A Research on the Impacts of the Young People's Internet Addiction Levels and their Social Media Preferences

Murat Akin*

Ömer Halisdemir University, 51240 Nigde, Turkey. *Email: muratakin@ohu.edu.tr

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to determine whether or not internet addiction levels of young people lead to differences in social media use intentions. The study consists of two main parts. In the literature review section where the conceptual framework is tried to be formed, internet addiction and social media concepts are defined, and information on social media use is given. Following the conceptual framework, the hypothesis to test whether or not the addiction has led to differences in the intended use is analyzed with a sample of 756 participants. The results of the research study suggest that 96.8% of the young people use the internet on a daily basis, 91.2% use mobile phones for the internet access, 0.61 of the young people are addicted to it, and 0.391 of them spend 5-6 h online every day. Facebook is seen as the most preferred social media tool. Young people use the social media mostly to establish communication and to make various kinds of sharing. It is worried that the young people's quality of life and mental health may be negatively affected in the later years. For this, first of all, the government needs to conduct studies on media literacy and create different social fields such as sports facilities, theaters, etc. where the young people can socialize with each other. In the conclusion of the study, the effects in question are evaluated, and the state, business managers, marketing researchers and marketing researchers are presented with suggestions.

Keywords: Satisfaction, Behavioral and Attitudinal Brand Loyalties, Mobile Phone, Young Consumers
JEL Classification: L2

1. INTERNET ADDICTION AND THE SOCIAL MEDIA

Within the first quarter of the 21st century, the speed of access to information and accumulation of knowledge acquired by human beings constituted even more of what had been possessed throughout the history. This speed and size of transition caused radical changes in human life (Aksoy, 2015). The internet, as one of the main actors of the age in which we live that include every aspect of our lives, underlies this profound change. Beyond being a network used in order to attain information, the internet has become a space that connects individuals and facilitated their socialization (Işık, 2009; Aydın, 2016). As in the whole world, the internet has been adopted and has spread very quickly in Turkey. According to TUIK 2016 reports, eight out of every ten families in Turkey have internet access (www.tuik.gov.tr, Access Date: 15.01.2017).

According to the survey (2014) conducted by the marketing agency Fikri Mühim, 70% of the youth population in the 16-24 age group and 63% of the 25-34 age group in Turkey use the internet. According to TUIK 2016 data, the percentage of the individuals who use the internet every day on a regular basis or at least once a week within the first 3 months of the year is found as 94.2%. In a similar study conducted by Akyazı and Ünal (2013), it is found that the vast majority of the participants used the internet for 1-3 h/day (Aydın, 2016).

According to the data from the internet users worldwide, it is estimated that 2.5 billion internet users worldwide (internetworldstats.com, 2012), and that this figure will reach to 3.6 billion by 2017. It is also stated that Facebook has a market share of over 60% in the world social media market, followed by YouTube, Google+ and Twitter with shares of 44%, 43%, and 35%, respectively (export.gov, 2012). The internet has made our everyday life easier, and its overuse has caused various problems. This situation causes the deterioration of the quality of life and psychological problems for some users (Young, 1996; Doğan et al., 2008; Gökçearslan and Günbatar, 2012).

Acier and Kern (2011) examined these problems under eight categories such as internet addiction disorders, pathological internet use, problematic internet use, cyber addiction, high internet addiction, excessive internet use and virtual addiction (Özdemir et al., 2014; Kardefelt, 2014; Liu et al., 2014).

The concept of "internet addiction" has been first coined by Goldberg (1996) with a spam e-mail sent as a joke (Kutlu et al., 2016; Gökçearslan and Günbatar, 2012; Durualp and Çiçekoğlu, 2012).

The concept of addiction is used in the international literature in the meaning of "compulsion" or "dependence" (Günüç and Kayri, 2010).

Addiction is described as "an inevitable desire for an object, person or entity, or the state of being under the domination of another person" (https://en.wikipedia.org; 14.01.2017), as well as the inability to refrain from or limit the consumption of a substance or behavior (Egger and Rauterberg, 1996).

As for addiction, not only substance dependence should be referred to, but behavior-based dependencies should also be evaluated. When it comes to addiction, substance-based addictions such as tobacco, alcohol, and drugs often come to mind. Additionally, behavior-based dependencies leading to deterioration of the quality of life and psychology of the individual such as eating, gaming, sex, computer, mobile phone, television, shopping and the internet that are not based on a physical substance should also be considered in addictions. Inevitability and persistency of behaviors and actions despite their negative consequences are among the common features of both substance-based and behavior-based dependencies (Henderson, 2001; Kim and Kim, 2002).

Although the controversy over whether or not internet addiction is a real psychological problem has been disputable until the year 2000, nowadays it is accepted as a psychological problem and studies are being conducted on treatment methods (Doğan, 2013). Although there is no consensus on the diagnosis and criteria for internet addiction in the literature; "excessive internet use, inability to refrain from using the internet, excessive nervousness and aggressiveness due to the deprivation of the internet use" are considered as the indicators of addiction (Arısoy, 2009).

In order to be accepted as an internet addict, the actual duration of online connection and inability to keep the internet use under control are essential for the individual (Young, 2004; Leung, 2004; Simkova and Ve Cincera, 2004; Yellowlees and Marks, 2007; Morahan and Schumacher, 2000; Chou et al., 2005).

The time spent online can be thought of as both the cause and the result of internet addiction (Irwansyah, 2005). The difference between actual time spent online for internet addicts and non-addicts is remarkable (Cao and Su, 2007; Everhard, 2000; Gonzalez, 2002; Hardie and Tee, 2007; Kim and Kim, 2002; Kubey et al., 2001; Lin and Tsai, 2002; Nalwa and Anand, 2003; Simkova and Ve Cincera, 2004; Young, 1996; Weitzman, 2000).

The time spent on the internet alone is not regarded as a sign of addiction, the purpose of the internet access is also of great importance (Bayraktutan, 2005). Users who are addicted to the internet use tend to spend their time on websites with games, chatting, and pornographic content while non-addict users go online for information and communication purposes (Kim and Kim, 2002; Murali and George, 2007; Tvedt, 2007; Chen et al., 2001; Tekdal, 2005). The need for socialization is thought to be one of the most important elements that lead individuals to internet addiction (Bayraktutan, 2005; Esen, 2007; Grohol, 1999). The need for socialization triggers the risk of internet addiction and encourages the individuals to become involved in a virtual world by moving them away from the society within (Thatcher and Goolam, 2005).

While these developments change the daily communication habits of individuals, they enable individuals to be involved in the process of producing meaning in many social and political contexts. Along with its attributions such as continuous updatability, multi-task usability, virtual sharing possibility; the social media becomes prominent as one of the most effective environments regarding interpersonal communication. People can share their daily thoughts on the social media, discuss these thoughts, and present new ideas. Besides their personal information, they can also share various photos and videos, look for jobs and even live in a virtual environment. In a variety of studies conducted to determine the intended use of the social media (Stutzman, 2006; Lockyer and Patterson, 2008; Grant, 2008; Ellison, 2007; Govani and Pashley, 2006; Ofcom, 2008), participants stated that they are mostly concerned with maintaining social relationships, sharing their personal information, mutual interests, thoughts and needs with each other and maintaining their existing friendships.

This situation causes all attention to be drawn on the social media and points out the necessity of forming a new conceptual framework for changing and transforming communication (Aydın, 2016). The studies indicate that young people use the social media as a means of interaction and communication and they create a digital environment for themselves (Agosto et al., 2012; Ahn, 2011; Boyd, 2007; Correa et al., 2010; Dönmez et al., 2012; Ito et al., 2010; Kert and Kert, 2010; Kert, 2011; Lenhart et al., 2007). Pempek et al. (2009) found that the young people utilize the social media to communicate, to find friends, and to acquire new information (Kindi and Alhashmi, 2012) by spending ½ h online.

Haase and Young (2010) pointed out that the social media sites are used by students for getting rid of the pressure, relaxing, and leisure while Mazman and Usluel (2011) categorized the intended use of the social networks under four dimensions such as maintaining existing relationships, establishing new relationships, following the agenda, and performing academic studies (Eren, 2014). In the study conducted by Armağan (2013) on the young people, it was determined that 96.8% of the participants use the social media and while 71% of them spent time on the social media sites for 1-5 h. Participants also use the social media to share pictures, videos, and information; to conduct research studies; to share their ideas, and to communicate with their friends. Again, Akçay (2011) stated that the young people used the social media to improve their social environment and to share pictures, videos and music.

Vural and Bat (2010) claimed that 68% of the participant connected to the internet on a daily basis, 85% used the social media, 82% used Facebook and 24% spent the most of their times on MySpace. It has been found that the social media is used by the participants who are impressed by the comments made on brands mostly for the purposes of following and communicating with their friends.

When the international literature is considered, it is found that the age discrimination among the young people in the studies on social media is mostly seen between the ages of 12 and 17 (teens) (Lenhart, 2009; Yardi and Bruckman, 2011; King et al., 2014) and 18-29 (young adults) (Correa et al., 2010; Roblyer et al., 2010; Duggan and Brenner, 2013). The social media is becoming a widely used platform especially among the young people (Erol and Hassan, 2014).

According to the digital marketing agency's statistics for the internet and social media use in 2015, it is seen that there are 37.7 million active internet users in our country. Thus, this figure corresponds to about 50% of the country's population of 70 million. According to these results, the widespread use of the social media in our country can be explained with the technological possibilities brought by the new communication environment and also with the transformative features offered by the social media in the communication field (Aydın, 2016).

Similarly, it is observed that studies on internet addiction are mostly about the adolescents or the young people and that the addiction increases rapidly for those between 12 and 18 years of age (Ozturk et al., 2007).

Despite the fact that each period has a distinctive feature in human life, the process of rapid and important changes in terms of biological, psychological and social nature undoubtedly coincides with the onset of puberty. Adolescence is considered as a critical period because the adolescents experience major changes in physical, emotional, and social areas (Whitehead and Corbin, 1997).

The adolescents begin to meet the social environment within this period and the friends along with the family gain importance for the development of the adolescent. It is thought that social support, which is emphasized to be closely related to mental health, becomes even more important during adolescence during which rapid emotional changes are experienced. Social support is a basic requirement for adolescents; for them to continue their social relations at the desired level, to overcome their loneliness, to adapt to their environment and to maintain their psychological well-being (Pinkerton and Dolan, 2007).

At this stage, the adolescents and the young people's pursuit of support in the social media that is becoming increasingly popular in daily life practices as an important part of social life brings about cultural, social and psychological influences as it plays a transformative role in social life.

The fact that it is so intertwined with everyday life also necessitates the questioning of the social media as a new means of communication. Therefore, the relationship between technology and the individual is important both at the individual and societal dimension. In particular, the time spent on social networking sites by the young population and the increased number of memberships in these sites indicate that a new form of communication has taken root. For this reason, research is very crucial for determining the social media use habits of the young and learning population (Eren, 2014; Erol and Hassan, 2014; Aydın, 2016).

In the study, regarding this importance, it is aimed to determine the level of internet addictions of the university students and whether or not the level of addictions lead to differences in their social media use habits.

Based on this information, the research hypothesis is as follows;
H_1: Internet addiction levels of the young people lead to differences in social media preferences,

In the literature, there are many measurement tools in the world and Turkey that examine individuals' internet use with different names (Lei and Yang, 2007; Meerkerk et al., 2009; Şahin and Korkmaz, 2011).

However, the short-version of Young's internet addiction test is widely used in Turkey as a valid and reliable scale for both university students and adolescents.

As for social media preferences, the scale included in the study of Erol and Hassan (2014) on young consumers' social media use is utilized.

2. METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

The internet use is also spreading rapidly in our country as well as in the whole world. Especially among the young consumers, the duration of internet access which can be defined as internet addiction, frequent inability of controlling the internet use and, most importantly, preference of this new virtual environment for socialization closely appeal to both educators and companies.

The determination of the social areas that the young people mostly prefer in this new environment that they use to socialize and interact with each other is considered as the most effective areas that can be used to reach them. With this study, it is aimed to determine how the young people spend their time on the internet and how they use this time and whether or not it makes a difference in the social media preferences of the young consumers within the age range of 18-29.

University students have been identified as the main population of the research. The study is conducted by face to face interviews with Ömer Halisdemir University students throughout October-November 2016. Questionnaires are drawn up from the related literature. In this context, it is primarily aimed to determine the internet addictions of the young consumers through the short-version of Young's Internet Addiction Test, and with respect to the social media preferences, the scale from which Erol and Hassan benefited in their study conducted on the young consumers' social media use. Both scales are prepared with 5-point Likert scale. The

Table 1: Young's (1998) Internet Addiction Scale

Young's (1998) Internet Addiction Scale	Not addicted	Risk group %	Addicted %	Average
Do you feel infatuated/captivated by the internet?	11	15.7	73.3	4.00
Do you feel the need for spending more time online to be satiated?	14.8	26.9	58.3	3.66
Have you ever tried to control or minimize your internet use?	26	16.1	57.9	3.52
Do you feel anxious, pessimistic or nervous whenever you try to limit or stop your internet use?	10.4	32.8	56.8	3.30
Do you stay online longer than you initially intended to?	7	13.1	79.9	4.15
Have you ever risked your important tasks, your education or an occupational opportunity due to internet access?	33.4	26.8	39.8	3.01
Have you ever lied to your family, friends or others in order to conceal the duration of your internet connection?	13.2	31.8	55	3.37
Do you utilize the internet as a means of escaping your problems or avoiding restlessness/anxiety?	14.9	16.9	68.2	3.84

Table 2: Distribution of the students' addictions

Young's (1998) Internet Addiction Scale	Not addicted	Risk group	Addicted
N (%) of the students	124 (0.164)	170 (0.224)	462 (0.61)

questionnaire consists of three parts; the Internet Addiction Scale is used in the first part, and the scale for determining the social media preferences is used in the second part. In the last part, questions about the demographic characteristics of the respondents, the durations of their internet use, and their social media preference are included.

2.1. Sampling and Data Collection

After the decision is made to conduct the study on the young consumers, Ömer Halisdemir University students are selected as the target group. Depending on the time and budget constraints of the study, convenience sampling is determined as the sampling method of the study. With this method, totally 800 undergraduate and graduate students are interviewed through face-to-face survey method between the period October and November. However, 756 questionnaires are found valid for analysis when sluggishly filled questionnaires with the crucial amount of lost data are excluded. The available questionnaire rate is 94.5%, and it is considered to sufficiently represent the population. When the demographic distribution of the research sample is considered, it is seen that the number of participants of either gender is almost homogeneously distributed, and 52.2% of the sample consists of women. Considering the income level of the research sample, it is seen that 46.3% of the participants have incomes of 2000 TL or higher. It is determined that 96.8% of the students who responded to the questionnaires use the internet on a daily basis, 91.2% of them used their mobile phones for the internet access, and 39.1% regularly spent 5-6 h online per day. In the meantime, the distribution of the answers given by the participants on the most frequently used social media tools to determine the mostly preferred socialization areas during the time spent on the internet is as follows. With 82.6%, Facebook is the most popular social media tool, and it is followed by Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube channels with 78.6%, 48.2%, and 43.5%, respectively.

2.2. Analysis and Findings

The reliabilities of two different scales used in the study are examined, and primarily addictions are categorized into three levels based on the responses given to the questions in Young's Internet Addiction

Test (Balcı and Gülnar, 2009) so as to determine the levels of internet addiction of the young consumers (Esen and Gündoğdu, 2010).

Those with an average up to 2.4 are considered as non-addicts, those with an average between 2.5 and 3.6 are considered as being at risk from time to time because of the internet, and finally those with an average of 3.7 and above are considered as addicts. Erol and Hassan's (2014) scale is also utilized to obtain information about the social media use (Table 1).

The overall average of the Young Internet Addiction Scale used in the study is estimated as 3.61. This suggests that 756 students involved in the study are located at the border of the risk group. The reliability of the Internet Addiction Scale is calculated as 0.84. Reliability of the scale used in the research study is evaluated by looking at the Cronbach alpha coefficient which shows the internal consistency of the variables forming the scale. When the Cronbach alpha coefficient (which varies between 0 and 1) is 0.60 or less, the results pertaining the reliability of internal consistency are unsatisfactory. In general, the lower limit of the Cronbach alpha coefficient is assumed to be 0.70. As the number of variables increases, the correlation coefficient between these variables also increases, thus the reliability of the scale increases (Hair et al., 1998).

Therefore, it can be said that the reliability of our scale for measuring internet addiction is sufficient. The distribution of 756 students' internet addiction is shown in Table 2.

Upon examination of Table 2, it can be said that both life qualities and psychological conditions of the participant students are prone to adverse effects in the future since 0.61 of them include in the addicted category. The reliability of our scale used to measure the intended social media use is 0.857. The reliabilities of both scales are higher than the acceptable threshold of 0.70 in social sciences (Nunnally, 1978). The distribution of the social media use of the participants who responded to our survey is shown in Table 3.

Kruskal–Wallis and non-parametric tests are utilized in order to determine whether or not the young consumers' internet addictions make differences in their social media preferences and which dependency level if such differences exist. When the analysis results are analyzed, it is seen that the dependency levels of the young consumers lead to differences, especially caused by those

Table 3: The Young people's purposes of the social media use

Definitions	Average	Standard deviation
I use social media to follow comments	3.58	1.171
I use social media to play games	2.55	1.369
I use social media to make entertainment plans	2.67	1.155
I use social media to follow new products	3.79	1.186
I use social media to follow campaigns	3.71	1.251
I use social media to share my photographs, videos, and experiences	3.81	1.132
I use social media to communicate with others	3.83	0.933
I add companies that produce products which I use to my social media account	2.58	1.270
I add information websites related to my fields of interest to my social media account	2.51	1.259
I add websites related to entertainment, vacation and travel to my social media account	2.65	1.275

Table 4: Kruskal–Wallis test results

Phrase	Chi-square	df	Asymptotic significant
I use social media to follow comments	254.350	2	0.000
I use social media to play games	225.823	2	0.000
I use social media to make entertainment plans	271.942	2	0.000
I use social media to follow new products	201.414	2	0.000
I use social media to follow campaigns	234.828	2	0.000
I use social media to share my photographs, videos and experiences	244.042	2	0.000
I use social media to communicate with others	236.807	2	0.000
I add companies that produce products which I use to my social media account	266.321	2	0.000
I add education institutions to my social media account	194.201	2	0.000
I add state universities to my social media account	266.268	2	0.000

with addiction, in the purpose of use. Therefore, our H_1 hypothesis of "there are differences between the dependency and the intended use" is accepted as seen in Table 4.

CONCLUSION

Social media is used intensively and effectively among young people in particular. When young consumers' purposes of social media use are considered, it is stated that factors such as communicating, sharing experiences, playing games, developing interpersonal relationships, shopping, acquiring information and sharing loom large (Tham et al., 2013). The aim of this study is to determine whether or not young people's internet addictions make a difference in terms of social media use. For this purpose, universities with intense young population are chosen as the fields of application.

According to the data obtained in the study, 61% of the young people are found to be suffering from internet addiction, while 22.4% are within the risk group. This indicates that the young people experience socialization problems.

Nowadays, the ease of internet access everywhere at any moment and the ability to connect to social networks via smart mobile phones enable the young people to spend more in virtual environments instead of socializing with their peers. It can be said that the young people are most interested in social media sites such as Facebook (82.6%), Twitter (78.6%), Instagram (48.2) and YouTube (43.5%).

Lenhart et al. (2010) also reported similar results suggesting that websites such as Facebook and Twitter are widely used by the young people. It is observed that 39.1% of the young people spend about 5-6 h on social media sites per day. This is a long period that

can be regarded as a sign of the level of internet addiction. It seems that the intended use of social media is mostly communication for the young people (3.83).

Pempek et al. (2009) found that as much as 84% of the young people use social media for communication purposes. According to the results of the study, it can be said that the young people use social media in general for communication, photography, video and sharing. The findings of the study suggest that the young people's social media use does concentrate mostly on photos, video sharing, and viewable sites.

Given the fact that the social media is used mostly for communication purposes, it may be useful for businesses and institutions to promote the social media use of content that may be of interest to young people. Media literacy should prepare more healthy environments for young people and teens to maintain more effective internet and social media use by facilitating sports and theatrical activities that would protect young people from internet addiction. Thanks to media literacy, young people can utilize the social media environment not only to spend time for leisure but also to find resources to attain secure information.

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