

7th International Symposium of Interactive Media Design

The Era of the New Marketing: Attitudes of Young Consumer towards Social Media Marketing

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The area of youth and social media tools deal with all research that concerns youth and their use of these media. This research is a special category in the area and examines how young university students attitudes towards marketing activities in social media tools. These tools made possible of brand interactions on young people by the rising of weblogs, social networking sites and wiki's. The research consists of a broad range of different perspectives such as qualitative and descriptive studies of what goes on in the social media environments. This research employed a survey design and executed among 124 detected participants from random research horizon. The study shows that young adults think social media facilitate interaction, information-sharing and collaboration for the marketing activities. In the research, it is revealed that 85% of the participants think that a brand needs 'a strong electronic presence'. In addition to this, 77% of the participants trust the advice of other consumers, 53% of the participants state that social media tools increase brand awareness and 68% of the participants think social media tools increase brand loyalty. The field is growing in size, shape and complexity and the need for study is urgent. The paper will be a valuable contribution by providing a perspective with Turkey sample and a broad overview.

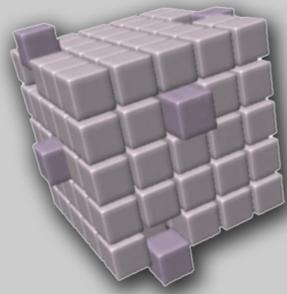
Keywords: Social media tools, youth, social interactions, blogs, marketing

Introduction

Nowadays technology is constantly changing, and when your brand is a part of the social networks it is obvious that it be able to change with it. Social networks have become an increasingly important part of the online experience and are used daily by millions of people. Perhaps it could be so basic definition that social media is people having conversations online. However, with the basic definition, social media is an umbrella term that identifies the different activities that integrate technology, social interaction and the construction of videos, texts, audios and all types of pictures. These social media sites can be classified into three main areas: These are multimedia, communication and entertainment (Boyd and Ellison, 2007).

When we look at the main problems of today's brands is that brands are challenged by serious competition. It is clear that marketing activities has become more competitive with the advent of the internet that has moved consumers away from mass media and into fragmented media consumption. Therefore, those brands try to activate social media options and by implementing the best solution for their awareness necessity and consumers' needs. In the subject of describing social media, McConnell and Huba (2007) suggest that it is 'the sum totals of people who create content online, as well as the people who interact with it or one another'. These social media sites offer a great chance to interact brands with customers in new ways. Moreover, finding new paths to target consumers is now becoming more difficult with the clutter environments of television and print advertising. Marketers need to explore and approve that there are new ways to engage customers through social media sites.

The social media is a potential tool that can help brands reach all new potential, but sometimes they need help has to how to use this power correctly. In the social network sites, groups of people just as friend are gathered and interacted through various micro and macro blogging tools and websites. Social media



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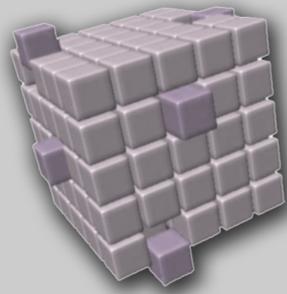
marketing strategies permits interaction, connection, conversation, belonging and a sense of community among its members. These people trust their online network of friends for sharing, advice and socializing. Furthermore, many different styles of online communities have created communities. This means that brands can reach more rich interaction. Social media is crucial right now, with the largest user demographic within the 18-24 age brackets. We can see that 86% of young in Europe are engaged in social media. When we look at the USA, 78% of young use at least one of the social media effectively (<http://arbitron.mediaroom.com/index.php?s=43&item=682>). For Turkey, the condition is brilliant. A new report by sosyalaglar.com gives marketers and researchers a brilliant picture of the motivations and attitudes of social media users in Turkey. While 79% of the Internet users (ages 15 to 35) participate in social media – 44% on a weekly basis – less than 8% of social media users turn to these sites for guidance on counseling decisions in any of product/service categories. Moreover, 12% of social media users state that they buy from companies that advertise on those social sites. When we look at the Twitter that is micro-site as an impressive number, Twitter now has 105,779,710 registered users all around the world. 300,000 new users sign up per day and approximately 60% of them are coming from outside the U.S. Another and the biggest social media tool in history, Facebook, has 300 million active users, of which half access their accounts daily.

Social media tools may be stated by some unique creative principle make easy contributing, but they take a wide array of modes. Well-known social media tools are counted as platforms of Web logs, or blogs, which are websites that are like user based diary or e-journals. Wikis, websites or special platforms are special social media environments, which are authored by a community of people. They are used for effective information getting. Podcasting is a form of audio blog allowed for the uploading and syndication of audio files. Online social networks are also hearth of social media tools. Virtual worlds, including online games, are counted as other forms of online social networks. (Skog, 2005: 464–474). Social media tools means a proper of technologies that have crucially lowered the interaction costs of two-way communication over the World Wide Web, which has socialized the production of information and applications across the internet. With the social media tools people did not just communicate more, they began communicating in qualitatively different ways than before. Very huge numbers of new media instruments give a serious opportunity to express them, collaborate with others for people and especially for the young people who using these effectively and predominantly (Buckingham, 2008). Social medias is really transforming our society in terms of firms' business, politicians' relationships with their voters, teachers' education styles on students, friends' relationships with each other (Li and Bernoff, 2008).

The purpose of this paper is to examine young consumers' attitudes towards social marketing practices. Data were collected using convenience sampling via a self-administered questionnaire in some of the Turkish universities located in Istanbul. A total of 124 useable responses were collected and retained for analysis. When we say something about the research limitations/implications of the studies, our sample is an only limited to young consumer in a Turkish context. As such, limited generalization can be derived. Future research can look into cross cultural studies or other consumer segments. In this paper, implications based on the findings are discussed.

Overview of Literature on Young Consumers' Attitudes toward Social Media

Today's youth is one of the market's most powerful consumer groups. Young people are nowadays progressively able to affect the purchase and decision making of others (Loudon and Bitta, 1983; Zollo, 1995). Young consumers also are able to act independently and they have consumption sophistication. The youth market can be seen as an indicator of social change in terms of their impact on society and surrounding culture (Widdicombe and Woffitt, 1995). Therefore, youth market is asserted to be shaping future marketing trends. Youth is now excessively difficult to reach with mass messages, thanks to a complex media



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landscape and competition in media also. It is easy to claim that the augmentation of young people using social networks brings about marketers a wide new way through which to target them. Nevertheless, this demographic remains a vital, influential market.

The youth market is seen as a tough target market to connect with and sell to them. Fragmented media landscape and young people's attitudes about rejecting marketing messages that lack credibility are the reason for this hardness (Herbig et al., 1993). It is presumably that young adults will perform discrete values, attitudes and behaviors regarding consumer-related skills because of economic, technological and socio-cultural alterations (Bakewell and Mitchell, 2003). It is claimed that new developing technologies and the young people that utilize them are the integral part with each other (Snyder and Edward, 2004; Tapscott, 1998; Spero and Stone, 2004). Successful brands marketing to youth have a special techniques or special contents: Music, sports, fashion, video gaming, technology, and especially social media are the key interests for brand's goals.

Research Method

The data for this study come from a survey. Before the main test, pretests, using one sample of 12 university students, were prosecuted. In the pretests, the questions and wordings for the questionnaire were refined. For the real survey, a total of 124 students at some universities located in Istanbul participated. Although the use of college students can be viewed as proper, Basil (1996) claims this sample is valid if their demographic group is of interest to the topic of study. (Basil, 1996: 431-440). At that point, university student sample is logical to study attitudes on social networking sites, because college students are the main users of social networks (Arrington 2005).

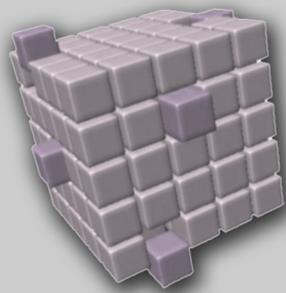
The paper extends debate on the attitudes of young people, which is technology-based generation towards social media tools. In this frame, our research questions are as follows:

- Q 1: What are the using styles of social media by young people?
- Q 2: What are the aims of young people to use social media tools?
- Q 3: What are the main attitudes of young people towards social media tools?
- Q 4: What are the advantages of those social media tools in terms of marketing and advertising practices?
- Q 5: What are interactions between the brands and young people?

At first glance it would appear that digital environment has brought about greater opportunities to communicate, to share views and interact with the brands for the young people which previously could not be widely realize with traditional communication environments. This research employed a survey design. Some survey items were measured using yes or no questions. In addition, these yes and no items were measured by frequency. The first part of the survey was quantitative; students indicated which, if any, social media tools they participated in. In the second part of the survey, young people were asked to respond to a number of statements about their interactions with brands and their attitudes towards social marketing activities. The explanations handle how young people feel about their Web 2.0 tools profiles being accessed in general. A total of 124 usable questionnaires were returned, indicating a response rate of 97 percent.

Results

Table 1 show that a large majority of the participants (53.2%) stated that they have been using internet for



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more than 6 years. The data concerning from where the participants have access to internet are also indicated in the study. According to this, 71.2 percent of the participants have access to internet from home, 16, 4 percent from school, and 12.4 percent from internet cafes.

Table 1. Usage Time of Internet

	n	%
1-6 Months	0	0.0
7-11 Months	0	0.0
1-2 Years	24	19.3
3-5 Years	34	27.4
More than 6 Years	66	53.2
Total	124	100.0

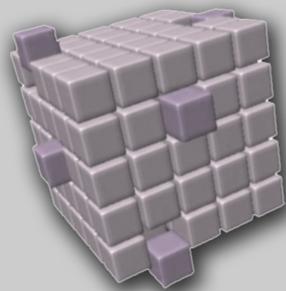
The information concerning the gender of the participants is procured in the study. 40.4 percent of the participants are female and 59.6 percent are male. The data concerning their own computer and internet accesses of the participants are also demonstrated in the study. 84.5 percent of the participants have their own computers, and 15.5 percent have personal internet accesses. The periods of connecting to internet in hour at the weekly basis are assured in the study. According to the findings, 39.6 of the participants connect internet for more than 40 hours, 22.8 percent for 21-40 hours and 19.3 percent for 10-12 hours. The most frequent purposes of using internet by the participants are also exhibited in the study. The data concerning how the participants identify themselves as the internet users are procured in the study. The participants use internet most frequently for the purposes of communicating with the other individuals (34, 6%), entertainment (25%), shopping (9, 6%), education (13, 7%) and get information (16, 1%).

Table 2. The Aims of the Using Social Media Tools for the Participants

	n	%
Education	17	13,7
Shopping	12	9,6
Entertainment	31	25
Communication to Others	43	34,6
Get Information	20	16,1
Total	124	100.0

It is seen that a large majority of the participants (88.4%) identify themselves as the regular internet users. The results concerning how the participants evaluate the place of internet in their lives are also provided in the study. According to the findings, 94.5 percent of the participants responded at the important and very important levels for the place of internet in their lives. The statuses of using the social media tools in which the participants are members are provided in the study. According to this, 48.2 percent of the participants use the social network sites for 21-40 hours, 26.5 percent for longer than 40 hours and 13, 4 percent for 10-12 hours and 11, 9 percent for 7-9 hours. When we look at the way of usage of social media tools, 29% have created their own online journal or blog. 22% of the participants maintain their own personal webpage. 32% of online participants share their own artistic creations online, such as artwork, photos, stories or videos. 23% create or work on webpages or blogs for others, including those for groups they belong to, friends, or school assignments.

Researches also have shown that 88.2 percent of all participants use at least one of the social media tools. The most popular social media in terms of social network sites was The Facebook, with 84.5 percent of participants. Twitter, Friendster and MySpace were the other shared social network sites stated by respondents. Table 3 shows the proportion of social network sites users by specific site. Facebook is the well-known social media tool among participants. Twitter is also well-known (100%) by the respondents. More



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than half of the sample uses MySpace, although it is popular tool among participant. The other three sites (FriendFeed, Xanga, and Orkut, in that order of popularity) are significantly less popular social media tools. Table 3 indicated the percentage of respondents who use the site 'often' and 'sometimes.'

Table 3. Familiarity and experience with social network sites among participants (percentages)

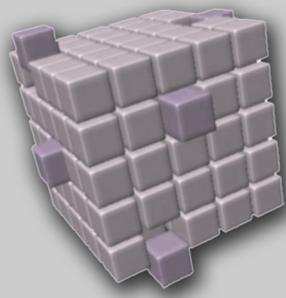
	Manages it	Has known of it	Has never managed it	Tried it but no more
Facebook	84.5	100	11.4	4.1
Twitter	69.6	100	21	9.4
MySpace	55.3	87.5	33.2	11.5
FriendFeed	21.2	49.4	63.1	15.7
Xanga	10.6	11.7	83.1	5.4
Orkut	5.7	10.8	86.5	7.8

We can see that from the study teens say social networking sites help them manage their friendships. 74 % of participants state they use the sites to stay in touch with friends they see constantly, while 69% use the sites to stay in touch with friends they rarely see in person. 68% of all participants manage the sites to arrange social activities with their friends; moreover, we see that 43 % use the sites to make new friends. Almost 3 in five (62%) young people who use social networking sites also mean they write blog. Young people also interact with each other especially with others' blogs. Approximately seven in ten (71%) young people noticed that reading the blogs of others. On the other hand, just 12% of all participants mean they use the sites for flirting. 68% of young people utter that they watch videos on video sharing sites such as video.google.com, Metacafe, YouTube.

The study of 124 participants reveals that 64% of Facebook fans and 75% of Twitter followers are more likely to recommend those brands since becoming a fan or follower. In addition to this, an impressive 47% of Facebook fans and 61% of Twitter followers are more likely to buy the brands they follow or are a fan of. Considering Facebook's over 18 million users in Turkey and over 11, 5 million users in Twitter, the opportunity is great for social media marketers (http://www.aksam.com.tr/2010/03/14/haber/pazar/624/sosyal_medyanin_3_atlisi_facebook_twitter_ve_friendfeed_.html).

The research shown that participants in the 18-to-24 age range expressed strong preference for:

- Search engines, 50 % for providing brand knowledge while buying process
- Registered users emails, blogs or social media sites from retailers or manufacturers, 34 percent,
- Try to reach online ads, 30 percent while buying process
- The study also found that a56 percent of the participants think social sites, macro and microblogging tool are future power to help promote products and services.



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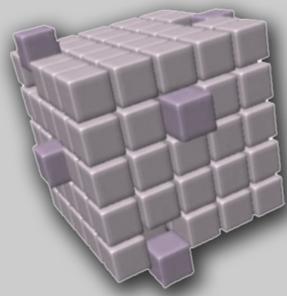
Table 4. Experience of the participants with Social Networking Web Sites

	n	%
Perceived usefulness	16	12.19
Perceive ease of use	29	23.3
Perceive enjoyment	22	17.7
Perceived security	9	7.2
Experience with social networks	24	19.3
Internet purchasing experience	23	18.5
Total	124	100.0

The answers of the social media marketing-based questions are provided in the Table 5. This table includes in the attitudes towards social media marketing of young people.

Table 5. The attitudes-based information concerning the young people towards social media marketing

Using a social media tools for advertising is useful.	Yes		No		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
	83	66,9	41	33,1	124	100.0
I am the fan of at least one company or brand.	Yes		No		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
	62	50	62	50	124	100.0
I follow at least one company or brand.	Yes		No		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
	67	54	57	46	124	100.0
I trust recommendations from people they knew personally about brands	Yes		No		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
	71	57,2	53	42,8	124	100.0
I like social network advertising very much	Yes		No		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
	57	42.8	67	54,2	124	100.0
I trust brand websites and mini-sites.	Yes		No		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
	59	47,5	65	52,5	124	100.0
I focus on the some contents of social media (Favorite pages focus on parenting info, and pages focused on coupons, restaurants, groceries and entertainment)	Yes		No		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
	61	49,1	63	50,9	124	100.0
I believe in the microblogging and macroblogging tool are future power to help promote products and services.	Yes		No		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
	47	38	77	62	124	100.0
If you fan of a brand, will you buy that product then?	Yes		No		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
	69	55,6	55	44,4	124	100.0



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According to the Table 5, the following results are obtained based on the opinions of the participants:

- 66, 9% of the participants think that using a social media tools for advertising is useful.
- 50% of the participants are fans of at least one company or brand.
- 54% of the participants follow of at least one company or brand.
- 57,2% of the participants trust recommendations from people they knew personally about brands
- 42, 8% of the participants trust brand websites and mini-sites.
- 47,5% of the participants like social network advertising very much
- 49,1% of the participants said that they focus on the some contents of social media (Favorite pages focus on parenting info, and pages focused on coupons, restaurants, groceries and entertainment)
- 49% of the participants believe in the microblogging and macroblogging tool are future power to help promote products and services.

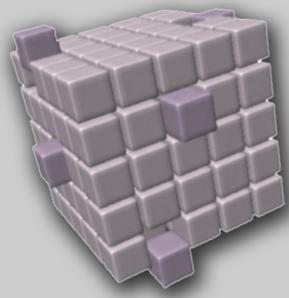
In the research, participants have stated that they have strong credibility toward social media tools:

- 81% of 124 participants state that they think recommendations are the most credible form of advertising,
- Online social network users were three times more likely to trust their peers' opinions over advertising when making purchase decisions,
- 79% of the participants said they would trust user reviews over a critic,
- 77% of the participants trust the advice of other consumers,
- 53% of the participants state that social media tools increase brand awareness,
- 68% of the participants think social media tools increase brand loyalty,
- 85% of the participants said that a brand needs "a strong electronic presence",
- They think, "If they're not on Facebook or Twitter, then they aren't in touch with the "electronic" people. This proportion is 62%.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have talked about the fact that social media has changed marketing forever. It is sure that mass media and traditional forms of marketing is inevitably prominent form of marketing. A company or a personal brand (celebrity) interacts with the consumer or fan. This means that there is an occasion for stronger connection between the consumer and brands. Social media provides the perception of a closer connection between the target market (e.g. a consumer) and the marketing items (brand, celebrity, athlete etc.). Moreover, it is assured that it is a type of word of mouth marketing forms in many case and relatively low cost touch point. There is no doubt that social media marketing is playing a greater role day by day. It is true especially for young and young adults who are nowadays progressively able to affect the purchase and decision making of others.

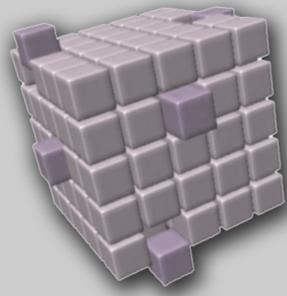
We can see that from the research young people 18 to 24 are looking online- search engines, online articles, online ads, email offers and social media- to a degree that is head and shoulders above the average citizen normally. Research shows that 29% of respondents have created their own online journal or blog. In addition, in keeping with the conversational nature of Web 2.0 environments, young people are interacting with others' blogs. When we come to social media marketing, the study found that 66, 9% of the participants think that using a social media tools for advertising is useful. They stated that are more likely to believe in the microblogging tool's future power to help promote products and services. Researches also have shown that participants think recommendations are the most credible form of advertising. Proportion of this item is 81%. 77% of the participants also trust the advice of other consumers. It is also reveal that participants think social media tools increase brand awareness and brand loyalty. In related to this, 85% of the participants said that a brand needs "a strong electronic presence" When asked if they would



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be more likely to buy something after becoming a 'fan' of the brand, 51 percent of social media users followed suit. When asked if they would be more likely to recommend the brand, 73 percent of Twitter users said they would agree.

As an implication, it is sure that for companies not engaging in the social media marketing conversation with their customers is big deficiency. Firms and brands exude on a literal world of opinion, market research, and feedback and CRM occasions precisely. Brands have had to increase their transparency, and be more honest about their offering in today's marketing environments. In this way, consumers can go and search for the truth online, offered by virtual strangers. In addition to this, it is today expected that a company have some digital face for the future opportunity. They need a strong electronic presence or you doubt their relevance in today's marketplace.



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