,75			

Source: Sobacı and Hatipoğlu, 2017:705-709.

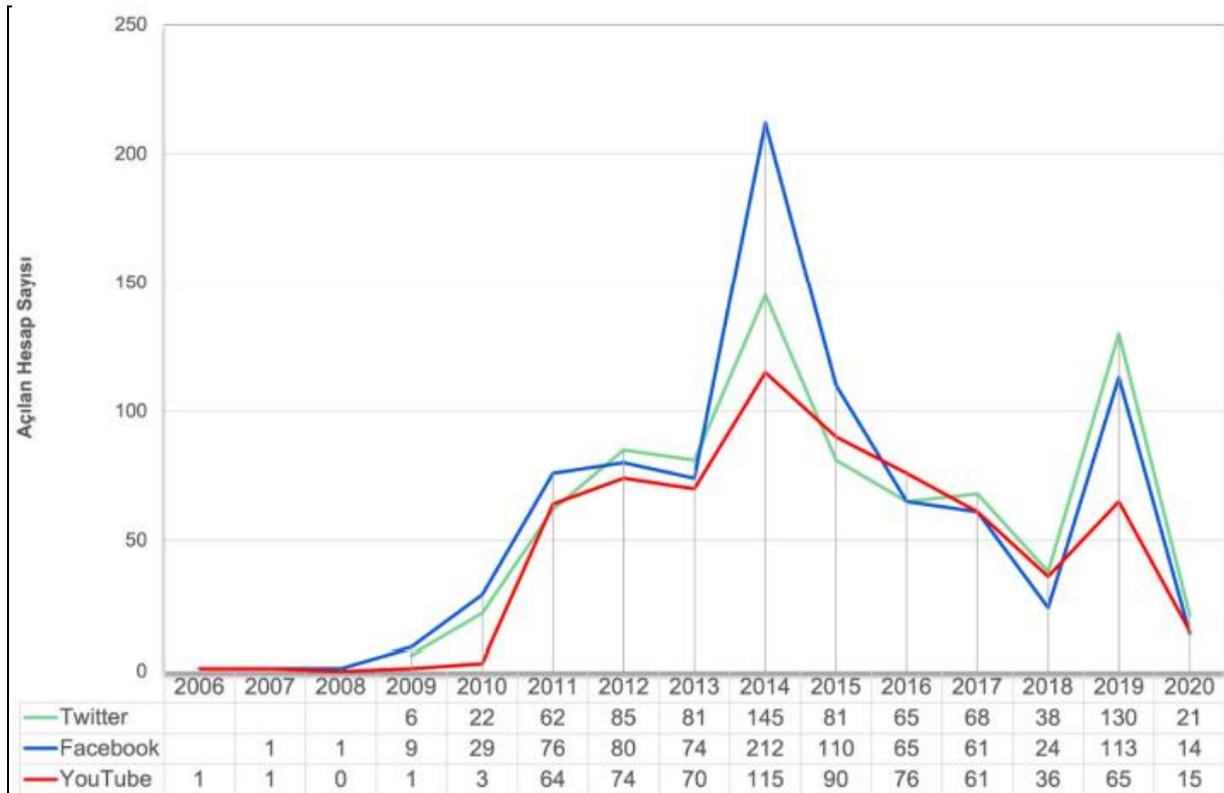
According to the table, 6 of the 20 municipalities with the highest level of interaction are metropolitan municipalities. The average interaction level of metropolitan municipalities with citizens is 7.61, while the

average interaction level of provincial municipalities is 9.60. Municipalities that interact with citizens stand out in the study results. Accordingly, the municipalities with the highest level of interaction are Eskişehir Metropolitan Municipality and Kars Municipality. However, the results of the study show that Facebook is used as a communication tool rather than focusing on public participation as an interaction tool. These findings of the research show the same results with the findings of literature studies conducted in foreign countries (Sobacı and Hatipoğlu, 2017:705-709).

Social media is being used more intensively by municipalities day by day. However, when analyzed in general, the number of posts on social media platforms and the number of followers are low. This situation shows that social media channels are not used effectively by municipalities.

In the study of 81 provincial and 919 district municipalities' social media, it was determined that 944 municipalities have Facebook, 804 municipalities have Twitter, 729 municipalities have Instagram and 665 municipalities have Youtube channels. The most effective use belongs to district municipalities, which reveals that there is no relationship between the time social media accounts are used, the number of posts made, the number of followers and the population of municipalities (Kılıç and Dikmen, 2021:795). It was determined that 94.4% of the analyzed municipalities have Facebook accounts and 84.8% of these accounts are actively used. It was determined that 80.4% (804) of the municipalities had Twitter accounts, but 65.2% (557) of these accounts were active. It was determined that 72.9% (729) of the municipalities have Instagram accounts, but 78.9% of these accounts are actively used. It was observed that 66.5% (665) of the municipalities use Youtube accounts. It was determined that the first social media account of the municipalities was opened by Kepez Municipality in 2007. As seen in the figure, municipalities have started to open corporate accounts since 2010. The years 2014-2019 were the periods when the most accounts were opened (Kılıç and Dikmen, 2021:803-805).

**Table 7.** Opening Dates of Social Media Accounts in Municipalities



Source: Kılıç and Dikmen, 2021: 803.

According to the table, it is observed that there has been an increase in the opening trend of Twitter, Facebook and Youtube accounts, especially as of 2014. As of 2020, it is seen that there is a downward trend.

According to the research examining the posts of municipalities on the Twitter platform, it shows that posts on service items of municipalities are predominant, while posts on municipal activities, commemoration of special days, visits, etc. remain at a minimum level. According to the table, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality uses Twitter more actively than other municipalities and shares posts on sports, health, transportation, traffic, public transportation, parks, green areas and environment. Ankara and Izmir Metropolitan Municipalities, on the other

hand, mostly share non-sectoral posts. Ankara Metropolitan Municipality posts on agriculture, tourism, promotion of Ankara, stray animals, food, energy, meteorology, climate, transportation, traffic and public transportation. İzmir Metropolitan Municipality stands out with its posts on transportation, traffic and public transportation, and science, culture and arts. The most shared topics for all three municipalities are traffic and transportation. In non-sectoral activities, special days, commemoration, celebration, wishes and wishes come to the fore (Uysal, 2019:246-256).

**Table 8.** Distribution of Shares by Services and Activities (%)

		Ankara MM		İstanbul MM		İzmir MM	
		Posts	Ratio to Total Number of Shares (%)	Posts	Ratio to Total Number of Shares (%)	Posts	Ratio to Total Number of Shares (%)
Sectors	Waste, Treatment, Recycling and Sanitation	3	1,40	24	4,91	2	0,71
	Science, Culture and Art	3	1,40	24	4,91	30	10,68
	Information and Technology	9	4,21	20	4,09	1	0,36
	Education and Vocational Training	8	3,74	20	4,09	6	2,14
	Urban Planning and Transformation	6	2,80	8	1,64	8	2,85
	Media and News	6	2,80	3	0,61	5	1,78
	Meteorology and Climate	22	10,28	9	1,84	1	0,36
	Parks, Green Space and Environment	7	3,27	46	9,41	22	7,83
	Social Aids and Services	11	5,14	17	3,48	13	4,63
	Sport and Health	5	2,34	73	14,93	18	6,41
	Water, Sewage and Infrastructure	5	2,34	14	2,86	5	1,78
	Transportation, Traffic and Public Transport	21	9,81	68	13,91	30	10,68
	General (Multiple Sectors)	17	7,94	17	3,48	26	9,25
Other Sectors	30	14,02	23	4,70	27	9,61	
Sectors Total		153	71,50	366	74,85	194	69,04
Non-Sectoral Events	Municipal Bodies and Personnel Activities	7	3,27	14	2,86	5	1,78
	Special Day, Commemoration, Celebration, Wishes □	26	12,15	41	8,38	36	12,81
	Events such as Fairs, Exhibitions, Festivals, etc. □□	3	1,40	6	1,23	22	7,83
	Social Activities and Visits	22	10,28	36	7,36	18	6,41
	Other □□□	3	1,40	26	5,32	6	2,14
Non-Sector Total		61	28,50	123	25,15	87	30,96
General Total		214	100,00	489	100,00	281	100,00
□(Agriculture, Tourism (City Promotion), Stray Animals, Food, Energy) □□(Funeral, Wedding etc.) □□□( Inspections, Fines, Natural Disasters and Other Events)							

Source: Uysal, 2019:246.

The Twitter accounts of the municipalities were analyzed in the study covering Esenyurt, Küçükçekmece and Bağcılar Municipalities, which are the three most densely populated districts of Istanbul. In this direction, it was investigated whether the municipalities use their Twitter accounts effectively in the context of public relations and communication, the purposes of using Twitter, and whether there is an approach to ensure citizen participation. According to the results of the research, 44.92% of Küçükçekmece Municipality's posts are mostly promotional and informative. This shows that the municipality's posts are not in the form of a multi-directional communication and that the level of interaction with the society remains at a low level. When the subject distribution of Esenyurt Municipality's posts is analyzed, it is seen that 51.85% of the posts focus on social activities, and the low level of retweet and comment rates indicates that the municipality cannot use Twitter as an effective communication tool. When the subject distribution of the posts of Bağcılar Municipality is

analyzed; it is observed that 50.91% of the posts focus on promotional and informational activities. It was determined that one-way communication was dominant in all three municipalities (Sayılmanoğlu, 2018:401-403).

Since municipalities generally do not have a professional perspective when using social media, it is observed that there are some deficiencies in their use of the platform. Accordingly (Kaygısız and Sarı, 2015:314-315);

- Municipalities reflect their social responsibility activities less when using social media platforms.
- There are fewer posts about the projects to be realized.
- Satisfaction surveys on the activities carried out by municipalities are insufficient.
- Citizens who submit their requests and complaints via social media are generally not replied.
- It is observed that citizens in need of social assistance are not supported
- Social media posts of municipalities have a disorganized and disorganized structure.

## 6. GAZİANTEP METROPOLİTAN MUNICIPALITY SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE SURVEY

Research Problem and Research Questions: The use of social media has been considered important by municipalities recently. The power of social media platforms, which are mostly used as promotional tools, to influence management and improve processes should be questioned. In this direction, the research problem is; It covers whether social media tools are used effectively in terms of governance. Does Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality use social media tools effectively in terms of governance? Can social media change the service processes of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality? The questions submitted to the Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality Communication Department within the scope of the research are as follows;

- Can you give information about your municipality's social media policy?
- What are the main purposes of social media use?
- Which social media accounts does your municipality use and how is the distribution of their use?
- Considering the intensity of use, what are the Social media platforms that are used regularly every day?
- What is the number of messages shared, number of followers, number of people and institutions followed?
- Can you provide information about the titles of posts for target audiences?
- What is the distribution of posts by day and time?
- Among Social media platforms; what are the percentages of social networks, sending messages, video or photo sharing?
- Are social media usage effectiveness measurements made? How often? Can you give information about the methodology used?
- What are the obstacles and anticipated risks encountered in the process of using social media?
- What is the process for the evaluation of requests, complaints and suggestions submitted via social media?
- To what extent do Social media platforms contribute to changing or improving the management policy and governance?

Purpose and Importance of the Study: In the literature, it is emphasized that municipalities should use social media platforms more effectively and gives importance to participation. The aim of this study is to reveal the status of the use of social media in municipalities and to identify the studies conducted in Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality. The study is important in terms of raising awareness about the importance of participation in municipalities and revealing the power to change management policies. Within the scope of the study, a form consisting of 12 questions was sent to the Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality Communication Department.

The research assumes that the use of social media tools at the governance level in municipalities has become widespread. Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality was chosen as a sample in the study. Because as of November 2022, social media accounts were chosen as the municipality with the most interaction among 30 metropolitan municipalities. Aiming to draw attention to the research, political and political situation sampling was used as a sample type.

**Methodology of the Study:** Qualitative research method was used in the study. Within the framework of the semi-structured interview technique, questions were asked by sending a form to the municipality. As of December 2022, semi-structured interview technique, which is a qualitative research technique, has been applied. In the semi-structured interview technique, the researcher prepares the questions in advance. It is preferred in the literature as a flexible interview technique (Türnüklü, 2000:547). The response to the form was given by the Head of Communication Department of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality.

**Extent and Limitations:** Social media platforms used by Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality were examined within the extent of the research. The lack of understanding of the governance mechanism by the municipality administration and social media workers, and the limited methods of responding to incoming requests are among the limitations of the research.

**Research Findings:** The research findings indicate that Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality Communication Department's social media policy is to inform citizens about the latest developments in the municipality's activities and the benefits they can gain, and to be in mutual communication with those who follow the municipality's social media account. It works to increase the visibility of municipal activities on all social media channels. Up-to-date content that will create interaction is produced by monitoring social media. In this direction, the target is to be in a two-way nurturing communication with the followers and to be aware of all kinds of feedback. The aim is to provide citizens with fast, updatable and easily accessible information flow.

The purpose of the municipality's use of social media is basically to announce the municipality's activities, announcements and events to citizens. Producing solutions to citizens' demands and complaints is among the priorities. The social media accounts used by the municipality are Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Telegram, Youtube. Information, work and activity announcements are actively made on all social media channels. Considering the intensity of use, Twitter and Instagram are the social media platforms that are used regularly.

**Table 9.** Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality Social Media Usage Information

Facebook			Twitter			Instagram			TikTok	
Followers	Followed	Posts	Followers	Followed	Posts	Followers	Followed	Posts	Followers	Posts
166.744	0	5	196.466	253	5	165.167	38	5	759	Changing

As seen in the table, the number of followers on Twitter is 196,466, the accounts followed is 253, and at least 5 posts are made daily. On Instagram, the number of followers is 165,167, the accounts followed is 38, and at least 5 posts are made daily (*Videos longer than 1 minute are edited and shared as Reels videos on Instagram*). The number of followers on Facebook is 166 thousand 744, followed 0, at least 5 posts are made daily. The number of Tiktok followers is 759 and the number of posts shared varies according to the suitability of the platform.

The content of the posts for target audiences; all working areas of the municipality, current social media trends, content productions that will create interaction. Examples include road works, construction of a science center, construction of social facilities, events, concerts, tradesmen trips and project trips by the mayor, special days and weeks, and activities to promote Gaziantep's history, culture and local food nationally and internationally. When the distribution of posts by day and hour is analyzed, it is seen that social media accounts are actively used 24/7. In general, posts are shared between 08:00 and 21:00 for 7 days. Among Social media platforms; social networks, video sharing, photo sharing rate is more or less the same. Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Telegram, YouTube accounts are used with the same intensity.

In Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, social media usage efficiency measurements are carried out every month. Separate content statistics of all platforms are compiled and analyzed. No single methodology is used, but information is obtained from various measurement tools. When the obstacles encountered and risks foreseen in the process of social media use are evaluated, it is observed that some announcements may draw reactions from citizens. From time to time, posts that contradict the country's agenda can be problematic. Due to the visuals and expressions in the posts, reactions of various segments of the society may be encountered. When the process followed for the evaluation of requests, complaints and suggestions submitted via social media is

evaluated, it is observed that such feedbacks are directed to ALO 153 Solution Center and no requests are received via DM. When the contribution of Social media platforms in terms of changing or improving the management policy is questioned, it is stated that citizens' requests and demands are regularly communicated to the units and management, and reasonable suggestions are evaluated. Over time, policy and working methods can be changed according to these reactions.

## 7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Social media is a communication environment and data storage that is open to everyone with internet access and whose rules are determined by the users. Social media, where the rules are at a minimum level, is a tremendous web 2.0 technology product where information, idea sharing, leaders' digital diplomacy platform, brands' promotional environment, public institutions provide information, respond to requests and instant developments.

Among public institutions, municipalities are the institutions that need the most promotion, participation, public relations, etc. In this sense, municipalities, which are elected and are the closest institutions to the public, have to use social media platforms that provide fast, cheap and easy access to the masses in line with their needs. Municipalities that are aware of the power of social media are in a pioneering position in promoting their services and cities better, keeping the pulse of the public, and responding to their needs (Pekküçükşen and Yıldırım, 2021:6727). In the public relations dimension, municipalities have a professional level of social media management at the point of reaching the public, finding solutions to the problems experienced, producing alternative solutions, and performing these activities quickly and easily (Kaygısız and Sarı, 2015:309).

Today, when branding has become widespread, municipalities also use the social media platform, which is more flexible and has a high level of interaction than the traditional media, which is referred to as new media, for purposes such as standing out in the services they offer to the public and creating a brand, promoting their services, ensuring the participation of the public in governance.

The use of social media for municipalities has many benefits. The benefits that a professional social media management will provide to municipalities are stated below (Yeşildal, 2019:890);

- It enables the municipality to work more efficiently according to the feedback from the public
- Increases transparency and trust in governance
- Less costly than traditional media
- Promotes economic development
- Mission supports objectives
- Supports citizen participation

In addition to these contributions, effective delivery of public services is possible due to the fact that social media is suitable for rapid sharing. The conduct of election campaigns through social media platforms has also been observed recently, especially in the US elections. Transparency and accountability can also be realized on social media platforms, which increases communication with the public and thus paves the way for governance. Through symmetrical communication with the public, municipalities have the opportunity to identify service deficiencies. At this point, the municipality can implement measures and policies to improve its performance. As one-to-one communication is established with the public, it is possible to establish close relations with citizens. Municipalities can use social media to inform citizens about an urgent issue and identify problems quickly and effectively. The process of reflecting urban problems on social media by users leads municipalities to develop cooperation with the public in identifying problems. In this direction, crises can be solved quickly and effectively (Yeşildal, 2019:892-897). For municipalities to use social media platforms more effectively (Kaygısız and Sarı, 2015:314-315);

- Social media platforms should be managed by experts trained in social media
- In order for sharing to be done regularly, sharing should be done on the basis of neighborhoods and districts
- Proposing solutions for citizens in need of assistance, disabled people and stray animals

- It is stated that citizens who submit their requests and complaints via social media should be responded to quickly and solution-oriented.

According to another study, in order for municipalities to be active in social media, they should adopt the following points (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2009:66-67);

- Making continuous and up-to-date posts
- Being engaging
- Having a humble approach
- Being amateur
- Being honest

Municipalities and municipal administrations need to be aware of positive or negative comments written about their institutions, services and activities. Social media platforms should be carefully monitored to prevent negative or manipulative comments. It is important to respond quickly to comments that are considered unfair and to inform the public about this issue (Solmaz and Görkemli, 2012:9).

Municipalities should determine their own policies and strategies in terms of social media use. Interaction with the public, ensuring public participation, determining whether their activities are in line with the demands of the public, measuring the rate of disruption or satisfaction in services, and performance evaluation are among the things to be done. Determining whether the right social media tool has been selected is also important. Two-way symmetric communication should be emphasized and a citizen-oriented governance approach should be adopted. Individuals working in the social media unit should be continuously trained.

Municipalities instantly inform the public about their activities and the services they provide by using social media channels. This situation has necessitated the active use of social media by both the public and municipalities, which are public service units. In this direction, it is essential to use social media accounts to provide better services and to identify the demands of the public in the most direct way, to ensure participation, and to inform the public about services and activities.

Social media also has the capacity to create an infrastructure for process innovation. This is because services that require very long process steps can be minimized through direct communication and the public can benefit from the services effectively. Likewise, with the use of social media, municipalities also have the opportunity to improve processes.

Standards consisting of various rules regarding the use of social media by municipalities can be determined. In this direction, determining the issues that municipalities should pay attention to while sharing, the characteristics of the personnel working in the social media unit, what can be done to ensure the participation of citizens, and the strategy to be followed in case of negative comments or crisis situations in posts containing services and promotions will ensure more efficient use of social media.

Taking Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality as an example, the research found that the municipality's service and activity posts are more or less at the same level, Twitter and Instagram accounts are used intensively, social media usage efficiency measurements are made every month, and ALO 153 Solution Center is included in the process in the management of demands and complaints. It has been revealed that the municipality contributes to the promotion of the city and governance, and it has been determined that municipal administrations have made improvements in service delivery in response to requests and reactions from social media and that they can change their management policies or the way they work. More emphasis should be placed on practices that encourage public participation in governance. In addition, making communication two-way will improve interaction with the public and contribute to governance. Considering the feedbacks of the citizens and being aware of these notifications are among the objectives of the municipality. On the other hand, there was no information about the extent to which the feedbacks of the citizens were returned. Producing solutions for demands and complaints is a priority. However, it should be among the main duties of the municipality to produce solutions with a proactive point of view before demands and complaints arise. Personnel quality and business processes should be developed in this direction and the improvement of processes should be given importance. The purpose of the municipality's use of social media is basically to convey the municipality's works and announcements to the citizens. However, communicating new and innovative service offerings to citizens through social media platforms will make significant progress towards becoming a municipality that makes a difference. Experts should be consulted in order to ensure that the reactions of the citizens on the

sharing are at a minimum level. Social media management should be carried out with professional social media managers and employees. Requests should be received via DM and a team should be formed that can only respond to requests and problems communicated via social media, apart from ALO 153. It is not enough to evaluate the suggestions from the citizens. It should be aimed to ensure the intensive participation of citizens in the governance mechanism. Citizens who offer suggestions on social media in this direction and whose suggestions are implemented should be rewarded and the process should be encouraged.

Since three-dimensional use of social media will be in question in metadata, where Web 3.0 technology has been developed and which we will meet in the coming years, it can be suggested that municipalities should develop themselves in this field as a priority, determine the necessary strategies, improve their technological infrastructure, focus on personnel training and be ready for social media transformed by metadata. The study was limited due to the lack of numerical data on the social media of the sampled municipality. It may be recommended to expand the research population for future studies.

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