Chapter **3**

The Impact of Social Media Phenomena' On Fashion Through Social Media in Türkiye and New Trends in the World[1] ⚇

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Abstract

Social media has become an indispensable element of our lives with the development of technology and the increasing usage of smartphones. Individuals' instant access to any information they want has removed all the limits to accessing information. All sectors are affected by this technological development positively or negatively, and companies have to use social media tools not only to sell products to customers who use products but also to watch, listen, reach, communicate, get to know and evaluate them. Therefore, these channels have created some new concepts thanks to their users and as a result, some new job descriptions have emerged. One of these is social media influencers. It is seen that these influencers inform their followers about the textile products they use, direct them, and sometimes even block them, causing sales to decrease. This development, which companies cannot remain indifferent to, causes some brands in the sector to make agreements with these influencers. Within the scope of this study, the positive and negative effects of social media influencers on the fashion industry will be examined, and the attitudes of companies in social media and the power of influencers in the industry will be discussed. The data regarding the phenomena mentioned in the study are limited to the phenomena in Türkiye.

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1. INTRODUCTION

With the developing technology and digitalization, social media has taken an important place in the lives of individuals and has become an indispensable part. These applications, which reduce the distances between individuals and allow them to reach each other at any time and be informed about each other, have also caused developments in every area of life. In particular, businesses have found the opportunity to feasibly identify the changing preferences and needs of individuals and their customers from these channels. Figure 1 shows the usage rates of social media tools in the world and our country as of 2022.
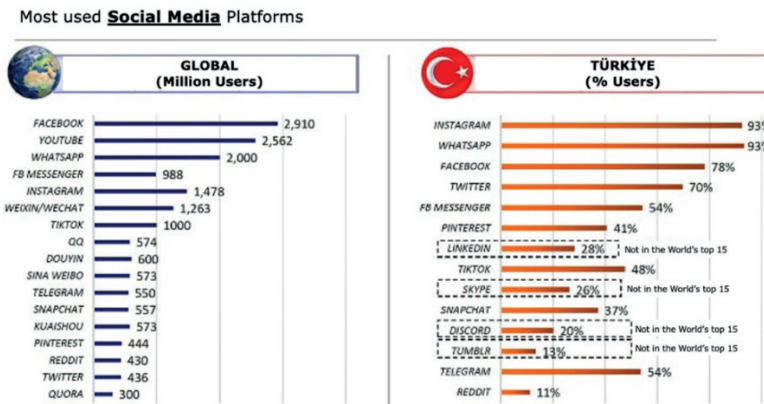
Most used **Social Media** Platforms

GLOBAL (Million Users)		TÜRKİYE (% Users)	
FACEBOOK	2,910	INSTAGRAM	93%
YOUTUBE	2,562	WHATSAPP	93%
WHATSAPP	2,000	FACEBOOK	78%
FB MESSENGER	988	TWITTER	70%
INSTAGRAM	1,478	FB MESSENGER	54%
WEIXIN/WECHAT	1,263	PINTEREST	41%
TIKTOK	1000	LINKEDIN	28% (Not in the World's top 15)
QQ	574	TIKTOK	48%
DOUYIN	600	SKYPE	26% (Not in the World's top 15)
SINA WEIBO	573	SNAPCHAT	37%
TELEGRAM	550	DISCORD	20% (Not in the World's top 15)
SNAPCHAT	557	TUMBLR	13% (Not in the World's top 15)
KUAISHOU	573	TELEGRAM	54%
PINTEREST	444	REDDIT	11%
REDDIT	430		
TWITTER	436		
QUORA	300		

Figure 1. Use of Social Media Tools in the World (Users) and Türkiye (%) (Ceviz, 2020; GuncelVeri, 2024)

These developments and changes have brought the concept of digital marketing with them, and by moving the way of reaching their customers directly to electronic environments, it has enabled companies to reach their customers interactively. Purwar (2019) also defined digital marketing as the phenomenon that brings buyers and sellers together in an electronic environment through the web, e-mail, social networks, TV, online forums or mobile communication, considering these factors (Purwar, 2019). It is seen that social media networks are also stronger and more effective than traditional media tools in this context today (Close, 2012). Therefore, it is seen that social media platforms are also used effectively in digital marketing, and it reveals the need for all institutions and organizations to carefully use these channels where the society is located and to express themselves. It is seen that the rate of social media usage and related channels is increasing day by day (Statista, 2024) and thus the way individuals and institutions

communicate and interact with each other is changing (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Ki et al., 2020).

Social media is defined as a web-based formation where individuals create and share content in line with their wishes and preferences, and users communicate and interact with each other (Sütçü et al., 2014). It is seen that social commerce has also grown with these platforms that allow being online at all times (Collier, 2012). Consumers interact with other consumers, share their experiences, make recommendations or express their complaints. Over time, it has been seen that all consumers who use social media make a lot of searches for information about the products they want to buy and/or get ideas. Therefore, it has become a necessity for businesses to use social media tools to increase brand awareness, protect or improve their image, position their new brand or strengthen their current position. The way companies shape their marketing plans according to changing consumer trends may also change depending on social media (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

2. SOCIAL MEDIA PHENOMENA

There are various social media tools, and platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X, TikTok, LinkedIn, and YouTube stand out as the most well-known. The content and limitations of each social platform are different. Among these platforms, Instagram emerged as a picture-sharing platform and its content has changed over time. This platform, which allows sharing short videos, and multiple pictures together in different ways or live broadcasting, has brought some of its intensive users to the forefront over time and has introduced a new concept called "Influencer", which is frequently encountered on the platform, and has entered Turkish as "phenomenon".

This concept is known in our language with different names such as "impressive" and "opinion leader". In general, influencers are defined as "people who have a certain level of knowledge about a product or subject and can influence the thoughts and behaviours of the masses" (Armağan & Doğaner, 2018). These people, who have a very large number of viewers and followers, provide their followers with their experiences about brands and products in many areas, along with their opinions (Öztck et al., 2021), and create an interactive environment with their opinions and knowledge. Thus, they take steps towards becoming a brand over time in these media where they reflect themselves as experts. These people regularly produce interesting content.

3. EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA PHENOMENA ON PURCHASING BEHAVIOR

The challenges brought by the competitive environment and the diversification of product and service opportunities have caused differences in consumers' purchasing behaviours and have become complex. This situation has made it necessary for all brands producing products and services to understand their consumers better and act in line with their requests (Köseoğlu, 2002). It is seen that brands have discovered social media platforms to increase their sales and reach consumers quickly and accurately, and they have carried the developments here to a different area with phenomena with high follower numbers that shape consumers' purchasing behaviours (Canöz et al., 2020).

Social media has increased its impact on consumers with the development and spread of digitalization. Today's brands use social media platforms as an effective marketing tool to reach their target audiences and increase the popularity and awareness of their brands. Thanks to these platforms, they can provide faster and more interactive information flow to their consumers about the products they produce, enrich their collections with the opinions and suggestions of users and shape their brand strategies. Especially the widespread influencer marketing strategies can directly affect purchasing decisions in line with the high follower base and the reliability of the influencer (Çetin & Taşdemir, 2018; Öztek et al., 2021). In this direction, Mangold and Faulds (2009) stated in their studies that social media tools should be considered within the promotion mix of marketing (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Especially consumers' identification with the individuals they follow without missing anything from their posts brings about FoMo behaviour. FoMo is called the emotional state that develops with social media marketing. It refers to the change in anxiety states of individuals who feel inadequate in the face of what others have (Przybylski et al., 2013). Followers feel left behind and miss something when they cannot follow (Çetinkaya & Şahbaz, 2020; Gil et al., 2015). In this context, it is possible to say that social media, which has a significant impact on the digital evolution of society, has a large share in the formation of FoMo. Because of their constant sharing, social media influencers present the products they use or the experiences they have with exaggerated expressions of satisfaction to their followers and create a fear of missing out on their followers. Especially female users of social media platforms are affected by this situation more than men (İşcan et al., 2024).

It is seen that influencers carry out the marketing strategy professionally through word-of-mouth communication (Sudha & Sheena, 2017) and over time, they have had a significant impact on consumers' purchasing decisions. The advice they give to their followers has had an impact on the sales of brands. Therefore, over time, many brands could not remain indifferent to the rise of influencers and started to use influencers as a communication tool to increase the recognition of their products, increase their sales or promote their brands and ensure their use. Therefore, brands choose influencers suitable for their target audiences and choose to collaborate with them. These collaborations can take place in the form of sending gift products, sponsoring the influencer, or over time, in the form of product promotion with story sharing (short-term sharing) for a certain fee or continuous sharing and directing sales by sending the product's sales link. Thus, the influencer can share a photo of the product, promote it by himself, provide information about the product features or convey his/her recommendations for the product to his/her followers in written or verbal form (Can & Koz, 2018). A study shows that 75% of marketing experts work with social media influencers (Vyatkina, 2020). Influencers are divided into 5 groups according to their number of followers: famous, mega, macro, micro and nano influencers. Although this situation greatly affects the fee part of their collaborations with brands, they can sometimes differ in terms of interaction and purchasing behaviour (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). For example, a study has shown that people who are normally uncomfortable with social media ads do not feel uncomfortable with the promotions of the influencers they follow and even behave moderately towards the brand. It is seen that followers want to get more information about the product and brand being promoted (Sarıtaş, 2018). Trust in the influencer helps to develop a sense of trust in the promoted product in the same way. Contrarily, there may be a sceptical approach to products promoted by an unpleasant influencer. These promotions, which were initially carried out naturally and without the knowledge of the brands, turned into commercial agreements over time, which can create the perception that the product is being promoted only for money, and therefore these products are also seen to be approached with suspicion (Al Mashh Adani, 2019; Woods, 2016).

Influencers can easily bring a brand together with its target audience. Thus, they are effective in attracting traffic to the brand's social media accounts and increasing interaction, and they can easily advertise the product or service with their posts (Patel, 2019). It is seen that the attractiveness of the phenomenon and the attitude towards the brand have a significant and positive relationship, and it is observed that sales increase (Ali & Temizkan,

2022). There are many studies in the literature showing that brands and advertisers turn their focus to this direction as a result of the positive change in purchase intentions following the positive effect of phenomenon marketing (Jansom & Pongsakornrungsilp, 2021; Jin et al., 2019; Khodabandeh & Lindh, 2021; Libunao et al., 2022; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Wiedmann & Von Mettenheim, 2020).

The YouTube platform is also called the new generation of television and offers the opportunity to create channels for many phenomena. On this platform, where channels that produce content such as the Youtube fashion channel provide service, it is seen that people present their ideas visually. On these platforms, which allow for longer live broadcasts, unlike Instagram, by getting together with their followers for a fee or free of charge, prominent fashion influencers in Turkey create fashion channels. These influencers share some of their posts with their followers on Instagram and create interaction between social platforms. In addition, the 123GO! Turkish channel stands out as the most important channel that explains different aspects of the fashion category (Adverport, 2020).

4. THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA PHENOMENA ON CLOTHING STYLE

Social media tools enable new fashion trends to be shared and spread rapidly. Celebrities or social media influencers who share, offer suggestions to their followers with the combinations they make and can instantly attract the attention of millions of viewers, making these trends popular. Clothing styles evolve rapidly with followers and their shares, the advice received can be shaped again and again with comments and can spread rapidly (Kuşdoğan, 2023).

Although it seems that personal image is generally given importance with social media tools, followers can also take on the same personality as the clothes they see the influencers they follow wearing. While this situation creates everyone's brand and image, it can also reveal their clothing choices as sometimes original and sometimes as a copy tool. Thus, individuals can use clothes not as an article of clothing, but as a means of expression and belonging.

In addition, it is seen that the consumer culture is developing at an incredible speed, and the "perfection" perception brought by social media also triggers the desire to always look good and show it. Due to this social pressure, individuals have started to spend more money and spend more time in front of the mirror. Thus, it is seen that consumption has increased

on e-commerce platforms, especially considering the effects of the links given by influencers.

Figure 2 shows that the fashion category has the 2nd highest number of interactions with brand profiles on Instagram Worldwide. Also, according to TÜİK (Turkish Statistical Institute) data, sales especially in the clothing and footwear sector increased every year compared to the previous year and reached 5.4% as of 2023 (TÜİK, 2023).
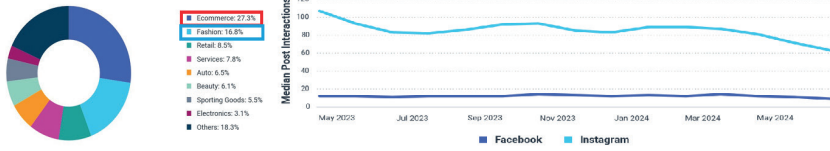

Figure 2. Total Interactions Distribution of Fashion brands Profiles on Instagram and Median Post Interactions (Emplifi, 2024).

Card payment transactions in the clothing and footwear sector are also increasing every quarter term. Although no complete data has been shared yet regarding the effect of social media influencers on this situation, it can be concluded that both fashion brands and the most preferred e-commerce sites such as Trendyol and Hepsiburada make good sales with the agreements they make with social media influencers and the promotions they make on these influencers' pages and the links given to these sites, and that their contracts are renewed and they become more preferred. Because many sources show that human resources departments attach importance to influencer collaborations by 75% (Vyatkina, 2020) and that brands reach wider audiences and influence consumers' purchasing decisions through influencer collaborations (Gönülşen, 2020; HaberBülten, 21 Şubat 2024; Öztek et al., 2021). When its effects on trade are examined, it is seen that the concept of "Influencer Marketing" or "Phenomenon Marketing" has entered the literature (Ki et al., 2020; MarketingTürkiye, 27 Ocak 2017; Öztek et al., 2021).

It is possible to say that influencers promise their followers to be like them and therefore show them ways to be like them. Thus, it is seen that they create an impression on their followers such as "If you wear the clothes I wear, you can be as stylish as me" and that the followers are quite influenced by the lifestyle and style of the influencers (Alişarlı & Eken, 2018; Çayir Tahtali, 2018). In his field research, Doğan (2019) revealed that especially Instagram influencers are very effective in all categories such as press and

media outlets, non-governmental organizations or official institutions in terms of increasing the number of followers and influencing the followers with the tagging they do. In terms of awareness, he stated that celebrities such as singers and actors are more effective in influencer marketing (Tünay Doğan, 2019).

With this concept gaining more and more importance every passing day, it is stated that the importance of influencers has also increased and influencer marketing has now become an indispensable element of the marketing mix. It is seen that this situation contributes to the development of influencers and that they are able to produce higher quality content and provide more accurate information to their followers. It is stated that the collaborations made by brands through influencers are more effective, create interaction and increase sales by accelerating the promotion rather than their own promotion and advertising activities (MarketingTürkiye, 27 Ocak 2017).

The first major cooperation agreement in our country with influencers, which are especially preferred by fashion brands, is made by KOTON, who make their clothes visible on someone, erase questions such as "How will it look if I buy it?" from the minds of their consumers and make the product visible and present different colours and combinations together. The brand has reached an agreement with social media influencers who stand out with their own style and style suggestions with the "Koton Fashion Clup" project (Editör, 2020). The collaboration, which has been ongoing since 2020, has made a significant contribution to the sales of the brand's products by presenting the brand's products to its followers along with style suggestions. It is seen that the brand's turnover continues to increase every year (PatronlarDünyası, 2024).

5. NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA PHENOMENA

In addition to the fact that influencers bring brands to a position where they speak to consumers, it is also extremely important for the appropriate influencer to cooperate with the brand image. Because this process can also pose a risk for some companies/brands. Especially for brands that are new to the market, staying in a competitive environment can bring about both positive and negative effects through influencers. The increase in the number of brands and the increase in the number of advertisements that occur along with it can also develop a feeling of boredom in consumers. Data shows that a US citizen is exposed to an average of 4,000 to 10,000 advertisements (Twentify, 2024). Therefore, in order for the right communication to pass to the right target audience, it is very important to proceed with someone

who has gained the trust of the consumer, to communicate with the right target audience, to ensure that they are remembered, and repeat purchase behaviours are formed, and to increase purchase behaviour in sales channels.

Choosing the wrong influencer can cause products/brands to gain the wrong place among followers/consumers, cause problems in reaching the target audience, go off-target and reduce trust in the brand (Twentify, 2024). Therefore, reputation should be left aside in choosing the influencer, and an agreement should be made with the influencer who is suitable for the brand and the brand's target audience. This will ensure that the message conveyed is understood, internalized and transformed into an experience by the target audience.

In addition, since social media platforms are platforms that allow everyone to produce content, they can sometimes be subject to restrictions after manipulated situations. This situation creates a negative situation for the influencers who have become famous and earn income in this medium. The fact that the companies that cooperated with the influencers terminated their agreements with the influencers after the restrictions and access barriers experienced in different periods in our country has also caused the influencers to enter into legal processes that will put the companies in a difficult position (GerçekHaberci, 2024).

There are approximately 200 thousand social media influencers in our country and companies allocate a budget between 7 and 10 million for Instagram promotions. It is known that 97.7% of social media influencers use Instagram the most. Social platforms constitute 10% of the total e-commerce volume (930 million TL per day). This rate, together with the influencers who generate traffic on the platforms, constitutes a volume of 1.9 billion TL (GerçekHaberci, 2024). Therefore, the restrictions and access barriers experienced by these platforms, which have become the source of income for influencers, also cause companies and influencers to come face to face. This situation also reflects negatively on the images of brands.

Another negative effect of social platforms is the perception of ugly/beautiful that they create on followers. Since each like on social media is considered as data (Mırçık & Elaltuntaş, 2022), the likes that individuals do not receive after each content they create by filming themselves cause negative feelings. Social media platforms, which have become an important part of daily life, allow individuals to follow people from all over the world, and they also offer the opportunity to follow the influencers they take as role models. In particular, the desire not to miss the posts of the influencers followed in different countries or even continents due to the time differences

between countries creates long-term social media use. Daily internet use in our country is approximately 7 hours, and social media use is approximately 3 hours (Günyol, 2024). This rate, which corresponds to 1/8 of a day, can bring about uncontrolled social media use, which leads to serious problems in mental state and communication. In addition, individuals' dislike of themselves in the face of their desire to resemble the fashion influencers they follow can also cause them to disconnect from social life (KTÜ, 2024). This situation also paves the way for individuals to behave aggressively.

In social media applications, especially the phenomena' unrealistically happy and ultra-rich lives, constant travelling, wearing different clothes in each frame, posing with luxury cars, etc. behaviours can create a sense of comparison in their followers. This feeling can cause followers to constantly follow the phenomena' lives and shape their consumption patterns accordingly in order not to miss the developments (Gürdin, 2019).

6. NEW TRENDS

While the fashion industry uses social media influencers quite effectively, it can easily adapt developing technology to its marketing strategy in order to increase the recognition of a newly released collection or existing product range. Thus, individuals who follow fashion or a wider audience do not have to wait for fashion magazines or constantly follow relevant web pages, social media platforms fill this gap.

6.1. Smart Mirrors and Applications

They use various digital information, graphics and interaction elements using high-resolution screens such as OLED or LCD located behind the mirror surface. With the developed software, they can be accessed and used by many people thanks to mobile phones suitable for using the screens in question. While these mirrors are used especially by fashion and ready-to-wear brands in store environments, showrooms, fairs or celebrity-style events, they are now used by influencers on social media platforms with the help of mobile phones for the purposes of combining products differently, easily displaying their variants, etc.

With smart mirrors, it is possible to see the customer's product types, suitability for their body, color and even compatibility with other colors, and accompanying recommendations (Magana, 2018).

Figure 3. Software that offers combinations and variants simultaneously

As seen in Figure 3, social media influencers can try on many clothes at the same time. Thanks to the development of smart mirror technology and its adaptation to mobile phones or similar applications developed on mobile phones, influencers can provide information about many products at the same time and produce content.

6.2. Virtual Phenomenon

In our digitalizing world, the development of avatar usage and metaverse has enabled the creation of avatar people on social media platforms and their use mostly by the fashion sector. Thus, virtual phenomena (virtual influencers) have been created and this trend is increasing. These digital characters are mostly used on the Instagram social media platform.

These characters are created entirely in a digital environment. Prepared using 3D modelling and artificial intelligence technologies, these phenomena act like humans, manage their social media accounts, constantly create content and interact with their followers. Lil Miquela, Noonoouri, Bermuda and Imma are the most well-known examples. The Lil Miquela character collaborates with famous fashion brands such as Calvin Klein and Prada. While Imma has a great impact on the Asian market, Bermuda, as Lil's friend, produces content that combines technology and fashion. Noonoouri, on the other hand, is a famous fashion icon who has taken part in many famous designers' digital fashion shows during Paris and Milan Fashion Week. He collaborates with luxury fashion brands such as Dior, Versace and Balenciaga.

Figure 4. Virtual Phenomenon

While real influencers include negativities such as personal discussions, scandals, lawsuits, etc., virtual influencers do not pose a risk in this sense. The influencers, who do not have problems such as vacation, illness, boredom, desire not to produce content or instability in content, can also collect detailed and accurate data for the fashion brands they are the face of and perform data analysis (Adlee, 2024).

CONCLUSION

Social media platforms that have entered our lives with developing technology have allowed us to access information about all living and non-living beings on Earth faster. These platforms, which have become an indispensable part of our lives thanks to smartphones and which we can access at any time, have created people who spend extra time to produce content, present their ideas and suggestions, and create and share their style and style over time. The fact that these people's posts are shared by others over and over again has made these people popular and followed by many people they do not know. With the growing number of followers, the content management of these people has been professional and their interaction with their followers has increased. Over time, these individuals, who are called influencers, have attracted the attention of companies, especially by sharing, recommending, suggesting and even recommending fashion brands to their followers and then informing them about the fashion brands they promote by tagging them, and these influencers have become fashion icons over time and have managed to take their place in the advertising budgets of ready-made clothing companies.

This study examined the effects of social media influencers on fashion brands. It is estimated that there are approximately 220 thousand influencers

in our country, and the effect and interaction that these influencers create with their followers attract the attention of ready-made clothing brands and fashion companies, and these people are used in promotion and sales areas. The increase in online sales on e-commerce sites along with the rise of influencers in our country also reveals the areas of influence of these people.

This new business line of this uncontrolled growing digital age has also brought some negativities with it. Individuals creating problems in their perception of beauty, problems in reaching the target audience by not matching with the appropriate brand, and financial problems they experience with brands in the face of the limitations of the media they use, reveal the need to take precautions in terms of the formation and institutionalization of the business from the very beginning. New trends are also developing with all these elements. All fashion brands benefit from the blessings of the digital age with smart mirror applications, applications developed for mobile phones and virtual influencers.

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