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Mobile Use and Online Preferences of the Millenials: A Study in Yalova

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to understand the use of social media in the millennial generation. Millennial generation covers those people born in the early 2000's. The research study answers critical questions such as: Why do the millennials use social media? Which website or social channels do they use most frequently when they surf the Internet? Using the social media has been explained thoroughly from a conceptual standpoint in different academic sources. We want to offer the readers some quantitative results beyond the qualitative research studies found in the literature. The study involved a questionnaire administered to 120 children between the ages of 12 and 17. The children were chosen by convenience sampling among the students from a combined Primary and Secondary Public School located in the Yalova district of Turkey.

Keywords: Social media; Millennials; Online behaviour; Yalova; Internet; Social

networks

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INTRODUCTION

Usage of social media is increasing day by day. Approximately every individual in the high income and upper middle income countries has a social media account. But their primary aims in using the different types of social media differ from each other substantially. People use the social media for connecting with friends, for chatting, for following the brands they like, gathering information, following celebrities and for many other reasons.

Social media is a term used to describe a variety of Web-based platforms, applications and technologies that enable people to socially interact with one another online. Some examples of social media sites and applications include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Linked-in, blogs and other sites that have content based on user participation and user generated content (abbreviated as UGC).

In October 2004, researchers Neil Howe and William Strauss called Millennials "the next great generation". They define the group as "as those born in 1982 and approximately the 20 years thereafter." In 2012, they affixed the end point as 2004. The participants of this study by this definition are "millennials". It is not determined yet what the next generation will be named. Some researchers have suggested the "C generation" meaning the "click generation" will be our next generation.

Regardless of the terminology we use to call the youngsters of today who will be in the work force and act as consumers in a couple of years' time, we should know what motivates them to use social media. If we know their behaviors in social media, marketing people can develop projects according to them. In the long run this will increase the profitability of any sector, especially the banking sector which uses online applications extensively.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of papers have been published about the different generations' use of the Internet or the social media. We will review the most relevant ones in this section. Some of the papers reviewed analyze the behavior of teens as separate from adults in terms of how they use their mobile devices. Some papers analyzed the different labels of generations (such as Y, X) in terms of how they use social media.

According to Yarrow and O'Donnell [1], teens and twenty-something's are twice as likely as their elders to use mobile devices for tasks other than talking. And they are far more likely to opt in for text promotions, mobile coupons and mobile search services.

In Bolton et al.'s paper [2] it is stated that Generation Y actively contributes, shares, searches for and consumes content – plus works and plays – on social media platforms. Service managers and researchers are interested in Generation Y's social media usage because it may

be an indication of how people will behave in the future. The paper concludes much more research is needed in order to comprehend the consequences of social media usage by the digital natives.

Kumar et al. [3] aimed to investigate the effects of age on mobile service quality perceptions and its impact on perceived value, satisfaction and loyalty between two significant mobile service user segments – Generation Y and baby boomers. Gen Y consumers are born between 1980 and 1994, with the youngest being 12 years old and the oldest being 26 years old as of 2006. Gen Y-ers are an important consumer segment. Gen Y-ers typically spend about \$187 billion annually or \$260 per person, per month in every industry, including wireless communication. The results identify the mobile service quality attributes that are important to Generation Y-ers and baby boomers. The study also finds significant differences between the two groups in terms of the effect of perceived economic and emotional value on satisfaction. In addition to this, Gen Y is important for marketers because of the impact that they have on their families' purchase decisions [4].

Gen Y-ers are often early adopters of new technologies and are extensive users of the internet. As with the internet, Gen Y-ers are substantial users of mobile services. In terms of mobile service usage, a recent study reports that more than 50 percent of US consumers in the age group of 15-24 own a mobile phone and these users outnumber all other users in terms of minutes used, number of calls placed, messages sent/received and wireless data transmitted/received [5].

Short message services (SMS) are also on the rise among Gen Y. A recent study indicates that majority of Gen Y-ers communicate via SMS with an average of 126 messages sent per month [6]. Mobile phones are often a medium of self-expression and individuality for the younger generation [7-9]. For example, Gen Y-ers personalize their phones by downloading unique ring tones, screensavers and message tones. Also, Gen Y-ers use mobile phones as an important means to maintain peer relations. As Gen Y-ers appear to be in the main stream of data service users in the USA, and as mobile data services are a main source of income for mobile carriers, Gen Y-ers are an important target market for mobile carriers.

Generation Y is a unique and influential consumer group whose behavior is often discussed but not fully understood [10,11]. Heavily influenced by technology and the internet, this consumer cohort has evolved differently from previous generations making it a challenging group to target [12].

Generation Y individuals watch less television, are not influenced by mainstream media, and are much more resistant to advertisements than previous generations [13-15]. They grew up in a more media-saturated, brand-conscious world than their parents and they respond to ads differently, preferring to encounter ads through sources other than traditional media. For this reason, many companies are relying less on traditional media advertising and more on event marketing, product placements and digital media [13]. For a message to appeal to Generation Y, it must be quick, direct, and honest [14]. Generation Y does not trust the traditional news media as much as earlier generations [16]. This generation dislikes being an advertising target, so they depend more on their friends' opinions and word-of-mouth when making purchase choices [16]. As moderate television viewers, Generation Y leans more toward programs shown on network and cable, and less toward prime time [17]. Marketers who have successfully targeted Generation Y use fewer traditional advertisements and often appeal to Generation Y

using messages that involve surprise and humor [16].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The questionnaire was administered using online data collection forms prepared by Google forms utility. The data collection lasted one month and took place in the April and May of 2015 when the 2014-2015 academic year second semester of the primary and secondary schools were in session. The school is run by the National Ministry of Education of the Republic of Turkey and is located in Yalova district of Turkey with a total of approximately 300 students (Yalova Merkez Zübeyde Hanım Ortaokulu). The Yalova district is located in the northwest of Turkey close to major cities like İstanbul and Bursa. The district has a population of about 125,000.

The students were asked to complete the forms in computer classes. Out of 300 students 120 of them completed the questionnaires. The questionnaire included 54 questions 4 of which are demographic questions. The starting question of the survey was "Do you use Internet at all?". Although the online form permitted the respondents to fill the rest of the questionnaire even though the answer is "no" the students with the "no" answers to the first question were deleted from the analysis. As a result 113 questionnaires were usable.

Of the students who filled the 113 surveys 55 were males and 58 were females. 101 students were middle school students (grades 5-8) and the remaining 12 were high school students (grades 9-12). 33 students indicated that they used the Internet less than 1 hour per day, 49 indicated they used the Internet between 1 to 3 hours per day, 22 students indicated they used the Internet between 3 to 5 hours per day and the remaining 9 students indicated they used the Internet more than 5 hours per day. It is evident from the results of this question that the students participating in the survey are actively using the Internet therefore the sample is adequate for the research purpose of the study.

The SPSS computer program was used to analyze the data. Frequencies and cross tabulations were used. Also, in order to explain the structure within the 10 Likert-Scale questions in the survey MDS analysis was applied. In particular the PROXSCAL option of SPSS was used with the "create proximities from data" option and the twodimensional solution.

RESULTS

With respect to the primary motivation for using the Internet a multiple choice question with the possibility to check more than one answer was utilized. Top of the list was "Entertainment-Video, Games etc." with 63 responses. 43 students checked "Research and Homework" as the main motivation for using the Internet. 32 students indicated "Social Media" as the reason for using the Internet. Following that, 10 students indicated "Keeping Up to Date with the Topics of the Day" as the reason for using the Internet. There were two other categories provided in the multiple choice questions but very few students checked these. One was "E-mail" with 7 students indicating this as the reason for using the Internet.

And finally the "E-Government Services" category was checked with the least frequency with just 3 students. On another question about what social media brings to mind first 21 checked "Instant Access", 34 checked "Fun", 30 checked "Communication" and 28 checked "Sharing".

One other set of questions asked the students which social media platforms they had accounts in. The possible responses were Facebook, Twitter, Personal Blog, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Foursquare. The vast majority of the students had a Facebook account with close to 77%. Following that was Twitter with 38%. The results are tabulated in Table 1.

Table 1: Percentage of students with various Social Media accounts.

Social Media	Percentage
Facebook	76.99%
Twitter	38.05%
Instagram	36.28%
Personal Blog	19.47%
Foursquare	11.50%
LinkedIn	7.08%

The students were also asked their primary motivation for using social media accounts. Among the answer choices were passing time, playing games, online chat and some others. Their answers indicated that the three categories mentioned had the highest frequencies. Following brands was given among the categories however only three students checked this option. The summary of the answers are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Percentage of students' primary purpose in using Social Media accounts.

Primary Purpose	Percentage
Passing Time	28,32%
Playing Games	18,58%
Online Chat	13,27%
Sharing Videos, Pictures	12,39%
Keeping Up to Date	9,73%
Following Friends	7,08%
Finding New Friends	6,19%
Following Brands	2,65%
Updating the Profile	1,77%

The number of friends on Facebook or the number of people followed in Twitter may also be a sign of how intensely the teenagers use the social media tools. Table 3 provides the data for Facebook and Twitter. Note that the number of students using Facebook is 87 and that for Twitter is 43.

Table 3: Number of friends contacted on social media.

Number of Friends/Number of Friends Followed	Facebook	Twitter
Less Than 100	12	19
101-250	24	13
251-350	20	5
More than 351	31	7

Table 4: Where customers seek information about brands.

Source of Information on Brands	Percentage
Facebook Pages	68,14%
Search Engines	64,60%
Facebook Groups	53,10%
Corporate Sites	46,90%
Twitter Accounts	41,59%
Forums	38,94%
Corporate Blogs	33,63%
Complaint Sites	33,63%
Personal Blogs	32,74%
Linked In Pages	14,16%

The 14 variables mentioned so far measured how intensely teenagers use various forms of social media. What we are more interested is how they make their decisions about brands and how these decisions are influenced by the Internet in general and more precisely by the social media. The subjects were asked a series of 10 questions about how they collect their

information about brands. The results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 5: Likert Scale questionnaire items.

Question	Variable Code
The presence of a brand on social media influences my attitude towards that brand	V1
The presence of a brand on social media influences my attitude positively towards that brand	V2
The presence of a brand on social media brings competitive advantage for a firm against a competitor	V3
I am influenced by what the brands share on social media	V4
I am influenced positively by what the brands share on social media	V5
I think that a brand I see on social media is more reliable	V6
I think that a brand I see on social media is more innovative	V7
I think that a brand I see on social media is of better quality	V8
I think that a brand I see on social media is more interactive	V9
I prefer to buy a brand I see on social media	V10

When students were asked if they are influenced by what their friends share about brands on social media 55 over 113 indicated a yes response (this number was 79 when asked if they are in general influenced by what their friends share on social media). 45 over 113 indicated that they follow a brand on social media. When asked on specific types of social media Facebook was top of the list by 57%, Twitter and Instagram had a tie at about 27% and LinkedIn 6%. When asked if they ever joined a social media campaign of a brand only %18 indicated that they did. The respondents were asked how important, in their views, it was for a company's image that the brands they carried had a Facebook page, Twitter account, Instagram account, corporate web site or a LinkedIn page. On a four point scale where most important carries a value of four, Facebook had 2.7, Twitter and Instagram has 2.3, corporate web site had 2.5 and finally LinkedIn had 1.6.

Finally the survey included a battery of Likert Scale (5 point) agreement questions on various

aspects related to a firm’s social media presence. There were 10 such questions in total and the questions and variable codes to be used in further analysis are presented in Table 5. The average levels of agreement for the 10 items in decreasing order are provided in Table 6. We can see that the highest level of agreement is with variable 3. The lowest one was with variable 10.

Table 6: Average levels of agreement.

Average	Variable Code
2.96	V3
2.83	V2
2.81	V5
2.76	V1
2.76	V9
2.75	V4
2.73	V7
2.67	V8
2.55	V6
2.51	V10

Table 7: Correlations among the 10 Likert Scale items.

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	V7	V8	V9	V10
V1	1	0.75	0.64	0.64	0.53	0.5	0.56	0.53	0.52	0.4
V2		1	0.56	0.61	0.5	0.6	0.57	0.62	0.6	0.41
V3			1	0.59	0.68	0.4	0.69	0.6	0.5	0.25
V4				1	0.62	0.58	0.59	0.56	0.56	0.4
V5					1	0.57	0.72	0.59	0.56	0.35
V6						1	0.52	0.57	0.55	0.56
V7							1	0.7	0.6	0.45
V8								1	0.51	0.34
V9									1	0.61
V10										1

It would also be interesting to study the correlations among the scale items. Table 7 provides the Pearson product moment correlations. All of the correlations are significant at the .05 level. The correlations are all positive with the largest being among V1 and V2, namely “influence attitude towards brand” and “positively influence attitude towards brand”. The second largest correlation is among V5 and V7, namely “influenced positively by what the brands share on social media” and “a brand I see on social media is more innovative”. Another high correlation following that is V7 and V8 which are “brands on social media are innovative” and “brands on

social media are of better quality”. V3 and V7 have the next highest correlation and those are “presence of a brand on social media brings competitive advantage for a firm against a competitor” and “brands on social media are innovative”. The most important variable perhaps is V10 which is preference for brands with online presence. This variable correlates highly with V9 which is “brands on social media are interactive”.

One way we can try to group together the variables multiple item scales is by using Factor Analysis. Another alternative is Multidimensional Scaling or MDS. MDS has been used previously mainly for visualization purposes [18-22]. On the other hand the method can also be used as an alternative to Factor Analysis in separating scale items into dimensions [23,24]. The authors applied the technique in a scale related to information seeking and sharing; they stated “This two-scale alignment confirms results of higher order factor analysis. Instrument items in quadrants II and III, together with item #8, which is located near the Y axis, were identified as belonging to the first of two scales derived by factor analysis. All remaining items, in quadrants I and IV, were identified as belonging to the second scale. This two-factor solution was accepted and resulted in the Information Seeking and Information Sharing scales of the ICTL”. In a similar fashion we applied the MDS procedure to the 10 items and obtained the map in Figure 1. According to this map the variables 3, 5, 7, and 8 fall into one cluster and variables 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, and 10 fall into the second cluster, upon looking at the first dimension coordinates. This observation is also consistent with the findings from the correlations given in Table 7.

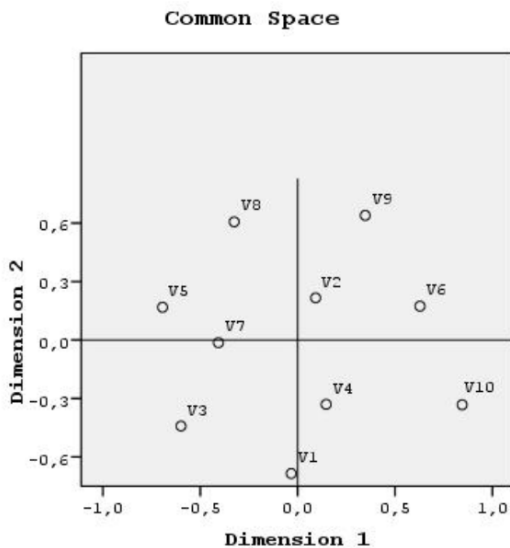


Figure 1: MDS map of the 10 Likert Scale items.

CONCLUSION

In the context of financial services firms Internet banking and use of apps and social media sites is becoming extremely important. As youngsters are moving on to college and becoming users of financial services the study of their online behavior becomes more important for marketing managers of these firms and others in different sectors such as FMCG and services.

We observe that a majority of the teenagers in Yalova area use some form of social media. One type of social media seems to dominate however the two runners up are catching up. Almost

half of the teenagers seem to state that their primary purpose in using social media is passing time and playing games. Those who use social media to follow brands fall at a minor 2-3%. In terms of seeking information about brands however, Facebook seems to top of the list. Also Facebook presence seems to be the most related to a company's image in the eyes of the millennials. On a 5-point Likert Scale the millennials stated an average level of agreement of 3 when asked whether social media presence would bring a company an advantage over competitors who do not have a social media presence (the highest score). Another observation from the survey conducted is that those who state preference for brands with social media presence also think that companies present in social media are more interactive.

This study presented, for the case of Yalova district of Turkey, an analysis of the online behaviors of teenagers who are in high school. The study can be extended to cover more districts and other areas of Turkey. It can also be extended to cover teenagers who are not attending high school. Having been completed in 2015 this study will act as a very recent quantitative study with results being usable in the near future.

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