

USES OF SOCIAL NETWORK SITES AMONG DIGITAL NATIVES: THE
CASE OF FACEBOOK USE AMONG METU STUDENTS

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FULYA AKBUĞA

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Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

Prof. Dr. Meliha Altunışık
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science.

Prof. Dr. Ayşe Saktanber
Head of Department

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science.

Asist. Prof. A. İdil Aybars
Supervisor

Examining Committee Members

Prof. Dr. Bülent Çaplı (Bilkent University, COMD) _____

Asist. Prof. F. Umut Beşpınar (METU, SOC) _____

Asist. Prof. A. İdil Aybars (METU, SOC) _____

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name, Surname: Fulya Akbuga

Signature:

ABSTRACT

USES OF SOCIAL NETWORK SITES AMONG DIGITAL NATIVES: THE CASE OF FACEBOOK USE AMONG METU STUDENTS TURKEY

Akbuga, Fulya

M.Sc., Sociology Graduate Program

Supervisor: Asist. Prof. Ayşe İdil Aybars

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Today, with the development of the Internet and Web 2.0 technologies, social media dominates the social life. Social network sites are an important part of Social Media where users communicate, interact, share and participate. The most popular social network site Facebook has over 1 billion users in the world and nearly 33 million Internet users in Turkey are using Facebook as well. Young people who were born into digital technologies are called as the 'digital natives'. They are the most active users of Facebook. The purpose of this study is to understand the motives of the digital natives in using social network sites through the lens of Uses and Gratifications Theory with a specific focus on their self-presentation in the case of Facebook. Within the purpose of the study, qualitative methods are used and in-depth interviews are conducted with the sample of Middle East Technical University first grade students.

According to the results, the main reason why the digital natives represented by METU first grade students use Facebook is to satisfy the needs of socialization, communication, entertainment and to share information. Self presentation emerges as one of the main reasons of their Facebook use. It is also significant that they express themselves better on Facebook than their offline social lives.

Keywords: Social Media, Facebook, Digital Natives, Uses and Gratifications, Self Presentation

ÖZ

DİJİTAL YERLİLER KUŞAĞI'NIN SOSYAL AĞLARI KULLANIMI: ODTÜ ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN FACEBOOK KULLANIMI ÖZELİNDE NİTEL BİR ÇALIŞMA

Akbuğa, Fulya

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Danışman: Yard. Doç. Dr. Ayşe İdil Aybars

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Günümüzde, İnternet ve Web 2.0 teknolojilerinin gelişmesiyle Sosyal Medya, sosyal yaşamın merkezinde yer almaktadır. Sosyal Medya araçlarının önemli bir bölümünü oluşturan Sosyal Ağ Siteleri ise, kullanıcılara iletişim, etkileşim, paylaşım ve katılım imkanı sağlamaktadır. Dünyanın en popüler Sosyal Ağ Sitesi Facebook dünyada 1 milyardan fazla, Türkiye’de ise yaklaşık 33 milyon kullanıcıya sahiptir. Dijital teknolojilerin içine doğan ve ‘dijital yerliler’ olarak adlandırılan gençler aynı zamanda Facebook’taki en aktif kullanıcılarıdır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Kullanım ve Doyumlar Yaklaşımı’ndan yola çıkarak, dijital yerlileri Facebook’u kullanmaya iten sebepleri ve kimlik temsilinin onlar için önemini anlamaktır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda nitel yöntemler tercih edilmiş ve Ortadoğu Teknik Üniversitesi (ODTÜ) birinci sınıf öğrencilerinin oluşturduğu örneklem grubuna derinlemesine mülakat tekniği uygulanmıştır. Elde edilen sonuçlara göre, ODTÜ birinci sınıf öğrencileri tarafından temsil edilen dijital yerlilerin Facebook’u temel kullanım amaçları; sosyalleşme, iletişim, eğlenme ve bilgi paylaşımıdır. Kimlik temsili, Facebook kullanımında önemli yer tutmaktadır. Ayrıca bu gençlerin kendilerini Facebook ortamında, gerçek sosyal hayata göre daha iyi ifade ettikleri gözlenmiş ve dikkat çekici bulunmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal Medya, Facebook, Dijital Yerliler, Kullanım ve Doyumlar, Kimlik Temsili

To my family...

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

In the last decade social media is growing rapidly and has become an integral part of the social life. After the development of Web 2.0 technologies, User-Generated Content has dominated the Internet. Social Media and especially Social Network Sites (SNS) have become extremely popular in the globalized world.

With the online mobilization, the boundaries between ‘private’ and ‘public’ have become blurred (Lewis et al., 2008). As online and offline worlds mix into a whole social world, physical locations have lost their importance (Albrechtslund, 2008). With more connectivity, users have more freedom to use social network sites wherever and whenever they want and this makes the users, ‘hyper connected’ as Beddington (2013) argues. On the other hand the users became producers, they began to create, interact and collaborate. This forms a new culture which Jenkins (2009) identifies as ‘participatory’. The young people –so called digital natives are the most active users of social media and they have created new skills and developed new identities to express themselves through social network sites.

Facebook is the most popular social network site all over the world with its user population of over 1 billion. According to a research, 66% of the user population is young people aged 15-34 (Smith,

2013). They use different social network sites for different purposes which satisfy different needs but most of them have Facebook account primarily.

Another study done by Nielsen shows that people spend more time on social networks than any other category of sites. According to that research, the age group 18-24 spend more time than the other age groups on social network sites.¹

Turkey is the fourth country in the world in terms of the social media usage. The users spend more than 10 hours on social network sites in a month, according to the numbers.² In Turkey, Facebook users are also dominating the social media use. There are 32.132.500 Facebook users in Turkey.³ This means, 4 out of 10 person is a user.

According to a 2013 research in Turkey, the main social media users are the digital natives and their most favorite SNS is Facebook. 89% of the Internet users between the ages of 15-29 use Facebook in Turkey. Twitter and Instagram come after Facebook in popularity.⁴ On the other hand, the young people in Turkey spend 54 minutes of the day on Internet. They are also the most active users of the social network sites.⁵

¹ Nielsen. (2012) State of the Media: The Social Media Report 2012. Retrieved 12 Apr. 2012 from <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/reports/2012/state-of-the-media-the-social-media-report-2012.html>

² Social Network Statistics (2014) <http://www.statisticbrain.com/social-networking-statistics/>

³ Top 10 Countries with most Facebook users. (2013) <http://www.clicktop10.com/2013/04/top-10-countries-with-most-facebook-users-in-2013/>

⁴ Turkiye Sosyal Medya Arastirmasi (2013) <http://www.gsb.gov.tr/HaberDetaylari/1/3816/genclikvesporbakanligiturkiyeninenkapsamlisosyalmedyaarastirmasiniyapti.aspx>

⁵ <http://www.cnnturk.com/bilim-teknoloji/sosyal-medya/bakanligin-sosyal-medya-arastirmasindan-ozgurluk-cikti>

In order to understand the motives of young people behind their Facebook usage, this study primarily focuses on the uses of Facebook among the digital natives with an inspiration of 'Uses and Gratifications Theory'. The theory concentrates on why and how different people select different communication tools, what are the motives and the satisfactions behind their usage.

Having a specific role in today's society, social media is used for several reasons. Many researches have shown that the main purpose of using social network sites is social interaction (Park et al., 2009). With the new technologies, mobile phones and the spread of social media, especially young people began to socialize through Internet and use SNS like Facebook for maintaining relationships, entertainment, information seeking, participating and presenting themselves.

Self presentation is one of the main elements of social media use because with the emergence of the social network sites, people have begun to disclose information about themselves instead of using an anonymous identity. Hence, this research gives special focus on the self-presentation of the digital natives. According to Goffman (1959), individuals are trying to reach the standards on society with their impression management. He describes social roles as performances and defines everyday life with 'back stages' and 'front stages'.

This ideas can be applied to social media usage. Users are constructing identities and playing social roles for their impression management on the social network sites like Facebook.

Yurchisin et al. (2005) use the term 'hoped for possible selves' to explain a different form of identity which is more attractive for the society. It is very much related to Goffman's view as he supports the idea that the 'masks' people wear become their real identities (Goffman, 1959). As mentioned before, he also idealizes the social

roles that people are trying to maintain the best impression on others' minds. Schlenker calls this as a 'desired impression'. People are creating their 'idealized self' on this online environment. Facebook gives its users a chance of narrating themselves and construct a self that is hoped to be approved and accepted by the society. On the other hand, social network sites like Facebook have the highest level of self-presentation and self-disclosure (Kaplan&Haenlein, 2009).

1.2 Significance of the Study

As mentioned in the first section, the main purpose of this research is to understand the online behavior of the digital natives in terms of uses and gratifications. Digital natives are the young generation who were born into the digital technologies. They are the 'native' users of Internet, mobile phones and similar technological devices (Prensky, 2001). This study aims to make a contribution to the previous studies about the motives of Facebook use centered on the online behavior of the digital natives.

When the term, 'digital native' has first introduced by Marc Prensky, he did not define them by age. Tapscott (1999) starts the generation with 1977 and Born Digital writers Palfrey and Gasser (2008) start it with the year 1980. In their book 'Born Digital', Palfrey and Gasser talk about the second generation of the digital natives who were born after the 1990s.

This study supports the idea that there should be two different categories defining the digital natives. A distinction can also be made by defining the 'Second Generation of the Digital Natives' who were born after the 1990s as the 'Digital Natives of the Social Media' because they are the members of the first generation who grew up with social media and the social network sites. When Facebook

became popular and began to be used, they were 13-14 years old which is the earliest age to sign up for Facebook. So, this study focuses on the university students –so called ‘digital natives’- aged between 19-20 (born in 1993-1994) who have access to Internet and are the active users of the social media.

Self presentation is an important part of social interaction. According to Goffman (1959), people are constantly creating strategies in order to manage a socially creditable impression in others’ minds and this is self presentation. Social media provides a lot of opportunities for the users to present themselves in various ways. Self-presentation can also be seen as a natural feature of the social network sites because in order to be part of an online community, more or less, users have to disclose some personal information. As Tufekci (2008) mentions, large numbers of users reported a belief that the disclosure of such private information is essential in making social network sites useful. This study also aims to understand the significance of self-presentation in the social lives of the digital natives, whether or not they see this representation of self as part of the uses and gratifications of Facebook.

1.3 Research Questions of the Study

The main research question of this thesis is grounded on the uses and the gratifications of the Facebook for the Digital Natives with a special focus on the concept of self-presentation.

The main research question of the study is:

- What are the uses and the gratifications of using Facebook for the digital natives?

There are also four sub-questions of the study:

- Sub question 1: What is the sociological significance of self-representation for the digital natives?
- Sub-question 2: Is there an ‘idealized self’ on Facebook for the young people who are the active users of social network sites?
- Sub-question 3: Does the way they present themselves has an impact on their offline social identity?
- Sub-question 4: Do they see the self presentation as one of the main uses and gratifications of Facebook?

To achieve the goals of the study, qualitative methods are conducted. The online behaviors of the METU students are examined who are studying at the first grade and 19-20 years old, with in-depth interviews and observation techniques. The participants are chosen from the METU students because they all have the access to Internet and computers, they are the active users of social network sites and as they are studying in one of the best universities of Turkey, they are assumed to express themselves well.

1.4 Content of the Study

In the second chapter of the study, the impacts of the information technologies on society are mentioned with different approaches. The literature review about the ‘digital natives’ is presented with relevant definitions and studies. History of social media and the main uses and gratifications of social network sites are also discussed. The last section of the chapter focuses on self-presentation and online identities with the influences of Goffman.

In the third chapter, the methodology of the study is presented. The fourth chapter covers the findings of the in-depth interviews with categories that are thematically separated.

The fifth chapter of the thesis is the conclusion. The results are discussed and interpreted in two main sections with recommendations for the further research.

CHAPTER II

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE 'NETWORKED' NATIVES

2.1 Introduction

The emergence of the Internet and digital technologies has significantly transformed the nature of social relations. Computer-Mediated Communication has allowed more flexible relationships free from the constraints of the physical space. Especially with the spread of Social Media and Social Network Sites (SNS) like Facebook, people find new ways to present themselves and interact and connect with their online and offline social contacts.

The boundaries between online and offline world have become unclear after the development of Web 2.0 technologies and online mobilization. The introduction of Web 2.0 was significant in that it has made User-Generated Content (UGC) possible, thereby giving everybody the possibility to become content producers. Moreover, Social Network Sites have given users the opportunity to interact, share information and participate. People use these social network sites to satisfy their certain needs such as sociability, collaboration, sense of belonging, access to information (Haythornthwaite & Wellman, 2002).

This chapter focuses on the diverse needs and goals that users aim to fulfill by using Social Network Sites through the lens of Uses and Gratifications Theory. The perceptions and the online behaviors of the digital natives have also been described. Facebook is the main focus as the most popular social network site with over 1 billion users.⁶

2.2 Networked Communication and Society

Internet changed the role of the media in today's society. Networked digital media became part of the everyday life as people use these technologies for their businesses, for cultural exchange and socialization. Their computer-mediated communication has become a part of daily lives, rather than being a separate set of relationships (Wellman & Haythornthwaite, 2002: 33).

One of the most important theorists of mass communication, McLuhan (1994) argues that technological developments have significant effects on society. His famous phrase 'Medium is the message' describes the role of the mass media. In terms of mass communication tools, people tend to focus on the content as it provides valuable information but it should be realized that it is the 'medium' itself that creates structural social changes in the society. According to him, people create and shape the tools but after that, these tools shape the individuals' behavior and society.

Today, the phenomenon of Internet is more powerful on culture and society than its content. Computer-Mediated Communication has become a crucial part of everyday life. With mobile phones and

⁶ Facebook Key Facts. Facebook- Newsroom. Web. (Available at: <https://newsroom.fb.com/Key-Facts>)

wireless Internet access, physical location has lost its importance (Haythornthwaite & Wellman, 2002).

Globalization and the innovations in communication technologies have developed new forms of relationships in society. Many scholars have focused on today's 'networked communication' with different approaches.

Castells claims that networks have become the primary relationship in the information age and we have now begun to live in the 'network society'. In the 'network society', boundaries are more permeable and social networks create demand for communication and information sharing (Castells, 2000).

He concentrates on the individualism in today's society. To him, 'networked individualism' is a social pattern where individuals build their online and offline networks according to their interests, values and projects (Castells, 2001). He also defines the new form of societal communication as 'mass self-communication'. It reaches a global audience through global networks on Internet but at the same time, it is 'self-generated in content, self-directed in emission and self-selected in reception' (Castells, 2001).

Similarly, Wellman (2002) suggests that with the increased mobility and advances in communication technologies, social networks are in a process of moving from being completely place-centered to completely person-centered. This process involves choice and specialization in social relations. This means that each network of tie with others have certain roles or functions in a person's life. For example different online forums or SNS focus on a specific theme and have a specific function.

Today, Internet dominates the media but at the same time all the tools of communication are intersecting with each other. In

McLuhan's view, the medium shapes and transforms the message (Poster, 2001). Different types of social media are designed to give the same message in different ways to the user. The same message will be taken in different ways through different tools because the medium that is used is the actual message to the audience.

On the other hand; consumers are learning to use these different media technologies to bring the flow of media more fully under their control and to interact with other consumers (Jenkins, 2006). The promises of this new media environment raise expectations of a freer flow of ideas and content. According to Nayar (2010), all media are now adapting and borrowing from each other; movies can be seen in computer games, television programs interact with social media, a mobile phone serves as an e-mail device. The nature of the mass communication is changing. Instead of one-way communication, people are interacting with communication tools and with each other. Potter (2013) claims that; the key element in this new media environment is the expansion of participatory culture that has brought all kinds of political, religious, economic and personal interests together.

Internet and social media, in these terms, are shaping the society, changing the habits and providing a democratic space free from the hierarchical mass media corporations (Hodkinson, 2011). Especially the role of social network sites in terms of pluralizing different views and ideas is unquestionable. Poster argues that Internet is a technology that puts cultural acts and symbolizations in all forms and it radically decentralizes the positions of speech, publishing, radio and television (Poster, 2001). In addition, they allow an intimate and interactive relationship in the globalized world.

Today, new ways of communication are made possible with Internet and social media; mobile and wireless technologies allow accessibility

everywhere. The boundaries between 'private' and 'public' is undefined and there are debates over the boundaries (Lewis et al., 2008). Online activities have become a part of the offline lives. On the other hand, anyone with access to Internet connection can reach their audience. This audience is not passive and they are at the same time producers. In this new 'participatory culture' users can share, create and express themselves in various ways (Jenkins, 2006). As Boyd claims, in a networked world the power is no longer in the hands of those who control the channels of distribution; it is in the hands of those who control the limited resource of attention (Boyd, 2010).

The young people –so called digital natives- are the main actors of today's networked society. They internalize this 'collaborative culture' and use social media tools, especially social network sites for various purposes and also for expressing their identity. As Sundar (2008) points out, with the arrival of the social network sites, young people have begun to experience the world through their own self-expression and the expressions of their peers.

2.3 Digital Natives

2.3.1 Being a Digital Native

The term 'Digital Native' was first introduced by Marc Prensky (2001), to refer to the young people who grew up with computers, video games, cell phones, etc. Digital natives have developed new skills naturally and they have become the native users of the new tools, unlike the 'digital immigrants' who learn to use these tools and try to adapt to this environment but still have some problems in internalizing this knowledge.

Prensky and many other scholars suggest that the new generation called 'digital natives' or the 'net generation' (Tapscott, 1999) are receiving information very fast, they prefer visual items rather than the text, they best function when they are networked and they prefer games rather than serious work (Prensky, 2001).

Many scholars have defined a new generation who was born into the digital technologies, but there are differences among them concerning the dates. Tapscott starts the new generation with 1977 and ends it in 1997. While Prensky is not specific about the dates, 'Born Digital' writers Palfrey and Gasser (2008) suggest that 'digital natives' appear after 1980. Oblinger and Oblinger (2005) define them as 'millennials' who were born after 1982 and they end the date in 1991 (Jones et al., 2010).

'Digital natives' can be described as social, keen on interacting with each other, immediate and fast, digitally literate and always connected (Oblinger&Oblinger, 2005). They have excellent research skills. Moreover, they are not just observers, they create: mashing and mixing have become their common practices in the cyberspace. They create content and not all the creative work is done freely: lots of young people find jobs related to social media. They sometimes are motivated by the possibility of fame (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008). In today's world rock stars or actors are not seen as icons; a digital native can be a fan but he or she can be a pop star as well. There are many examples of young people becoming famous with their video on YouTube or becoming a phenomenon on Twitter. Doing something different, creating an idea and being rich, being recognized in the crowd and being approved by friends are the most important issues for the digital natives. They have no time to waste. It is not about studying or working hard, it is about being recognized.

At this point there are two popular and opposite ideas. Tapscott (2008) finds this new generation smart, different, powerful and collaborative. To him, the 'net generation' is a strong generation with values and integrity. They want to have fun – even at work. They want to innovate and they have the power to change the educational system, which is an old and one way-model. According to him, this generation, especially the children became 'authority' on this digital revolution that is changing business, commerce, entertainment, government, learning, publishing, diplomacy – in short, every institution in society.

On the other hand, Mark Bauerlein (2008), who calls the digital natives as the 'dumbest generation' suggests that, although there is a big potential on the Internet, it does not open them up to a big world of ideas, art-works, documents, politics and foreign affairs. Rather, it gives them what they really care about: other teenagers, access to one another. He mentions that young people spend most of their time on social network sites instead of studying, habits like reading, visiting museums or libraries and the mentors should immediately warn them without worrying about being on the other side of the students' world (Bauerlein, 2008).

As a response, Tapscott argues that it is not about the young people being 'smarter' or 'dumber', it is about the 'power'. It's about who gets to control the dissemination of information. The communication of knowledge and the old power structures are being broken down by a new medium and this medium is a necessity -like the air- for the new generation (Tapscott, 2009).

The two approaches have remarkable and correct parts. There can be a lack of communication between the teachers and the students; the mentors need to understand them instead of criticizing them, but it is also a correct observation that what the young digital natives are

most interested in is ‘themselves’ and ‘their friends’. Although they have excellent skills of comprehension or creation, it is generally not about the grades at school that they care. How they present themselves and what the others’ perception is more important for them. In fact, the adaptation problem of the digital natives to the education system is an important issue for many countries. They think fast, they consume fast, they have no patience and time to read the whole book so they prefer to watch a short video about any subject. Moreover, they are multitasking, creative and participatory. This online creativity is about sharing and it is inherently social and collaborative (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008). However, as there are too much information and too many messages in today’s digital world, they find it very hard to concentrate. It is a real disadvantage because even if they are too smart and confident, they can easily be distracted. But at the same time they are a multitasking-generation: they can be instant messaging while downloading something, watch television and write an essay at the same time. Their skills provide them with ‘power’.

Prensky (2001) points out that the language of the digital natives is totally different than the digital immigrants. Their ‘immigrant’ teachers can only reach them by learning and speaking their language. Bennett et al. (2008) argue that there is an urgent necessity for an educational reform as the ‘net generation’ or the ‘digital natives’ are being imbued by sophisticated technical skills and learning preferences.

Another disadvantage of being a digital native is that their familiarity with technology increases their self-esteem to the extent that they feel that they do not need any experience for a job for example, or they do not need to spend long time to learn or practice something. This makes them more impatient and maybe bold at school or in the professional life. They want to finish the school as soon as possible,

they want to move faster in their career, they can easily get bored and the worst part is that they do not know what they do not know.

On the other hand, Bennett and Maton (2010) suggest that digital natives are not a homogeneous generation. There is a diversity of interests, motivations and needs. So while some young people might be regarded as 'digital natives', there are by no means characteristics shared by all young people simply because of their exposure to digital technologies. They claim that more research is needed into what young people choose to do with technology and why, what it is they value and what they do not, according to the contexts in which they engage (Bennett & Maton, 2010).

According to Palfrey and Gasser (2008), the motives for these young people are social approval, intimacy or relief of distress. With these social network sites, they learn to participate, learn what it means to be friends, develop identities, experiment with status and interpret social cues.

2.3.2 Digital Natives vs. Digital Immigrants

Digital natives are the native speakers of the digital language of computers and the Internet, while digital immigrants are trying to learn to adapt to the environment but they still have an 'accent'. Prensky gives 'Did you get my e-mail?' phone-call as an example for this 'accent' (Prensky, 2001). This view can be adapted to the social network communication. For example, the digital natives usually write their social media messages just like they are talking to their friends, whereas the immigrants are trying to make the perfect sentences and before sending the message, they generally think about it.

Digital natives generally feel comfortable and secure while using social network sites and as they have developed their own sub-culture, they just feel how to manage their online behavior and they can easily be disturbed by the online behavior of the immigrants.

One of the main differences between the digital natives and the digital immigrants is the perception of 'privacy'. Barnes (2006) uses the term 'privacy-paradox' to describe the dilemma. The young people often think their lives are private as long as their parents are not reading their journals. Adults are concerned about invasion of privacy, while teens freely give up personal information because often teens are not aware of the public nature of the Internet. As the boundaries between private and public are unclear and the natives usually use their mobile phones or computers like an organ of their body, they can reveal too much information about themselves. To Abril (2007), the digital immigrants' conception of privacy is rooted in the knowledge that the Internet is open to anyone.

Digital natives are more visually literate than the digital immigrants. They express themselves using images and they can easily weave together images, text and sound together in a natural way (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005). On the other hand, while the digital immigrants are reading manuals, they prefer to learn by doing; they love to explore and they do not have time to read manuals.

The digital natives pay more attention to their self-presentation on social network sites than the digital immigrants because they see the internet as real as the real life unlike the immigrants. They also use Facebook or Twitter to get news whereas the immigrants usually get their news via traditional news sites or hard copy newspapers. While the immigrants prefer to have 'quality' interaction with their few friends, the digital natives can interact simultaneously with tens or hundreds of friends at the same time (Zur & Zur, 2011).

In his report about 'the future identities', Beddington claims that the identities of the digital natives are changing and that they are feeling more comfortable than the digital immigrants in representing themselves and building new identities. To him, they are 'hyper-connected' and social networking is an important part of their online lives (Beddington, 2013). As they are constantly online and constantly interacting with each other, it is also remarkable that their parents' (who are digital immigrants) online behaviors can disturb them as mentioned before so that many young people have begun to deactivate their Facebook profile temporarily waiting for their parents to get bored of it sometime (Radovic, 2013).

As Selwyn (2009) points out, digital technologies may be contributing to an increased disengagement, disenchantment and alienation of young people from formal institutions and activities. Using digital technologies such as the Internet or mobile phones for self-expression and self-promotion is more important for them than using them for actually listening to and learning from others. Digital immigrants still prefer face-to-face communication (Paskett, 2012).

Although there are too many remarkable differences between the digital natives and the digital immigrants, there are many 'immigrants' who have the same abilities with the 'natives' and there are millions of digital natives who do not even have access to Internet. A general categorization can be made but as Krause argues, understandings of technology vary significantly according to socio-economic background, age and gender and 'the assumption of homogeneity is misleading and dangerous' (Krause, 2007).

2.4 What is Social Media?

With the rise of digital technologies, social media became a crucial part of everyday life. Social media gives people opportunities to connect, interact, share, learn, participate, and present themselves in various ways. It allows people to connect over large distances, share information, create different identities, provide opportunities for self-presentation that may not always be possible offline and meet new people through Internet. Social media blur the traditional lines between public and personal communication (Benjamin, 2012).

There are several definitions that explain the uses of Social media. Correa et al. (2010: 72) identify Social media as ‘the Internet tools that provide a mechanism for the audience to connect, communicate and interact with each other and their mutual friends’.

To Kaplan and Haenlein (2009: 61), ‘social media is a group of Internet-based applications that are built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content.’

Social media can be categorized in six types on the basis of their functions and media richness: Collaborative projects (wikis), Blogs, Content Communities (YouTube, Slideshare, bookcrossing.com), Social Network Sites (Facebook, Twitter, etc.), Virtual Game Worlds (Dungeons and Dragons) and Virtual Social Worlds (Second Life) (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009). The common characteristic of these different tools is ‘interactivity’. Today, most of the interaction between people –especially the digital natives- in the society is mediated by social media or social network sites.

Hoffman and Novak (2011) argue that the fundamental interactivity of social media allows for four higher-order goals: connect, create, consume and control. Thus, social media enable and facilitate

interactions that ‘connect’ people. These social media conversations occur through web or mobile applications that people use to ‘create’ (post, upload, blog) and ‘consume’ (read, watch, listen to) content. Social media applications give individuals a greater ability to manage their reputations and ‘control’ the applications and online ‘settings’ such as profile and privacy options.

2.4.1 Development of Social Media

The rapid growth of Internet technologies and development of Web 2.0 have supported the evolution of social media. Web 2.0 means a transition from information consumption and publishing to applications that support more communication, cooperation, and participation on the Internet⁷ (O’Reilly 2005). It is a platform whereby content and applications are no longer created and published by the experts but are continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009). According to Fuchs, Web 2.0 is dominated by human communication on the net whereas Web 1.0 was dominated by information production and reception (Fuchs, 2008: 17). Instead of being just a publishing platform, Web 2.0 enables interaction.

The innovation process of the Internet leads this media-rich communication environment which is participatory and collaborative. With the Web 2.0 technologies, users have control on information construction and distribution (Siemens & Tittenberger, 2009).

This collaborative production process allows a democratic and interactive space for the users but at the same time it has disadvantages to some views. Keen (2007) suggests that participatory

⁷ The concept of Web 2.0 was first introduced by Tim O’Reilly in 2004.

mode of digital culture makes it hard to distinguish between the truth and the opinion. According to him, Web 2.0 services replace the 'expert' with the 'amateurs' by creating an undermining of truth with the blogs or wikis. In contrast, Tredinnick (2008) points out that the mediation of knowledge through traditional sites of authority is designed to impose certain dominant outlooks of the entire social system. To him, the participatory culture, provided with Web 2.0, does not undermine the objective truth; it exposes the versions of truth through social media. Knowledge and information are constantly recreated and reconstructed. This means that the information on social media can be more personal and more relative but it does not mean that it is not reliable. Users can develop new skills to evaluate the quality of the information.

Therefore, Web 2.0 enables users to share content, interact with each other and disclose personal information. User-Generated Content is its distinguishing feature. This stimulates people to produce by drawing information from multiple sources and sharing it with others. With the possibilities offered by Web 2.0, the information and the content can be transformed into a new product by creating new forms, ideas, remixes, mash-ups and services (Lim & Kann, 2008). The goal is not to be a passive consumer of information but rather to be attentive in a world where information is everywhere (Boyd, 2010).

Hendler and Golbeck (2008: 128) point out that 'the fact that the sharing of content can be enhanced primarily by personal connections rather than searching' is the most successful part of the Web 2.0 applications and they give the example of YouTube. The key individuals who often act as opinion leaders make the videos prominent by sharing them through blogs, social network sites and e-mails. These communication practices have created a new area for the market where products are promoted to consumers in different ways which are called 'viral marketing.'

To sum up, Web 1.0 was a one-way communication with web sites that provide information to the users. The development of Web 2.0 which is a 'two way' communication, enabled people to upload, create and contribute content. Social media facilitated the conversation between users and made the social interaction possible. Today, the development of Web 3.0 (Semantic Web) is in process. It is defined as 'a big database' where machines can also read Web pages and where search engines and software agents can better troll the Net (Metz, 2007).

2.4.2 Social Network Sites

In today's global world, Social Network Sites are essential for communication, sharing, getting information and free interaction. After creating a profile and uploading a photo, everybody can connect with friends, relatives or unknown people from all over the world.

With the Social Network Sites, people began to communicate beyond the geographical boundaries. Sharing information is fast and uncensored and the freedom of speech that is allowed by cyberspace makes online communities active and important for the offline social life. In addition, they provide flexible and personalized modes of sociability which allow individuals to sustain strong and weak ties through a variety of online tools and strategies (Ellison et al., 2010).

Ellison and Boyd (2008) define Social Network Sites⁸ as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their

⁸ They chose the term 'network' instead of 'networking' because they suggest that; 'networking' emphasizes relationship initiation, often between strangers and while networking is possible on these sites, it is not the primary practice on many of them, nor is it what differentiates them from other forms of Computer-Mediated Communication.

list of connections and those made by others within the system. They state that social network sites are primarily organized around people, not interests.

According to Social Presence Theory, various communication media differed in their capacity to transmit classes of nonverbal communication in addition to verbal content (Short & Williams & Christie, 1976). The more the number of cue systems a system supported, the warmth and the involvement of the users experienced with one another increases.

Social network sites give this intimacy, warmth and a high degree of social presence. As Goffman suggests, people have a desire to manage their impression on other people in all social interactions (Goffman, 1959). Social network sites satisfy the need for self-presentation by giving opportunities for constructing different identities and creating different images.

In the SNS, the system is dynamic; it is permanently reproduced by human actions and communications (Fuchs, 2008: 16). With the mobile devices and the smart phones, people can become online and social without leaving their offline world. To Albrechtslund, as the online and offline worlds seem to mix into a whole social world, location sharing makes it difficult to uphold a sharp division between locations in the physical space and 'places' and 'venues' in online social networking (Albrechtslund, 2012).

According to Boyd (2007), social network sites have four properties that are not present in face-to-face public life; persistence, searchability, replicability and invisible audiences. To her, social dynamics are altered by these properties which complicate the ways people interact.

Today, the most popular social network site Facebook's population is nearly three times the population of the United States and about one in seven of the world's population with over one billion monthly active users (Smith, 2013). The first real social network site is accepted as SixDegrees.com which was introduced in 1997 (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

2.4.2.1 Facebook

Facebook is a user friendly platform which allows users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues. Anybody can register to be a user without paying any fee and it has been guaranteed on the main page of the web site that it will always be free. Users can have an account with their e-mail addresses and by searching their friends' names and adding them (they should also be registered) they can create a friend list and begin to interact.

Facebook was created by Harvard computer science major Mark Zuckerberg in October 2003 (Simon, 2009). To join, a user had to have a harvard.edu email address. As Facebook began supporting other universities, those users were also required to have university email addresses associated with those institutions. That requirement kept the site relatively closed and contributed to users' perceptions of the site as an intimate, private community for a while (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). In 2005, it began to spread worldwide, reaching UK universities. In September 2006 it opened its doors to the rest of the world and quickly became popular especially among young people (Philips, 2013).

Facebook is available in over 70 different languages and according to figures from November 2012, the most popular languages in

Facebook is English (359.828.280), Spanish (142.865.540) and Portuguese (58.539.940). Turkish is the sixth most used language on Facebook (31.742.540)⁹.

Facebook allows registered users to post updates, photographs, videos and links that can be seen on the user's profile page (Benjamin, 2012). It also allows interaction with the invited 'friends'. In addition, users can 'like' (endorse) posts, pages and articles. On the main page there is a virtual board called 'The Wall' where the users can send messages or pictures. Members can send texts or contents to their friends' wall. Another popular component is the virtual photo album that has no limitation. Users can upload their photos, either to keep or share them.

Facebook offers a range of privacy options so that the members can decide who will see their profile or photos or who will comment on them. There is also a 'tag' option and if a user is tagged (identified) in a photo, that means his/her contacts can also see that photo.

All interactions are published in a newsfeed and distributed in real-time to the user's friends. Users on the other hand, can choose whether or not to be searchable or decide which parts of their profile are public and they can also 'block' or 'limit' a person by controlling their privacy settings. Users can interact with more than one person at the same time. Comments and interactions can be seen by other users. Facebook can also be used like e-mail as there is a message feature on the main page to allow private communication.

⁹ The 20 Most Interesting Social Networks. (2013) Social Bakers: Web. (Available at: <http://www.socialbakers.com/resource-center/808-article-the-20-most-interesting-social-networks?sbksPaginator-page=1>)

Facebook includes public features such as:

- Marketplace - allows members to post, read and respond to classified advertisements.
- Groups - allows members who have common interests to find each other and interact.
- Events - allows members to announce an event, invite guests and track who plans to attend.
- Pages - allows members to create and promote a public page built around a specific topic.
- Presence technology - allows members to see which contacts are online and chat

Applications are an important part of Facebook. In May 2007, Facebook opened up its developers' platform to allow third-party developers to build applications and widgets; once approved, they are distributed through the Facebook community.

There are also other features which are not commonly used like; 'downloading a copy of personal data' or 'creating an interest list' to organize the content that the user is interested in on Facebook (Curtis, 2013). Today, there are 1.23 billion monthly active users of Facebook according to the statistics of December, 2013¹⁰.

¹⁰ Facebook Key Facts. Facebook- Newsroom. Web. (Available at: <https://newsroom.fb.com/Key-Facts>)

2.4.2.2 Other Social Network Sites

Different types of Social Network Sites have been created for different needs and different type of users. FriendCircles was launched in 2004 as a place to organize around hobbies, interests or career goals whereas Tagged.com was created for teenagers. Orkut is an invitation-only social network that encouraged friends to create mini groups to share related photos and ideas (Simon, 2009). Some of the SNS are used for professional purposes (LinkedIn), while others aim to facilitate multimedia sharing (Flickr).

The second most used social network site is Twitter with approximately 700 million users in the world.¹¹ It is a microblogging platform that simply needs an answer to a simple question: ‘What are you doing?’ and it allows users to type a message that is no more than 140 characters and post that message to the profile of the user which is then entered into a news feed where all of the Twitter followers can see what is being said.¹²

While Facebook was built on the idea that all information was private and shared only between friends, Twitter was born under the idea that most of the information shared was open and viewable by anybody (Suster, 2010).

Twitter has a terminology that the tweeters use; ‘Retweet’ is sharing somebody’s message with the followers and the other users. When users find something interesting or like a message, they can hit the retweet button and the message is sent to their followers. Anytime @ is used before a user’s name, user will be able to see that ‘mention’ on Twitter. If a word is used after a ‘hashtag’ (#), people can search that hashtag easily when they try to find out the tweets about a certain subject. Twitpic service is an easy way to send a photo to the Twitter

¹¹ Twitter Statistics. Available at: <http://www.statisticbrain.com/twitter-statistics/>

¹² <https://twitter.com/>

followers. There is also a way to understand what is happening in the world or in a specific location by looking at the 'Trending Topics' list. Trending Topic (TT) stands for a word or a phrase that has a greater rate and popularity than the others.

Hosterman categorizes the twitter users as; 'the literalists', 'networkers' and 'the facilitators'. The 'literalists' use twitter for its main purpose and tweet what they're actually doing like; 'eating dinner' or 'drinking beer'. The 'networkers' are working like the gatekeepers of a newspaper; they're simply passing along someone else's tweets by re-tweeting. Facilitators are the most active uses of twitter as they ask and answer questions, provide links, argue, begin and add to conversations (Hosterman, 2012).

Twitter is also used for consumption, promoting new products and services and it is a great way for companies to learn what is going on within their consumer base. It is on the other hand an effective tool for businesses; users might be able to build a relationship with a high profile person in their industry. If a user follows a person, that person may follow her/him back. Users who have thousands of followers on Twitter are called as 'Twitter Phenomena'. There are lots of examples of these people who became famous with their tweets and get different jobs in real life, mostly in mainstream media.

Twitter is getting more popular among teens according to a 2013 Pew Research. Facebook is still the most used network site but Twitter is becoming more popular among young users. The research shows that 26% of the young people named Twitter as the most important SNS while 23% of them thinks Facebook is the most important one.

Besides, Facebook is still the most used social network site with a significant margin.¹³

Foursquare is an interesting example of geo-location based networks. Users are able to share their locations with the followers. The service is designed primarily for mobile devices. It allows users to ‘check in’ at various places using the application for devices that support geo-location. Every time a ‘check in’ is made at a place, ‘badges’ or points can be gained and people can take advantage of the promotions. It is a significant example of how online and offline environments are intersecting with each other in everyday life.

The other most popular social network sites according to the January 2014 numbers can be listed as LinkedIn, Google+, Pinterest, Tumblr, Flickr, VK, Instagram, MySpace and YouTube.¹⁴

LinkedIn is the most popular social network designated for ‘professionals’. Besides allowing users to publish their CV, LinkedIn allows its users to join groups, use applications, post business references, and search for any type of business contact. Searching for jobs or employers through LinkedIn is possible. LinkedIn, for instance, allows users to see how they are linked to others and how many degrees of separation they are from a ‘target’ member—possibly an employer they would like to meet.

¹³Marketing Charts. (2013) Twitter Overtakes Facebook as Teens’ Most Important Social Network. 22 Oct. 2013. Web. Available at: <http://www.marketingcharts.com/wp/online/twitter-overtakes-facebook-as-teens-most-important-social-network-37352/>

¹⁴ <http://www.ebizmba.com/articles/social-networking-websites>

Google+ is an SNS launched by Google in June, 2011. The server presents itself as a service that can help you stay in touch with your friends and acquaintances, and discover new interesting people. You also have the option of reading status updates of others even if they are not your friends.

On Pinterest, users have a virtual pinboard, where they can create, manage and share image collections that are related to a particular topic.

Tumblr is an image focused microblogging site where users post interesting photos, videos and other media to their followers, who can then share it with their followers as well.

Flickr is an online photo-sharing and image/video hosting service that allows users to share photos and videos with their friends or others. They can also comment on other photos and create a specific community with the people that are sharing their photos. It was chosen as 'The Best Site of 2009' by the Time magazine (Fisher, 2009).

VK is the most popular social network site in Europe after Facebook. It is mainly used in Russian speaking countries.

Instagram (launched in October 2010) is a smart phone application that allows users to take photos, apply various digital filters to a photo and share them with other users or other social networks. It is growing quickly and becoming as popular as Facebook among teenagers. (In 2012, Facebook bought Instagram for \$1 billion¹⁵).

¹⁵ <http://techcrunch.com/2012/04/09/facebook-to-acquire-instagram-for-1-billion/>

MySpace is one of the well known and important Social Network Sites. It was the most popular Social Network Site among young people and rock bands between 2004 and 2010. Today the new MySpace is working a streamed music player where the users can create their playlists as well as connect and share.

You Tube is not a typical social network site but a very popular platform that has more than 1 billion monthly visitors.¹⁶ It is a video-sharing website where users can view, share, upload, comment on, like or dislike videos. Soundcloud is an audio version of YouTube that allows users to record, upload and share music or other audio recordings.

There are also other social network sites for giving information about everyday life (Do-it-Yourself), for educational or academic purposes (The Math Forum) and for hobbies (OhMyBloom).

2.5 Why do we use Social Media?

Uses and Gratifications Theory aims to understand why and how people actively seek out specific media to satisfy specific needs. This approach reveals that different users have different reasons for using different communication tools (Severin & Tankard, 2007). Today, there are various types of social network sites as it has been mentioned and the users have a chance to use them simultaneously. Scholars focus on the advantages and disadvantages of utilization of communication tools through scientific explanations (Nyland & Near, 2007).

¹⁶ You Tube Statistics (2013) Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/yt/press/statistics.html>

In the 1940s, there were criticisms to uses and gratifications theory regarding the limitations of the studies. Despite many disagreements, various studies have been conducted to find the different patterns of gratifications in terms of media use from the beginning of the 1950s. For example, Katz and Foulkes (1962) conceptualized mass media use as an escape. Mendelsohn (1964) identified several generalized functions of radio listening as companionship, bracketing the day, changing mood, counteracting loneliness or boredom, providing useful news and information, allowing vicarious participation in events and aiding social interaction (Ruggiero, 2000). It has also been found that the individuals who are performing monotonous tasks and feeling bored choose more exciting television programs to watch compared to the other individuals who are under stress (Bryant & Zillman, 1984).

Different social and psychological needs are being satisfied by the different tools of mass media. According to Atkin (1985), people use media for 'intrinsic satisfaction' or as an 'extrinsic utility'. Enjoyment seeking and passing time are examples of intrinsic satisfaction, whereas getting information is an example to a need of extrinsic utility. The basic needs depending on the individual's character and social environment produce different problems and those problems and solutions constitute different motives for gratification behavior that can come from using the media (Rosengren, 1974). When a medium does not fulfill the needs, audience members often become disappointed and predictably cease utilizing the specific medium. This leads the audience to look for a different medium that can provide the kinds of gratifications they are seeking (Quan-Hasse & Young, 2010). Ruggiero (2000) points out that as new technologies present people with more and more media choices, motivation and satisfaction become even more crucial components of audience analysis. To him, Internet communication offers multiple topics for

the U&G researches although it is very different than the traditional mass media tools, in terms of its range of communication opportunities and interactivity.

In 1990s and 2000s, U&G Theory has been applied to Internet communication and social media in several studies. As a popular communication tool in today's society, different types of social media satisfy different needs and people have various motives to use social media and -specifically social network sites. According to Stafford and Gonier (2004), there are several gratifications that motivate the Internet users such as web searching, acquisition of information, ability to engage in interpersonal communication and socialization. A 1995 study about college students' Internet usage resulted in 'six motivational categories: entertainment, social interaction, passing the time, escape, information, and Web site preference' (Kaye, 1998). A more recent study had a similar result: Matsuba (2006) suggests that the main reasons people use Internet tools are for entertainment, information seeking and maintaining social relationships. According to Weiser (2000), gender plays a role in terms of the uses of online communication. A research had shown that women are more likely to use online communication tools to maintain personal connections with family and friends than men. On the other hand, it has been found that young people are more motivated to engage in online communication compared to middle and late adult age groups (Thayer & Ray, 2006).

Like the other forms of computer mediated communication, social media has also been discussed by many scholars in terms of its enormous impacts on society and social life. With the emergence of Web 2.0 and the popularity of social network sites, the way people connect, interact and socialize is changing. Although there are different motives behind the use of the SNS depending on different

variables, the main goal is seen as socialization and communication. Dwyer et al. (2007) have listed the purposes of using SNS as communication, maintaining relationships and the main activities on them as 'sharing photos', 'updating others about activities', 'archiving events', 'presenting an idealized persona', 'sending private messages' and 'posting public testimonials'.

This study examines the uses and gratifications of social media in two main sections: 'Social and Structural Uses of Social Media' and 'Socio Psychological Uses of Social Media'.

2.5.1 Social and Structural Uses of Social Media

There are several reasons behind the uses of social media. In this section, main uses of social network sites that have also impacts on society are examined in five categories; 'online socialization', 'political activism', 'access to news and information', 'online communities and participation' and 'creativity and sharing'.

2.5.1.1 Online Socialization

Human interaction is a part of social life and although there are many other benefits, most of the people use social media as a tool for 'socialization' and 'communication'. As Park et al. (2009) claim, the need for social interaction is the main gratification for using social media. Millions of people are using social media tools to socialize and maintain their relationships. Social network sites like Facebook allow registered users to post updates, photographs, videos and links that can be viewed on the user's profile page and they allow invited 'friends' to interact (Benjamin, 2012).

According to Castells, because of the flexibility and communicating power of the Internet, online social interaction plays an increasing role in social organization as a whole (Castells, 2001).

On the other hand, since the emergence of the Internet, there is a common fear that the increasing time spent online can cause a decrease in the amount and quality of time spent offline.

Kraut et al. explain the negative effects of the online relationships as poorer quality and weak ties. They claim that Internet social relationships are substituted for face-to-face relationships. Time spent online is time in which people would be forming strong face-to-face ties were they offline (Kraut et al., 1998). After the creation of Web 2.0 and the spread of the social network sites, the forms of social interactions have changed. Today, online activities and relationships are not totally free from the real life; mobile devices and smart phones act like a bridge in bonding the offline and online environments.

Online mobilization allows individuals to connect their offline activities with the online world. Internet and social media support activists and organizations to promote their causes as well, because it combines the advantages of one-to-many and many-to-many modes of communication (Lim & Kann, 2008).

There are several studies that suggest that Internet and social media may indeed enhance and enrich offline social life (Burnett & Marshall, 2003). Social network sites provide opportunities for users to build strong ties with friends and make connections beyond geographical boundaries. They provide a democratic space where ideas can be shared with freedom of expression.

In the last few years, studies have started to contradict the idea that Internet or social media make individuals 'unsocial'. Social network

sites such as Facebook provide opportunities for the users to improve their friendships and other social connections whether from offline to online or from offline to online. Ross et al. (2009) suggest that, Facebook is different from other social network sites because it demonstrates an offline to online trend which means; ‘the majority of Facebook friends are met offline and then added later.’

Whereas, Ellison et al. (2007) claim that besides developing offline relationships, people can move their online connections to their offline social life. To them, there is both online-to-offline and offline-to-online movements in SNS. People can have friends and connections from online world that can result in face-to-face meetings.

Some other studies have shown that social network sites have an important role in both allowing users to meet new people and to maintain current offline relationships. Raacke and Raacke (2008) applied ‘Uses and Gratifications Theory’ to social network sites and studied their impact on college students. Results of their research showed that many uses and gratifications especially the need for socialization -finding old friends, making new friends, learning about social events, etc.- are met by the users who use SNS.

All these network of relationships are called as ‘social capital’ (Bourdieu, 1986). Putnam separates social capital into bridging and bonding (2000). Bridging social capital means ‘weak connections’, bonding is found between close relationships like family and friends. Although it might seem that social network sites are the examples of bridging social capital, many people build strong relationships through the Internet. People can meet online as members of the fan group of a singer and they can be good friends when they get together in a party in the real life. There are also examples of online connections that end with a romantic relationship and marriage.

Therefore, developing 'bonding social capital' through the SNS is also possible.

Williams (2006) claims that despite the fact that using the Internet takes away from the amount of time participants have to work on their offline social capital, the time they spend online help them build their offline social capital.

2.5.1.2 Political Activism

In the last few years social media played an important role in political activism. Citizen groups and social movements are likely to reach a new level in the ways in which they mobilize, build coalitions, inform, lobby, communicate and campaign (Hajnal, 2002). Today, it is very easy for an organization to quickly and affordably reach millions of people.

In the 2000s, a collective action is produced with the globalization and the growing power of transnational corporations and international institutions (Porta & Tarrowi, 2005). Internalization of the global environment produced opportunities for activists and with the development of Internet technologies, mobilization and social media, they became more powerful.

The new form of social movements began with forums, mailing lists, e-mails, web sites, and so on, but with the rise of the social media and SNS and the advance of mobile devices there has been an increase in civic engagement.

After the development of Web 2.0, new socially-interactive forms of Internet media such as blogs became popular. Blogs were easy to create for non-technical web users and provide a democratic space. So, first activists of social media were bloggers; they have

demonstrated themselves as ‘technoactivists’ mentioning not only democratic self-expression and networking, but also global media critique and journalistic sociopolitical intervention (Kahn & Keller, 2004).

With the online mobilization and the spread of the social network sites, offline activities are connected to offline environment and individuals using these facilities have become the supporters of the major social and political movements. Gerbaudo (2012) points out that, in the new protest movements of the 21st century, social media is used as part of a project of re-appropriation of the public space. In his view, Facebook and Twitter do not fit the perception of ‘cyberspace’ that is seen as detached from physical reality.

The important movements in the 2000s that had global effects – Iranian elections, the Arab Spring, protests in Spain, Occupy Wall Street and Gezi Parki- were all supported by the social media. In Turkey, during the Gezi Parki protests that kicked off in the summer of 2013, social network sites took the place of the mainstream media and they were used efficiently by especially the young people to collaborate and share information (Arsu, 2013).

2.5.1.3 Access to News and Information

Seeking information is the other reason behind social media usage. It is fast, easy and efficient so in the last few years people prefer to get information from social network site instead of newspapers or other media.

The individual’s desire for information from the media is the primary variable in explaining why media messages have cognitive, affective or variable effects (Ruggiero, 2000). Today, people increasingly satisfy their need for reaching information through the social network sites

because they are fast and easily accessible. To Boyd, the ability to connect to others like ourselves allows us to flow information across space and time in impressively new ways (Boyd, 2010). Mobility makes SNS more useful as a news source because any incident can be spread easily through Facebook or Twitter. Online mobilization allows users to become the creators of the news content as well as being informed.

According to a 2013 PEW Research¹⁷, 30% of Facebook users in the US get their news from Facebook. Twitter and LinkedIn are the other main sources for getting the news.

Chamberlain (1994) suggests that we have entered in an era of 'demassification' with the new technologies, which the individual is able to pick from a large selection of media. Internet and social media give lots of opportunities and choices to the users to get messages regarding their needs. Unlike traditional mass media, new media provide control for the individuals to select which message or the information they will get. No other media have allowed for interactivity as Internet news has done (Dessauer, 2004: 132). With the social network sites, this interactivity is faster and sometimes more credible. Abbasi and Liu (2013) claim that as more people rely on social media for political, social and business events, misuse of the information will be reduced. So, users have the challenge to discern which information is reliable or not.

¹⁷ Pew Social Media Study (2013) <http://techcrunch.com/2013/11/14/pew-social-media-study-30-of-the-u-s-gets-news-via-facebook-reddit-has-the-most-news-hungry-regular-users/>

Social network sites can be assumed as more credible than other social media tools as a news source because the ‘friends’ act as gate keepers to spread the content. They enable users to identify news from wide range of sources deemed by friends to be interesting and important (Ismail, 2013: 271). In this way, users do not select the source or the content, they just choose to read the story that is recommended by a friend.

As an information source, the educational benefits of the SNS should not be underestimated as well. Some educators suggest that social media can be used to broaden students’ world views and encourage teachers to share their ideas and innovations (Partridge, 2011). Madge et al. (2009) have claimed that Facebook provides an informal learning space for university students with possibilities to engage team working, organizational and other activities that may have relevance to their employability skills.

2.5.1.4 Online Communities and Participation

Social network sites allow the creation of online communities to share information and ideas supporting the civil society. Through personal profiles on Facebook, members can create or contribute online communities (Koenig, 2008).

The emergence of the computer-mediated communication tools has made the Internet inevitable for social interaction (Vitak, 2008). First online communities were created with a concept called CBSS (Computerized Bulletin Board System) in 1978. It was developed to inform the groups about meetings or important announcements. This eventually led to the creation of forums, special interest groups in which users could communicate among themselves about specific

topics (Simon, 2009). AOL chat rooms and Yahoo groups are the first examples of the popular online communities.

Marhan (2006) categorizes online communities as 'one-to-one connected online communities (e-mail), one-to-many connected online communities (blogging) and many-to-many connected online communities (wiki)'. Today, social network sites serve as online communities and they have subgroups - like Facebook groups- that bring people with similar interests together. 'Freedom of engagement' is an important element of online communities; members choose when and how to engage with other community members (Miller, 2011). On the other hand, online communities do not have a problem of space, distance or mobility because membership to a community is not interrupted by the physical movement of people (Day, 2006). According to Kietzmann et al. (2011), there are two major groups on social network sites. First, the users can sort through their contacts and place their friends or followers into different self-created groups. Second, there can be online groups that are open to anyone, closed (approval required) or secret (by invitation only). Each group has a different meaning and function for the individual. As Wellman (2002) suggests, the new form of 'person-centered' communication process involves more choice and specialization in relationships.

Jenkins (2006) claims that new media technologies create a 'participatory culture' in society. For him, it is now possible for the average user to share, create, express themselves and participate in media in powerful new ways. Many of these tools allow them to archive, remix, recirculate content for media as a mode of creative expression. Online communities are part of this participatory culture and there is a huge respect to creative process in the supportive environments of these groups. In this new participatory culture, anyone who is a consumer could become a producer.

To Lessig (2004: 9) Internet has unleashed an extraordinary possibility for many to participate in the process of building and cultivating a culture that reaches far beyond local boundaries and that power has changed the marketplace. That change in turn threatens established content industries.

As Internet becomes more powerful in building a culture, marketers have been obliged to adapt to this collaborative system where relationships with the 'fans' have become increasingly significant (Jenkins, 2006). In this new participatory culture, marketers are trying to reach the consumers through 'viral marketing' that aims to spread the campaigns through social media or e-mails by the users. Viral marketing assumes that consumers have the most influence in creating brands instead of firms.¹⁸

This participatory culture has also effects on society in terms of binding the individuals with same interests or concerns. Sunstein (2007) focuses on the 'shared experiences'. To him, by social interactions, people recognize that they have common issues and they are living in the same culture. This provides as a form of 'social glue' (Sunstein, 2007: 103). Social networks sites make this kind of intimate social interaction possible.

2.5.1.5 Creativity and Sharing

Creating and sharing are the important features of the social media usage. As a 'free' space, Internet allows users to produce content and distribute it. With the digital technologies and user-friendly applications, people can easily record a song or edit a video and share them with other people through the SNS. Music distribution and

¹⁸ Berry, 'Paul Berry's Viral Marketing Advice'
<http://www.g4tv.com/attackoftheshow/blog/post/430607/paul-berrys-viral-marketing-advice/>

production have been reshaped by digital technology and networking. On the other hand, social networking platforms have allowed individuals to act like gatekeepers for themselves and their peers (Russell et al., 2008: 54). With the SNS, users spread new songs or videos to their friends and friends' friends. Boyd (2007) claims that, music is a tie among youth and this is the reason why MySpace had attracted young music fans who are the active participants of the music subcultures. Today, sharing music through YouTube, Facebook or other social media tools is a common activity that allows the users to improve their creativity with the help of the new technologies.

Young people produce various forms of creations like mash ups (blending two or more songs), remixes (edit a song to sound different from the original) or sampling (short recorded bits of music). Lorenzo et al. suggest that, constantly connected to information and to each other, students do not just consume information; they create and re-create it (Lorenzo et al., 2007: 2).

To Palfrey and Gasser (2008), digital natives have developed excellent skills to produce new forms of expression. The main reasons that Internet has become a fertile ground for creativity are its low costs, huge potential of audience and technological infrastructure to access and remix digital content.

Photo sharing is another common activity on social network sites. Users upload photos and socialize around them. Besmer and Lipford (2008) claim that people are losing control over their identity and disclosures as their photos can be uploaded or tagged by other users. However, impression management concerns could be more powerful than privacy concerns and users may not alter their online behavior.

On the other hand, instead of sharing or creating there is a significant group who are the passive users of social media, called as

‘lurkers’. They usually do not contribute or create content. ‘Lurking’ is a common pejorative term for those who are present in public online spaces but do not prominently speak up (Crawford, 2009). ‘Lurking’ is also seen as a beneficial ‘non-public’ participation because lurkers make use of the information they find to improve their practices (Anton & Chesire, 2010). A study of online teen bulletin boards found that many visitors spend considerable time ‘lurking’ or reading others’ posts without posting any reply (Suziki & Calzo, 2004).

2.5.2 Socio Psychological Gratifications of the Use of Social Media

Instead of social and structural benefits there are some psychological and socio psychological factors that stimulate the SNS use. These gratifications of social media and SNS usage -specifically Facebook- can be analyzed with different approaches.

2.5.2.1 Well-Being

There are some studies that focus on the positive effects of social media and SNS such as increasing the well-being of the user.

According to Self-Affirmation Theory, people want to see themselves as ‘good’ and ‘appropriate,’ and people are motivated to protect the perceived integrity and worth of the self (Steele, 1988).

The notion of being a ‘good’ person can also be interpreted in different ways from person to person. There can be various forms like being successful, intellectual, sensible, a good group member, etc. People want to see themselves in a positive image, even when this image of self-integrity is threatened.

To maintain this positive view of the self and protect themselves from failures and threats, people use some defense mechanisms (Steele, 1988). For example, a person who failed in professional life can say 'I am over-qualified for these positions' or 'I am too honest for the professional life'. Fulfilling the need to protect self-integrity in the face of threat can enable people to deal with threatening events and information without resorting to defensive biases (Sherman&Cohen, 2006).

Self-Affirmation Theory can be extended to social media use as it enables users to present their positive sides by reminding them how many friends they have, the activities they enjoy, their hobbies, experiences, etc. It helps them affirm their positive self-views even if they are not totally real. It can help them have a motivation to protect their self-integrity.

According to Toma (2010), the Self-Affirmation Theory posits that accessing positive information about the self makes people more confident, secure and open-minded and less biased, and as a social network site, Facebook has self-affirming potential.

People need a positive self-image and they need to see themselves as valuable, worthy and good (Toma & Hancock, 2013). So, Facebook is a good motivator for self-presentation. On the other hand, according to some studies, some people communicate better in online relationships. Sheldon and Honeycutt (2008) found that students who are afraid of face-to-face meetings are more likely to go on Facebook to pass time. This means that being on Facebook creates 'well-being' among some users.

Although most of the studies have concentrated on the positive effects of Facebook, there are some opinions which support the idea that SNS like Facebook can cause depression. A study conducted in

Goteborg Univesity points out that people using social network sites can have psychological problems because they compare their lives with the others'. Sharing the best moments and the most beautiful pictures on Facebook creates an illusion of a perfect life (Talley, 2013).

Facebook can be seen as an interesting reflection of the real life where people can feel that their self-esteem is being satisfied by being part of a social group, but at the same time spending more time on Facebook can cause insufficiency on them.

2.5.2.2 Self-Esteem

A relation between self-esteem and Facebook use has also been revealed. Hancock and Gonzales (2011) made a research to test Objective Self-Awareness and the Hyperpersonal Model -two conflicting theories.

The traditional 'Objective Self-Awareness Theory' (Duval & Wicklund, 1972) suggests that focusing attention on ourselves can have negative effects on self-esteem because it makes us aware of our limitations and shortcomings. On the other hand, the Hyperpersonal Model (Walther, 1996) assumes that self-selection of the information we choose to represent ourselves can have positive effects on self-esteem. In this research, 63 students were left alone in a university lab with a computer and the computers were either turned off or showing the student's Facebook page. Some of the computers that were turned off also had a mirror propped against the screen. Those who were on Facebook were allowed to spend three minutes reviewing their page. Then, all of the students were given a questionnaire to measure their self-esteem.

The students who were on Facebook gave more positive feedback about themselves than the other two groups, according to the article. Those who had made a change to their profile gave themselves the highest marks. Those in the mirror and control groups were given the same questionnaire.

While their reports showed no elevation in self-esteem, those who had used Facebook gave much more positive feedback about themselves. Those who edited their Facebook profiles during the exercise had the highest self-esteem. So, they conclude that Facebook can have a positive influence on the self-esteem of college students because Facebook by and large, shows a very positive version of themselves (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011). Self-esteem is also related to social acceptance or social approval. In his research, Cheshire (2008) has revealed the power of social approval in SNS like Facebook. When people were told that their networks liked the content they were sharing, they shared more. But when they were told that people in their network did not like their shared content, they actually shared even more to figure out what their network might like and come up with more content that was edgier.

Some other scholars have also agreed to the idea that that there's a strong relation between using Facebook and narcissist behavior. Mehdizadeh (2010) conducted the study at Toronto's York University and gained access to the Facebook accounts of hundred college students and measured activities like photo sharing, wall postings and status updates. She also studied how frequently users logged on and how often they remained online during each session. After measuring each subject using the 'Narcissism Personality Inventory' and 'Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale', Mehdizadeh discovered narcissists were more likely to spend more than an hour a day on

Facebook and to write status updates and send attractive photos that are self-promoting.

2.5.2.3 Need to Belong

'The Need to Belong Theory' proposes that all human beings need social connections (Carvallo & Gabriel, 2006). People have a basic psychological need to feel closely connected to others and that intimate, affectionate bonds from close relationships are a major part of human behavior.

According to Baumeister and Leary (1995), the need to belong has two main features. First; people need frequent personal contacts or interactions, ideally positive and pleasant. Second; people need to perceive that there is an interpersonal bond or relationship marked by stability, affective concern and continuation into the foreseeable future (Baumeister & Leary, 1995: 500). Social network sites create this kind of bond which supports intimate, positive and frequent interactions.

Social network sites like Facebook offer a space in which people can satisfy their need to belong by using services provided to enable conversations and information gathering, along with the possibility of gaining social approval, expressing opinions and influencing others (Gangadharbatla, 2008). Jetten et al. (2009) suggest that people using social network sites cope more effectively with the difficult life changes such as a job loss, a break-up or even the death of a loved one. On the other hand, Valenzuela et al. (2009) have discovered that intensity of Facebook use is positively associated with life satisfaction and social trust.

2.5.3 Self-Presentation on Social Media

Self-presentation is an important part of the Social Media usage. The Internet and World Wide Web have made possible for people to present themselves in cyberspace by creating web-pages (Schau & Gilly, 2003). Today, either by 'constructing identities' or 'managing impressions' users are presenting themselves on Social Media. Social Network Sites offer the highest degree of self-presentation and self-disclosure (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009).

Since 'self-presentation' can be seen as both a structural and socio psychological need for the individuals and is one of the main concerns of this study, this topic is examined in a different section with detailed explanations and the influence of Goffman's ideas.

2.5.3.1 Online Social Identities

Social identities are as complex as the nature of the individual. As Taylor and Spencer claim (2004), the socialization of self-identity is a continuous process. It is shaped by the social context and it has many dimensions as we can identify ourselves in different views like ethnicity, gender, nationality; it is the way we see ourselves and the way we are seen by the others.

According to Castells, identity is the construction of a meaning through a process of an individuation. To him, identities are stronger sources than roles because of the self-construction they involve (Castells, 1997: 6).

Individuals are constantly producing identities through narratives; they tell stories about their lives with the help of their memories, experiences or understandings. (Lawler, 2008). With the stories that they tell to others, people control the image of themselves in other

people's minds by changing some parts of the reality, adding or removing some words or using memories.

To some degree what others know or think about us can be controlled in face-to-face interaction; people infer qualities of identities based on gender, race, clothing, etc. As many of these cues are invisible online, Internet technologies offer the possibility of controlling more aspects of the identity for public consideration than has been possible before (Wood & Smith, 2005).

Internet has changed the traditional way of constructing identities (Zhao et al.). An important characteristic of this new identity production is the possibility for people to act like someone else or to put on different online persona that differ from their real life identities (Turkle, 1995). In the anonymous online world, a twenty year old girl can have a fake account and act like a fifty year old man just because she wants to express herself in that way or she does not want to disclose information about herself. As Turkle (1995) suggests, computer enables multiple roles and people control these multiple roles rather than suffer from the burden of having to negotiate among them. She says: "In computer-mediated worlds, the self is multiple, fluid and constituted in interaction with machine connections; it is made and transformed by language" (Turkle, 1995: 267). There are various forms of identities where one can become more important than the other depending on the context. Poster (1990: 6) claims that in cyberspace; 'the self is decentered, dispersed and multiplied in continuous instability.'

According to Binark (2005), individuals make some material and cultural choices such as language use, style, interests, etc. to describe their identity in the process of identity construction. Internet enables people to reinvent themselves in producing new identities.

Users can hide their undesired physical features or act as a different person in an anonymous online world. Although relationships through social network sites are not anonymous, there can still be an identity construction and individuals can prefer to show certain sides of their identities. On the other hand, for some people it is easier to reflect their real identity or personality online and these people can feel that they socialize more successfully online.

2.5.3.2 Presenting the ‘self’

Presenting the self to others is an important part of identity. People use self-presentation to create different images in other people’s minds. By constructing a self, the individual can become the person he/she wants to be seen by others (Rosenberg, 1979). People want to be accepted, approved and respected in society, so they try to make positive impressions.

Goffman (1959) defines the social behavior of the individual as a ‘performance’. He claims that, like the theatrical performances, people have ‘front stage’ and ‘back stage’ in their lives. All social interaction is a performance or drama where ‘backstage’ is closer to the individual’s real identity and the front stage is less honest (Lawler, 2008).

To Zhao et al., identity performance also takes place in nonymous online environments like SNS where individuals can be identified. Depending on the degrees of nonymity in the given situation, the level of conformity varies (Zhao, et al., 2008). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) explain that, the presentation of a user's identity can often happen through the conscious or unconscious ‘self-disclosure’ of subjective information such as thoughts, feelings, likes, and dislikes. Self-presentation is a pervasive part of the social life. People all have

backstages and front stages of their lives. By constructing different identities consciously or unconsciously they are attempting to lead people to think about them in a particular way and they are engaging self-representation. On Facebook, the profile page is the 'front stage' and the process of preparing the photos to share can be seen as 'back stage' in terms of Goffman's ideas.

Social network sites and users differ from each other. On Facebook there is an expectation of using the real name and identity on the profile page, but on Twitter using a nickname is more preferable. People can have multiple identities online but one can become more important than others in different contexts; a user can be a part of a hobby group, a fan and an activist at the same time.

Papacharissi & Easton (2013) interpret Bourdieu's 'habitus' in terms of social network sites. They claim that social network sites are the new fields of meaning-making and while the premise of Facebook is to express one's unique and subjective personality, all users can only present themselves in the standard structure of the page template (Papacharissi & Easton, 2013).

2.5.3.3 Impression Management

According to Goffman, people are trying to create an impression of others that will enable them to achieve their goals, which he calls 'impression management' (Goffman, 1959).

Goffman was concerned with the role of expressive strategies in the management of a socially creditable impression (Lemert&Branaman, 1997). He separates the 'self' itself and the 'self' as a 'performer' from each other. He also differentiates the 'character' and the 'performer'. To him, 'the socialized self' or the self as a 'character' represents a person's humanity. Whereas, the self as a 'performer' is a social

product (Goffmann, 1959). The distinction between the person and the role that is being performed in a social situation is a social product.

Applying this approach to social network sites –mainly Facebook, the users choose to ‘be’ there with their profiles using their real names and photos and having their real friends around them; this is their ‘self’ as a character or socialized self, human being. But when sharing information or interacting with friends, the self is being constructed apart from its feelings or impulses and becomes a social product with a performance. The performances should be ‘publicly validated’ so on the social network sites most of the people do not prefer to disclose their marginal political ideas for example or share photos that are not appropriate.

In the age of Internet and the social media, use and control of the information plays an important role in the social life. By creating a ‘profile page’, people are trying to regulate the information about themselves to shape or influence the impressions formed by an audience. From their profile photo, to the pages they ‘like’, users have a control on their identity. Users can satisfy their need for self-presentation by disclosing more or less information about their lives, sometimes by putting their best parts forward.

Self-presentation is a pervasive part of the social life. People all have ‘back stages’ and ‘front stages’ of their lives; by constructing different identities consciously or unconsciously they are attempting to lead people to think about them in a particular way and they are engaging in self-representation.

According to his view, individuals are able to adapt themselves to different situations by creating different roles and identities. A person’s self is generally built around multiple, loosely-integrated social roles. When one is destroyed, an individual in most cases finds

consolidation in others (Goffman, 1952). In the online social world, these roles can be more various and changing.

2.5.3.4 Facebook and the ‘idealized’ self

Facebook -being the most popular social network site in the world- enables users to make connections, maintain relationships, participate and present themselves with a virtual identity.

As Haferkamp and Kramer (2010) point out, social network sites are not only a potential means for self-presentation, but people are indeed highly motivated to use this new area for presenting themselves. Facebook gives significant opportunities to its users to present themselves, even to create a personal brand. It has been claimed in a research by Boston University that Facebook significantly aids in helping one meet the intrinsic need for self-presentation (Nadkarni et al., 2012). Facebook members generally prefer to use their real names on their profiles instead of being anonymous. On the other hand, they create a virtual representation of themselves by deciding what to share and how to express their identities. Privacy settings are also part of this presentation as some of the friends can be allowed to see all the posts on the profile page, while others are only allowed to see the basic information and the profile picture.

Facebook is a platform for communication and sharing but at the same time, it is a ‘stage’ where users make their performances, in line with the ‘stage’ concept of Goffman. The idea in Goffman’s argument is that the individuals are giving performances to manage their impressions and to present images of themselves that can be socially supported (Goffman, 1959).

Goffman points out that 'idealization', as living up to ideal standards, makes the person better from the outside to the inside (Branaman, 1997). Schlenker (1985) uses the term the 'desired impression' to describe this idealization. Users are trying to build up the best impression and the perfect image through others in their social lives. With the SNS like Facebook, this impression management can be made much easier.

On Facebook, everybody is performing to present themselves well and create a better image, but it is different than the performances that occur in real life. In offline relations, selves are constructed depending on the occasion. The role that is performed at work is different than the role performed at home. On Facebook, all social connections are together so the character should be performed in a way that is acceptable by the whole 'friends' list that consists of family members, close friends, colleagues, etc. This is the 'desired impression' or the 'idealized self'. By maintaining an idealized image, people convince themselves that they are not ordinary. It has maybe a cathartic side as it gives a different kind of satisfaction to us by animating the desires of our subconscious mind.

Yurchisin et al. (2005) called these 'hoped-for possible selves', which are socially more attractive identities. Zhao et al. (2008) used this term to describe the third form of identity that we construct. In a nonymous offline world and everyday life -as Goffman focuses on, the 'masks' people wear become their 'real' identities. To him, being a person in social life is not different from being a 'mask' as individuals play roles to build identities (Goffman, 1959). Whereas, in an anonymous online world, the masks are thrown away, but this time people create 'perfect' identities. The nonymous online world, -like Facebook, however emerges as a third type of environment where

people tend to express themselves as 'hoped-for possible selves' (Zhao et al., 2008).

The self-presentations on Facebook can be seen as an exaggeration rather than a 'desired impression' but many people use it for their self-presentation as well as social interaction. It enables a free space for the users who have difficulties to express themselves in real life and gives opportunities to people to present themselves to their connections in various ways. Facebook can also be seen as a reminder of the positive aspects of life as mentioned before (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011). On Facebook, there is a collection of interactions: 'The Wall' which is full of comments of friends, shared photos, the information about what the users have done. Therefore, with a selective self-representation, users can see how much they are loved, how they succeed in life, and so on. Despite the popularity of other social network sites, Facebook cannot easily be quitted because it is hard to risk the memories, friends, photos and positive aspects of a life to be deleted. That is why Facebook allows users 'deactivate' their accounts to hold on to their data in case they return.

Facebook groups and fan pages are another way of presenting the self on Facebook. Users can join a group about their interests and share their comments with other people, or they can add a fan page of a celebrity or a brand to their profile by clicking the 'like' button.

According to Park et al. (2009), one of the reasons that college students participate in Facebook groups is self-status seeking which is defined as 'developing career and desire to make themselves look 'cool'. So, joining to 'groups' is part of self-presentation on Facebook, and the preferences give an idea about a user's online social identity.

Facebook profiles allow users to create an image of themselves which can be seen as an 'idealized self'. Unlike the offline world, there is more time to manage the impressions on social web, it does not have

to be done simultaneously. Stanculescu (2011) suggests that people express their identity on an SNS making a controlled disclosure of personal information, and having a natural tendency to present themselves in a positive light such a competent, successful, attractive and social skillful person. All the movements and the choices made on Facebook - like picking a profile photo, sharing information, comments, status updates, etc. are the given tools to construct a new social identity that represents an 'ideal'.

Some other social network sites like Twitter, chat rooms, online games or virtual social communities allow users to create a fake account and act in a completely different identity. A woman can be a man, a child can be an adult or a fan can be a rock star depending on the context.

On the other hand, although the sites like Facebook identify the person by name, - adding a degree of responsibility - the identities are still constructed and are the 'perfect' versions of the users with a background of reality as they communicate with their real friends, relatives, etc. in the name of their real identity. Facebook users have different tools to create multiple identities even though they are not supposed to be anonymous (Toprak et al. 2009).

With Facebook or other social networks sites, people are creating a copy of themselves to represent them. This is what Baudrillard calls a 'simulacra', a mediated version of our identity (Baudrillard, 1994) by hiding the negative sides and polishing the positive sides of their lives. It is not totally unreal: They connect to their real friends, they share how they feel. Their online identities are the 'media representations'/simulacra' of themselves that are more successful than their actual selves and the society is ready to accept these 'surrogates'.

2.6 Summary

Internet and social media have important impacts on society. With the new digital technologies, mass communication became 'networked communication'. After the development of Web 2.0 and then the spread of social network sites, social interaction, getting information and creating content beyond geographical boundaries have become possible. Mobile and wireless technologies allow people to be active free from the physical place. Boundaries between private and public, consumers and marketplace, online and offline are getting blurred.

Digital natives who are the 'native' speakers of the digital technologies are the active users of Social Media. They are more adaptive to the new technologies, they have different skills than the 'digital immigrants' who were not born to digital environment. Digital natives are the young generation who are multi-tasking, creative, collaborative and always online.

Social media have various types with different functions, designed to serve for different needs and interests. Social network sites are the social media tools that enable people to make connections and interactions with other people from all over the world. Facebook is the most popular social network site and is also the most used one among digital natives.

Uses and Gratifications Theory aims to understand the motives behind the usage of communication tools. This theory can be adapted to social media usage. According to different studies, people use social media and social network sites for reasons such as social interaction, entertainment, information seeking, sharing and participating. In addition, social media tools satisfy the needs like well-being, belonging and gaining self-esteem.

Self-presentation is an important part of social media use. People are building impressions and constructing new identities for their self-presentation. According to Goffman, individuals are performing roles in their lives and social life can be seen as a 'stage'. With the SNS like Facebook, users also create different identities to build a 'desired impression' that is accepted as the 'ideal' selves in the standards of the society.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, methodology of the study is presented. In order to give general information about the main goals of the research, the research questions, the design of the study, data collection and limitations of the study are also explained in detail.

3.2 Basic Information

This study aims to understand the motives of the digital natives behind their Facebook usage by exploring their uses and gratifications, as well as their self-presentation patterns on Facebook.

The study concentrates on Facebook because it is the most popular and most used social network site with more than one billion monthly active users in the world.¹⁹ In Turkey, 89% of the Internet users between the ages 15-29 use Facebook.²⁰ As today the social media increasingly dominates the social lives of the digital natives, this study focuses on the online behaviors and motives of the university students aged 19 and 20, because they are assumed to be

¹⁹ <http://newsroom.fb.com/Key-Facts>

²⁰ Turkiye Sosyal Medya Arastirmasi
<http://www.gsb.gov.tr/HaberDetaylari/1/3816/genclikvesporbakanligiturkiyeninenkapsamlisosyalmedyaarastirmasiniyapti.aspx>

the first 'native' users of social media. The participants are chosen from the METU students in Ankara and qualitative methods are conducted.

3.3 Research Questions

The research questions of this study are grounded on the uses and the gratifications of the Facebook for the digital natives with a specific focus on the concept of self-presentation.

The main research question of the study is:

- What are the uses and the gratifications of using Facebook for the digital natives?

The sub-questions of the study are:

- What is the sociological significance of self-representation for the digital natives?
- Is there an 'idealized self' on Facebook for the young people who are the active users of social network sites?
- Does the way they present themselves have an impact on their offline social identity?
- Do they see the self presentation as one of the main uses and gratifications of Facebook?

3.4 Design of the Study

In the research, qualitative approaches are used, within the assumption that, qualitative research makes it possible for the researcher to attain an in-depth understanding of the phenomena they examine (Patton, 2002). On the other hand, in the social media studies, mostly qualitative methods are recommended. Thelwall

points out that, it is more useful for the researchers to use qualitative methods for the social network sites because researchers can have more informative and exploratory data (Therwall, 2008).

Within the purpose of this study, in-depth interviews are conducted with participants. Interview methodology begins from the assumption that it is possible to investigate elements of the social by asking people to talk, and to gather or construct knowledge by listening to and interpreting what they say and how they say it (Mason, 2002).

The focus of this research is to understand the online behavior of the digital natives and their motives behind using Facebook in a general perspective. Therefore, this study aims to reflect their words, ideas and body gestures. Since, as McCracken claims, interviews are designed to 'allow respondents to tell their own story in their own terms' (McCracken, 1988: 35).

The questions were asked in a friendly but at the same time in a professional manner where the interviewees feel comfortable in responding and also feel that the conversation is under control. As Rubin & Rubin points out; 'you need to balance your personality with the interviewing situation. If you are too aggressive for the situation, back off a bit; if you are too passive, force yourself to follow up a bit more (Rubin & Rubin, 2005: 81). The researcher has an advantage in interviews, as she is a radio and television presenter in her professional life and giving lectures about interviewing skills, it was easier to use this method to collect data.

All the interviews are recorded to a digital device but the researcher also took notes during the interviews as a back-up. For ethical considerations, the researcher asked the participants for their permission on recording the interviews and using the data. They are also informed that their names will not be disclosed in the study.

The questionnaire used for the interviews contained twenty main questions but as the interviews were semi-structured, the participants were flexible in using their time or give answers that are not directly relevant to the questions. The researcher asked for additional information if necessary. She also intended to make the interviews much like a daily conversation. Most of the participants were ready to talk and tell their personal experiences about Facebook; only a few of them need more time to feel secure and disclose themselves.

The questionnaire used in the interviews is annexed to this study. The questions were prepared in four categories. The first category consisted of the basic information about the participants; their age, department and hometown. In the second category, for how long they use Facebook, the time they spend on Facebook and the other social network sites they use are questioned. The third category of questions was designed to understand the main motives behind the participants' Facebook usage. The participants were asked to give three reasons to explain why they have a Facebook account. The other questions were about the content they share, Facebook's effects to their social lives and the disadvantages of using Facebook in their perspectives.

The fourth category was consisted of questions about the participants' Facebook identity and self-presentation. In this part, the questions were prepared in a direct and indirect way to examine their online behavior to present themselves on Facebook. The researcher aimed to find the differences between their online and offline identities. In this part, the key question was 'How would you like to be described by a person who does not know you in real life but knows you through Facebook?' Although there are different categories of questions, as mentioned before, the interviews were

semi-structured so some questions were repeated or asked out of order depending to the flow of the conversation.

3.5 Participants

The main purpose of this study is to analyze the online behavior of the university students –so called ‘digital natives’- aged 19-20, who have access to Internet and who are the active users of the social media, with a view to understanding their self presentation patterns on Facebook. The reason why they are chosen is because these digital natives are the first generation who grew up with social media. When Facebook became popular in Turkey they were 13-14 years old which is the earliest age to sign up for Facebook.

The participants are chosen from Middle East Technical University (METU) students. The ages of the participants in the sample are 19 and 20. All of the participants are studying at first grade in METU. Interviews have taken place at various places on the campus, generally in the canteens of their departments.

Some of the participants were chosen accidentally while others were chosen by snowball sampling. They were asked to recommend their friends preferentially from other departments. In order to determine which students will attend to the interviews, two filter questions were asked. The first one was ‘Do you have a Facebook account?’ Only one of the students that were asked said ‘No’ to this question, and was left out of the sample. The second filter question was the age of the participants. Two of the students who are asked to participate were older than 20 years so they could not be a part of the study. One of the students could not stay for the interview because she said she does not want to disclose information about herself.

The intention was to make them feel comfortable and set the interview in a friendly tone. 20 participants (10 male, 10 female) were interviewed in total, from the different departments of Middle East Technical University. Although their hometowns are different, it is not considered as a variable because all of them have lived in the major cities like Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Adana, Antalya and Mersin.

Before the interview began, the participants were informed that the interview would be recorded and transcribed and each participant verbally acknowledged permission to do so, or else the interview would not have take place. Some of the participants got nervous and asked whether the information they give will be published in a public space or not.

Each interview lasted about one and a half hour. The questions were asked in a friendly manner to make sure that the participant did not get bored and lose their attention. As McCracken (1988) offers, they were asked to describe themselves and give their answers in their own way using their own words and telling their own story.

The researcher has aimed to collect as many data as she can during the interviews so the conversations were made without a break with full concentration. To obtain this atmosphere the interviews were conducted in the most silent parts of the canteens or in the empty classrooms.

In addition to in-depth interviews, more than fifty Facebook pages of the digital natives have also been examined within the scope of this thesis. Although in-depth interviews were satisfying, the researcher thought that it is essential to look at the Facebook pages to get a concrete data that supports the answers of the questions about the online behaviors of the sample of METU students.

These pages are chosen from the ‘friends’ lists of the participants with permission to access their Facebook accounts. These pages are selected from the ‘friends’ lists of the participants accidentally. All pages belonged to the first grade METU students as well. They were picked according to the ‘basic information’ given on their profile pages.

3.5.1 METU

Middle East Technical University (METU)²¹ is one of the old and important educational institutions in Turkey founded in 1956.

METU accepts students only from top 1.5 % of approximately 1.8 million applicants taking the National University Entrance Examination, each year. The university has 43 undergraduate programs within 5 faculties. The language of the education is English.

METU is ranking in the 51-60 band according to the ‘Top 100 Universities of 2013’ list of ‘Times Higher Education’.²²

²¹ Middle East Technical University Web Site: <http://www.metu.edu.tr/>

²² World’s Top 100 Universities 2013:
<http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2013/mar/05/world-top-100-universities-reputation-rankings-times-higher-education>

3.5.2 Profiles of the Respondents

<i>n=20</i>	Gender	Age	Department
Respondent 1	F	20	Industrial Eng.
Respondent 2	M	19	Industrial Eng.
Respondent 3	F	20	Industrial Eng.
Respondent 4	M	20	Mechanical E.
Respondent 5	M	20	Mechanical E.
Respondent 6	M	19	Mechanical E.
Respondent 7	F	19	Chemical E.
Respondent 8	F	20	Chemical E.
Respondent 9	M	19	Chemical E.
Respondent 10	F	20	Architecture
Respondent 11	F	20	Architecture
Respondent 12	M	20	Architecture
Respondent 13	F	19	Business Administration
Respondent 14	F	20	Business Administration
Respondent 15	M	19	Economy
Respondent 16	F	20	Political Science & P.A.
Respondent 17	M	20	Political Science & P.A.
Respondent 18	F	19	Psychology
Respondent 19	M	20	Food Eng.
Respondent 20	M	20	Biology

3.6 Limitations

The sample of the study was limited with the first grade METU students. The reason why METU students were chosen as the sample of this study is that they all have access to Internet, they are all active users of social media and they are assumed to express themselves well because they are studying in one of the most important universities of Turkey where there are significant facilities for social activities. The researcher assumed that these social activities and campus life have a positive impact on their self-expression and self-esteem which would affect the quality of the interviews.

There was also an age limit in this research. All of our respondents are chosen from the university students who were born in 1993 or 1994 because they are the first generation who use Facebook. When Facebook became popular in Turkey they were 13-14 years old which was a legitimate age to sign up for Facebook. The respondents are assumed as the second generation of the digital natives because they were born in the era of Internet and they are all familiar with social media since they were born.

The interviews were conducted during the first semester of the school so, the students did not have long hours for interviews. Most of the meetings were arranged in the lunchtime, considering that the participants have free time during the lunch breaks. Although the participants were keen on answering questions, the interviews would have been more effective if they had more time for the conversation.

The research was completed six months after the 'Gezi Parki Incidents' which can be named as a 'political and digital milestone' in Turkey. During that time, a lot of young people joined protests against government all over the country. Social media was used effectively and actively by especially the university students. On the

other hand, METU is known as one of the most political universities in Turkey where the general tendency is being leftist. Therefore, if the interviews were conducted before the 'Gezi Parki Protests', some of the answers that are given by the participants would have been different. Many of the respondents have mentioned the events and the 'activist spirit' that they have was very significant. Furthermore, if this study was made in another university of Ankara or Turkey, the results were assumed to be also different because every university creates its own subculture and every campus has its own language. The students studying at METU are the small minority of the whole university students in Turkey. They are assumed to be successful and smart because the points they have to get in the general exam to enter the university is higher than most of the other universities in Turkey. In addition, as they use English in the school very often, the jargon they use in their descriptions may differ, compared to the other students who do not speak English. So, METU students do not represent the whole population of university students in Turkey.

Finally, this research is conducted during a time when Facebook is a very popular social network site. Thus, there is a chance that the same study will result differently if it would be conducted some other time in the future.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

In this section, data that have been collected through the interviews are analyzed. The sections are named thematically in line with the in-depth interviews depending on the relevant questions and the significant answers. The categories are formed thematically.

4.2 Why Facebook?

The first cluster of questions concerns the reasons why the respondents join Facebook and why they use and prefer it as a social network site. The first question was 'How long have you been using Facebook and why did you get a Facebook account at first?' Many of the respondents said that they have a Facebook account since they were at secondary school, which means that they have been using their Facebook account at least for five years.

Most of them said that the main reason they took Facebook account was its 'popularity'. After that, the participants were asked to list the main reasons for their Facebook usage. Below, the answers to this question are examined under six categories, which are: 'Popularity', 'Communication and Social Interaction', 'Participation and Online

Groups’, ‘Entertainment’, ‘Viewing Others’ Profiles’, ‘Information Seeking’.

4.2.1 Popularity

Twelve of the respondents stated that the first reason for creating a Facebook account was its popularity at the time of joining, which raised their curiosity about it. Most of the participants think that Facebook is no longer popular or ‘cool’ among young people as there are too many other options, but they do not think to leave Facebook because they think that it is an essential tool for a university student. One of them claimed that:

“I’m on Facebook because everybody’s there!” (Respondent 7)

This means that they have created a Facebook account because of its popularity at that time but it is not considered as the main reason they use Facebook because most of them stated that they do not find Facebook popular anymore.

4.2.2 Communication and Social Interaction

According to the respondents, one of the main reasons they join Facebook is socialization. Thirteen of them give ‘communication and social interaction’ as an answer to the question: ‘Why do you use Facebook?’ Three of them stated that with Facebook they can follow ‘what’s going on’ in their social life and they ‘don’t feel alienated’.

Other three of them mentioned that they are using Facebook to communicate with their friends or relatives who are living in another city or country. One of the respondents said:

I can communicate with my best friend who is living in Eastern Anatolia constantly. Actually, I was wondering ‘what would life be without Facebook’ and last year I tried to write a letter to my friends living in different cities but I think after some time it gets boring. In my opinion, after Facebook, people do not miss each other anymore but at the same time it is very easy to reach a friend through Facebook. (Respondent 8)

One of them claims that:

For example ten people are talking about something they share on Facebook, you feel like a stranger in this conversation. This isn’t a functional knowledge indeed, tomorrow another thing will be discussed but still you want to be a part of it. It increases your adaptation to your social life. (Respondent 2)

Three of the respondents said they just use Facebook’s ‘private messaging’ function for communication purposes. Two of them stated that the ‘messaging’ feature of Facebook is very useful. The other one said:

“I use Facebook because communication with cell phone can be very expensive. Sending message from Facebook is free and easy” (Respondent 15).

Most of the participants have mentioned that they have smart phones, they constantly check their Facebook notifications through their phones and they are always online. They also claimed that when they are at home while studying, their Facebook page is always open. Besides, its ‘messaging’ feature is seen as practical as telephone communication.

Therefore, social interaction and communication are the important features of Facebook. For many of the respondents Facebook provides opportunities to keep in touch with friends and to reach them

whenever they want. In addition, ‘communication’ was the most common word that most of the participants have used during the interviews while describing their main motives behind the use of Facebook. Some of the participants have said that although they are not active on Facebook as they used to be, they cannot deactivate their Facebook account as their friends are still there.

4.2.3 Participation and Online Groups

The majority of the respondents have mentioned the importance of the ‘groups’ on Facebook. They said that all the information about the courses and the exams are shared in these groups, students ask questions about the courses they take to the other students even though they do not know each other well in the real social life. There are also other groups which they have joined to be informed about the social activities and events which is an important part of the university life. One of them said:

“In the last few years, the groups on Facebook are very trendy and they give lots of information about the courses and social activities. if there wasn’t this feature, I wouldn’t be using Facebook...” (Respondent 11).

Another participant claims that Facebook is a unique platform that provides information about numerous things at the same time:

The most important thing that Facebook brings to my life is that I can get information about different things; the social activities, exam days and what the friends are doing tonight, etc. We have also discussions about the exam topics in the private groups, they are very useful. Other social network sites couldn’t provide this kind of fluent communication, yet. (Respondent 2)

The main reasons why they join online-communities are in order to be informed about their exams or courses and the social events. It has also been recognized by the examination of the different Facebook pages of METU students that, nearly all users are the members of online groups. They said they usually join more than one group and while they are at home on their own in the offline world, they simultaneously join discussions in different groups or read comments. Some of the respondents said that if there were not groups, they would not be on Facebook. It is also remarkable that their use of language on their comment is generally appropriate and sometimes ironical.

In fact, Gezi Parki sharings are the significant examples of the concept of 'participation'. The effort of the digital natives in that period can also be seen as the need to be part of a collaborative action instead of political concerns as many of them said that they are not interested in sharing serious political content or joining online groups for political activism.

4.2.4 Entertainment

Nine participants stated that they use Facebook for entertainment. The answers like 'to have fun', 'to pass time', 'to fight boredom', 'to forget about daily issues', etc. are also considered in the category of entertainment. One of the interviewees said:

Facebook helps me to fight boredom. I read all the things that have been shared even though most of them are ridiculous or stupid. I read them just because they are funny and make me laugh. I sometimes lose myself on Facebook. I can spend hours on Facebook. (Respondent 14)

Four of the participants directly stated 'passing time' as a reason why they use Facebook. Two of them mentioned that Facebook makes them laugh. On the other hand, many participants use the words 'enjoyable', 'funny', 'smile', 'social' and 'interesting' which can be considered as a part of 'entertainment'.

4.2.5 Viewing Other's Profiles

One of the main answers given to the question; 'Why are you using Facebook' was 'viewing other people's profiles'. Seven of the respondents said that they like to 'monitor' their friends' profiles and 'curiosity' is one of the main reasons they are using Facebook. Two of the interviewees use the word 'stalking' to describe their behavior of looking at someone's profile page in detail. One female participant said:

There is a concept which is very trendy called 'stalklamak' (Originally it is 'stalking', she used a word half Turkish half English). You visit somebody's profile page and have a look on everything. You can choose your friends by this way. Nowadays people are being friends on Facebook and then they become friends in real life. Before meeting him, you make 'stalking' and then you decide whether you will meet him in real life or not. For example once I had feelings for a boy and then after looking at his profile and seeing his interests, my feelings and thoughts have totally changed. I think Facebook profiles affect the people's identity in real life. Today, Facebook comes first, if a friend is able to pass this step, then face-to-to face communication begins. (Respondent 16)

Another participant said:

When I met a new person, I directly look at his Facebook profile. I love looking at other people's profile pages. I have information about them through their Timeline; which movies they like, which books they have read... (Respondent 1)

Although, there have not been a direct question about 'viewing other people's profiles', surprisingly many respondents have claimed that this activity is an important part of their online behavior. Most of the participants claim that they are curious about what the other people are doing. Some of them mentioned that they look at other profiles to see what they wear, what they listen to or what they talk about. Some respondents said they do it for fun, while the others stated that they 'stalk' to know a person better.

4.2.6 Information Seeking

Most of the participants said that getting information about the daily issues is as important as social interaction in using Facebook. Eight of them said they get the news from Facebook instead of a newspaper or a news site because they think that it is fast and reliable. All of the participants stated that they control their Facebook account more than five times a day to follow the news and 'what is going on' and more than half of the respondents mentioned that they have a smart phone that displays Facebook interactions simultaneously.

One respondent said:

"The reason why I use Facebook is because it is faster than a news agency, a news site or a newspaper. We learn the backgrounds of the political events from Facebook instead of mainstream media."
(Respondent 5)

Another one stated that:

I think the flow of information is very important and if anything happens, you can see it on Facebook in a minute. I follow the news about Turkey and the world news from Facebook. Even an incident happened at classroom can easily spread on Facebook.
(Respondent 9)

Many participants mentioned 'Gezi Parki Protests' and how getting the reliable information has become important at that time:

"When Gezi protests happened we learned a lot of things from Facebook instead of newspapers or television. As everybody knows, there was too much censorship on the news channels." (Respondent 5)

Although the participants have said that they follow the news through Facebook and they find it more trustful than the newspapers or other mass media, reading news is not the main reason they join Facebook. Most of them claimed that Twitter is more effective for following the current events. On the other hand, seeking information is important for the respondents; as mentioned before with the 'open' or 'private' groups on Facebook, they can get information about the school issues or social events and this feature of Facebook seems to be very crucial for them.

4.3 What Do You Share on Facebook?

Sharing content is one of the main activities and an important part of the user's self-expression on Facebook. Great majority of the participants said they share content on their Facebook pages. "What do you share most and why?" was the other question that was asked.

Most of the interviewees used the word 'different' while describing their sharings. Music, photos, funny pictures and videos and political content are the most shared items on Facebook. Three of the

respondents state that they would never share 'food pictures' because they find it inappropriate and five participants said that they would never share a content that will make them seen as a 'stupid' or 'ignorant' person. Two participants said they rarely share content, they prefer to see the other's sharings. More than half of them again mentioned Gezi Parki protests while they are talking about the content they share.

The Facebook pages that have been examined have given similar results. In most of the pages, photos of the users with their friends dominate the shared content. Most of the pages also contain humorous content.

In this part, the respondents' sharing activity is examined in six titles. 'Photos', 'Music', 'Humorous and Political Content' are the main answers to the question what the respondents most share on Facebook. There are also passive users called 'Lurkers' whom generally do not prefer to share anything on Facebook. In addition, the answers to the question 'What would you never share on Facebook?' are also examined in this category.

4.3.1 Photos

Photos are the most shared items on Facebook. Ten of the participants said that they constantly share photos through Facebook. Five of them pointed out that they do not share as many photos as they did before because they use Instagram for this purpose. Common behavior is to upload photos that are taken with friends in social activities. Five of the female interviewees claimed that they would never share a video or a photo with a sexual content on Facebook as they do not find it appropriate. Three of the

participants indicated that they are not sharing private photos since their parents and relatives have joined Facebook.

One participant said:

“I don’t like sharing photos with just myself in it. I want to be seen in a crowd. Being with friends makes me feel strong and happy and I don’t prefer to be seen lonely” (Respondent 3).

Twelve of the participants said that their look is important on their photos. Nine of them said that they usually delete their old photos on Timeline because they find themselves ‘ugly’.

In my photos, I’m always looking good. If I’m 80 kilos for example, on my photo, I look like I’m 50. How I look is very important for me because all of my friends and friends’ friends are there (Respondent 13).

The respondents said they mostly share photos.

Although this study is not taking gender as a major determinant, it has also been recognized that the female participants have a tendency to share more personal photos than the male participants. However, sharing photos of especially the social activities is very common among the sample of METU first grade students.

4.3.2 Music

A significant number of participants said they share music and videos through Facebook. Instead of sharing popular songs, they mentioned that the trend is discovering new and different songs and bands and giving information about them. They said that, sharing good music and videos are important for them because they want to be seen as a person who has a good taste in music and they want to

be the first to introduce new songs to their friends. One of the interviewees said:

I don't share songs just to share them. I don't share the songs that everybody knows, either. My purpose is to let my friends know about a special song of a 'no name' band so that if that band became famous someday, people will remember that I had recommended that band and its songs. (Respondent 4)

Another participant stated:

For me, a good taste of music is very important. I would be very happy if people say 'This girl knows about good music' or 'she always shares good songs'. I also like to read comments about the songs or videos I've shared. (Respondent 1)

Beside the interviewees' answers, the Facebook pages that are examined have showed that sharing music links and videos is common on Facebook. Types of music were diverse depending on the interests but the songs do not have to be new or unknown as the respondents mentioned. On several Facebook pages, there were old and popular songs and videos, as well.

4.3.3 Humorous Content

Most of the participants said that sharing funny things and humorous content is an essential side of Facebook. More than half of the interviewees point out that there has to be an intelligent side in the funny videos or pictures, instead of just being funny. Six of them mentioned 'Caps' to describe the new sharing trend on Facebook which describes the photoshopped pictures of famous people with funny dialogues.

I'm sharing funny and different Caps. I think Facebook has really improved my sense of humour. In my opinion, also the perceptions of the society have become more flexible with the social media. 'Caps' is the proof of the change. People are now more tolerant to the jokes, I guess, and it brings freedom. (Respondent 6)

Another respondent thinks that Caps are ridiculous and silly. She said:

"I think there should be a limit in humour. I don't like to share Caps; I prefer 'eksisozluk' and 'zaytung' contents' (Respondent 16).

One of the male participants stated:

"With Facebook, my creativity has been improved. I love to read comics and share them" (Respondent 2).

As 'having fun' is one of the main motives of Facebook usage, humorous content is remarkable on almost every page. Some of the respondents have stated that even the most serious news content can be a material for the humorous and creative works. They claimed that they prefer funny or ironical content rather than long articles.

4.3.4 Political Sharings

Although five of the participants said they sometimes share political content, thirteen of them mentioned 'Gezi Parki Protests' during the interview in different contexts. Nine of them stated that they shared political content during Gezi Parki protests.

Facebook makes it easy to follow the agenda. I like to share funny stuff instead of news content on Facebook. But, they have to be really funny and different so that I can share them with

friends. When the Gezi protests occurred I shared lots of things on Facebook and I have followed the news through Facebook. (Respondent 19)

One female participant claimed that:

“It was the Gezi Parki period when I did share lots of things. I was very angry and I had wanted to inform people. At that time I was sharing content nearly ten times a day” (Respondent 11).

Some of the respondents stated that although they are not interested in current events or politics, they share news content during the ‘Gezi Parki’ incidents.

It has been recognized that sharing political content is not rare among the sample of the METU first grade students. Political issues are important for them either to make comments about them or make fun of them but as they can easily get bored, they prefer short and humorous ways to read and share political content.

4.3.5 ‘Lurkers’

Five of the participants have defined themselves as ‘passive’ on Facebook. They said they spend their time on Facebook by reading their friends’ posts and sharings without any comment and rarely share content. One of the participants claimed that:

In my normal life I am more active but on Facebook I prefer to be passive. I generally don’t share photos, my friends tag me because I don’t think that people are interested in my photos. I like reading the posts more than writing or sharing something. (Respondent 18)

'Lurking' is a pejorative term like 'stalking' but it has been noticed that the word has become a part of Facebook terminology and used in the sociological articles as well.

4.3.6 Never Share...

Another question was 'What would you never share on Facebook?' Six of the answers were radical political content, three of them were sexual content, and three of them were food pictures. One of the respondents said:

"There are some people who constantly share the picture of the things they have eaten. I think sharing food pictures is rudeness" (Respondent 7).

Another one stated that:

"I want to share different things in general. If I see a picture that is shared on my Timeline ten times for example, no matter how beautiful or creative it is, I do not prefer to share it again" (Respondent 10).

Other answers were varied. Most of the participants said they do not share 'radical' content that will disturb their friends. Some of them claimed that they do not write too much comment because they do not want to be seen as a person who spends all the time on Facebook.

Two female participants said that they do not share gossip or tabloid news. One of the participants claimed that she would never share a photo of her boyfriend. The other one stated that he would never share content that could have been misunderstood. Some other participants have also claimed that although Facebook is an important part of their social lives, they are aware of the fact that

written communication is not the same as face-to-face communication so, misunderstandings usually happen.

4.4 Disadvantages of Facebook

When the participants were asked about their thoughts on the disadvantages of Facebook, six of them directly gave the similar answer; their main concern which they specify as a disadvantage was 'lots of information is disclosed and 'everybody knows everything about everyone'. Another six of them claimed that their parents' or relatives' presence on Facebook is a major disadvantage for them.

Two respondents stated that there can be a lot of misinformation on Facebook. Three of them said it takes lots of their time and they cannot concentrate on their courses. One of them claimed that it does not give the right information about people because there are too much exaggeration on Facebook.

This section is detailed according to the two main answers: 'Privacy Issues' and 'Digital Immigrants on Facebook'.

4.4.1 Privacy Concerns

Many of the participants stated that they have privacy concerns and they see this as a disadvantage of Facebook. Just two of the participants said that they do not control the privacy settings on Facebook. Eleven of the others state that only their 'friends', five of them said friends' friends can see their full profile. Eight of them said they are worried about privacy issues; the main concern is "they do not want to be 'monitored' by other people". Two of them said they have worries about the security of their information. A female

respondent talked about an incident that has been occurred last year:

*Last year I saw something on Facebook; it was a contest and they are choosing ‘the most beautiful girl’ and the ‘most handsome boy’ in METU. I was shocked when I saw my photo between the nominees. After that I became anxious and deleted lots of my photos from my profile page and I deleted some of my friends, as well. I’m now more careful about the privacy settings.
(Respondent 1)*

It was significant that, in contrast with the general assumption that the digital natives do not give importance to the privacy issues, majority of the participants stated that they have privacy concerns and they control their privacy settings while they are on Facebook. They do not want to disclose too much information to the users who are not their ‘friends’.

4.4.2 Digital Immigrants on Facebook

Six of the participants stated that the presence of their parents and relatives on Facebook is disturbing them. One of them said:

My mother’s existence on Facebook is very disturbing for me. Mothers have a different style on Facebook, they permanently ‘like’ everything, every photo or every comment, the worse thing is; when you get tagged in a photo, they write comments like these: ‘Oh my dear, you are beautiful, you look wonderful!’ and this is horrible for me! We always make fun of these comments because it’s like a cliché and they always write in capital letters, which means yelling! It is very hard for us to understand their style (Respondent 11).

Another interviewee said:

“Retired old relatives are sending game requests every day, this really makes me angry.” (Respondent 4)

One male participant said that their parents or relatives use Facebook like they use telephone:

“They have comments like this: ‘You look very nice. I’m kissing all of you. See you later. Bye.’ We usually make fun of them!” (Respondent 12)

Another reason they are being disturbed by their parents are the pressure of being controlled. Four of them said they want a private life so they do not prefer their family members see their profile or photos. One female participant stated:

I have two Facebook profiles; one is for myself, the other one is for my family. Because I do not want them to see my boyfriend’s picture or I don’t want them to see me smoking in a photo. And sometimes we make comments just to have fun but our parents can take it seriously, I think this is generational difference. (Respondent 18)

One participant said that she is thinking of deleting her Facebook account just because her mother is there.

These statements show that the digital immigrants have difficulties in adapting to the online environment of the digital natives where they have developed their own behaviors and habits. According to the participants, the generation differences are obvious on Facebook. On the other hand, instead of being concerned about privacy issues, it is also remarkable that some of the respondents’ concerns are only about protecting their privacy towards their parents.

4.5 Effects of Facebook on Offline Social Life

Another subject of the interviews was the effects of Facebook on offline social life. Five of the participants said it helps to improve their relationships with friends or relatives. Many of them claimed that they cannot think their daily life without Facebook.

One of the female participants said:

“When I wake up, the first thing I do is to control my Facebook messages. I turn on my computer and telephone and I directly look at Facebook. Facebook became an important part of my life.” (Respondent 1)

Another interviewee stated:

“When we get together with friends, most of our dialogues are about the sharings on Facebook. Facebook gives us new subjects to talk about.” (Respondent 5)

One female participant said that a person’s Facebook behavior can change her perception about him or her:

...for example after having a chat with people, when I look at their profiles I can feel closer them if we have similar taste of music or movies. Or, I can have bad feelings for someone I love in real life just because she is sharing every moment of her life, everything she eats for example. Facebook profile gives impressions about people and they can be sometimes more powerful than normal life. I think Facebook image has become more important than the real life. (Respondent 13)

Meeting new people is seen as another effect of Facebook on the participants’ offline social life. More than half of the participants have

claimed that they met new people through Facebook but the number of these new people is not more than two or three. Moreover, they stated that the friends they have met on Facebook are in fact the people they know from school or other social groups. Facebook makes it easier for them to start a conversation rather than meeting strangers and become friends online. On the other hand, one of the male participants said that he had found his girlfriend from Facebook in the past but she was also his friends' friend.

One of the participants said that by joining groups they can meet new people but it cannot be seen as 'having new friends'.

*With the sharings in the groups, especially while talking about the exams and the courses you can meet new people from your class but it doesn't improve your friendship. I don't believe that a person can have friends from Facebook, you just meet there.
(Respondent 20)*

Two of the participants mentioned 'finding old friends'. One of them said:

*Through Facebook I found my old friends from primary school and now we are getting together once in a month. Again, after Facebook I can recognize faces and names easier. I have a bad memory! Moreover, I can have the photos very quickly, if there wasn't Facebook, it would be hard to get the photos from friends.
(Respondent 10)*

So, although the participants did not name it as 'friendship', the main effect of Facebook on their offline social life seems to be 'meeting new people' and 'improving social relationships'. 'Makes it hard to concentrate on school and courses' was also a significant answer.

4.6 Other Social Network Sites

One of the questions that have been asked to the respondents was the other social network sites they use instead of Facebook. Seventeen of the participants said they have Twitter account beside their Facebook accounts. Instagram and Foursquare are the other popular accounts among participants. Nearly half of them stated: *“Facebook is not popular as it used to be”*.

One respondent claim that:

“I think Twitter and Instagram have taken the place of Facebook. Some people deactivate their Facebook account but in order to be cool they keep on being active on Twitter.”(Respondent 6)

On the other hand, three of them mentioned that ‘check-in’ activities through Foursquare are more popular than check-ins through Facebook itself.

One respondent claimed that Facebook is not useful for mobile devices.

Facebook is a multi functional site but it in a way not useful. As we all use smart phones, we have instant demands. Instagram is just for photos for example, Twitter is to say what you’re doing and Foursquare are for check-ins. When you’re on streets, they are more easy and practical to use but when you’re at home, I prefer Facebook because it the sum of them. (Respondent 12)

The main reason why Facebook loses its popularity is the variety of the social network sites in today’s ‘networked society’. But the main significance is, although the participants think that Facebook is not trendy anymore or they do not use it as actively as before, they cannot leave Facebook. It has been recognized that most of the

participants see their Facebook page as an archive and their connection to the friends and social life.

4.7 Facebook Identity

In this part, the questions were designed to understand the participants' 'Facebook Identity' and their self presentation. The answers were examined in six categories which are: 'Profile Picture', 'Language', 'Timeline', 'Constructing identities and Self Expression', 'Reality or Illusion' and 'Desired Impression'.

4.7.1 Profile Picture

The respondents were also asked about their profile picture which is a part of the self presentation on Facebook. Only one of the respondents is using an illustration instead of a profile photo because he said he wants to be seen 'cool'. This word is used by five other respondents:

"The image I'm creating on Facebook is very important for me. I don't like to share everything about the private parts of my life and this makes me look cool." (Respondent 2)

Four of them said they put their photos with friends, others state that they prefer to be alone on their profile pictures. All of them said that they update their profile photo at least once in every two or three months. Many of the participants have also stated that how they look like on the photos is important. Some of them admitted that they do not look like themselves in their photos; they look thinner or more beautiful. This is an indicator which shows that self presentation is a part of their Facebook usage.

4.7.2 Language:

The language use of the participants are also questioned during the interviews and also examined through the Facebook pages. Most of the respondents think that they use the language in a natural way on Facebook; they write exactly the way they think or they talk in the real life. Three of the respondents said they sometimes use bad language in real life but on Facebook, they are more sensitive in terms of the words or phrases they use. On the other hand, six of them said that they are expressing themselves better by writing instead of speaking. One participant said that language use is an important clue about a person's character or style. She said:

"A person using the grammar of the language and punctuation remarks correctly gives a good impression to me. So, I'm trying to be careful in my comments." (Respondent 8)

So, using language in an improper way is not pervasive on Facebook among the participants of the study.

4.7.3 Timeline

Timeline is a collection of photos, stories or different kinds of content that a user has shared on Facebook and sometimes referred as 'the profile'. During the interviews many of the participants have used the word 'timeline' and as this interface gives detailed information about the user, it is considered as a part of the user's representation.

One of them said:

“Our timeline begins with our adolescence so there are so many things we are ashamed of. Sometimes people can comment on old sharings so I’m constantly deleting my old photos.” (Respondent 19)

Another participant claimed that:

Timeline is like an archive where you can see all the past activities of the people so I usually update my timeline.. I delete the old and ugly photos of myself.” (Respondent 10)

After the examination of the Facebook pages, it has also been noticed that the users’ Timeline is updated and only the selected content can be seen by the other users.

More than half of the participants have mentioned that they constantly delete old sharings and photos on their Timeline. This is not related with the surveillance concerns. They indicated that they do not want their friends to see photos of their adolescence or ridiculous comments they made in the past. So, how their timeline is seen by the others is important for them and they see their past activities as a part of their self-presentation.

4.7.4 Constructing Identities and Self-Expression

Another question about Facebook Identity concerns whether the participants feel that they create a different identity on Facebook. Five of them said they express themselves easier on Facebook. It provides an opportunity for them to disclose their less-known sides of their character and life.

One of them stated:

In the normal life I’m very shy and I couldn’t communicate well with people but on Facebook, I realize that I can express myself better. For example I like to draw pictures but I can’t show my

ability in normal life but Facebook gives me an opportunity to show my different sides to my friends. (Respondent 16)

Another participant has also mentioned that she can express herself better on Facebook:

“I have difficulties in face-to-face communication but on Facebook I feel comfortable. For example sometimes I speak to someone on Facebook a lot but when we meet at school, I can feel nervous.” (Respondent 7)

In addition, some of the participants have admitted that in order to be seen more ‘cool’ or sophisticated, they sometimes comment on the issues that they do not know much about or they ‘like’ a movie they have not actually seen yet.

The researcher has found it significant that as the native users, the majority of the respondents feel themselves comfortable while using Facebook and express themselves well. Facebook also provides them opportunities to create new identities consciously or unconsciously.

4.7.5 Reality or Illusion

Another question was ‘Do you think that Facebook profiles are the reflections of the real lives?’ Fifteen of the participants say ‘No’ to this question, the others did not give a specific answer. One of the interviewees said:

I think Facebook is illusory if you want to know a person well because people are hiding the unhappy sides of their lives. They don’t like to share the bad things and if they are doing it to create an image; some of them finds it ‘cool’ to be in depression, some of them find it ‘cool’ to be ‘cool’. (Respondent 5)

Another respondent thinks that sometimes Facebook profiles can be more real than the real life:

People are showing different sides of their lives and personalities on Facebook. Sometimes Facebook can be more real because people are acting like a person they actually want to be. I think what we want to be is more real than what we really are. For example one of my friends -who was fat and not so beautiful- was sharing only sexy photos on Facebook although she was very shy in real life, she was talking to everyone on Facebook. In my opinion, her online identity is more real; she just can't express her self in real life. (Respondent 14)

Seven of the participants admitted that they sometimes act as a different person. One of the female respondents say:

Sometimes I act like I have hobbies which I don't have to attract a boy for example. Let's say if a boy likes a basketball team I try to share a video about it, so he thinks that I'm also interested in that team.

A significant number of the participants said that they do not see the Facebook profiles as a pure reflection of the real lives. They have stated that they are fully aware of the fact that people are 'acting' on Facebook and they are showing positive parts of themselves.

4.7.6 Desired Impression

To understand the 'desired impression' (the impression they want to create on others' minds) of the participants, a key question was asked. The question was: "How would you like to be seen on Facebook to a person who does not know you in real social life?" The

interviewees were asked to give their answer in three words. The most common answers were 'enjoyable', 'social' and 'different'. Three of them said that they want to be seen as 'opponent'. Four of the participants claimed that being seen as a 'sophisticated' person is important for them. 'Successful' and 'active' are the other words used to describe the 'desired impression'. Three of the participants used the phrase: 'travels a lot'.

Five of the participants use the word 'positive' to describe their identity on Facebook. One female interviewee said that she does not prefer to reflect her negative moments:

I seem to be very happy on Facebook although I'm having really hard times. I usually don't write things about unhappy moments. I always share funny and positive things on Facebook. My comments are also positive. (Respondent 1)

So, the most common words the participants were used to describe their 'desired impression' were 'enjoyable', 'social', 'different', 'smart', 'sophisticated' and 'active'. 'Successful', 'humorous', 'cheerful', 'happy' and 'stylish' have also been used to define 'desired impression'.

Beside these definitions, other statements and Timeline observations gave clues about their desired impression. For example, most of the participants like to be seen with their friends on their photos because they want to be perceived as 'social'. They disclose information about their distinguishing interests such as fashion, movies, sports or other hobbies in order to show 'different' sides of their identity. Many of them claimed that they like to share stories or photos about their success at school or in social life as being 'successful' is important for them. They all agreed that they are organizing their Facebook profiles parallel to their 'idealized selves

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the findings of the research are presented with a view to reaching conclusions and suggestions for further research. The findings are discussed in two sections regarding the main concerns of the study. The first part will reveal the findings about the ‘uses and gratifications’ of Facebook for digital natives, and the second part will discuss their ‘self presentation’ patterns.

5.2 The Uses and Gratifications of Facebook for the Digital Natives

This study has focused on the online behavior of the digital natives through the sample of METU first grade students in terms of their uses and gratifications and self presentation in the case of Facebook.

As indicated in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, Mark Prensky (2001) defined ‘Digital Natives’ as the young people who were born into the digital technologies. Some other scholars also mentioned this concept with different names as ‘Born Digital’ or the ‘Net Generation’.

Tapscott (1999) suggested that they are the generation who was born after 1977. Palfrey and Gasser (2008) argued that they are the generation born after 1980. The creator of the concept Prensky did not give any age limit but he describes this generation as the 'native' users of the technologies.

Influenced by this idea, this study called the young people born in the mid-1990s as 'the native users of SNS', because they are the first users of Facebook, which is the first significant social network site'. Thus, the age of the sample is determined with regards to this information. The sample of this study was selected from those who were born in 1993 and 1994 so that, when Facebook became popular in Turkey, they were 13 or 14 years old – the legitimate age to sign up. The findings have revealed that all of the participants are the 'native' users of Facebook because they all said that they had an account nearly since the beginning of its popularity in Turkey.

Most of the participants have said that the first thing they do when they wake up is to look to their Facebook page or control their messages. These statements correspond with the claims of Beddington (2013) that the digital natives are 'hyperconnected'. In addition, most of them have mentioned that they have smart mobile phones and they are getting the Facebook notifications automatically. This goes parallel with the claims of Lim and Kann (2008) that online mobilization allows individuals to connect their offline activities with the online world. Many of the participants have also stated that in every situation and at every location they are searching for connection to check their Facebook notifications which posits the suggestions of Haythornthwaite and Wellman (2002) that physical location has lost its importance and computer-mediated communication has become a part of everyday lives.

'Social interaction' and 'communication' are the primary reasons for the participants to use Facebook. In his 1995 research, Kaye (1998) also found that social interaction is the main reason and motivation of Internet communication. The statements of the respondents and also the Facebook pages that are examined has also proved the idea that the digital natives can be identified as 'social, keen on interacting with each other and always connected' as Oblinger and Oblinger (2005) pointed out. Interacting with friends on Facebook is a crucial part of their social life.

Many of the interviewees stated that Facebook interaction replaces the telephone interaction in their lives. On the other hand, one participant said that he is disturbed by his parents' Facebook messages because they write messages like they are talking on the phone. This confirms McLuhan's (1994) argument that, the medium transforms and shapes the message. There are various types of social network sites because each of them are designed to give the same message in different ways and each of them is being used for a different purpose. McLuhan's famous phrase; 'Medium is the message' can also be interpreted in this context. Medium is more efficient to change the perceptions of the people than the message itself. As a matter of fact, all of the participants have stated that they use more than one social network site and they use them simultaneously.

Meeting new people and having new friends are a significant part of the social interaction for the participants. They indicated that, while improving their relationships with friends, Facebook allows them to meet new people. This confirms the view of Williams (2006) and Ellison et al. (2007) who argued that the time users spend online helps them build their offline social capital and moving online relationships to offline social life is possible.

On the other hand, although the participants mentioned that they meet new people through Facebook groups, the majority of them agreed that the main tendency is to move their offline connections to Facebook. So, Facebook is more effective in maintaining current relationships than developing social capital which goes parallel with the suggestion of Ross et al. (2009) that the majority of Facebook friends are met offline and then added later.

Most of the interviewees have claimed that they join Facebook groups to share information about the courses and exams on school or the social activities. This online behavior is similar to Castells' (2000) concept of 'networked individualism', which assumes that people build their online networks according to their interests, values and projects.' The digital natives are creating these communities to share information and content generally about school and social events or their common interests.

More than half of the participants agree that they can gather true, reliable and objective information through Facebook which shows that 'information seeking' is an important part of Internet communication as Matsuba (2006) argues. The common opinion is that mainstream media and mass communication tools are not trustful to get the news. In general, the participants prefer Facebook and Twitter to follow the news. Their statements have showed that most of the participants agree with Hodkinson (2011) that, 'Internet provides a democratic space free from hierarchical mass media.'

It was also significant that most of the participants have mentioned 'Gezi Parki Protests' during the interviews in terms of gathering and sharing information. They claimed that, during that time they created and shared different kind of content. This is the 'participatory culture' that Jenkins identifies (Jenkins, 2006). Most of the participants see themselves as active users of social media; instead of

reading comments or joining to the groups, they are at the same time creators and producers of the content or the agenda.

Sharing seems to be a natural and essential activity of the lives of the participants and by the social interactions through social network sites they recognize that they have common issues. These interactions connect them as a kind of 'social glue' as Sunstein (2007) points out. The sharings of 'Gezi Parki Protests' can also be seen as a kind of 'social glue' which makes the online connections of the digital natives more intimate.

Although the participants generally do not share political content, this does not mean that the digital natives do not follow the news or do not have an idea about the current issues. Some of the participants said they do not like to read political content on Facebook and they get bored of reading long articles. One of the reasons of this is that, there are different kinds of and more attractive sharings on the Newsfeed and sometimes –as a criticism of the participants, Facebook can be slow especially on the mobile phones. So, they prefer to read and share content like photos, comics, aphorisms or Caps that are easy to read and understand. Some of the participants said that they find it hard to concentrate. This is one of the characteristics of the digital natives that Mark Prensky (2001) defined; they find it hard to focus on the texts so they prefer graphics or videos. So, as the participants claimed; they like to get information about the daily and political issues through humorous content or short videos. As a consequence, rather than being apolitical, they like to express their feelings and ideas in an ironical way, by using caps or other visual material. Many participants said that 'they like to have fun on Facebook'. So, entertainment is more important motive for them to use Facebook than reading news. Compared to mass media or Internet sites, they said that they found the information their

friends share on Facebook more reliable but they generally follow the news or share political content through Twitter.

As mentioned before, 'creativity' is an important element of the social media. Funny pictures called 'Caps' are the examples of this creativity. It has also been recognized that even the photos that are shared through Facebook are the proofs of this creative approach with their interesting concepts. As a matter of fact, many participants have used the word 'different' to describe their online behavior. So, being different and taking attention is important for them while using Facebook. All these 'creative' actions justify Palfrey and Gasser (2008) who suggest that the digital natives are very creative and they have skills to produce new forms of expressions.

'Entertainment' is one of the main reasons for the participants to use Facebook. Some of them have stated that they use Facebook to 'have fun' or 'pass time' and the others have told the researcher that, Facebook helps them to 'fight boredom'. Participants did not specifically mention their happiness or well-being while using Facebook but they made positive comments and the word 'entertaining' was a significant comment among them so it posits the relationship between Facebook and well-being as Toma argued (Toma, 2010). Tapscott (1999) had also claimed that entertainment and having fun –even when working is a common characteristic for this generation.

Some of the participants called themselves as passive users of Facebook. This means that some of the users just read comments or posts instead of being participative as Suziki and Calzo (2004) and Crawford (2009) suggest. So, not all the digital natives are active on Facebook but the 'lurkers' can be seen as a minority of the young users. Most of the participants said that they prefer to be active on Facebook.

With the observations and the interviews it has been recognized that most of the participants do not prefer to be alone in the photos they share. Some of the respondents said 'it feels good' to be with friends. On the other hand, they stated that when they do not participate in online activities or sign in to Facebook, they feel alienated from offline social life. So, these manners can be explained with 'need to belong' theory which came up with the idea that 'people need frequent and positive personal contacts with stability' (Baumeister & Leary, 1995: 500).

Being a part of a group and 'social approval' is important for many of the respondents and this makes them more 'collaborative'. Palfrey and Gasser (2008) and Tapscott (1999) have also described the online behavior of the digital natives as 'collaborative'. This collaboration can be noticed especially on Facebook groups where the students help each other to solve problems or take each other's advice about various issues. On the other hand, as they share information especially in 'groups' with each other, Facebook can be seen as an informal learning space for the university students, as Madge (2009) suggests.

Most of the participants claimed that they are controlling their privacy settings and they do have concerns about privacy issues. This contradicts with the view of Abril (2007) who argues that the digital natives do not have concerns about privacy.

Abril (2007) argued that the digital natives do not have concerns about privacy. But most of the participants said that they are controlling their privacy settings and only their 'friends' can see their full profile. On the other hand, nearly half of the participants stated that they are disturbed by their parents' and relatives' presence on Facebook. This supports the concept of 'privacy paradox' defined by Barnes (2006). They are disclosing personal information to their

friends or friends' friends but they do not want their parents see them because it feels like their private life is controlled by them.

5.3 Self-Presentation of the Digital Natives on Facebook

Self-presentation is one of the main reasons of using social network sites. Although the participants in this research do not use 'self presentation' as a specific answer to one of the reasons of their Facebook usage, other answers and comments give clues about their ideas on 'presenting the self'.

First of all, most of the participants said that they care about how they look in the photos they share or they are being 'tagged'. Only one of them is using an illustration for the profile picture. Observations of the Facebook pages have also showed that there is a high degree of disclosing information about the identities of the users on their profile pages. It is possible to notice various aspects of an identity like the interests, political view, social groups, activities, physical appearance, etc. This confirms Haferkamp and Kramer's (2010) argument that people are highly motivated to present themselves on social network sites. Although there are 'lurkers', most of the interviewees also claimed that they share content related to their lives on a regular basis. These are the indicators that posit the view that Facebook helps people satisfy their need for self-presentation (Nadkarni et al., 2012) and the statements of the participants have also showed that self presentation is an important element of their Facebook usage.

Many of the participants stated that they never write negative comments or share unhappy moments on Facebook. Building a positive self image is part of self-presentation. This behavior is along the same line with the view of Stanculescu (2011) who suggests that

people have a natural tendency of presenting themselves in a positive light. In addition, most of them state that they do not share 'silly' content because they are having an image of sophisticated person. This posits Rosenberg's (1979) view; by constructing self, they are becoming the person that he/she wants to be seen by the other people.

Many participants have mentioned that besides sharing music, photos or other content, they make creations, collect information about various issues and share them with their friends. These are the activities which Goffman (1959) have called 'performances'. On 'back stage', the users are preparing their material to share, they search the content, sometimes create it or they decide how much information will they disclose about themselves. These are the backstage performances. Sharing music, photos or making comments can be seen as their performances on front stage. As Lawler claims, they produce identities through narratives (Lawler, 2008). Some of them said that they would like to be seen as a person who has a great 'taste in music' so they are trying to put this part of their identity forward.

Some of them admitted that sometimes they share content or write a comment about an issue they in fact do not know much about because they want to be known as 'sophisticated'. This is what Goffman (1959) calls 'impression management'. This concern can also be proved with their photos. Nearly all of the participants said that how they look in their photos are important for them. In addition, Goffman's 'mask' metaphor can be used to describe their presentation skills on Facebook. To him, in social life people are wearing 'masks' to build identities. Many participants claim that they do not reflect their real identity or situation on Facebook. Some of them specifically mentioned that they always act happy on their profiles although they feel unhappy or depressed. Although they do

not use anonymous identities, they use the opportunity of acting in an alternative manner in the online environment.

The study also aimed to understand the 'desired impression' of the digital natives on Facebook. One of the key questions about self presentation was: "How would you like to be described by a person who does not know you in real life but follows you from Facebook?" The answers were varied but common answers were 'enjoyable, social and different'. These are the 'ideal' parts of the identities which Yurchisin et al. (2005) called 'hoped for possible selves' or Schlenker (1985) defined 'desired impression'.

Nearly half of the respondents stated that expressing themselves on Facebook is easier than real life. They said that Facebook gives opportunities to the users to show their special interests –like fashion, photography, poetry, etc. to their friends. Disclosing this kind of information is easy on Facebook and makes them feel good. This posits the view of Gonzales and Hancock (2011) which suggests that Facebook can have a positive influence on the self-esteem because it shows a positive version of our selves.

On the other hand, some of the participants who describe themselves 'shy' in their offline social life stated that feel comfortable while they are communicating on Facebook. This can be explained by Tapscott (1999) who claims that the digital natives function best when they are networked.

A significant number of the respondents stated that being successful is important for them and they share information about the school life and social activities because they think that in the future, Facebook profiles will be important for finding a job. This confirms Park et al. (2009) who have also argued that, one of the reasons that college students participate in Facebook groups is self-status seeking

which is defined as ‘developing career and desire to make themselves look ‘cool’.

Palfrey and Gasser (2008) have suggested that some of the digital natives are motivated by the possibility of fame. But none of the participants have talked about becoming a phenomenon or being famous. On the contrary, most of them are controlling their privacy settings and are only visible to their friends. So, their main concern is building an ‘ideal’ or ‘positive’ image to their friends. They do not care about the people they do not know. On the other hand, viewing others’ profile is a common activity and most of the participants claim that they are curious about what the other people are doing. This means that the digital natives influence each other in constructing an identity.

Many participants have claimed that they simultaneously update their timeline by deleting old and unnecessary content or old pictures. Timeline of Facebook can be seen as a narrative of a person’s life shaped by the memories, experiences or understandings of the individual, as Lawler (2008) suggests. To him, with the stories that they tell, people control the image of themselves in other people’s minds by adding or removing some words or using memories. By deleting some of the old pictures or adding new content, the participants constantly use their Facebook timeline as a narration of their lives. These narratives are the part of their ‘desired impression’.

Finally, some of the participants have stated that Facebook profiles sometimes become more real than the real identities of the users which means although the pages are the representations of the real identities, they can be more significant to give an impression about one’s identity. Other respondents also used similar phrases to identify the importance of the perceptions and the impressions that Facebook profiles create. These answers are found parallel to the

concept of 'simulacra' that has been identified by Baudrillard (1994). So, based on the comments of the participants and the observations made by the researcher, Facebook can be seen as a mediated version of ourselves or a 'simulacra' where the 'copy' of the real identities can sometimes be perceived as 'more real than the real'.

5.4 Summary

The digital natives -represented by METU first grade students- are the active users of Facebook. They share, comment, participate or view other people's profiles and they constantly check their Facebook notifications.

Most of them have mobile phones and they are always online, physical locations are not important for them to make interactions or to get informed.

Socialization, communication and entertainment are the main reasons for the participants to use Facebook in their daily lives as many other studies have found. Although they are aware of the fact that Facebook contains an exaggeration and have unreal sides, they generally do not see it apart from their lives. Information seeking is another motive for them and they actively use Facebook groups to get informed about the social activities or issues about school.

They are obviously more comfortable in expressing themselves on social media than their real social lives. Most of them think that they can reflect different sides of their identities through Facebook.

Although they seem politically active on Facebook, most of the participants do not prefer to share serious content or complicated articles. Having fun is the main concern for them even discussing the critical issues. They found the news content shared by their friend

reliable and trustful. Most of them follow the news from social network sites instead of mainstream media but Twitter is more useful for them than Facebook in this context.

Although the participants did not say it directly, the answers that were given to the questions have showed that, self presentation is an important reason for them to use Facebook. They care about the image they have created on their friends minds so they are trying to manage their impression by controlling the privacy settings, deleting old photos, sharing success stories from their lives, being positive and using an appropriate language in their comments.

Social approval is important for them and especially their friends' thoughts have an impact on their online identity. On the other hand, their parents' or relatives' presence are disturbing them as their comments and online behavior have negative comments on the participants 'desired impression'.

Many of the participants see Facebook a space to maintain relationships and satisfy their 'need to belong' rather than meeting new people. It is also a place to prove their social existence. Even if they are not always active on Facebook most of them do not want to delete their Facebook account because in spite of the unreal elements or exaggerations, Facebook profiles are the reflections of their identities and having a Facebook profile is a necessity in today's social life according to their view.

5.5 Recommendations for the future research

In a future research, comparative methods can be applied to examine the differences between the online behaviors of both the digital immigrants and the digital natives. Furthermore, Facebook users with different socioeconomic backgrounds can be analyzed with

participant observation. As Bradley et al. (2008) argues university student populations are not representative of the whole population of the digital natives. The study should be replicated to the digital natives who are not university students or who are living in smaller cities in Turkey.

In this study, gender did not have a significant role as a variable. But it would be important for the future research to base the analysis on gender and outline the main patterns of uses and gratifications of men and women.

The researcher had a limited time for this study. With a greater time span, different opportunities would be provided for a more comprehensive work. Beside social media use, the social behavior of the digital natives can also be examined in different context such as work life or their political activism.

This study examined the main uses of Facebook as it is the most used social network site. A similar research can be made with other social network sites such as Twitter or Instagram which have become as popular as Facebook among the users of social media. A future research should also investigate the non-users of the social network sites. Why some of the digital natives do not use these sites can also be understood by collecting additional data.

Quantitative methods can also be used to support the reliability of the data. Although 'social media' is a popular field for academicians in the last decade, the quantity of the studies is still not enough compared to the huge changes in digital technologies and the user habits.

5.6 Concluding Remarks

This study shows that social media is a crucial part of the digital natives' social lives. As they are always connected and available, it is very significant that the boundaries between the online and offline worlds have become blurred for the young people. The digital natives who have grown up with the social network sites have created a subculture that allows more connections, more interaction and more participation.

The flow of information and the rapid changes in the technology forces them to create new skills to express themselves in order to be a part of this environment. It seems that the new mechanisms on the online social world are based on collaboration and the young people are aware of the fact that the more they share and contribute, the more they will get. The speed on social media makes them multitasking and more creative in different areas.

Instead of individualism, it seems that social relations have moved to a different environment where the traditional notions of the identities have become less meaningful but the main concerns do not change. Social approval and self presentation is important for the digital natives which makes them more active on social network sites. These motives of 'being different' and 'more successful' can bring more competition in offline social life and also create new opportunities in work life. It is also remarkable that as the social network sites enable people to connect with others and discuss several issues on different platforms, digital natives look for quality and reliability. These democratic spaces will increase the quality of the services and prevent misinformation as well. It is also obvious that most of them express themselves better and more successful on Facebook, which means that online identities can transform offline identities. This also

affects the social relationships and makes Facebook identities more considerable for the digital natives.

Ultimately, social network sites like Facebook are the new platforms for social interaction and communication. They are inevitable for the digital natives who create new skills and abilities to be a part of this 'online society'.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. Interview Questionnaire

Age:

Department:

City:

- How long have you been using Facebook? Why did you need to get a Facebook account?
- Why do you use Facebook? How would you list the three main motives behind your Facebook usage?
- How many times do you check your Facebook notifications during the day?
- What do you share most on Facebook? What type of content would you never share on Facebook?
- Do you think that the content of your sharings has an effect on your offline social life?
- Do you control your privacy settings on Facebook?
- What are the disadvantages of using Facebook in your opinion?
- What are the impacts of Facebook on your social life? Did you meet new people through Facebook?

- What are the other social network sites you prefer to use?
- How would you describe the differences between your offline identity and your Facebook identity?
- What kind of picture do you use for your 'profile picture (an illustration, a single photo, photo with friends, etc.)? Do you think that your appearance on your photos is an important part of your Facebook identity?
- Do you think that language use is important on Facebook?
- How often do you update your Timeline?
- How would you like to be seen by a person whom you do not know in real life but know from Facebook?
- Do you think that you can express yourself well on Facebook?
- Which sides of your character do you think are significant on Facebook?
- Do you think that sometimes you act as a different person on Facebook?

APPENDIX B. Türkçe Özet

Günümüzde, İnternet ve Web 2.0 teknolojilerinin gelişmesiyle Sosyal Medya, sosyal yaşamın merkezinde yer almaktadır. Sosyal Medya araçlarının önemli bir bölümünü oluşturan Sosyal Ağ Siteleri ise, kullanıcılara iletişim, etkileşim, paylaşım ve katılım imkanı sağlamaktadır. Dünyanın en popüler Sosyal Ağ Sitesi Facebook dünyada 1 milyardan fazla, Türkiye’de ise yaklaşık 33 milyon kullanıcıya sahiptir. 2013 rakamlarına göre Türkiye’de 15-29 yaş aralığındaki İnternet kullanıcısı gençlerin yüzde 89’u aynı zamanda birer Facebook kullanıcısıdır.

Yeni teknolojilerin gelişmesi ve cep telefonlarının yaygınlaşmasıyla sosyal medya, sosyal hayatın önemli bir parçası haline gelmiştir. Kullanıcılar sosyal paylaşım ağları sayesinde farklı coğrafyalardaki insanlarla iletişime geçebilme ve İnternet üzerindeki farklı gruplara katılarak görüşlerini özgürce ifade edebilme imkanına kavuşmuştur. Katılımcı bir kültürün oluşmasını da sağlayan sosyal medya toplumsal ve siyasal olaylarda baş aktörlerden biri haline gelmiştir. Sosyal Medya, bloglar, wikiler, sanal sosyal dünyalar ve oyunlar gibi farklı türleri içinde barındırmaktadır. Sosyal paylaşım ağları da denen sosyal ağ siteleri sosyal medyanın bir türüdür. Boyd’a (2007) göre sosyal ağ siteleri, yüzyüze iletişimde mümkün olmayan dört özelliğe sahiptir. Bunlar: süreklilik, tekrar edilebilirlik, aranabilirlik ve görünmez izleyici kitlesi. Mobil iletişimin yaygınlaşmasıyla sosyal ağ siteleri günün her anında kullanılır hale gelmiş, özel hayat ve kamusal hayat arasındaki sınırlar belirsizleşmiştir.

Kullanım ve Doyumlar Yaklaşımı’na göre kitle iletişim araçları farklı izleyiciler üzerinde o izleyici kitlesinin sahip olduğu gereksinim, istek

ve deęerleriyle yönlendiren etkilere sahiptir. Söz konusu yaklaşım, izleyicileri pasif unsurlar olarak görmez, insanların kitle iletişim araçlarını kullanma nedenlerini ve bu kullanımdan sağladıkları faydaları inceler. 1940'lı yıllardan itibaren bu alanda çeşitli çalışmalar yapılmış, bir takım eleştirilere rağmen bu çalışmalar kapsamı genişletilerek günümüze kadar devam etmiştir. Katz ve Foulkes (1962) kitle iletişim araçlarının başlıca kullanım sebebini 'kaçış' olarak nitelendirmiştir. Bryant ve Zillman'ın (1984) yaptığı bir araştırma ise, günlük hayatta rutin işlerle uğraşanların ve kendilerini sıkılmış hissedenlerin stres altında olanlara göre daha heyecanlı televizyon programları izlemeyi tercih ettiklerini ortaya koymuştur. Farklı sosyal ve psikolojik ihtiyaçlar farklı araçlarla giderilmektedir. McLuhan 'Araç mesajdır' sözünü kullanılan iletişim aracının içerikten daha önemli olduğunu belirtmek için kullanmıştır. Bu bağlamda İnternette gerçekleştirilen etkileşimin içerdiği mesajlardan çok İnternet ve İnternet kullanımı sosyal ilişkileri ve toplumun bütününe etkilemektedir. Ayrıca, aynı mesaj farklı sosyal medya araçlarında farklı şekilde algılanmaktadır. Dolayısıyla kullanıcılar farklı sosyal medya araçlarını farklı amaçlar doğrultusunda (sosyal ilişkiler için Facebook'u, profesyonel ilişkiler için LinkedIn'i, fotoğraf paylaşımı için Instagram'ı, vb.) kullanmaktadırlar.

Günümüzde İnternet iletişimi ve sosyal medya kullanımı da 'Kullanım ve Doyumlar Yaklaşımı'ndan hareketle çeşitli araştırmalarla masaya yatırılmıştır. Kişilerin sosyal medya kullanımlarındaki başlıca amaçları sosyal etkileşimdir. Milyonlarca insan sosyal ağ sitelerini sosyalleşmek ve varolan ilişkilerini geliştirmek amacıyla kullanmaktadır. Facebook gibi siteler kullanıcılara e-posta adresi aracılığıyla bir profil yarattıktan sonra paylaşımlarda bulunma ve oluşturulan arkadaş listesindeki kişilerle iletişim kurma olanağı sağlamaktadır. Raacke ve Raacke (2008) üniversite öğrencileri arasında yaptığı bir araştırmada sosyal ağ sitelerini kullananların,

sosyalleşme ihtiyaçlarını büyük ölçüde bu siteler sayesinde giderdiklerini ortaya çıkarmıştır. Araştırmalar sadece 'çevrim dışı' sosyal hayatta varolan ilişkilerin sanal ortama taşınmadığını, sosyal medyada 'çevrim içi' olarak kurulan ilişkilerin de 'çevrim dışı'na aktarılabilirliğini göstermiştir. Facebook'ta yer alan özel grupların üyeleriyle gerçek hayatta da buluşmalar gerçekleştirmesi, sosyal medya aracılığıyla tanışıp evlenen çiftler buna örnek olarak gösterilebilir. Yine de özellikle Facebook'taki genel eğilim varolan ilişkilerin geliştirilmesi ve Facebook ortamına taşınması şeklindedir.

Başta Facebook ve Twitter olmak üzere sosyal medya araçları dünyada ve Türkiye'de meydana gelen politik olaylarda da etkili olmuştur. Sosyal medyanın sağladığı demokratik ortam ve mobilizasyonun getirdiği olanaklar, kişilerin gelişmeleri hızlı, sansürsüz ve ilk elden takip edebilmesini mümkün kılmıştır. İran seçimleri, Arap Baharı olayları ve Türkiye'deki Gezi Parkı protestoları sosyal medyanın ne kadar etkili olabileceğini gösteren çarpıcı birer örnektir.

Sosyal ağ siteleri bilgi edinme ve haber paylaşımı amaçlarıyla da kullanılmaktadır. 2013 tarihli bir PEW araştırmasına göre Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'ndeki Facebook kullanıcıların yüzde otuzu haberleri Facebook üzerinden takip etmektedir. Bazı araştırmacılar İnternet medyasında yoğun bir bilgi kirliliği yaşandığını ve doğru habere ulaşmanın zor olduğunu savunmaktadırlar. Abbasi ve Liu'ya (2013) göre, kullanıcılar haber paylaşımını sosyal medya üzerinden yaptıkça yanlış kullanımların önüne geçilecektir. Öte yandan kişiler, Facebook gibi sosyal ağ sitelerinde okudukları haberleri, haber kaynakları arkadaşları tarafından paylaşıldığı için büyük ölçüde güvenilir bulmaktadır.

İnternet iletişiminin sağladığı interaktivite de sosyal medya etkileşimini cazip hale getirmektedir. Kullanıcılar ilgi alanları veya

projeleri dahilinde farklı gruplara üye olarak düşüncelerini ifade edebilmekte, gruptaki diğer kişilerle gerektiğinde fikir alışverişinde bulunabilmektedir. Jenkins (2006) paylaşım dayalı bu yeni toplumsal durumu 'katılımcı kültür' olarak tanımlamaktadır. Paylaşım dışında 'yaratıcılık' da sosyal ağ sitelerinin kullanımında önemli ve göze çarpan bir unsurdur. Özellikle genç kullanıcılar müzik ve eğlenceli içerik paylaşımlarını Facebook üzerinden yapmakta, teknolojiyi rahat bir biçimde kullanabildikleri için görsel zenginliği olan yaratıcı içerikli videoları veya farklı tasarımlara sahip resimleri paylaşmayı uzun ve karmaşık metinler paylaşmaya tercih etmektedirler.

Sosyal ağ sitelerinin, sağladığı kullanım imkanları dışında bir takım sosyo-psikolojik ihtiyaçları da karşıladığı düşünülmektedir. Onaylanma, aidiyet duygusu, iyi hissetme gibi sosyo-psikolojik doyumlar da yapılan araştırmalara göre sosyal medya araçları tarafından tatmin edilmektedir.

Yapılan pek çok araştırma Facebook kullanımı ve kişinin iyi hissetmesi arasında doğrudan bir ilişki olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Kendisiyle ilgili yaptığı pozitif paylaşımlar ve sahip olduğu 'arkadaşlar' kullanıcının motivasyonunu artırmakta ve kendini iyi hissetmesini sağlamaktadır. Bunun dışında yapılan bazı çalışmalar Facebook kullanan kişilerin kendine güven arasında bir ilişki olduğunu savunsa da, bazı araştırmacılar bu özgüvenin narsizme kadar varabileceğini çünkü kişinin Facebook'ta başkalarından ziyade sadece kendine odaklandığını savunmuşlardır. Yine pek çok araştırmacı, kişilerin ihtiyaç duydukları 'aidiyet' duygusunu giderdiği için Facebook kullandığını ifade etmiştir.

Kişilerin kendilerini sunma ve kimlik temsili ihtiyacı da sosyal medya kullanımını cazip hale getiren faktörlerden biridir.

Öz-sunum ve kimlik temsili kavramları sosyal medyanın temel varoluş amaçları arasındadır. Kişiler adeta bir marka gibi kendi kimlik algılarını Facebook gibi sitelerdeki profilleri aracılığıyla yönlendirmektedir. Bunu yaparken de bir takım rollere bürünmektedir. Goffman (1959), insanların sosyal hayatta edindiği rolleri 'performanslar' olarak adlandırmaktadır. Bu performansların sosyal ağ sitelerinde fotoğraf ve bilgi paylaşımı, yapılan yorumlar ve kullanılan kelimeler olarak ortaya çıktığını söyleyebiliriz. İnsanlar İnternet iletişimini gerçekleştirirken farklı kimlikler yaratmakta, bu platformlarda anonim bir isimle değil, kendi ismiyle var olmasına rağmen yarattığı kimlikler ve tasarladığı imajlar doğrultusunda hareket etmektedir. Kişiler, başka insanların zihninde yarattıkları algıyı önemserler ve buna uygun bir kimlik yaratmak için çaba gösterirler. Sosyal medya ve özellikle Facebook, kullanıcılara bu anlamda pek çok olanak sağlamaktadır. Yurchisin, Facebook'ta oluşturulan kimlikleri 'umut edilen benlikler' olarak tanımlamaktadır. Kullanıcılar, sosyal medyanın verdiği imkanlar sayesinde sosyal olarak daha ilgi çekici kimlikler oluşturmakta, gerçek hayatta olmak istedikleri kişiler gibi davranmaktadırlar. Goffman (1959), bireylerin sosyal hayatta maskeler taktığını ve bu maskelerin zamanla onların gerçek kimliği haline geldiğini söyler. Sosyal medyada da benzer şekilde maskeler takılmakta, kişiler sosyal ağlar aracılığıyla yeni kimlikler üretme şansına sahip olmaktadır.

Dijital teknolojilerin içine doğan gençler, Marc Prensky (2001) tarafından 'dijital yerliler' olarak adlandırılmıştır. Farklı araştırmacılar tarafından farklı isimlerle tanımlanan bu kuşak, alışkanlıkları, algıları, teknolojiyi kullanma ve sosyalleşme biçimleri gibi konularda önceki jenerasyonlara göre bir takım farklar göstermektedir. Bu farkların sosyal medya kullanımına yansıdığı düşünülmektedir çünkü onlar aynı zamanda Facebook'taki en aktif kullanıcılarıdır.

Dijital yerliler sosyal, hızlı, teknolojiyi kullanma konusunda yetenekli ve yazılı materyalden ziyade görsel materyalleri kullanmayı tercih eden yaratıcı ve paylaşımcı bir nesil olarak tanımlanmaktadır. İnternet iletişimine hakim oldukları için sosyal medyadan da en fazla yararlanan İnternet kullanıcıları dijital yerlilerdir. Dijital göçebeler olarak adlandırılan grup ise, söz konusu teknolojileri sonradan öğrendiği için, bu yeni teknolojik cihazları dijital yerliler kadar rahat kullanamamakta, İnternet'den iletişimden çok bilgi alma amacıyla faydalanmaktadırlar. Onlar kendilerini yüz yüze iletişimde daha kolay ifade etmektedir. Ayrıca sürekli olarak 'çevrim içi' olmak gibi bir çabaları da yoktur. Dijital yerliler ise, İnternet bağlantısına ulaşamadıkları noktalarda kendilerini dünyadan kopmuş gibi hissetmekte ve bundan rahatsızlık duymaktadırlar.

Bu çalışmanın amacı, 'Kullanım ve Doyumlar Yaklaşımı'ndan yola çıkarak, dijital yerlileri sosyal ağ sitelerini kullanmaya iten sebepleri ve Facebook kullanımında kimlik temsilinin onlar için önemini anlamaktır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda nitel yöntemler tercih edilmiş ve Ortadoğu Teknik Üniversitesi (ODTÜ) birinci sınıf öğrencilerinin oluşturduğu örneklem grubuna derinlemesine mülakat tekniği uygulanmıştır. Bu yöntemin seçilmesinde araştırmacının profesyonel hayatta deneyimli bir radyo ve televizyon programcısı olması ve mülakat teknikleri konusunda dersler vermesi etkili olmuştur. Araştırmacı aynı zamanda 50 civarında Facebook sayfasını incelemiş ve mülakat verileriyle kendi gözlemlerini birleştirmiştir.

Örneklem grubu için seçilen öğrencilerin 19 veya 20 yaşlarında olmasına dikkat edilmiştir çünkü Facebook'un Türkiye'de popüler olduğu tarihlerde bu gençlerin 13-14 yaşlarında oldukları ve Facebook'u ilk kullanan yaş grubu içinde yer aldıkları tahmin edilmektedir. Onlar sosyal medyanın da 'dijital yerlileri' olarak tanımlanabileceği için bu yaş grubunda yer almaları önemlidir.

Araştırma kapsamında öğrencilerle bir buçuk saat süren görüşmeler yapılmış, belli sorulardan yola çıkılarak geliştirilen derinlemesine mülakatlarda öğrencilerin Facebook'u kullanım alışkanlıkları 'Kullanımlar ve Doyumlar Yaklaşımı' doğrultusunda anlaşılmaya çalışılmış, 'kimlik temsili' kavramının onlar için bu bağlamdaki rolü sorgulanmıştır.

Görüşmeler sohbet ortamında geçmiş ve sorular açık uçlu olarak sorulmuştur ancak yine de görüşmelerin çıkış noktasını önceden hazırlanan sorular oluşturmuştur. 4 ana başlık altında incelenebilecek soruların birinci bölümünde katılımcılar ile ilgili temel bilgiler, ikinci bölümde Facebook kullanım alışkanlıklarıyla ilgili sorular, üçüncü bölümde Facebook kullanımının arkasında yatan nedenler ve son bölümde katılımcıların Facebook'daki kimlik temsiline ait sorular yer almıştır.

'Neden Facebook?' sorusuna katılımcıların büyük çoğunluğu 'o dönemde popüler olması' şeklinde yanıt vermiştir ancak aynı katılımcıların Facebook'un günümüzde eskisi kadar popüler olmadığını düşündüğü göz önüne alınarak bu yanıt Facebook kullanımının ana sebeplerinden biri olarak kabul edilmemiştir.

Dikkate değer sayıda kullanıcı Facebook'u sosyalleşme ve iletişim amacıyla kullandığını söylemiştir. Kullanıcılar Facebook'un günlük hayatta neler olup bittiğini anlamak için vazgeçilmez olduğunu, Facebook'tan uzak kaldıkları zaman sosyal hayatlarındaki sohbet konularından da uzaklaştıklarını ifade etmişlerdir. Katılımcıların büyük bir kısmı Facebook'a mobil telefonlarından girdiklerini ve Facebook bildirimlerini sürekli olarak kontrol ettiklerini söylemişlerdir. Bu durum onların, söylendiği gibi 'sürekli çevrim-içi' olduklarını doğrulamaktadır.

Öğrencilerin büyük bir kısmı Facebook'u 'gruplar' için kullandıklarını, bu grupların iletişimi olmasa Facebook hesaplarını

kapatabileceklerini belirtmişlerdir. Facebook gruplarının sınavlar, dersler ve sosyal aktivitelerle ilgili bilgi paylaşımı açısından öğrencilerin hayatında çok önemli olduğu gözlenmiştir.

Mülakata katılan öğrencilerin tamamına yakını paylaşımlarından söz ederken Gezi Parkı Olayları'ndan söz etmiş, o dönemde hiç yapmadıkları kadar çok paylaşımda bulduklarını ifade etmişlerdir. Hem bu paylaşımlar, hem de Facebook gruplarındaki ortak yaklaşımlar Jenkins'in tanımladığı 'katılımcı kültür'ün örnekleri olarak kabul edilebilir.

Facebook'un önemli kullanım nedenlerinden biri de 'eğlence' olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Bu noktada, verilen 'zaman geçirme', 'sıkıntıyı giderme' ve 'iyi vakit geçirme' gibi cevaplar da 'eğlence' başlığı altında ele alınmıştır. Bu, Toma'nın (2010) değindiği Facebook ve 'iyi hissetme' arasındaki ilişkiyi doğrular niteliktedir.

'Başkalarının profillerine bakma', sorular arasında direkt olarak sorulmamasına rağmen çok sayıda katılımcıdan gelen yanıtlar arasında yer almıştır. Katılımcılar, başkalarının Facebook sayfalarını ayrıntılı bir şekilde inceleme eyleminin aktif kullanıcılar arasında yaygın olarak yapıldığını belirtmişlerdir.

Pek çok katılımcı Facebook'u haber alma konusunda güvenilir bulduğunu ve güncel haberleri ana akım medya veya internet siteleri yerine Facebook'dan takip ettiğini söylemiş ve bu bağlamda da Gezi Parkı Olayları'na değinmiştir. Bazı katılımcılar normalde politik içerikli herhangi bir paylaşım yapmadıkları halde o dönemde bu tür paylaşımları gün içinde yoğun olarak yaptıklarını ifade etmişlerdir. Bu yanıtlar, Hodkinson'ın (2011) internet iletişiminin kitle iletişim araçlarının hiyerarşik yapısından bağımsız, demokratik bir alan yarattığı görüşünü destekler niteliktedir.

'Facebook'da daha çok neleri paylaşıyorsunuz?' sorusuna en fazla 'fotoğraf' yanıtı gelmiştir. Onun dışında müzik ve komik içeriklerin paylaşımı yapılmaktadır. Özellikle Caps denilen yaratıcı fotoğraflar ve farklı kurgulardan oluşan videolar, dijital yerlilerin 'yaratıcı' kimliğini doğrular niteliktedir.

Fotoğraf paylaşımında öne çıkan bir nokta da, genel olarak katılımcıların arkadaş gruplarıyla toplu çekilmiş fotoğraflarının paylaşılmasıdır. Bu durum incelenen Facebook sayfalarında da araştırmacının dikkatini çekmiştir. Bu durum, bu gençlerin sosyalleşmeye verdikleri önem ve 'Aidiyet İhtiyacı' teorisiyle açıklanabilir.

Katılımcılar 'Facebook'da asla paylaşmayacağınız içerik nedir?' sorusuna değişik yanıtlar vermişlerdir. Radikal siyasi içerik, cinsel içerikli materyal ve yemek resimleri en çok gelen cevap arasında yer almıştır. Facebook'un dezavantajları konusunda ise iki cevap dikkat çekici olmuştur; özel hayatın gizliliğini tehdit etmesi ve anne, baba ve yakın akrabaların da Facebook'a üye olmaları. Öğrenciler, Abril'in (2007) söylediklerinin tersine gizlilik ayarlarına önem verdiklerini, sadece arkadaşlarının veya arkadaşlarının arkadaşlarının profillerini görebildiklerini belirtmişlerdir. Pek çok katılımcı, Facebook'un en büyük dezavantajının 'Herkesin her şeyi bilmesi' olduğu konusunda hemfikir görülmektedir. Diğer bir dikkat çekici yanıt da, 'dijital göçebeler' olarak tanımlanan ve kullanıcıların anne, baba ve yakın akrabalar olarak ifade ettiği kullanıcıların da Facebook ortamına dahil olmalarının verdiği rahatsızlıktır. Katılımcılar, bu durumun kendileri üzerinde bir baskı yarattığını ve aileleri tarafından da görülen paylaşımlar üzerinde bir nevi 'otosansür' uygulamak zorunda kaldıklarını anlatmışlardır. Gençler, arkadaşlarıyla pek çok bilgiyi paylaşırken ailelerinin de bu paylaşıma ortak olmasından, fotoğraflarına yorum yapmasından veya kendilerini sosyal medya aracılığıyla takip etmesinden son derece büyük bir rahatsızlık

duymaktadır. Facebook kullanımını ile ilgili dikkat çekici bir diğer unsur da, katılımcıların Facebook dışında da sosyal ağlara üye olmasıdır. Facebook dışında en fazla tercih edilen sosyal ağ siteleri; Twitter, Instagram ve Foursquare olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Katılımcılar Facebook'taki haber paylaşımlarına da güvenmekle birlikte gündemi takip etmek için daha çok Twitter'ı kullanmaktadırlar.

Katılımcılara Facebook'ta kimlik temsili ile ilgili yöneltilen sorularda da ortak noktalar elde edilmiştir. Sadece bir kullanıcı profil fotoğrafı yerine illüstrasyon kullandığını ifade etmiş, onun dışındaki katılımcılar kendi fotoğraflarını veya arkadaşlarıyla birlikte çekilmiş olan toplu fotoğrafları kullandıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Bu, onların kimlik temsiline önem verdiklerini gösteren ipuçlarından biridir. Katılımcıların büyük çoğunluğu, paylaştıkları fotoğraflarda nasıl göründüklerinin kendileri için önemli olduğunu söylerken, daha zayıf veya daha güzel çıktıkları fotoğrafları profil sayfalarına eklemeyi tercih ettiklerini ifade etmişlerdir. Katılımcıların 'zaman tüneli' bölümünü de sık sık güncelledikleri gözlemlenmiştir. Bu alışkanlığı, 'eskiden paylaştıkları fotoğrafları beğenmemeleri' veya 'eski haberlerin güncelliğini yitirmesi' şeklinde özetlemişlerdir. Profilde ve Zaman Tüneli'nde yer alan bilgilerin düzenli olarak güncellenmesi de, öğrencilerin arkadaşları üzerinde yaratmaya çalıştığı imajın onlar için önemli olduğuna dair bir gösterge olarak kabul edilebilir. Bu bölümdeki belirleyici sorulardan biri de; 'Sizi normal hayatta tanımayan ama Facebook'dan takip eden biri tarafından nasıl tanımlanmak istersiniz?' sorusudur. Gelen cevaplar arasında eğlenceli, sosyal, farklı, entelektüel, başarılı, pozitif ve aktif tanımlamaları başı çekmiştir. Bazı katılımcılar kendilerini günlük hayatta 'utangaç' olarak tanımlarken, Facebook'da daha girişken ve sosyal bir kişilik sergilediklerinin de görüşmeler sırasında altını çizmişlerdir. Katılımcıların pek çoğunun olumsuzluk içeren

paylaşımlar yapmaktan çekindikleri, olumlu içerikli cümleler kullandıkları ve 'mutlu' göründükleri fotoğrafları paylaştıkları da dikkate değer unsurlardır. Bazı katılımcılar, Facebook'daki paylaşımların kesinlikle gerçek hayatı yansıtmadığını savunurken, bazı katılımcılar da, kullanıcıların sanal ortamlarda, 'olmak istedikleri kişi' gibi davrandıklarını, bunun da 'gerçek' olarak kabul edilebileceğini belirtmişlerdir. Pek çok katılımcı, kimi zaman Facebook'daki kimliğin gerçek hayattaki sosyal kimliğin önüne geçtiğini savunmuş, insanları diğer kişiler hakkında yorum yaparken veya bir yargıda bulunurken Facebook profillerini gereğinden fazla ciddiye aldıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Bu durum Baudrillard'ın 'simulacra' tanımlamasıyla örtüşmekte, kopyalar gerçek kimliklerin yerini almaya başlamaktadır.

Katılımcıların büyük bir kısmı, sabah kalkar kalmaz ilk yaptıkları işin Facebook mesajlarını ve bildirimlerini kontrol etmek olduğunu belirtmiştir. Yine büyük çoğunluk akıllı telefonlarından derste veya dışarıda olsalar bile Facebook bildirimlerini otomatik olarak aldıklarını ifade etmişlerdir. Bu, Beddington'ın (2013) dijital yerlilerin sürekli olarak 'çevrim içi' oldukları önermesini destekler niteliktedir. Lim ve Kann'ın (2008) da açıkladığı gibi çevrim içi mobilizasyon, kullanıcıların gerçek hayattaki aktiviteleriyle sanal dünyadaki aktiviteler arasında bağ kurmasına olanak sağlamaktadır. Haythornthwaite ve Wellman'ın (2002) internet iletişiminin fiziksel lokasyonun önemini kaybetmesine yol açtığı bulgusu da söz konusu ifadelerle doğrulanmaktadır.

Elde edilen sonuçlara göre, ODTÜ birinci sınıf öğrencileri tarafından temsil edilen dijital yerlilerin Facebook'u temel kullanım amaçları; sosyalleşme, iletişim, eğlenme ve bilgi paylaşımı olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu sonuçlar, Kaye'in (1998) sosyal etkileşim ve iletişim kurma ihtiyacının Facebook kullanımındaki ana güdüler olduğu yönündeki bulgusuyla paralellik göstermektedir. Pek çok katılımcı

Facebook iletişiminin kendileri için telefon iletişiminin yerini aldığını ifade etmektedir. Facebook temel olarak var olan ilişkileri geliştirme amacına hizmet etse de, katılımcılar Facebook aracılığıyla yeni insanlarla tanıştıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Bu, Williams (2006) ve Ellison'ın (2007), çevrim içi olarak geçirilen zamanın çevrim dışı hayata sosyal sermayenin geliştirilmesi anlamında katkı yaptığını savunan görüşlerini doğrular niteliktedir. Pek çok katılımcı Facebook gruplarını aktif olarak kullandıklarını ve bilgi paylaşımı ve derslerle ilgili konularda bu platformları sıklıkla kullandıklarını anlatmıştır. Bu çevrim içi davranış, Castells'in (2000) kişilerin ilgi alanlarına, amaçlarına ve projelerine göre çevrim içi ağlarını oluşturdukları fikriyle örtüşmektedir.

Paylaşımlarda bulunmak sosyal medya iletişiminin önemli parçalarından biridir ve katılımcılar da bu paylaşımcı yaklaşımı özellikle Gezi Parkı olayları döneminde yoğun bir biçimde gerçekleştirdiklerini belirtmişlerdir. Türkiye tarihinde 'dijital milat' olarak kabul edilebilecek bu olaylar Sunstein'in (2007) 'sosyal tutkal' olarak tanımladığı bağı gençler arasında kurmuş gibi görünmektedir.

Palfrey ve Gasser (2008) dijital yerliler olarak tanımlanan gençleri yaratıcı ve hızlı olarak nitelendirmiştir. Gençlerin haberleri ve gündeme dair konuları uzun metinler yerine mizah içerikli görsellerden takip etmeyi tercih etmeleri, onların içeriklere çabuk ve hızlı ulaşmak istemelerinin bir sonucudur. Ayrıca, paylaşımlar arasındaki yaratıcı videolar ve fotoğraflar da dikkat çekici ve onların bu yönlerini gösterir niteliktedir. Yine pek çok araştırmacının belirttiği gibi bu gençler eğlence kavramına önem vermekte, ciddi bir işle uğraşırken bile iyi vakit geçirmenin yolunu aramaktadırlar. Bu yaklaşım onların Facebook kullanımında da ortaya çıkmaktadır. Zaten pek çok katılımcı Facebook ve benzeri sosyal ağ sitelerini eğlenmek ve hoşça vakit geçirmek için kullandıklarını belirtmişlerdir.

Kimlik temsili, Facebook kullanımının ana sebeplerinden biridir. Ayrıca bu gençlerin kendilerini Facebook ortamında, gerçek sosyal hayata göre daha iyi ifade ettikleri gözlenmiş ve dikkat çekici bulunmuştur. Onlar sosyal ağ sitelerini ve özellikle Facebook'u hayatlarının vazgeçilmez bir parçası olarak görmekte ve 'dijital göçebeler' olarak tanımlanan bir önceki nesil ile karşılaştırıldığında günün her anını 'çevrim içi' olarak geçirmeyi tercih etmektedirler.

İleride yapılacak araştırmalarda bu çalışmanın kapsamının geliştirilmesi, ODTÜ dışındaki üniversitelerde okuyan öğrencilerin de dahil olduğu bir araştırma yapılması faydalı olacaktır. Farklı yaş gruplarındaki sosyal medya kullanım alışkanlıklarının ortaya çıkarılması için karşılaştırmalı çalışmalar da yürütülebilir. Facebook şu anda dünyada ve Türkiye'de en yaygın kullanılan sosyal medya aracı olduğu için seçilmiştir ancak araştırma sonuçları aynı zamanda söz konusu gençlerin 1'den fazla sosyal ağ sitesini kullandıklarını göstermiştir.

Sonuç olarak, sosyal medya dijital yerlilerin sosyal hayatında tartışılmaz bir öneme sahiptir. Günlük yaşamlarında sürekli olarak çevrim içi oldukları ve iletişime hazır buldukları için çevrim içi ve çevrim dışı hayatlar arasındaki sınırların onlar için neredeyse kalktığından söz edilebilir. Sosyal medya ve sosyal ağ siteleriyle büyüyen gençler daha çok bağlantı, daha çok etkileşim ve daha çok katılımın olduğu bir alt kültür yaratmışlardır. Hızlı bilgi akışı ve teknolojideki takip edilmesi zor değişimler onları bu ortamda bir aidiyet sağlama adına kendilerini ifade etmek için yeni ve farklı yollar yaratmaya itmektedir. Paylaşmak ve katkıda bulunmak sosyal medya kültürünün vazgeçilmez öğeleri arasındadır ve dijital yerliler ellerindeki bilgiyi ve içeriği paylaştıkça kendileri de daha çok bilgi elde edeceklerinin farkındadırlar. Öte yandan geleneksel roller ve kimlikler sosyal medyadaki kimliklerden daha az anlam ifade etmeye başlamıştır. Söz konusu gençlerin kimlik temsiline verdikleri önem

ise kendilerini tanımadıkları insanlara ispat etme güdüsünden çok, kendi arkadaş çevrelerinden onay alma ve kendi sosyal çevrelerine olan aidiyet duygularını geliştirme yönündedir.

Günümüzde sosyal hayattan kopuk düşünölemeyecek olan sosyal medya ve Facebook gibi sosyal ağ siteleri sosyal etkileşim ve iletişim için henüz yeni alanlardır. İnternet kullanıcıları ve dijital yerliler söz konusu etkileşimi artırdıkça onların bu sitelerin içeriğindeki kalite ve gerçeklik arayışı da artacaktır. Onları sosyal medya araçlarını kullanmaya iten güdülerin çevrim dışı sosyal hayatlarına bir takım etkilerinin olması ise kaçınılmazdır.