

**THE ROLE OF DIGITAL MARKETING AND
SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR: A
RESEARCH ON CONSUMERS' ONLINE SHOPPING HABITS**

CEREN KURTULAY

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**SOCIAL SCIENCES INSTITUTE
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**THESIS SUPERVISOR: ASSISTANT PROFESSOR DUYGU AYDIN
ASLANER**

YEDİTEPE UNIVERSITY

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PLAGIARISM

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.

Date: 12.05.2022

Name/Surname: Ceren Kurtulay

ABSTRACT

With the development of technology, it has become easier for people to access devices such as smart phones and smart tablets. In this way, digital platforms, and in particular social media, have been commonly adopted by individuals. Their increased use has led to the use of these channels as marketing tools as well. The capacity of social media to reach a large number of people all over the world and its interactive communication style make it a popular medium preferred by brands for their marketing efforts.

Social media is open to the access and use of all individuals who request it. Users who sign up to the various social media channels often become the target of digital content advertisements of brands, and therefore, should have sufficient knowledge to choose between products. Easy access of consumers to information, their option to choose between products, and their freedom to express their experiences have led brands to adopt consumer-oriented marketing strategies. Brands today not only produce quality products and services for their customers, but also try to reflect the lifestyle of their target audience. Before buying products or services, consumers examine certain criteria for brands such as ideology, social media content sharing, mobile marketing, e-mail marketing, and then make their purchases accordingly. The easiest ways to reach such information are through internet queries and social media research.

In terms of buying preferences, it is important for brands to meticulously manage their use of internet and social media for their digital marketing activities, and to send consistent and integrated messages representing the brand image.

This study examines the effect of social media digital marketing activities of clothing brands on consumer buying behavior. Consumers residing in İstanbul participated in the study and the data obtained were analyzed statistically.

Keywords: Integrated Marketing, Digital Marketing, Digital Content Marketing, Social Media Marketing, Social Media, Consumer, Consumer and Customer, Buying Behavior.



ÖZET

Teknolojinin gelişmesi ile birlikte insanların akıllı telefon, tablet gibi cihazlara erişimi kolaylaşmıştır. Bu sayede dijital platformlar ve özellikle sosyal medya, bireyler tarafından oldukça benimsenmiştir. Kullanımın yoğunlaşması, bu kanalların pazarlama aracı olarak kullanılmasına zemin olmuştur. Sosyal medyanın tüm dünyada çok sayıda kişiye ulaşabilme gücü ve interaktif bir iletişimin olması, markaların pazarlama çalışmaları için tercih ettiği popüler bir platformdur.

Sosyal medya, talep eden tüm bireylerin erişim ve kullanımına açıktır. Üye olan kullanıcılar sıklıkla markaların dijital içerik reklamlarına hedef olmaktadır ve dolayısı ile ürünler arasında tercih yapabilir seviyede bilgiye sahiptir. Tüketicinin bilgiye kolay ulaşımı, ürünler arasında tercih yapabilme avantajı ve tecrübelerini ifade edebilme özgürlüğü, markaları tüketici odaklı pazarlama stratejilerine yönlendirmiştir. Artık markalar, müşterileri için sadece kaliteli ürün veya hizmet üretmenin yanında, hedef kitlesinin yaşam tarzını yansıtmalıdır. Tüketiciler, ürün veya hizmet alımı öncesinde markaların ideolojilerini, sosyal medya içerik paylaşımlarını, mobil pazarlama, e-posta pazarlaması gibi kriterlerini incelemekte ve bu doğrultuda satın alıma yönelmektedir. Bu sonuçlara ulaşmanın en kolay yolu internet ve sosyal medya araştırmalarıdır.

Tüketicilerin satın alım tercihleri açısından bakıldığında markaların, dijital pazarlama faaliyetlerinde internet ve sosyal medya kullanımlarını titizlikle yönetmeleri, bütünleşik, tutarlı ve marka imajını temsil eden mesajlar vermeleri önemlidir. Bu çalışmada, giyim markalarının sosyal medya üzerinden yapmış olduğu dijital pazarlama çalışmalarının tüketici satın alım davranışlarına etkisi incelenmiştir.

İstanbul’da ikamet eden tüketicilere yönelik bir araştırma yürütülerek, elde edilen veriler istatistiksel olarak analiz edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bütünleşik Pazarlama, Dijital Pazarlama, Dijital içerik pazarlaması, Sosyal Medya Pazarlaması, Sosyal Medya, Tüketici Kavramı, Tüketici ve Müşteri, Satın Alma Davranışı.



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CONTENTS

Plagiarism Report	i
Abstract	ii
Özet	iv
Acknowledgement	vi
Content	vii
List of Tables.....	xi
List of Figures	xiii
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. Background.....	1
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	3
2.1. Integrated Marketing Communications.....	3
2.1.1. Concept of Integrated Marketing Communications.....	3
2.1.2. Historical Development of Integrated Marketing Communications.....	7
2.1.3. Features of Integrated Marketing Communications.....	10
2.1.4. Advantages of Integrated Marketing Communications.....	11
2.1.5. Elements of Integrated Marketing Communications.....	13
2.1.5.1. Advertisement.....	15
2.1.5.2. Personal Selling.....	17
2.1.5.3. Public Relations.....	19
2.1.5.4. Direct Marketing.....	21
2.1.5.5. Sales Promotion.....	23
2.1.5.6. Communicative Aspect of Price.....	25

2.2. Digital Content Marketing within Integrated Marketing	
Communications.....	26
2.2.1. Historical Development of Digital Marketing.....	27
2.2.2. Concept of Digital Content Marketing.....	28
2.2.3. Types of Digital Content.....	30
2.2.4. Stages of Digital Content Process.....	33
2.2.4.1. Analysis Process.....	34
2.2.4.2.Planning of Strategies.....	35
2.2.4.3.Content Creation.....	37
2.2.4.4.Assessment and Evaluation.....	38
2.2.5. Management Methods for Marketing over Digital Platforms....	39
2.2.5.1.Search Engine Marketing.....	40
2.2.5.2.E-mail Marketing.....	41
2.2.5.3.Social Media Marketing.....	43
2.2.5.3.1. Instagram.....	46
2.2.5.3.2. YouTube.....	48
2.2.5.3.3. Twitter.....	50
2.2.5.3.4. Facebook.....	51
2.2.5.3.5. Pinterest.....	53
2.2.5.4.Mobile Marketing.....	54
2.2.5.5.Affiliate Marketing.....	55
2.2.5.6.Remarketing.....	56
2.2.6. Benefits of Digital Content Marketing.....	58
2.3. Digital Marketing and Consumer Behaviors.....	59
2.3.1. Concept of Consumer Behavior.....	59

2.3.2. Characteristics of Consumer Behavior.....	61
2.3.3. Consumer Behavior Model.....	63
2.3.4. Factors Affecting Consumer Behavior.....	64
2.3.4.1. Cultural Factors.....	65
2.3.4.1.1. Culture.....	65
2.3.4.1.2. Subculture.....	67
2.3.4.1.3. Social Class.....	67
2.3.4.2. Social Factors.....	68
2.3.4.2.1. Reference groups.....	68
2.3.4.2.2. Family.....	69
2.3.4.2.3. Status and Roles.....	70
2.3.4.3. Personal Factors.....	71
2.3.4.3.1. Age and Life Cycle.....	71
2.3.4.3.2. Gender.....	72
2.3.4.3.3. Occupation	72
2.3.4.3.4. Economic Characteristics.....	73
2.3.4.4. Psychological Factors.....	73
2.3.4.4.1. Personality and Sense of Self.....	74
2.3.4.4.2. Values and Lifestyle.....	76
2.3.4.4.3. Attitudes and Emotions	76
2.3.5. Buying Processes of Consumers.....	78
2.3.5.1. Emergence of Need.....	79
2.3.5.2. Gathering Information and Evaluating Alternatives.....	80
2.3.5.3. Purchasing Decision.....	82
2.3.5.4. Post-Purchase Attitude.....	82

3. RESEARCH.....	85
3.1.Content & Focus.....	85
3.2.Research Questions & Hypotheses.....	86
3.3.Purpose & Scope.....	87
3.4.Significance of Research.....	87
3.5.Methodology.....	88
3.6.Population and Sample.....	89
3.7.Limitations.....	89
4. RESULTS.....	91
4.1. Demographic Characteristics	91
4.2. Daily Internet Use Habits & Social Media Use Habits.....	94
4.3. Social Media Access Types & Most Preferred Applications.....	95
4.4. Habits on Shopping via Internet and Social Media.....	96
4.5. Reasons, Frequency, and Preferred Categories for Shopping Online....	97
4.6. Attitudes and Behaviors of Consumers towards Digital Marketing and Social Media Marketing Activities.....	102
5. DISCUSSION.....	112
SOURCES.....	118
APPENDIX A.....	128

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Distribution of Participants by Sex	91
Table 2	Distribution of Participants by Age	92
Table 3	Distribution of Participants by Income	92
Table 4	Distribution of Participants by Education Level	93
Table 5	Distribution of Participants by Marital Status	93
Table 6	Distribution of Participants by Daily Internet Use Habits	94
Table 7	Distribution of Participants by Daily Social Media Use Habits	94
Table 8	Distribution of Participants by Devices Used to Access Social Media	95
Table 9	Top Three Social Media Applications Preferred by Participants	95
Table 10	Distribution of Participants by Online Shopping Habits	96
Table 11	Distribution of Participants by Platforms to Perform Brand Search	96
Table 12	Distribution of Participants by Their First-Choice Social Media Platform to Search for Brands	97
Table 13	Distribution of Participants by Their Reasons for Preferring Online Shopping	98
Table 14	Distribution of Participants by Their Top Sectors of Online Shopping	98
Table 15	Distribution of Participants by Their First-Choice Devices for Online Shopping	99
Table 16	Distribution of Participants by Online Shopping Frequency	99

Table 17	Distribution of Participants by Frequency of Shopping for Clothing with Traditional Methods	100
Table 18	Distribution of Participants by Emotions after Shopping	100
Table 19	Distribution of Participants by Most Influential Traditional Advertisements regarding Clothing Shopping	101
Table 20	Distribution of Participants by Most Influential Social Media Advertisements regarding Clothing Shopping	101
Table 21	Buying Attitudes and Behaviors of Consumers	105
Table 22	Effect of Digital Marketing on Consumer Buying Behavior	108
Table 23	Effect of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Buying Behavior	111

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Marketing Mix Elements and Communication Effects	5
Figure 2	Continuity of Marketing Communications	6
Figure 3	Historical Development of Marketing Communications	8
Figure 4	Interpersonal Communication Model	11
Figure 5	Concrete and Abstract Elements of Product	13
Figure 6	Media Planning Process	16
Figure 7	Promotion Mix and AIDA	18
Figure 8	Active Communication Process Expected by Consumers from Brands	19
Figure 9	Integrated Marketing Communications Public Relations Model	20
Figure 10	Key Features of Direct Marketing	22
Figure 11	Aspects of Customer Perceived Value	26
Figure 12	Stages of Digital Content Process	34
Figure 13	Digital Content Planning Strategy	36
Figure 14	Data obtained from the “We Are Social Turkey 2021 Report” was used for the figure	46
Figure 15	What is Consumer Behavior?	60
Figure 16	Consumer purchase activities	62
Figure 17	Black Box Model	64
Figure 18	Values, Norms, Sanctions and Consumption Structures	66

Figure 19	Factors Affecting Consumer Behavior	70
Figure 20	Three Main Units of Personality	75
Figure 21	Concept of Sense of Self for Consumers	75
Figure 22	Attitude Components and Attitude Development Process	77
Figure 23	Stages of Decision-making Process for Buying	78
Figure 24	Process of Determining Need for Buying	80
Figure 25	Alternatives and Search Process	83
Figure 26	Post-Purchase Consumer Behavior	85

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Marketing is a concept shaped in line with human needs and as these needs change, thanks to higher levels of standards of living and opportunities created by technology, the way products and services are marketed also changes. In this process of change, traditional marketing has become a more consumer-oriented and integrated structure that often plays an active role in digital platforms with the impact of the development of technology.

Technology plays a major role in the lives of individuals. Many routine needs of daily life have been facilitated within the framework of the possibilities offered by the technology. With the support of GSM operators, technology, especially the internet, has become accessible to individuals even on their mobile phones and has been put at the disposal of any need at any time. For example, one can buy food or pay bills easily with the applications downloaded to the mobile phone.

As a result of digitalization, the ability to access the desired information from anywhere at any time brings a distinct perspective to marketing communication. Marketing integrated with technology has also enabled the development of new concepts. Aiming to direct the target audience with various strategies in the digital environment, preparing creative and even interactive content, communicating with an integrated perspective can be seen as the benefits of a consumer-oriented marketing approach.

The most important reason for the change in marketing activities is the change in the consumer factor. Considering the 18th century, when marketing activities were actively pursued, purchasing opportunities, access to information and purchasing

alternatives were quite limited for consumers of that age. Over time, the development of technology, consumers having easier access to information and the increasing momentum of competition have provided the consumer with the opportunity to choose from different alternatives.

As a result of the constant and further competition within the consumption economy, as well as the variety of marketing activities and the effects of technological advancements, the consumer is in a state of constant change and development. It can be said that digital marketing methods, where consumption needs can be met through social media and digital applications, have created a dynamic structure for the sector.

This study consists of three main parts. The first is a literature review related to the conceptual framework in which all the concepts of the study will be explained in detail by evaluating the effect of digital marketing activities of clothing brands on social media on consumer purchasing behavior.

Following the conceptual framework, the second part of the research will use survey results to examine the internet usage habits of consumers, their perspectives on digital marketing and marketing activities on social media, and their consumption habits.

The final part of the study will include the results of this survey, a comparative discussion of the findings with the literature, the conclusion and recommendations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Integrated Marketing Communications

In this section, the transformation processes of traditional marketing into integrated marketing, digital marketing contents, and studies on social media marketing will be discussed. The target audience of marketing activities with digital content over social media is the consumer. In this section, the concept of the consumer and consumer behaviors will be detailed.

In addition to the concept of the consumer and types of consumer buying behaviors, all processes such as realizing the need, seeking information, evaluating options, deciding to buy, and post-purchase behavior will be examined. As a result, the psychological, social and cultural factors that affect the buying behavior of consumers will be discussed in detail.

2.1.1. Concept of Integrated Marketing Communications

According to its general definition, marketing is the entire process of designing and providing services in line with the determined strategies, trying to understand the needs and desires of consumers (Cemalcılar, 1988).

Marketing, as an organizational activity, emerged with the industrial revolution in the early 18th century. After the First World War, industrialization accelerated and production became easier as a result of mass production; however, the distribution and sale of the products, that is, the marketing of the products, became more difficult. Thus, a new era began in which production was designed for the market. In this era, also known as "Classical Marketing", the most popular marketing communication tool was advertisements (Bozkurt, 2014).

Traditional marketing is a marketing method that appeals to the masses. It is not a consumer-centered or consumer-need-focused method, but rather one in which the main idea is to increase the sales of the product. The communication method of this form of marketing uses general tools such as television, radio, newspaper, e-mail, brochures and billboards to easily address the masses (Bozkurt, 2007).

Traditional marketing methods are very costly in terms of budget. Due to the necessity of using standard methods to introduce the product or service to the target audience, the cost is quite high compared to the advertisements made over the internet (Odabaşı & Oyman, 2002). The elements that make up the traditional marketing mix are referred to as 4Ps in the literature: product, price, place, and promotion. These concepts can be explained as follows (William & Kincaid, 1985);

Product; The brand name, packaging, design, color and shape are the physical properties of the product. In addition, it can have many underlying meanings for the consumer. It is the process in which all the messages to be conveyed to the consumer are designed.

Price; It is the process of planning the consumer cost of the designed product. Price is considered not only the monetary value but also contributes to the reputation of the product. A higher or lower price for a product can lead to the formation of ideas about quality connotation in the consumer's mind. It is a process that must be carried out by considering all conditions, including market dynamics.

Place; It is the location where the product prepared for the consumer is offered to the consumer at the most competitive price. It is also important in terms of being the place where the product meets the consumer and communication takes place.

Promotion; It is a process that includes communication activities for the product released to the market. Promotional activities, which can vary based on the changing consumer attitudes, usually aim to be short-term and effective.

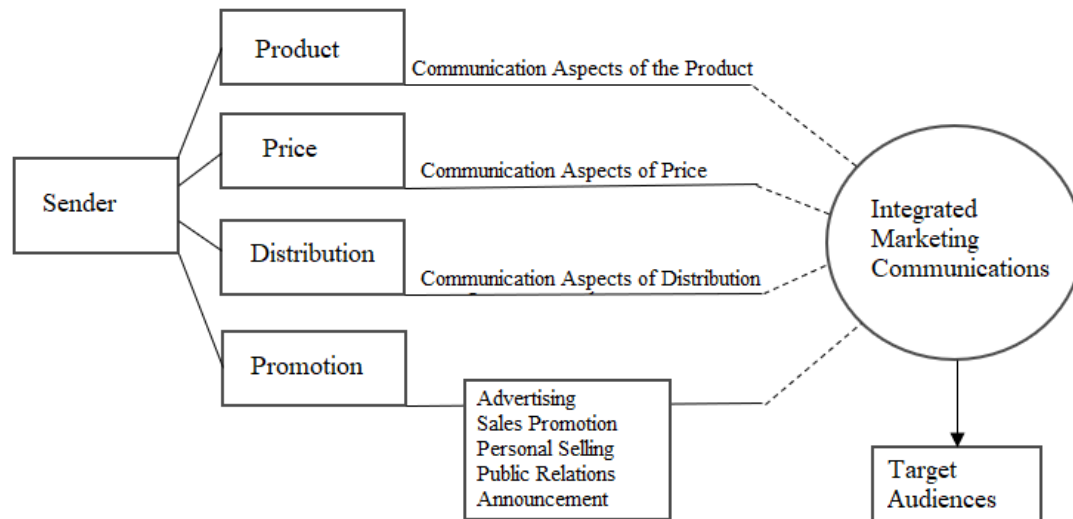


Figure 1. Marketing Mix Elements and Communication Effects

Source: Pickton, D. & Broadrick, A. (2001). *Integrated Marketing Communication*, (Harlow, England: Prentice Hall). p.91.

Between the years 1960-1980, the buying behavior of the masses began to shift (Bozkurt, 2007). The change in people's living standards, the prominence given to sharing ideas, and the variability in income level caused a reconsideration of needs. In this change process, a period in which the consumer directed the market began, and as a result, the transition to integrated marketing communication began.

Integrated marketing communication is generally defined as a process in which all communication activities of an organization are coordinated. Marketing activities and consumer interactions that are prone to rapid change create various behaviors and reactions in target markets. Integrated marketing communication requires a coordinated approach enabling various parts of marketing to reach

consumers with a single voice and with a unified message and image. For the integrated marketing communication approach, a customer-oriented strategy is implemented instead of sales-oriented communication strategies (Bozkurt, 2007).

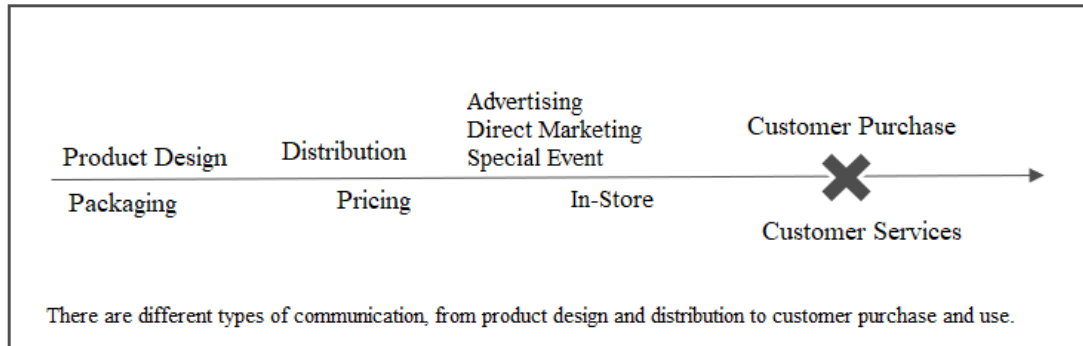


Figure 2. Continuity of Marketing Communications

Source: Schultz, D. E., & Tannenbaum, I. S., & Lauternborn, F. R., (1993). *Integrated Marketing Communication*. (Chicago: NTC Pub. Co). p.46.

Integrated marketing communication, starts with the customer at the center and determines the necessary forms and methods of communication in line with effective communication strategies. The aim here is to influence consumer behavior, directly or indirectly. It is a process that aims to trigger the consumer behaviorally towards buying. Integrated marketing communication is both a process and a discipline that can be further defined by concepts such as univocality, harmony and integration of all efforts of the marketing world. The concept defined as “Integrated Marketing Communications” (IMC) in the world market is used with its word-for-word translation in Turkey.

2.1.2. Historical Development of Integrated Marketing Communications

In the historical process, the marketing approach evolved in parallel with the developments in political, social, cultural, and economic domains as well as technological platforms. This change first evolved with the Industrial Revolution and was further modified through events such as the 1929 world economic crisis and the First and Second World Wars. Since the 1980s, this evolution has accelerated in a way that cannot be ignored. As the global economy has grown, technology has also developed rapidly (Bozkurt, 2007).

The increasing importance of the communication element, which directly affects buying behaviors, for businesses and marketing has been noticed and different concepts have been sought within the classical marketing approach. As a result, it has been understood that marketing activities can no longer be carried out with the 4P marketing mix (product, price, place, and promotion), which is considered the basic formula of marketing processes (Odabaşı & Oyman, 2002).

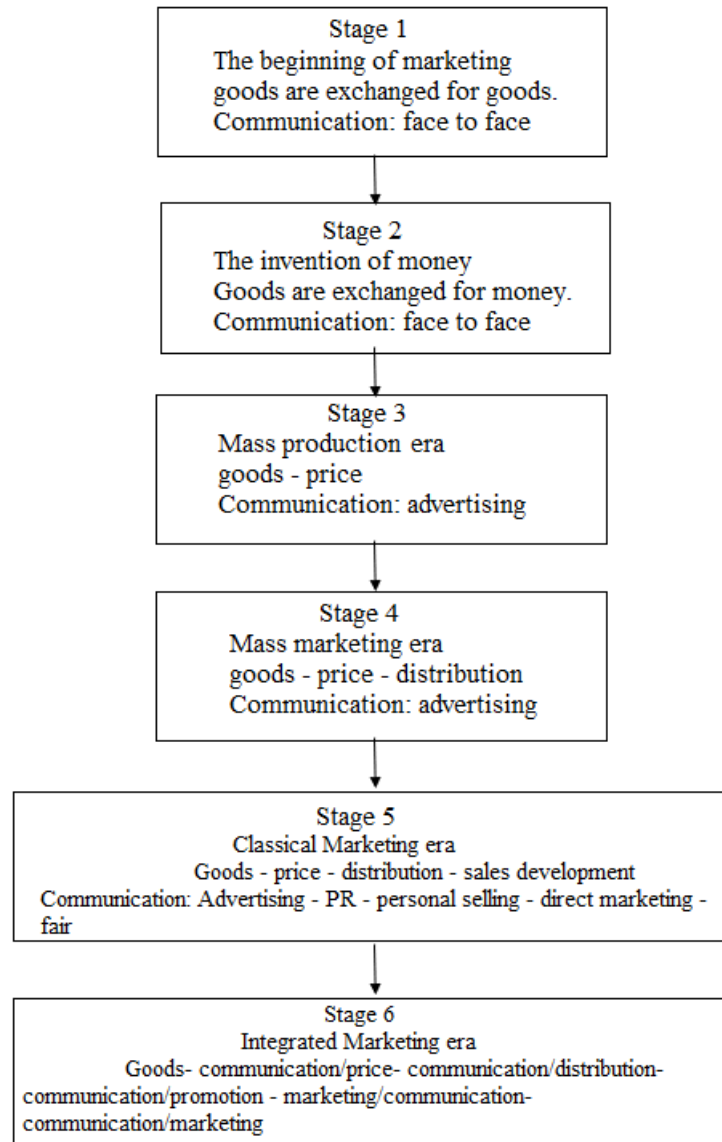


Figure 3. Historical Development of Marketing Communications

Source: Bozkurt, İ. (2007). *Bütünleşik Pazarlama İletişimi*. (Etiler: İstanbul, MediaCat). p.22.

Customer-oriented marketing urged the need to create two-sided and long-term communication processes in which the consumer is interactively involved in the marketing process. After the 1980s, the concept of the 4Cs overtook the prominence of the 4Ps (Kotler, 2017). The 4Cs are defined as customer value, customer cost,

customer communication, customer convenience. These concepts can be explained as follows (Çiftçi, 2016);

Customer value; Consumers buy products to fix a problem or to have value. This stage is the process of planning to offer a solution that will benefit the customer by valuing the preferences and wishes of the customer.

Customer cost; It is the provision of the produced value or service to the customer in the most appropriate price range in accordance with market conditions.

Customer convenience; It is the process of creating the most suitable environment in which the consumer can perform the buying activity. that the aim is that consumers can buy the product or service they need easily and with the payment method they prefer.

Customer communication; It aims to establish the most appropriate communication with the consumer. An approach is adopted in which the wishes and needs of the consumer are considered and the consumer feels valued through honest and clear communication.

Considering these definitions, it can be said that the 4C method has a structure that supports the 4Ps. In order to create a convenient buying experience for the consumer, all concepts that support each other should be meticulously evaluated (Kotler, 2000).

Integrated marketing communication is an approach that motivates the consumer towards buying behaviors and aims to establish customer loyalty. This approach is based on the strategic planning and implementation of all the decisions that brands will make in line with common goals and purposes (Tolon & Zengin, 2016).

2.1.3. Features of Integrated Marketing Communications

The process of creating customers from consumers is achieved by integrating the brand with corporate reputation. Integrated marketing communication was the first to allow for measurements to be performed with clear data. In the integrated marketing communication approach, consumers are at the center of all strategies as all strategic decisions are made in line with the demands and needs of the consumers, which in turn align with the market trends. All decisions made by brands carry a message for consumers, which turns companies from having production-oriented structure to one which is customer-oriented (Tolon & Zengin, 2016). In other words, the customer is the basis of all innovations brought by the integrated marketing communication approach to the marketing process, and it is very important to have databases about potential customers and to be able to use these databases.

The basic mission of integrated marketing communications is to establish sustainable communication based on trust. It aims to create customers instead of consumers through mutual interaction on the basis of such communication.

The foundation of integrated marketing communications is based on the need to constantly exchange information and experience between the brand and the consumer. Brands collect customer data with consent for their databases, and consumers renovate their interaction with the brand through active communication. Thus, the process of gaining mutual experience begins and this relationship gradually becomes more beneficial for both parties. One of the missions of integrated marketing communications is to carry out the necessary activities for these relations to be continuous and sustainable. The integrated marketing communication approach includes all the effort required to provide this orchestration.

2.1.4. Advantages of Integrated Marketing Communications

This typically communication-based process is described as an interpersonal communication model as it includes processes such as sender, message, receiver, channel, and feedback.

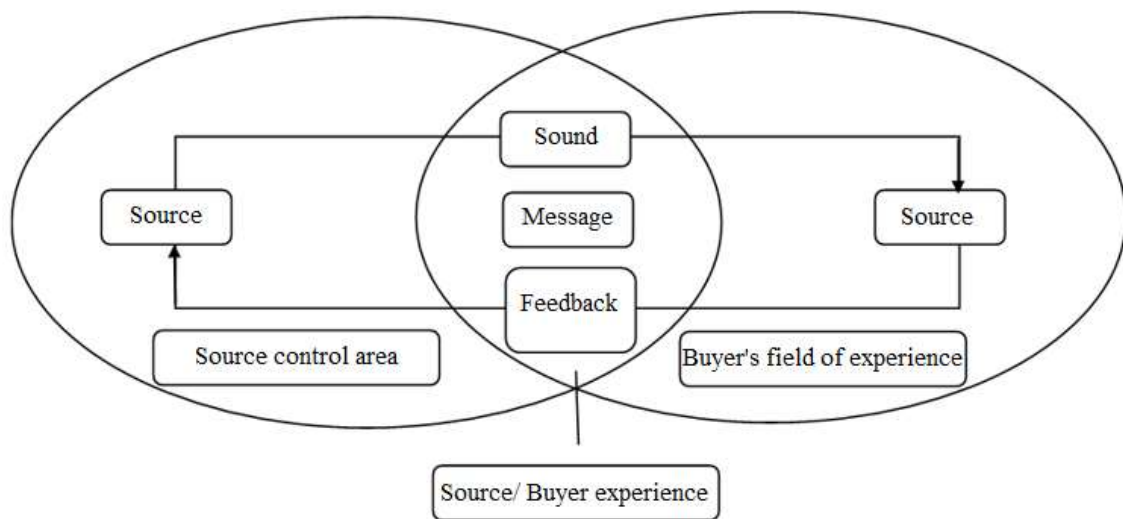


Figure 4. Interpersonal Communication Model

Source: “Schramm, W. & Roberts, D. (1971). *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication* (Urban, University of Illinois Press)”, Schultz, D.E., & Stanley Tannenbaum & Robert Lauternborn (1993). *Integrated Marketing Communication*. (Lincolnwood: NTC Publishing, 1993), p.27.

The communication model in Figure 4 can be expressed simply as follows:

The message and content prepared by the sender in accordance with the channel type in which the communication will take place are made clear and easy to understand so that the receivers can perceive the messages, and then, these are sent to the recipients. The foundation of integrated marketing communications is based on the constant exchange of information and experience between the brand and the consumer. The brand collects data about its customers, their shopping habits, and general preferences.

In line with these data, marketing strategies are determined, and buying is encouraged by contacting customers again. Thus, communication becomes useful for both parties experiencing the process. The convergence of these relationships is essential for the philosophy of integrated marketing communications.

The priority of brands in all existing or potential locations should be communication. Communication is required for products and services to be accepted by consumers (Yılmaz, 2006). The message that will encourage buying is accepted as both a basic input and an output in the integrated marketing communication approach, where shopping is planned and strategically managed (Bozkurt, 2007).

Within the scope of integrated marketing communication efforts and in line with consumer needs, sub-groups such as loyal customers, periodic customers, and non-users are formed for the brand, which makes it easier to create different communication strategies for such sub-groups (Odabaşı & Oyman, 2002). Having such detailed information in the brand's database enables the brand to contact and communicate with more consumers.

In order to carry out an effective integrated marketing communication process, it is necessary to find solutions to consumer problems. Consumers are more interested in how the products or services can meet their specific needs rather than their existing features. The perception of the consumer, whose level of knowledge has increased with the opportunities offered by technology, is egocentric. The fact that the experience of the self-centered consumer is positive, that it is continuous, or that a problem is solved quickly are among the reasons why the consumer prefers that brand. Through such achievements, the brand intellectually proves that it can meet the

needs of the customer and takes its place among the first consumer's preferences.

Therefore, this step is the most significant in creating loyal customers.

2.1.5. Elements of Integrated Marketing Communications

It can be said that when consumers buy a product, they buy more than the concrete features of the product. "Consumers don't buy products, what they buy is the benefits of the products." This idea clearly expresses the product concept of today as products today contain much more meaning than a physical object (Odabaşı & Oyman, 2002).

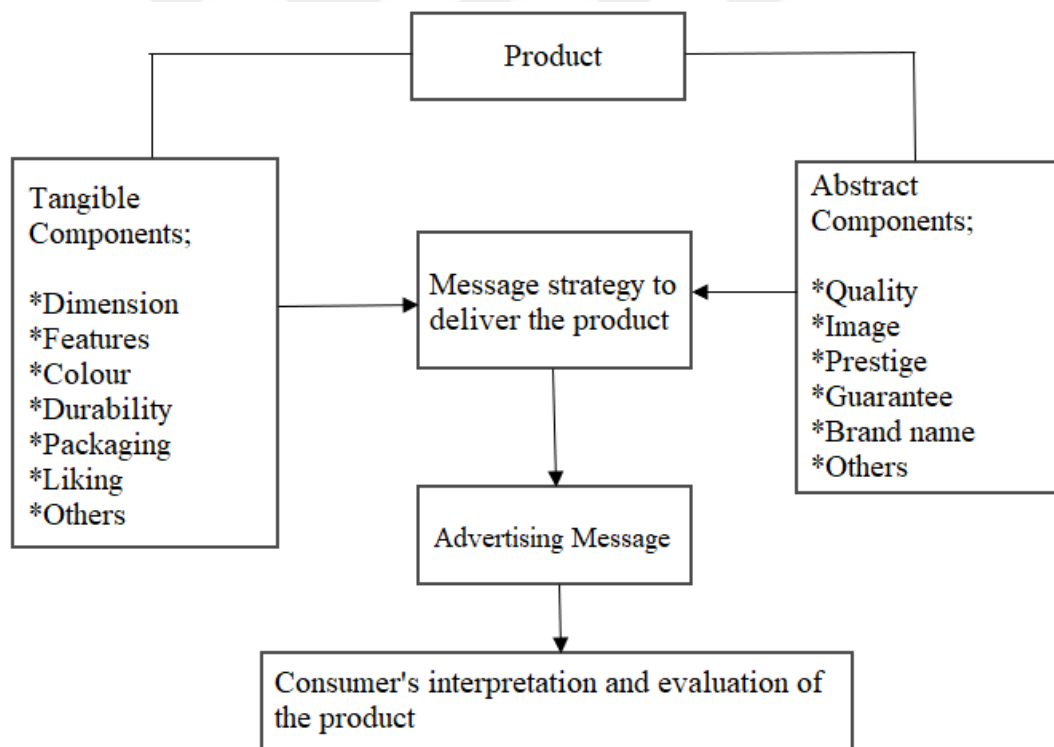


Figure 5. Concrete and Abstract Elements of Product

Source: Wells, W., & Burnett, J.J., & Moriarty, S. (2000). *Advertising: Principles and Practice*. (England: Prentice Hall International). p.69.

Consumers not only consider the physical components of products but also the satisfaction that these products can provide. From this point of view, what the consumer buys is the benefit provided by the product. Concrete or physical features such as the size, color, or texture of the purchased product may have different meanings for consumers. And such meanings may differ individually (Odabaşı & Oyman, 2019).

The product or service, which is evaluated with personal differences by consumers, can be perceived with its abstract features, despite the emphasis on its concrete features. The bag that a woman buys, when considered abstractly, meets the same purpose as its other counterparts. However, the brand of this bag can create a class difference among women. For consumers, some features can be more important and dominant for the buying process (İslamoğlu & Altunışık, 2008). The “determinant attributes” of products is an issue that should be considered during the creation of integrated marketing communication strategies.

How the delivered content is perceived by consumers does not only depend on the physical stimuli but also their mood and cultural background. Various characteristics of a product such as shape, color, size, odor, texture, weight, and material play an important role in how consumers evaluate a product (Rettie & Brewer, 2000). However, the first point of contact with the product or service is visual. Therefore, how the content appears is very important. Aristotle’s observation that “All perceptions begin with the eye” draws attention to a crucial point (Odabaşı & Oyman, 2019).

Considering that buying behavior can differ significantly from person to person, various methods must be systematically introduced to the market in order to effectively carry out marketing activities for a product.

The components of the sub-system of integrated marketing communications are important for product marketing in this respect.

2.1.5.1. Advertisement

According to the definition of the American Marketing Association, advertising consists of promotional activities carried out by paying the price of each product, service or idea and in a way that it is understood by whom the price is paid, and excludes personal selling (White, 2000). According to this definition, advertising has four main characteristics. These can be listed as follows (Odabaşı & Oyman, 2002);

1. Advertisement requires payment in exchange. The advertiser pays a price for the advertisement. In return for this price, that person or institution has supervisory authority over the advertisement.
2. Advertisement is not a personal presentation. It is an impersonal sales effort and a marketing communication method. Delivering any message to consumers is a mass interaction that requires the use of different means of communication.
3. Advertising messages can include products, services or ideas. The person or organization making the advertisement is evident. As the source of the information is evident to the target audience, advertising is not considered propaganda.

4. The two most important strategies of the advertising plan are the message strategy and the media strategy. One of the most important issues for the message strategy is creativity.

Advertisements are among the most preferred marketing methods by brands that provide products or services because they can include product features, product usage information, brand name, manufacturer contact information, and many other topics. The important thing here is to deliver the right message to the right target audience and to stimulate buying behavior.

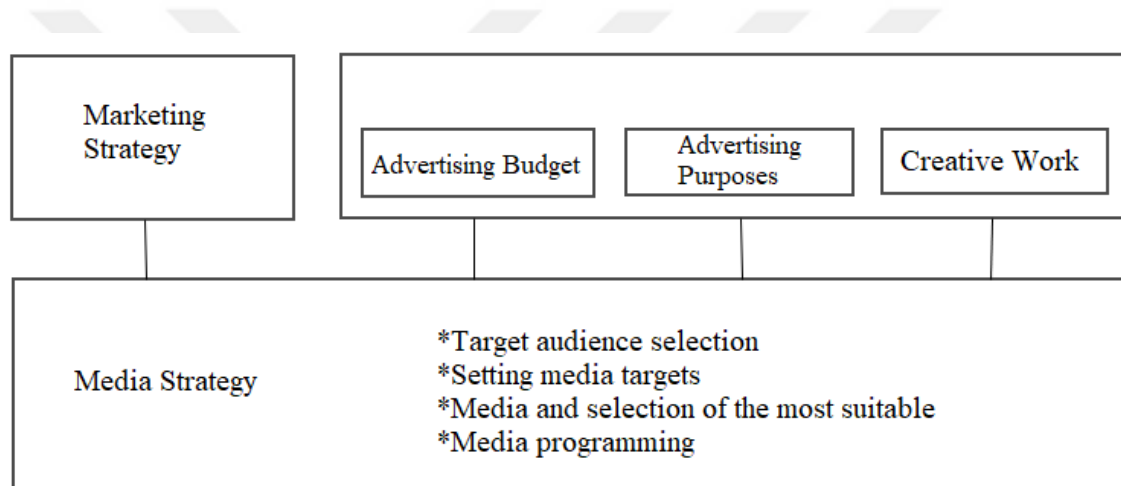


Figure 6. Media Planning Process

Source: Odabaşı, Y. & Oyman, M. (2019). *Pazarlama İletişimi Yönetimi*. (Eskişehir: MediaCat). p.117.

Advertisements also differ in terms of their roles in consumer societies. A key role of advertising is its use for marketing purposes. With its marketing role, it aims to strategically plan the process of creating satisfaction for the wishes and needs of the consumers. In this way, it focuses on bringing products and consumers together (Mucuk, 2010).

Advertisement is one of the first methods that come to mind when considering how to communicate with the consumer society. An advertising campaign that has succeeded in showing the sincerity in the message prepared with the right planning in a strategic way will always be influential for the audience (Elden, 2004). Even if it does not trigger buying behavior, it has potential to inform the consumer about the content.

Advertisement also has the effect of reminding consumers of the product. When a need arises for the advertised product, the relevant advertisement comes to the consumer's mind and directs them towards the product. Thus, the advertisement can both remind the customers of that brand and activate the buying instinct of the customers (Aşıcı, 1984)

As long as brands continue their marketing activities, advertisements will be one of the more effective communication methods between the consumers and the brands. Advertisements have been described as a communication activity since the first use of advertisements (Çetinkaya, 1993). Along with the technological developments of the period, it is one of the most preferred methods in communicating with the consumer through online platforms.

2.1.5.2. Personal Selling

The fact that the communication process takes place face-to-face is the most significant difference that distinguishes personal selling, which is the oldest promotion method, from other methods. Personal selling is defined as the face-to-face meeting of the seller with one or more potential buyers for the purpose of selling (Can, Doğan & Yaşar, 1991).

The main purpose of marketing should not be making sales. Rather, it should focus on guiding the consumer to better understanding their habits. Personal selling has an important place in marketing communication because there is direct communication from the brand to the consumer due to its direct structure (Bozkurt, 2014). The active conduct of communication enables brands to address the wishes and needs of the consumers.

Although personal selling includes personal contact, it is a bidirectional marketing communication tool that includes the AIDA model. The aim of this model is to secure the attention of buyers, trigger their interest, arouse their desire, and activate the need to buy.

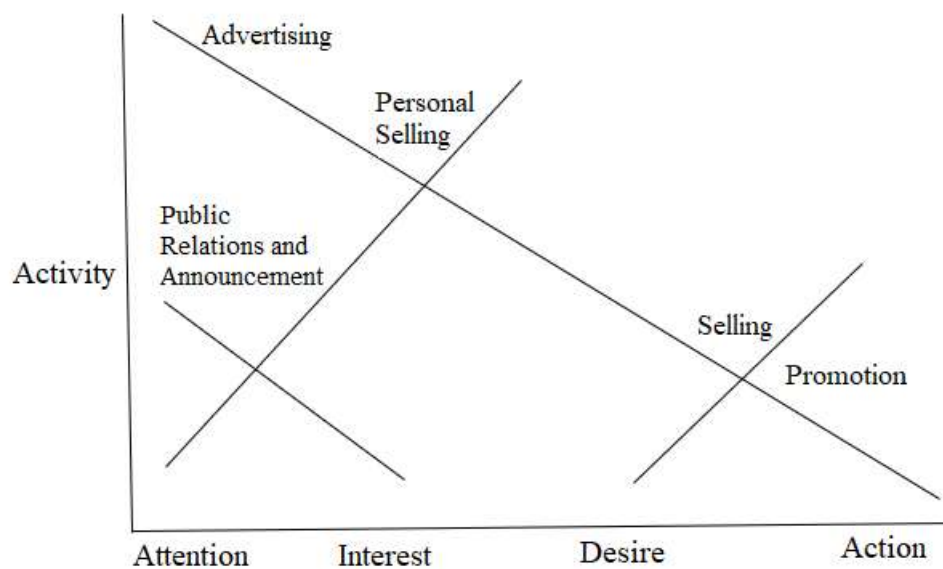


Figure 7. Promotion Mix and AIDA

Source: Odabaşı, Y. & Oyman, M. (2019). *Pazarlama İletişimi Yönetimi*. (Eskişehir: MediaCat). p.87.

The purpose of personal selling is to strengthen communication in harmony with all other marketing efforts. Since there is direct communication with the consumer, it is critically important to achieve satisfaction and increase trust.

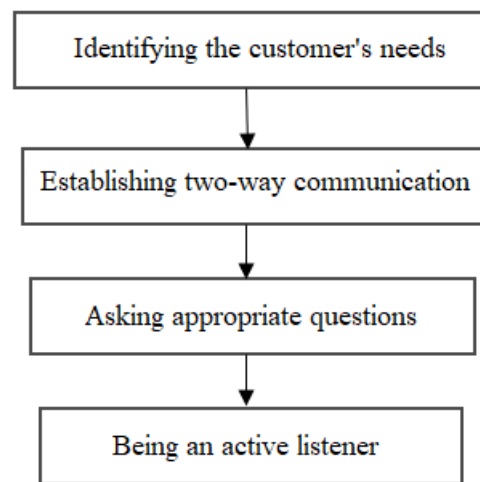


Figure 8. Active Communication Process Expected by Consumers from Brands
 Source: Odabaşı, Y. & Oyman, M. (2019). *Pazarlama İletişimi Yönetimi*. (Eskişehir: MediaCat). p.183.

2.1.5.3. Public Relations

Marketing and public relations specialists began to use the concept of marketing-oriented public relations more in the literature after the 1980s. This term was first used in America to refer to the field of public relations that uses marketing activities in a supplementary way. In fact, some experts wanting the method to be evaluated as an independent field from public relations argued that this type of public relations is autonomous in itself; they suggested that this field should be presented separately from other forms of public relations that include relations with non-consumer public institutions (Petekoğlu, 1998).

Public relations activities are an important components of integrated marketing communication methods and are prepared with strategies for marketing objectives.

The main purpose of public relations is to establish an emotional communication with the target audience in line with the image of the brand in order to increase the sales of products or services and to ensure its continuity (Tosun, 2003). Public relations, which is effective in communication efforts for new products and services, can support the re-evaluation of existing products and the solution of problems that may arise.

The basis of public relations activities is to create a brand image for the product, to create brand loyalty, to make new introductions to the market and position the brand, to eliminate advertisement gaps, to keep up with developing technology, and to influence public opinion leaders (Erzor, 2015).

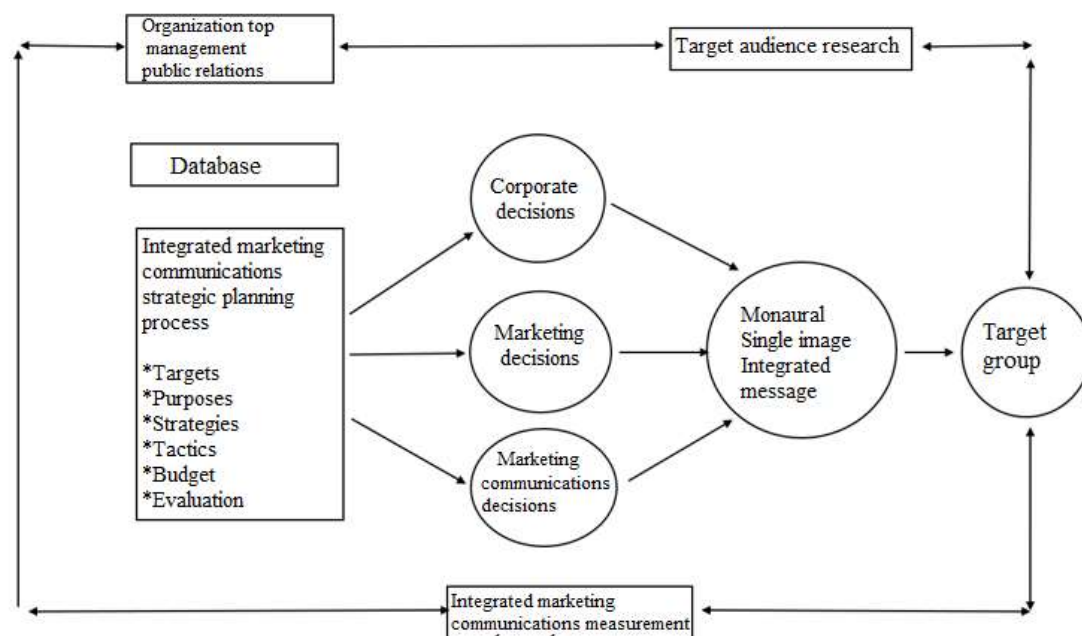


Figure 9. Integrated Marketing Communications Public Relations Model

Source: Bozkurt, İ. (2007). *Bütünleşik Pazarlama İletişimi*. (Etiler: İstanbul, MediaCat). p.147.

Public relations activities are generally carried out to create a positive image of the brand for a target audience (Tolon & Zengin, 2016). In addition to this, they aim to keep the negative situations experienced in times of crisis at the lowest level (Öztürk, 2009).

Public relations can provide opportunities for mutual interactions as it acts as a communication bridge between the brands and the consumers and is shaped around the principle of customer satisfaction (Kadıbeşegil, 1998). Public relations ensures that the messages and goals of the business are shared with the consumers, and that the business takes new actions in line with the feedback from the consumers (Aydede, 2001).

Public relations can also shape the effective social environment for the marketing activities of the brands. In this respect, it plays a complementary role in communication with the consumers. Through public relations, consumers can communicate effectively with brands; thus, it has become an integrated marketing communication element that has an impact on target audiences and contributes to the promotion efforts of brands.

2.1.5.4. Direct Marketing

Direct marketing is an interactive marketing system that uses one or more advertising media to label a measurable response and/or a commercial transaction at any location (Odabaşı & Oyman, 2002).

As implied by its name, direct marketing provides direct communication with the consumer, which is a critical component with the effects of getting fast feedback and creating permanent customer relations (Mucuk, 2010). Contact strategies are

planned through many communication channels in order to get quick results for the target audience determined in the direct marketing process. Different communication channels are used in this type of marketing; for example, both traditional and modern digital marketing methods such as e-mail, telephone marketing, catalogues, mobile phones, internet, TV advertisements, as well as social media such as YouTube, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook can all be utilized (Moriarty, 2011).

Direct marketing includes face-to-face contact efforts towards existing or potential customers in order to get an immediate and measurable response or reaction (Tosun, 2003). It is a marketing system that uses one or more advertising media to create a measurable response, regardless of location. Communication, database creation, and distribution constitute the focus areas of direct marketing (Çoroğlu, 2002).

The key point is that the reaction and response of the target audience can be measured in direct marketing activities (Tosun, 2003). For example, a brand can promote a new product or service directly to the target audience through its mobile application. Based on the hit rate of the application, the number of people in the target audience who are interested in the product can easily be determined.

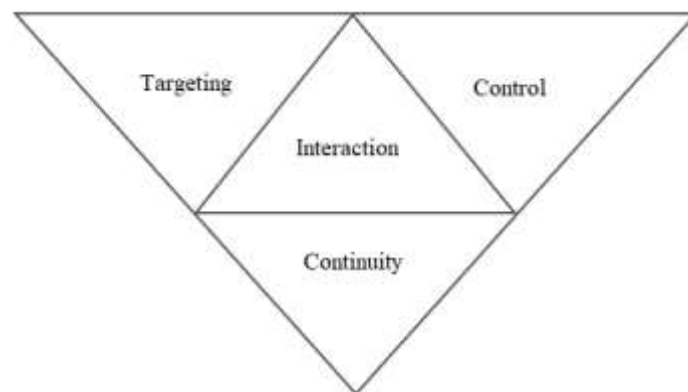


Figure 10. Key Features of Direct Marketing

Source: Corkell, Mc. G. (1997). *Direct and Database Marketing*. (London: Kogan Page Limited). p.28.

Key points such as measurability and interaction require close knowledge of the target audience. In this way, the messages to be sent to the target audience can be customized. As these messages become more customized, the consumer will feel emotionally closer to the relevant brand or product.

The most important factor in the increased use of direct marketing is the changes in the lifestyles of societies. Direct marketing considers consumers not as patterns, but as individuals with different personalities, which is a critical detail and perhaps necessity of modern marketing (Cömert, 1989).

2.1.5.5. Sales Promotion

Promotion is a communication process consisting of conscious, programmed activities aimed at persuading the customer in order to facilitate the sales of a product or service by a business.

Promotion is aimed at attitudes and behaviors as well as for facilitating direct sales. This process is meaningful only when considered and applied together with other marketing activities (Odabaşı & Oyman, 2002). Product, price, place, and promotion form the main elements of the marketing strategy.

The purpose of applying the types of promotions together is to create the highest positive synergy. Here, synergy can be defined as “the joint effects of interrelated parts of the system towards achieving the desired result”. Sales promotion activities can strengthen all efforts at points where personal sales and advertising are

insufficient or weak (Odabaşı & Oyman, 2005). Use of an additional activity, innovation, or both adds value to existing activities.

Sales promotion practices create a sense of benefit between the brands and consumers. Consumers are satisfied with their buying and have a material or moral benefit; on the other hand, brands benefit from factors such as retention, customer creation from consumers, and brand loyalty (Cemalcılar, 1998).

Sales promotion is a direct incentive tool. Action is required in the immediate moment, and the promotion activity is temporary and short-term. If successful, an increase in sales is expected. It is a pleasing type of activity for consumers which is likely to increase buying traffic as it can provide the consumer with an unplanned purchasing experience.

Sales promotion can be done in unlimited ways and is very flexible. It can be used during the introduction of a new product or at any stage of marketing. It can enrich the sales messages presented by advertisement and personal selling (Odabaşı & Oyman 2005).

Sales promotion activities can also be a more effective communication tool in environments or periods where/when competition is more intense. If there is a new product, brand or service, it can create the most suitable environment for the consumer experience (Elden & Yeygel, 2006). A key point, however, is that sales promotion and advertisement are not interchangeable but complementary activities. There is a synergic interaction between the two. When considered separately, sales promotion activities cannot be expected to create the expected synergy.

The product to be promoted can be a physical product or a service. The important thing here is to develop something that people want to buy. It can be said

that when consumers buy a product, they buy more than the concrete features of the product. This idea clearly expresses the product concept of today as typical products contain much more meaning than a physical object (Kingsnorth, 2017).

In terms of integrated marketing communications, the visual satisfaction of the product is of significant importance for the consumer. The strategic planning and implementation of this grant a personality to the product within the market. It adds a feature that distinguishes the product from its competitors in the minds of the consumers.

2.1.5.6. Communicative Aspect of Price

Price itself is one of the components that undertake the task of communication. Similarly, it is a stimulus and a clue for the consumers. From the point of view of the consumers, the perception of the relationship between price and quality is directly proportional to the consumer's image and budget. For this reason, pricing should be based on the lifestyle, image preference, expectations, and economic spectrum of the target audience (Atılğan, 2015).

Price creates many messages for the consumers, it affects the behavioral and cognitive activities of the consumers. Cognitive activities are related to thinking and decision-making processes about what to buy. Comparing alternatives can be a stressful process; therefore, buying the same brand is often a more practical solution for consumers (Baltacıoğlu, 1980). Behavioral activity, on the other hand, is about taking action to buy a product. In this behavior model, consumers tend to buy the first appealing product they encounter in line with their needs and complete the process.

If consumers perceive a high-quality difference between brands within the same product group, they tend to accept price as an indicator of quality and evaluate brands accordingly. Cosmetic products can be given as an example for products in which the quality difference is perceived widely among brands. Most consumers are well aware of whether there is a difference in quality between different cosmetic brands. Some of these differences may not be perceptible. However, higher prices are required to be paid because they reflect “invisible quality” (Odabaşı & Oyman, 2005).

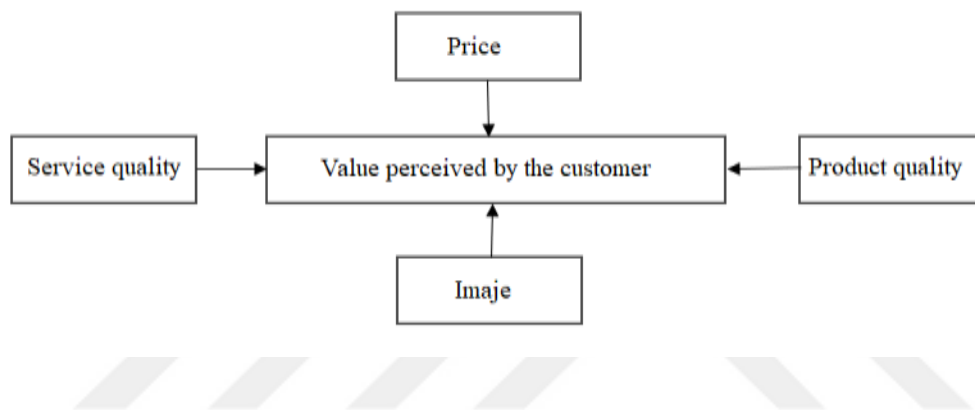


Figure 11. Aspects of Customer Perceived Value

Source: Odabaşı, Y. & Oyman, M. (2019). *Pazarlama İletişimi Yönetimi*. (Eskişehir: MediaCat). p.296.

2.2. Digital Content Marketing within Integrated Marketing Communications

The concept of digital content covers all information accessible over the internet. Digital content may include many different formats such as video, audio, image files, and textual content.

The concepts related to digital marketing and its sub-branch digital content marketing will be explained in this section. Types and stages of digital content marketing will also be mentioned. And finally, digital marketing platforms and the importance of social media for marketing will be explained.

2.2.1. Historical Development of Digital Marketing

Digital marketing as a concept was first introduced in the 1990s. The world at the time was of course quite different from today's world. The first banner ads were introduced in 1993 and the first webcrawler (Search Engine) was created in 1994 (Kingsnorth, 2017). This era, in which the internet started to be used for informational purposes, is called Web 1.0, and initiated the search engine optimization of today.

After Google was founded, a rapid growth trend began, and BlogSpot was introduced in 1999. As a result of this innovation, the modern internet age also began. BlogSpot is a website that allows individuals to host their own internet-based blogs. With this development, the era of Web 2.0. began. Web.2.0 represents private social networks and blogs. This innovation also represents the transition from information seeking to socializing and sharing. With Web 2.0, the internet became a social environment and online communities emerged. It created the technology environment that prepared the birth of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, and many other platforms (Kingsnorth, 2017).

Blackberry, which appealed more to the corporate business world, switched to the use of e-mail over mobile, which paved the way for MySpace. MySpace is the original beginning of the social media we use today (Açikel, & Çelikol, 2012).

Google's release of the AdWords system was a milestone for marketing activities. Google AdWords is an advertising system that works with keywords. With the innovations included in the application and simple algorithms run in the background, it is still considered an indispensable system today (Kotler, 2017).

In order for societies to carry out their vital activities, the need for consumption requires continuity. This dynamically-structured continuity of

consumption ensures that marketing activities can continue as well. Traditional marketing, which has adapted to the rapid progress of technology, has almost completely surrendered to the digital world and an endless process of development (Erdil & Başarır 2009).

Digital marketing can be defined as achieving marketing objectives through the implementation of communication strategies with digital technologies. Digital marketing can respond to the demands of societies and can even direct societies with its many features such as classifying consumers, analyzing needs, and reminding consumers of their needs. The fact that it can contact consumers through many channels can provide multiple experiences to the consumer, which is used to support marketing activities (Spirit, 2021).

At the heart of digital marketing, there are activities aimed at acquiring new customers and maintaining relationships with existing customers. Digital marketing is a bridge that provides the relationship and communication between the consumer and the brand and is one of the important components of marketing (Rhan & Jones, 2009).

2.2.2. Concept of Digital Content Marketing

Digital Marketing is the execution of marketing activities over digital platforms with the help of technology in order to reach the target audience, establish an interactive relationship with the target audience, and obtain measurable results (Akar & Kayahan, 2007).

Content marketing and digital content marketing are emerging trends today. Content marketing in general is a process that includes a variety of activities related to content creation, the selection of channels for the content, its distribution and

measurement, the creation of awareness by securing the attention of the target audience and potential consumers, making products and services more appealing, contacting the target audience, establishing relations with the target audience, and getting measurable results by triggering the target audience (Pencere, 2013).

Establishing sustainable contact with consumers and existing customers, providing solutions to their problems, and informing them have been among the *sine qua non* of marketing for many years. The concept of open "content" created by users became especially popular in 2005 and is used to describe various media content created by end users (Anderas & Michael, 2010).

Digital content marketing is the determination and implementation of strategies by a brand to appeal to its target audience. Completing the preparation stages of the content meticulously in order to attract the attention of the target audience and include them in the buying process ensures a positive outcome of the process.

Digital content marketing is different from traditional advertisements. Consumers engage in advertisements only for a brief time and in an untimely manner, and they may easily forget or remember the content based on their personal interests (Ryan, 2016). While content marketing activities reach consumers through digital channels, the message directly touches the target audience, and if it can be long-lasting, its permanence also increases. Permanence will be ensured if the content of the message evokes a sense of ownership for the consumer.

When it comes to digital content marketing and digital marketing, the first concept that comes to mind is the internet. The Internet is a communication environment created by more than one computer-based communication network

(Okur, 2005) and is a technology that emerged as a result of the desire to store and share the information produced and to access this information when necessary (Bölükoğlu, 2002). This environment has also created a whole new aspect of communication where geographical limitations have been eliminated and humanity has become a global community.

With this technology, people can access a lot of information easily, safely, cheaply, and quickly. Today, mobile phones, tablets, TVs, and many electronic devices are compatible with digital platforms. Digital marketing is not limited to the internet, but the internet is its most important part. There can be many variations of marketing activities performed via the Internet and these can meet the consumers faster than traditional methods (Kingsnorth, 2017).

With the changing consumer mindset, the aim of the brands has become to analyze current or potential customers well, understand their wishes and expectations, and deliver the right content to the right target audience, instead of creating content on digital platforms (Pulizzi & Barrett, 2009). Digital content marketing can be defined as the art of fully understanding what consumers need and providing needed products and services creatively.

2.2.3. Types of Digital Content

Digital content is products that are delivered directly to the target audience. The content may differ based on the chosen target audience. Therefore, it is critical to determine the target audience in the most accurate way.

When it comes to content, many methods can come to mind. As the main purpose, the content should appeal to the senses; thus, content can be written, visual,

or audio. Creativity is important in digital content marketing. It is impossible to say which content type is superior to the other. The only determinant in this regard is the personal thoughts and habits of the consumers. For this reason, consumers should be exposed to various content types with different methods for the most appropriate marketing approach (Gökşin, 2018). However, rather than focusing on which content type is more effective, it is important to ensure that they are all compatible with each other and integrated at a level that will increase the effect.

Content means written, audio, visual (photographs, graphics, etc.), video, and other (live broadcast, etc.) products that are prepared to be conveyed to the target audience and provide connection with the target audience. All content can be evaluated separately or as a whole. For example, content can be delivered to the target audience with a photograph positioned under a written text (Handley & Chapman, 2013).

In terms of written content, text or mail are the first methods that come to mind. In addition, the contents on the internet accessed through search engines can also be included. In the written content method, it is important that the message is expressed in a clear and understandable language to the target audience. The text must have a catchy title that emphasizes the message (Handley, 2015). It is vital that the font does not tire the eyes, the content does not deviate from the subject, and that punctuation marks are used correctly.

Hearing is of great importance in learning activities and has a prominent place in the creation of digital content. In order for audio content to create a positive and long-lasting effect on the consumers, instrument sounds, human voices, or melodies can be used, depending on the type of product. An audio content that expresses the

product in an integrated way will be effective in activating the consumers as it will appeal to the senses of the consumers (Pencere, 2013).

The use of visual content is an effective method to influence the target audience, increase brand awareness, and achieve measurable results. As visual cues are important in daily life, they are equally important in the digital environment. For effective visual content, the quality and harmony of the imagery are important. According to a study conducted by the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey, people tend to learn 75% of what they learn by seeing and 13% by hearing (TÜBİTAK, 2013). The human brain consists of 3 parts and decision-making takes place in the oldest of those 3. The brainstem, the region which controls the most basic functions of human life, needs and prefers concrete data. At this decision-making stage, it can provide adequacy according to the needs of the consumer (Renvoise & Morin, 2012).

Video content is not only a combination of visual and audio content, but also a type of content including choreographed activity. It is very popular and highly preferred on digital platforms. Millions of videos, created by brands or consumers themselves, are shared on social media platforms all over the world. A recent advancement in video marketing is that videos can also be accessed from books or magazines with QR codes (Pencere, 2013).

The final category, “other”, can include live broadcasts and slide shares. Particularly in recent times, a popular way of sharing content is to provide an interactive environment by broadcasting live on social media. It can be seen that many brands implement this content method through third parties on social media.

This type of content should be prepared according to the interests of customers and the habits of the target audience, and should be interesting and attractive (Kotler, 2017). On a platform with endless possibilities such as social media, a lot of content can be produced, especially in a competitive environment where consumers have many alternatives. But any content sharing that is not consumer-focused will likely fail.

2.2.4. Stages of Digital Content Process

Advances in technology have made online marketing the fastest developing direct marketing technique. As such, it has been described as the innovative marketing approach of the digital age (Odabaşı & Oyman, 2002). After language, arguably humanity's greatest creation, the internet can be considered the greatest communicative discovery due to its ability to be used as an international communication network.

Every business competes in a different world today. The first is the physical world of resources that the management can see and touch, and the second is the virtual world created by information. The internet is the most important reality of this virtual world (Kiani, 1998).

Due to the fact that technology has a place in every stage of social life, the activities of brands to reach their target audiences have become quite challenging compared to the traditional marketing period. The way to create brand loyalty for consumers with content that creates added value is to successfully complete the stages of the digital content process.

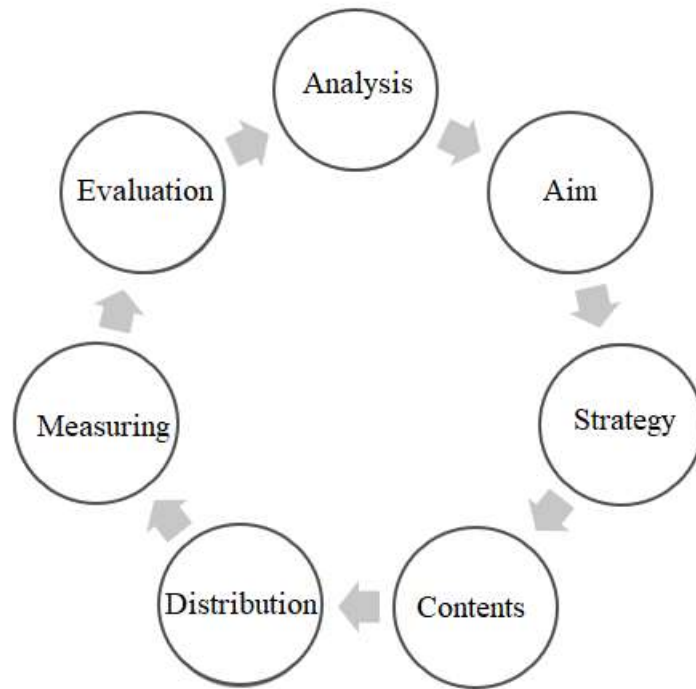


Figure 12. Stages of Digital Content Process

Source: Pencere, D. (2013). *Dijital İçerik Pazarlaması*. (Adana: Karahan Kitapevi). p.82.

2.2.4.1. Analysis Process

A brand's main purpose is to sell the products it produces or represents. And the main need of consumers is to buy a product that can eliminate an issue that is causing their dissatisfaction. There are many products and many needs in the world, so meeting at a common intersection is a challenging process (Handley & Chapman, 2013).

The product or service must first have a purpose even at the production stage. Again, cosmetic brands can be a good example in this respect. The story of the creation of cosmetic products is that all women around the world are in search of

products that will make them feel more beautiful. Therefore, in such a case, the first priority of cosmetic brands should be to analyze women.

Analysis includes the processes of researching the target audience in detail, identifying opportunities and problems, and following the strategies of competitors in the same industry (Lieb, 2012).

Knowing or determining which content the target audience follows on which channels and for what reasons means a correct analysis. The key step for achieving this is to be in constant contact with the consumers. Consumers should be asked hundreds of questions such as “On which platform do the consumers buy the product? Do their buying activities focus on mobile/digital channels or in-store? What kind of comments do consumers make after buying? What kind of comments do consumers make after using a product? Do consumers recommend the product to their friends? Do consumers participate in surveys?”

2.2.4.2. Planning of Strategies

Planning or designing a digital marketing strategy requires making conscious and deliberate decisions. After determining the purpose of digital content, it is only possible with the necessary knowledge to design the steps to reach this purpose in a planned way (Ryan & Jones, 2012).

The data obtained as a result of analyses establish the basis for the preparation of the content. The content should be clear and easy to understand and should express specific purposes. Purposeful content can be prepared in line with the analysis data, the wishes of the target audience, and the available opportunities (Gunelius, 2011) and

results in delivering the right message to the right target audience. Therefore, strategic planning is critically important at this stage.



Figure 13. Digital Content Planning Strategy

Source: Survivor, 3 Jan 2021. Dijital pazarlama stratejisi nasıl oluşturulur?

08.11.2021. <https://www.survivor.com.tr/dijital-pazarlama-stratejisi-nasil-olusturulur>

Social media is another effective tool and a strategy for its use should be established in order to proceed in accordance with the planned purpose. Web pages and social media accounts should be created where various information about the brand or product can be updated, and more importantly, interactive communication with the consumer can be ensured. Different alternatives such as websites, Facebook and Instagram pages, or e-mail accounts for sales support and after-sales support can all be utilized together (Pencere, 2013). The rate of viewing and reviewing of the content can be measured through these most effective channels.

Twitter provides a suitable environment for brand-related posts, updates, and consumer comments. Recently, the most popular marketing activity for brands aiming for comments about their products has been the use of hashtags. Information transfer on how to use the product or service serves as preferable after-sales support for consumers. Twitter's ease of use and its number of users make it a suitable platform to ensure a brand can secure its place in the minds of customers in the long-term. Another alternative is opening a YouTube channel (Kingsnorth, 2017).

One crucial decision to be made at the strategy development stage is where the target audience should be directed online. All content prepared for the product or service in question must work together in an integrated manner. Addressing all other content to whichever content type has the most effective message for the target audience will positively affect the result (Ryan & Jones, 2012).

2.2.4.3. Content Creation

Creating a message addressing the needs of the target audience while preparing the content should be a priority. Creating content requires creativity and professionalism; therefore, it is important to make detailed preparations in this regard (Kotler, Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2017).

First of all, it is necessary to create a story suitable for the purpose and strategy of the content. Regardless of the type of content, the message must have a story that can be conveyed clearly and simply (Handley & Chapman, 2013).

Appropriate keywords that will facilitate the distribution of the content should be chosen during this process. The keywords to be used should be customer-oriented, enable customers to find the content easily, and be related to the main theme.

Many factors such as the cultural background of the target audience and demographic variability can be limiting in the content creation process. However, it is important that the content conveys messages that do not harm the brand persona (Slater, 2014).

2.2.4.4. Assessment and Evaluation

Content marketing includes creating, hosting, distributing, and promoting content that is engaging, relevant, and useful to a clearly defined target audience; thus, content marketing is a marketing approach that aims to create conversations about content (Kotler, 2017).

A critical feature of digital content marketing is its measurability as this indicates the compatibility of the digital activities with the determined purpose. After the interaction of the activities with the target audience, the measurement made to understand the extent to which the activities are internalized and remembered by the consumer candidates shows how close the brand is to the target it has determined. It is possible to determine new strategies in line with the results obtained (Pencere, 2013).

Once these measurement results are evaluated, they can be used as the basis for setting new targets. The information obtained as a result of the analysis, such as in which channels the brand is lacking, where it contributes, and at what level, is important for the sustainability of the brand.

2.2.5. Management Methods for Marketing over Digital Platforms

It is necessary to use the most appropriate method, or an amalgamation of methods, in order to interact with the target audience and direct them to buy products. Many strategies can be used that can be shaped according to long or short-term targets, internet usage habits of the target audience, budgets, and the optimum level of strategies. In this context, some important online marketing strategies that can be used are explained in the literature (Penpece, 2013).

All efforts to facilitate the buying process of consumers should be clearly related to the lives of customers. For content not to be ignored, this entire pool of information must make sense to the target audience. Stories with effective content can reflect the persona and principles of the brand. Considering that there is a content marketing trend based on the use of multiple screens, the use of multiple formats to make the content more visible and accessible should not be ignored.

The most common paid channels in the digital space are banners, partner publisher networks, search engine listings, paid product placement on social media, and mobile ads. A brand usually determines its next moves based on the number of views or the number of actions, that is, the number of actions of users such as clicking, registering, or buying (Kotler, 2017).

One of the most preferred marketing methods in recent years is mobile marketing, which covers activities performed using mobile devices. The growth momentum of this type of marketing and the increasing number of opportunities offered by mobile devices clearly show that mobile marketing has an important place in the future of marketing.

Technological developments have enabled the development of new mobile marketing methods and tools, along with the increase in the competence of the masses in the use of mobile devices. One of the important features of mobile marketing is the advantage of being very strong in one-to-one communication and being a communication channel with high measurability. Since mobile devices enable brands to establish closer contact with many consumers, the proper marketing activities carried out through these devices can have great effects (Açıkel & Çelikel, 2012).

2.2.5.1. Search Engine Marketing

Search engine is a digital marketing discipline that classifies marketing methods within itself. In this discipline, little knowledge is very dangerous, and a lot of knowledge is necessary for the marketing strategy to be truly successful (Kingsnorth, 2017). The reason for this is that the moment a website or an online shopping platform is established for the sale of a product, this internet-based shop is included in the search engine platform.

Search engine marketing is digital marketing efforts to increase visibility and preferability on search engine pages and can consist of paid visibility enhancement efforts and search engine optimization for search engines. Search engine optimization is required to have a better ranking in search results.

One feature distinguishes search engine marketing from all other marketing activities: the user who searches in the search engine is literally searching for something. Consumers are willing to buy when they come across a desired product or a product with similar features. Therefore, consumers are ready to interact with all the content made for the category of this relevant product. Rather than trying to influence

or attract a random consumer, marketing activities carried out in this context have the feature of helping users to find the product.

There are categories that should be carefully considered for search engine marketing activities. The most important category is the correct use of keywords. Matt Cutts, a name that first comes to mind for search engine optimization, said the following throughout his Google career; “Consider what users will press on the keyboard”. Therefore, it is important to identify all possibilities that can represent the product and bring them together with the consumer, and then include them in the strategy (Dermedya, 2016). For this, the target audience for the product or service should be well researched.

With the right criteria and strategy, search engine marketing activities will also allow periodic measurements to be made by creating the required source of information. In this way, data can be obtained on how much the activities satisfy both the consumer and the brand.

The search engine is a query and acquisition mechanism that compares and queries each of the output information and records, performs the necessary actions for the acceptability of a query, and ensures high performance of the obtained data (Jennifer, 2000).

2.2.5.2. E-mail Marketing

E-mail marketing is a type of direct marketing using electronic mail. Brands try to inform and attract consumers with the content of the e-mails they send. If e-mail users are interested in the content, they can open the email. If they would like more detailed information, they can visit the brand’s websites via hyperlinks. E-mails also

provide the opportunity to measure how much the prepared content attracts the attention of the consumer. It has been determined that there are three important factors in the opening of e-mails sent for marketing purposes. These factors can be listed as follows (Açıkel & Çelikel, 2012);

1. Who sent the e-mail,
2. What is written in the subject section of the e-mail,
3. When the e-mail is displayed.

In today's technological conditions, people open e-mail accounts in order to be aware of the news, to subscribe to a site, to communicate in writing, to carry out corporate workflow, and so forth. Content routing, which has a high usage density, can also be performed with e-mail (Bozkurt, 2007). For example, by clicking on the content of an e-mail sent for marketing purposes, you can be directed to the website of the relevant brand. However, users may not open every sent e-mail for security reasons. For this reason, it is desirable that the person sending the e-mail be a member of a highly reliable brand or organization. E-mails sent to company accounts in particular are passed through a number of security filters and delivered to the user afterwards. At this point, brand awareness is important.

The basic e-mail usage behavior is to examine the details by first looking at the sender and then the subject. In this respect, it is important to attract the attention of users with the message in the subject section. In particular, subjects including a warning, gift, or opportunity attract the most attention. It is important that the subject of the mail is short, easy-to-understand, and attractive. A long subject title may lose its meaning as it cannot be displayed in its full form and may cause the user to read the e-mail later (Renvoise & Morin, 2012).

It is necessary to pay attention to the time when the e-mail will be sent as well. The sensitivity of the users to the mails sent at the beginning of the week, in the middle of the week and on the weekend varies. For example, sending an opportunity e-mail for a weekend activity on a Thursday will increase the probability of the user's reaction. Sending the same email on a Tuesday may not have the same effect because there may be a different activity scheduled at the beginning of the week.

The compatibility of the prepared content for mobile devices should also be considered in this regard. Regardless of whether the content is text, a video, or an image, it should reflect the same effect and appeal not only on computer screens but also on mobile devices (Açıkel & Çelikel, 2012).

It should be remembered that these factors will vary according to the age, gender, socioeconomic, and cultural differences of the audience to which the e-mail is sent. In this respect, as in all marketing activities, preparation is very important.

2.2.5.3. Social Media Marketing

Social media is a respected yet criticized concept that is fully included in the lives of consumer societies and therefore, perception towards it vary from person to person. Social media is generally defined as any website or application that allows users to create and share content or participate in events. Today, when social media is mentioned, specific applications with a substantial number of subscribers come to mind.

Social media started to enter society in the 21st century. However, its origins date back to the development of bulletin board systems of the 1970s which were used to share information with other like-minded people. Instead of being forgotten over

time, the bulletin board method continued until the 1990s (Kingsnorth, 2017) until it was replaced with social media.

Social media has a significant global presence and is used by people of all ages. It is a critically important platform for marketing activities, especially considering that the internet can be used on mobile devices and is one of the important concepts of daily life (Cop & Eru, 2019).

Creating a social network is a fairly straightforward process requiring a person to apply for a confirm a subscription to existing platforms. With the development of technology, many rituals of daily life can be performed via the internet and mobile devices. Social media has provided a great adaptation to this developing mobility. Therefore, social media is used extensively with applications downloaded to mobile phones.

As social media is quite easy to access and use for consumers, it is both a great opportunity and a great challenge for brands focused on the local scale, Europe, or the entire world. Social media, by its nature, is a platform used for interactions between people and a network where brands have to exist for marketing activities where the consumer is at the forefront (Akar, 2010).

Social media has three purposes in this regard. The first is to listen to the ideas of consumers. Brands can learn many things from general conversations about their products on social media. Second, brands can stay in touch with their customers interactively. They can even set up a team to influence conversations by making comments to get more precise results. The third use of social media is to deal with complaints that have the potential to cause brand crises. Companies are expected to

offer solutions to the problems of their customers before these problems go viral on the internet (Kotler, 2017).

Consumer comments made in the open communication environment of social media may not develop in the direction desired by the brands. Customers can not only communicate directly with brands on social media but can also make suggestions to their friends or relatives about their brand experiences and share their negative experiences as well. It is necessary to create algorithms to follow social media closely, monitor chats, and filter and prioritize conversations.

Social media allows brands to influence their customers to a certain extent through the brand's own page and also provides unique opportunities for brands to be influenced. Businesses that are truly successful in social media are not businesses that try to dominate communication, but those that listen to consumers, try to understand them, and offer solutions for their problems (Göksu, 2021).

Social media relies on the power of the network because people trust the people they know more than they trust any advertisement (Kingsnorth, 2017). Recommendations on social networks and regular word-of-mouth marketing by such recommendations serve as a tremendous marketing tool for brands.

Sosyal medyayı tam olarak bir kalıba oturtmak mümkün değildir. Toplumsal trendlere, siyasal ve politik süreçlere kısaca insana göre değişkenlik gösteren bir yapısı vardır. İçeriğinde pek çok site, uygulama, ortam mevcuttur ve bunları birbirinden ayırmak, sınıflandırmak mümkün olmamaktadır. Toplumlar tarafından kullanılan sosyal medya platformları, ihtiyacın değişimine göre şekil değiştiriyor ise markaların da bu değişim trendlerini yakından takip etmeleri gerekmektedir.

Markaların varlıklarını sürdürülebilir kılmaları için, tüketiciyi her daim merkezde tutup, yeniliklere açık olmalıdırlar (Kotler, 2017).

2.2.5.3.1. Instagram

According to data related to Turkey from We are Social 2021, the number of internet users in the country increased by 3.7 million in 2021, while the number of social media users increased by 6 million. According to this data, the ratio of the number of social media users in Turkey to the total population at the beginning of 2021 was 70.8%. The average time spent on the Internet was an average of 7 hours and 57 minutes per day with 2 hours and 57 minutes of this allocated to social media use.

There are many platforms on which social media users living in Turkey can spend time. According to the We are Social data, Instagram is in second place with a rate of 89.5% in the preference ranking of the population.

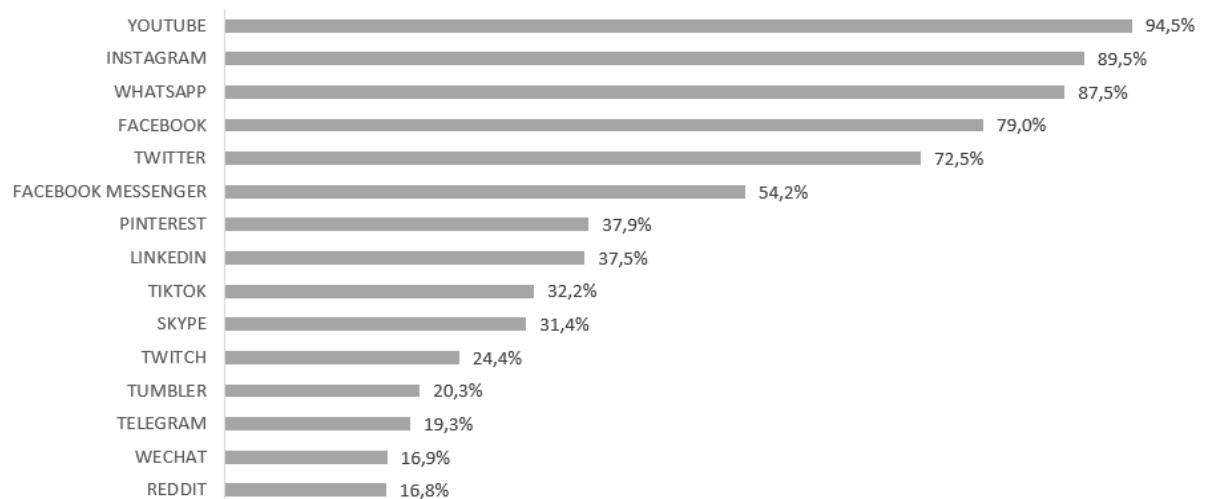


Figure 14. Data obtained from the “We Are Social Turkey 2021 Report” was used for the figure.

Source: Kemp, S. 11 Şubat 2021. Digital 2021: Turkey. 09.10.2021.

<https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-turkey>

Instagram stepped into the world of social media in 2010 and has become one of the most preferred social media platforms today. Instagram was developed to enable users to share photos, and through the contribution of its users, became a frequently preferred photo filtering and sharing application.

According to Digital's 2021 report, the global number of Instagram users has reached 1.22 billion, with slightly more female users than male. Instagram teams also confirm that over a billion people are actively using Instagram around the world, and are proud to bring these people closer to the people and things they love. They note that Instagram inspires people to see the world differently, discover new interests, and express themselves (Gökdemir, 2020).

In line with the data above, the fact that Instagram has a mobile application facilitates its intensive use. Its mobility enables users to join the network at any time and view new posts whenever they want. Instagram also creates a suitable environment for brands to share their content with potential consumers. Although it was intended as a social network for photo and video sharing purposes, it has much more potential for brands.

All brands that want to promote their products to large audiences quickly and effectively benefit from the power of Instagram. Users browsing Instagram stories or posts can often come across content prepared by brands for their products. The advertisements users encounter according to their interests may direct them to the product's page or website.

With the development of Instagram and the increase in its usage traffic, a new concept has emerged: the world of "influencers". Influencer is the term used for people who attract the attention of other users with an innovative approach on their Instagram account and maintain this in a sustainable way. This community has recently added diversity to the marketing world of brands.

During the time that Instagram users spend on their accounts, there is a high probability that they will see a product or service tried, commented on, and eventually recommended by a qualifying influencer. Influencers often suggest trying some products/services in their posts, stories or reels, and share links so that their followers can access them. Algorithms used in marketing activities on Instagram come into being as product or service advertisements provided according to the interests of the users.

2.2.5.3.2. YouTube

In 2005, two friends wanted to share videos and photos they had taken at a party but were at a loss as the content they wanted to share was larger than the allowable email size limit. Thus, YouTube was born on the idea of sending pictures that cannot be sent via e-mail or message and has become a huge platform with millions of subscribers and content where all global trends can be followed.

YouTube video sharing is one of the most preferred marketing methods in transferring content for brands to consumers. According to Digital's 2021 report, the global number of YouTube users has reached 2 billion, with the rate of male users higher than female. One billion videos are watched per hour on YouTube every day with 70% of these watched on mobile devices.

According to We are Social “Digital 2021: TURKEY” data, 1.9 billion people visit YouTube every month and the platform has 30 million daily active users. Five billion videos are watched per day with 96% of users in the 18-24 year-old range. Users spend approximately 40 minutes on YouTube every day. The mobile viewing rate is 70% with 46% of users being between the ages of 16-24. 70% of young people around the age of 18 use YouTube to learn something. YouTube ads secure the attention of 83% of viewers whereas this rate is 45% for TV ads (Kemp, 2021).

YouTube is an important platform for content marketing. There are advertising methods with six different algorithms (Cankiran, 2020);

TrueView ads: Ads that appear at the beginning of YouTube videos with a skip option.

Non-skippable YouTube Ads: Ads that the user has to watch in order to watch the video content they want.

Bumper Ads: Ads that lasts no more than six seconds without a skip option.

Overlay Ads: Ads displayed during the video. These ads appear at the bottom of the video on player and pop up after the video starts playing.

Visual Ads: Ads located in the corner of the screen to the right of the video player. They are used only for advertising in desktop environment.

Cards and Sponsored Cards: Cards are the messages that can be set to appear in the YouTube player. Sponsored cards are small rectangular ads that appear to the right of the player while a video is playing.

Similar to the “influencers” of Instagram, the influencers of YouTube are known as “YouTubers”. Brands can contact the most suitable Youtuber based on their

target audience and other criteria and ask that influencer to promote their products. It is quite common for brands to prefer Youtubers for their marketing activities. As a requirement of common consumer behavior, the feeling of trust in the immediate environment is more effective than standard advertisements. Sharing the user experiences of the product is a key factor in this regard. The rate of buying of a product recommended by a popular Youtuber can be higher, compared to the incentive power of traditional methods. Here, the consumer's trust in the person promoting the product, finding this person sincere, or wanting to resemble this person can be triggers. This is not just for YouTubers, it applies to all influencers with a large number of followers.

2.2.5.3.3. Twitter

Launched in 2006, Twitter was intended to be used as an SMS service. Typically, SMS messages are sent as direct messages to the GSM number of the recipient. By universalizing this, Twitter aimed to send SMS over a common platform.

Twitter is a free social network that allows its users to share messages and see what others have shared. Compared to other platforms, it has a very freedom-oriented structure where people who do not know each other communicate interactively with each other. It is considered a trending Microblogging platform. Microblogs provide a medium for users to share small pieces of content such as short sentences, snapshots, or video links (Andreas & Michael, 2011).

Twitter is also very important in terms of marketing communication. Hashtags or trend topics created on Twitter make communication with the target audience very

easy. With the mobile use of the application, understanding the extent to which the content prepared for the product or brand is in line with the expectations of the target audience is facilitated by Twitter. The ability of consumers to share their brand experiences, send direct messages to the brand, and communicate through an open platform on Twitter allows consumers to express themselves and creates an environment of trust.

2.2.5.3.4. Facebook

Launched as a social network within a university, Facebook can be described as a global center where a sizable proportion of the world's population shares their lives.

Facebook is among the popular choices of brands among digital platforms due to the various statistics it can offer to change and develop strategies for the changing needs of consumers. Facebook also offers the opportunity to reach user experiences by bringing the needed content together with the consumer or potential consumer (Akar, 2010).

Facebook offers brands that want to create awareness using digital strategies the opportunity to meet with millions of its users and also offers options such as business pages, paid campaigns, and performance analyses. Ads are divided into 3 main categories on Facebook Business Manager: awareness, consideration, and conversion (Kılıç, 2020);

Brand Awareness Ads: This advertising model is used to increase brand awareness. An algorithm shows ads to people who will increase the awareness of the

brand. The ads can be shown as Picture, Video, Carousel, or Slideshow. A person is shown ads at least twice within 24 hours.

Reach Ad: A person is shown ads once within 24 hours. The goal is to show the advertisement to more people.

Traffic Ads: Advertisements are shown to people who can come to the page by clicking on the advertisements. It is the preferred advertising model for more people to visit.

Engagement Ads: This advertising model is used for brand content and sharing to receive more comments, likes, and interactions.

App Installs Ads: This model is used to increase the number of downloads of a mobile application.

Video Views Ads: Users watching the video are divided into percentiles and the video is shown to them again.

Lead Generation Ads: This model allows for the collection of information about potential customers.

Conversions Ads: This is the preferred advertising model for the purpose of selling products or services through the brand's website, mobile application, or messenger application.

Catalog Sales Ads: These are used for sales and re-marketing.

Store Traffic Ads: This advertising model directs people with a high probability of buying to the brand's store.

2.2.5.3.5. Pinterest

Numerous social media have been developed that focus solely on visual media with Pinterest being one of the leaders in this respect. Although it is a social network, it basically functions as a search engine. It works similarly to the algorithms of all known search engines and complies with basic SEO (Search Engine Optimization) rules.

It is based on the logic of sharing visual content called a "Pin" by addressing it within the channel. Pins can be images, videos, or products/services. In order to create a pin, a user simply uploads an image to the social network. Each pin created can have a title, description, and (if applicable) a website link or hashtag, which can be updated later.

Pinterest is a social network that focuses more on people's lifestyles and allows users to generate ideas and communicate through photos. Considering the impact of visual marketing on social media marketing, Pinterest can provide a tremendous environment for many users to facilitate the delivery of the story (Kawasaki & Fitzpatrick, 2016).

Considering that visual marketing is very effective in social media marketing, an integrated marketing activity can ensure that the content containing the right message reaches the right target audience.

2.2.5.4. Mobile Marketing

Mobile marketing is the fastest changing type of marketing compared to other methods. Ever-changing mobile technologies have a significant impact on the speed of this change (Açıkel & Çelikol, 2012).

Mobile advertising activities can actually be thought of as an adaptation of online advertisements broadcast over the internet to mobile devices. It is possible to communicate with banner ads on mobile platforms, just like on websites.

Basically, there are three popular techniques that have been proven to increase customer engagement in the digital age. These techniques can be explained as follows (Kotler, 2017);

1. Mobile applications should be used to enrich the digital customer experience.
2. Social customer relations management should be implemented to engage customers in conversations and provide solutions with customers.
3. Using the gamification technique ensures that the right customer behavior is encouraged, and participation is increased.

People today use smartphones for various activities such as reading the news, sharing content, and learning about communities. Smartphones are now a basic need and probably the best channel for customer engagement.

Mobile devices have also enabled the use of social media to become more frequent as people are able to take and share photos, chat, or shop at any time. The greatest architect of the state of being online all the time is mobile devices and the ever-evolving capacity of these devices. Due to their widespread use, mobile phones

are effective for brands wanting to engage in mobile communication activities as well as practical for consumers.

2.2.5.5. Affiliate Marketing

Affiliate Marketing is literally translated to "sales partnership" in Turkish and is defined as the agreement of brands with well-known and popular websites or applications to reach consumers together. It can be considered as a revenue partnership for businesses and as the multiplicity and security of contacts that consumers can communicate with (Inbox, 2016).

There are three parties in Affiliate Marketing activities. These are as follows;

1. The owner of the brand or products is referred to as the 'Merchant'. The merchant deals with all processes from the production of the products to the delivery to the customer and then to the after-sales support.
2. The 'Affiliate' undertakes the role of publisher. Affiliates can be e-commerce sites, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Blogs, or Affiliate companies. Affiliates advertise the products or the brand to their current participants and attempt to influence and persuade consumers to make a purchase. In an effort to persuade consumers, they make the product attractive and market it via the website, social media, and other marketing channels. If needed, they support the consumers with after-sales services.
3. Customers are the those who prefer the brand and buy the products. Consumers make purchases for their needs through advertisements they see on social media, banner ads, or the e-commerce site that they prefer.

The first addressee of the consumers is the merchant, but since consumers shop under the assurance of the affiliates, their security standards protect the consumer.

With digital marketing, it has become easier for sellers and buyers to come together for a need. Promotion of products or services can be done in a more advantageous way than printed publications, and Affiliate Marketing is one of these advantageous ways (Ordu, 2021). For example, influencers on Instagram sharing their experiences about a product on their page and suggesting buying this product to their followers by providing a link can be considered within this scope. In the example, influencers benefit because they contribute to the sale of the brand, merchants benefit because their products are sold, and consumers benefit because they buy products on the recommendation of someone they trust.

Affiliate marketing is an important aspect of digital marketing as all parties can benefit. According to some sources, 35% of the online trade is done by affiliate marketing method (Olgun, 2020). One reason affiliate marketing is so popular is that it provides a sense of security and trust to consumers. Consumers may want to finalize their buying activity through a platform they trust. This precaution taken against possible negativities is a behavioral model that guides buying behaviors.

2.2.5.6. Remarketing

Remarketing is a type of marketing that occurs when people who visit random websites see advertisements websites they had previously visited. For example, a consumer searching for a coat views the website of their preferred brand. When the

consumer closes that web page and accesses their social media accounts, they will encounter advertisements for the preferred coat brand's website.

Remarketing uses a technology called cookies. A cookie consists of a simple JavaScript code that is placed on the computers of people who visit any website and then follows them after they leave the website. In this way, the ads of the product or brand they are interested in are shown to the same people on other websites they visit, with the aim of having these people come back and make purchases.

JavaScript is a common software language used by software engineers. The opening and closing of website menus or the warning box that appears when incorrect data is entered are examples of JavaScript usage. It is a dynamic software language that increases the qualities of applications or web pages, improves them and makes them more functional.

There are many methods of remarketing activities. Content such as Google AdWords, e-mail marketing, social media marketing, and SEO can be managed with remarketing strategies. It is frequently preferred by brands because it is a repetitive and self-reminding method at the point of reaching the target audience with digital marketing.

The information obtained through cookies is presented to the customers continuously and systematically. In order for this system to work, it will be sufficient for users to visit a brand's web page once. Then, the user's product comparisons, searched products, and purchase tendencies are stored by cookies. Accordingly, advertisements that may secure the attention of the customers are systematically presented to the customers. By means of these advertisements, the probability of

customers visiting a particular web page again is increased. The success rate of this method is extremely high (Editör, 2019).

2.2.6. Benefits of Digital Content Marketing

There are many definitions that describe digital content marketing. The most important feature of this type of marketing is that it increases the tendency of the potential customer group to the brand of the content. Opportunities such as measuring the average viewing time, clicks, visits, and changing digital content prepared on social media platforms also offer an advantage for brands (Göksu, 2021).

The groups determined by brands as their target audiences may vary according to the trends of the period. In order to create a sense of loyalty in these groups, the reliability of the content is an important criterion. It is also important that the target audience believes in the content. The reliability of the content also ensures that potential consumers can share it. The fact that the prepared content is liked by a social media user within the target audience group and shared with other users becomes an effective marketing activity for the brand, as in the word-of-mouth marketing process (Kingsnorth, 2017).

The possibilities offered by digital content marketing for brands can be as diverse as the possibilities offered by the internet. However, consumers expect that prepared content is engaging and distinctive. Many simple, fun, interesting, unique, and brand-oriented ideas can be developed, adapted according to the target audience, and presented to the consumers.

Digital marketing provides convenience to brands in steps such as being able to adapt to changing trends, identifying the wishes and needs of consumers, and

communicating with consumers in order to offer solutions to their problems. In order for this interaction to begin, the attractiveness of the prepared content is critical as it is the first moment consumers see the brand message. In this respect, digital content activities can turn into value-enhancing experiences for brands and enjoyable experiences for consumers (Pulizzi & Barrett, 2009).

2.3. Digital Marketing and Consumer Behaviors

Digital marketing has led to a change in the consumer habits thanks to technological developments and has created a new variety of services in terms of marketing (Moon&Millison, 2003).

Consumerism has led to many changes in socio-cultural, political, and economic aspects from the societies in the modern age to the present day, therefore it has become one of the most discussed topics in academic literature. In this section, the activities of digital marketing on consumer behavior will be discussed.

2.3.1. Concept of Consumer Behavior

In order to understand the importance of consumer behavior in marketing communication, first of all, it is necessary to observe how consumers behave. Production and consumption play a key role in human life. All people consume in order to continue vital activities or to meet their needs or secondary wishes and desires (Cömert & Durmaz, 2006). The need for consumption causes a cyclical pattern by encouraging production.

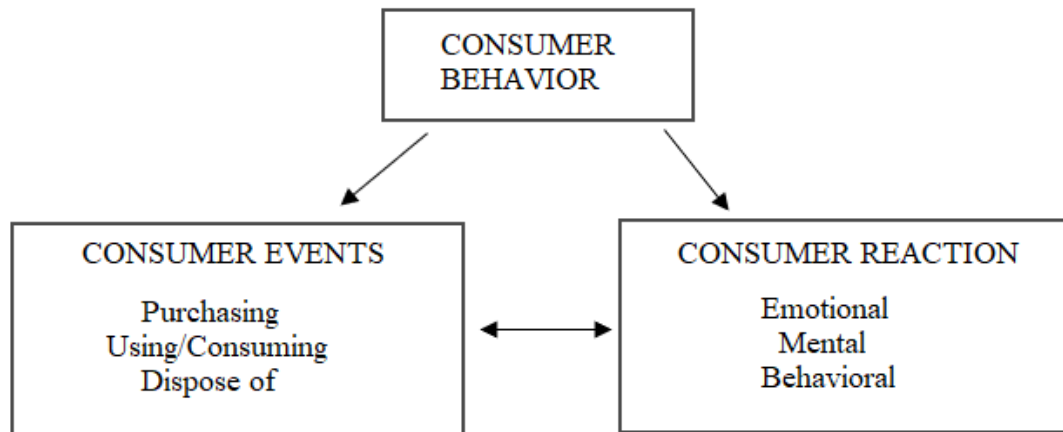


Figure 15. What is Consumer Behavior?

Source: Aslaner, A. D. *Dijital Çağda Türkiye’de Kuşaklar ve Alışveriş*. (İstanbul: Akademisyen Kitap Evi). p.63.

In order for production to be sustainable, the presence of consumers is needed. Consumers are defined as people who buy and use goods or services to meet their wishes and needs or those of their family members (Odabaşı & Barış, 2014). Loyal and regular consumers preferring a brand are called customers. The terms customer and consumer can be used in the same sense in everyday speech, but they do not have the same meaning academically. The concept of the customer is evaluated under the concept of the consumer.

In order to understand the preferences, thoughts, experiences, buying behavior patterns and after-sales thoughts and feelings of consumers aiming to meet their needs and desires, first of all, human behaviors must be well-understood (Solomon, 2004). The behaviors of consumers during consumption are reflected in the process as a part of their human behaviors.

Consumer behavior is one of the criteria on which marketing is based. The two main purposes of brands, as previously mentioned, are to meet the demands and needs

of consumers and to satisfy consumers. Consumer behavior analysis processes, which are prepared for this purpose and included in marketing efforts, deal with how consumers choose, buy, and use goods or services in order to meet their own desires and needs, and evaluate the post-use process (Kotler, 1997). The consumer buying decision process goes through a diligent behavior process to meet the need or solve the existing problem. Consumers are a factor here: they search for the qualities of goods or services, they have the opportunity to quickly access the information they are looking for, and therefore, they can make rational decisions (Uztuğ, 2003). With the change in marketing understanding and the development of technology, the importance of the consumer has increased, and consumer behavior has become an area of focus for brands. “Marketing managers have been curious about and have investigated consumer behavior for the last 35 to 40 years.” (Bozkurt, 2004, 93).

2.3.2. Characteristics of Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior is a broad field of study that examines the processes by which individuals choose, buy, experience, and consume products or services to satisfy their needs and desires (Aslaner, 2019).

Consumer behavior studies investigate who consumers are, when, for what purpose they buy, and how they conduct their consumption behaviors (Schiff & Kanuk (2004). The main characteristics of consumer behavior are as follows (Odabaşı & Barış, 2019);

Consumer behavior is a dynamic process: Consumer behavior examines the buying decision processes, why the processes differ from person to person and from event to event, and post-buying behavior. Examining the process until the buying

decision makes it possible to analyze the behavior of consumers, contributes to explaining which products and services consumers buy and why and how. Figure 16 displays the three basic steps in this process;

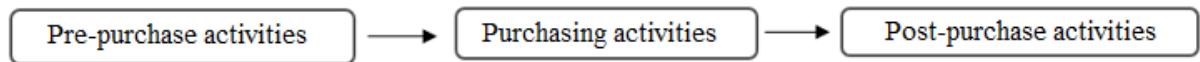


Figure 16. Consumer purchase activities

Source: Odabaşı, Y. & Barış, G. (2019). *Tüketici Davranışı*. (Etiler, İstanbul: MediaCat). p.31.

Consumer behavior is a motivated behavior: When consumers want to satisfy their wants and needs, they want to satisfy their internal tension. In other words, consumers are in search of solutions to their problems. As a result, they take action to achieve their wish. Satisfying wants and needs is a goal, and the buying behavior itself is a tool used to achieve satisfaction.

Consumer behavior is complex and exhibits timing variations: Complexity is related to the number of factors affecting the decision and the degree of difficulty of the decision, while timing represents when consumer decisions are made and how long the decision process takes. Therefore, it can be said that the more complex the decision, the more time it will take to reach the result, and the more energy the consumer will spend in this situation. Some consumers can speed up this process by choosing brands they are loyal to, based on their past experiences, or by considering the experiences of other consumers as a reference.

Consumer behavior addresses different roles: There are different roles in the consumer behavior process. Consumers may be taking on one or more of these roles, and their behaviors may change based on the roles they assume. The initiating role that determines the need to meet the wants and needs and the initiating role that requests the purchase, the influential role that verbally or behaviorally supports the buying process, the final decision maker role with financial power, the buyer role, or the user role that performs the consumption action of the purchased product or service. Such roles are examples of different roles in question (James, Roger, & Paul, 1990). For example, a mother realizes a need for diapers chooses a brand. Thus, she assumes the roles of initiator, influencer and decision-maker, whereas the father assumes the role of the buyer once he is sent out to purchase the diapers and the baby takes the role of the end user/consumer.

Consumer behavior consists of various activities: Consumers have individual thoughts, decisions, experiences, and evaluations. This accumulation of experience can be planned, accidental, or unintentional. Consumer buying behavior is shaped and completed by the average result of all this experience.

Consumer behavior is affected by environmental factors: Consumer behavior can be exposed to external factors in the course of daily life. Emotions, financial means, and various other factors can affect the buying behavior of consumers in the short or long term. Therefore, there is variability in consumer behaviors.

2.3.3. Consumer Behavior Model

Consumers are faced with many external stimuli while making a purchase in line with their needs. It is not possible to determine a single buying behavior for all

consumers as it differs from person to person. The buying behavior of consumers and the decisions they make as a result are mostly affected by some variables in the minds of the consumers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012).



Figure 17. Black Box Model

Source: Kotler, P., & Armstrong, G. (2012). *Principles of Marketing*. (New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall). p.21.

The black box behavior model illustrated in Figure 17 is the formation of unobservable effects on the behavior of consumers as a result of their reactions to various stimuli. Consumer behavior, like human behavior, is driven by many variables. How consumers react to stimuli affect them in line with their personal characteristics (Kotler & Armstrong, 2021).

2.3.4. Factors Affecting Consumer Behavior

The success of brands in the market is related to the extent to which they satisfy the needs of their consumers (William, Michael, & Bruce, 1995). The focus of the most recent marketing approaches in this context is the satisfaction and happiness of the consumer.

Human behavior is a concept that can be clarified upon examining the interaction processes of people with their environment and forms the main structure of

consumer behavior. Every emotion, thought, or action is a part of human behavior and each are reflected in the behaviors of people as consumers.

Consumer behavior can be defined as the decisions and related activities of individuals at the stages of buying and using products or services (Walters, 1978). Individuals interact with themselves and their environment throughout their lives. This interaction varies based on the cultural, social, psychological, and personal factors affecting individuals for consumer buying behaviors (Aydın Aslaner, 2019).

2.3.4.1. Cultural Factors

Cultural factors surround the consumer and create the dynamics of the society in which the individual lives (Aydın Aslaner, 2019) and are very important in terms of consumer behavior as they impose new roles on individuals and shape those roles. Therefore, brands should consider the roles that consumers have acquired in their culture, subculture, and social class when creating their marketing strategies for the target audience. Cultural factors are divided into three categories as culture, subculture and social class (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012).

2.3.4.1.1. Culture

Culture is the set of acquired behaviors with the behavioral outcomes shared and transmitted by members of a particular society (Linton, 1981). The habits that individuals acquire throughout their lives are shaped within cultural patterns (Eroğlu, 2009). Cultural habits are the basis of individual wishes and needs. Behaviors are acquired by learning from others in childhood and onwards. Family, friends,

homeland, school, and many other factors affect the development of character; therefore; these factors determine the roles of people in society.

The factor that most widely influences behavior is the culture in which individuals live. All of the psychological and social factors that affect consumer behavior are the effects of culture. Cultural habits are also effective in the consumer roles of individuals. Individuals tend to maintain their consumer role in accordance with the beliefs and values of the society they live in (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012).

People continue their daily lives within the framework of the behaviors learned from their cultural habits. Therefore, this behavior also guides consumption habits.

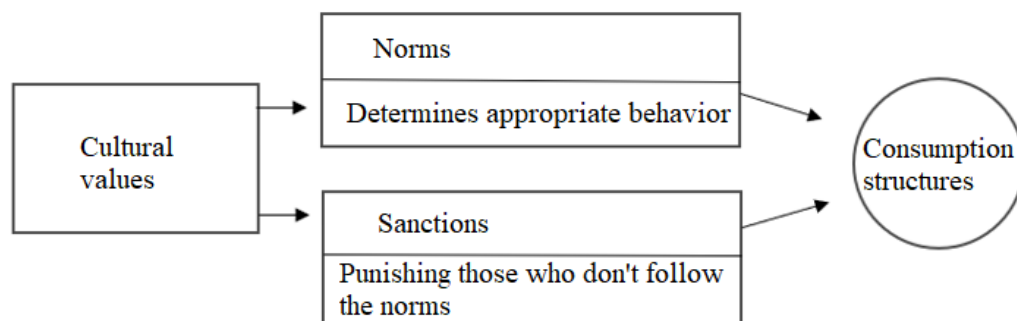


Figure 18. Values, Norms, Sanctions and Consumption Structures

Source: Hawkins, D., Roger, J. & Coney, K.A. (1998). *Consumer Behavior:*

Implications for Marketing Strategy. (Dallas, TX: Business Publications).

2.3.4.1.2. Subculture

Subculture is a subdivision of culture in which a particular lifestyle or behavior is accepted. Communities that generally live in a particular region and tend to display a similar intellectual and behavioral attitude under the influence of close relationships with each other form a subculture. These attitudes vary within the boundaries of living areas.

Subculture includes religion, race, regional groups, and music groups. Subculture significantly affects character formation, and therefore, the behaviors of individuals (Özkan, 2007). Brands consider sub-cultural characteristics within the scope of their marketing activities.

2.3.4.1.3. Social Class

Social classes are the groups formed by the classification of individuals with similar characteristics within the framework of certain rules. Social classes make up society and are important in terms of the characteristics they have (Pasulki & Waters, 1996).

Individuals belonging to same social class have similar characteristics such as lifestyle, income status, attitudes and behaviors, as well as social and cultural values specific to their groups (Doğan, 2009). The social class of individuals is determined by the family in which they are brought up and is a principal factor in the stages of character formation and personality development. Social class can affect and shape the lifestyles, educational opportunities, mindsets and consumption habits of individuals (Eroğlu, 2009).

While it is possible to make a transition between social classes, the permanence of the habits acquired during childhood is very deep and class changes may cause some contradictions in the inner world of the individuals. It is possible that individuals in the same social class have common cultural habits and traditions and can exhibit similar behaviors. Therefore, their behaviors as consumers are similar to each other. For example, two young people of the same social status will prefer to buy a phone model or a shoe brand with similar features.

2.3.4.2. Social Factors

In its most general definition, social class is expressed as the stratification among the groups that make up the culture (Aydın Aslaner, 2019). Social factors seem to be important in consumer behavior because consumer behavior is a process shaped by the social environment as well as the individual.

Social factors affecting the purchasing behavior of the consumer can be defined as reference groups, family, status and roles.

2.3.4.2.1. Reference groups

Reference groups are groups that affect the attitudes and behaviors of people based on their orientation and perspective (Öztrak, 2012). Reference groups are also called advisory groups and are characterized as a community of people who directly or indirectly influence people's attitudes and behaviors.

Consumers often want to consult those around them and benefit from their ideas and experiences during the pre-purchase research process. This is also important

for the continuation of the level of satisfaction that the purchase can provide after the buying. Reference groups consist of people, groups, or organizations that the consumer uses as an example and trusts when deciding to buy a product or service (Kotler, 2000).

Reference groups are divided into primary reference groups and secondary reference groups (Solomon, Russel-Bennett, & Previte, 2011);

Primary reference groups: These are communities where people interact face-to-face, such as family, friends, schoolmates, and co-workers, and have relationships based on love and friendship. These groups can closely direct the buying behavior of consumer individuals.

Secondary reference groups: These groups are not shaped with close and face-to-face communication and have more formal ties such as party memberships, associations, and fan clubs. The effect of these groups on the buying behavior of individuals is quite limited.

2.3.4.2.2. Family

The family is the most fundamental building block of society. It is the smallest unit in society and typically consists of the mother, father, and child/children. When examined in terms of consumer behavior, family structure and habits are effective in the buying behavior of individuals as consumption habits and tastes of family members are similar in many cases (Zümrüt, 2016).

Family structures are very effective in terms of consumption habits as well. Individuals spend the transition processes from infancy to adulthood by observing the attitudes and behaviors of family members. Most behaviors learned during this

observation period continue well on into adulthood and before permanent character features. Individuals then direct their buying activities in the light of these behavioral tendencies.

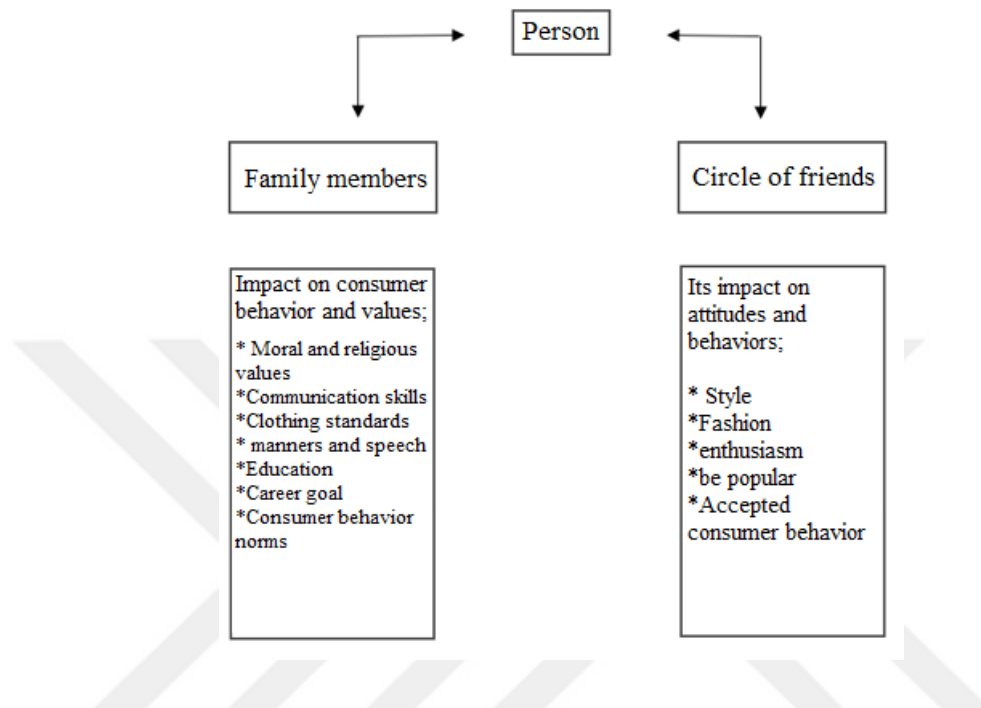


Figure 19. Factors Affecting Consumer Behavior

Source: Schiffman, L. G. ve Wisenblit, J. (2015). *Consumer Behavior. Global Edition*. (Essex: Pearson Education UK.). p.91.

2.3.4.2.3. Status and Roles

A role is all the activities that people do in the process of reaching the person they want to be and are expected to do by their social class. Every role in society has a status (Kotler, 2000). Within societies, there are groups in which each person can meet their basic needs and to which they belong or are bonded. Within the groups, each individual has a required role and status. In the consumption stage, individuals may be inclined to make choices within the scope of their existing roles and

responsibilities and thus often tend to choose products suitable for their role and status (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012).

However, individuals can have multiple roles in society. Take for example the married working mother: she has multiple roles consisting of the employee, wife, and mother. Each of these roles can affect the consumer at the time of purchase. People may prefer to choose brands that touch all their areas of responsibility.

2.3.4.3. Personal Factors

Personal factors have a significant impact on the buying process of the consumers. Personal factors affecting the buying behavior of consumers include age and life cycle, gender, occupation, and economic characteristics.

2.3.4.3.1. Age and Life Cycle

From the point of view of consumer behavior, age and life cycle can impose different habits and needs on people. Individuals can have experience with many brands and products in line with their wishes and needs throughout their lives. The tastes and preferences of consumers who are in a similar period of life cycle and are close in age are often similar. Therefore, brands often consider age in their marketing strategies.

The life cycle period of people is also a key factor affecting their behavior as each generation carries traces of its own era. The economy, ideology, social trends, and technology of the period in which people are born affect their consumer behavior to a certain extent (Akçal, 2020).

2.3.4.3.2. Gender

From a physiological and psychological point of view, the concepts of gender are both interrelated and contain a variety of other concepts. Within societies, groups and families, men and women may have distinct roles and responsibilities. These roles and responsibilities are decisive in many areas, from the way individuals lead their daily lives to their consumption habits.

The concept of gender varies across countries and cultures. For example, eastern countries tend to consist more of patriarchal societies, whereas gender equality is more dominant in western countries. Thus, the concept of gender is areas an area that requires great attention in the marketing strategies of brands. Although it may depend on the product or service, marketing activities of a brand that is known worldwide can be planned based on the target countries, societies and groups.

2.3.4.3.3. Occupation

An occupation is the general name for the work that people do in order to earn money to support their lifestyles. Occupations of individuals in societies play a decisive role in living standards and can also shape their groups of friends, social activities, and therefore, consumption habits.

Occupations affect people's wants and needs, and therefore their buying activities, as these occupations may cause them to develop their activities and interests in a particular direction (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012). For example, lawyers may tend to prefer clothing suited to a formal environment while those in the agricultural industry may tend to prefer more comfortable or weather appropriate clothing. Therefore, brands also need to consider the effect that occupational groups

have in directing the consumption habits of the consumers in their marketing strategies.

2.3.4.3.4. Economic Characteristics

There basic reason individuals in societies have a profession is to earn the money they need to maintain their lifestyles. However, this money earned also determines the individuals economic status.

The economic characteristics of individuals in societies vary considerably. Educational status, preferred occupation, the type of job, the demand for that job in the country and around the world, and many other factors affect the amount that people can earn in their chosen occupations.

Economic variability among people also creates a variety in consumer roles. The fundamental needs of people are shelter, clothing, food, and physical health. People first meet their basic needs with their earnings, then they satisfy their personal tastes and social needs. Therefore, the concept of economic characteristics has a direct impact on consumer behavior.

2.3.4.4. Psychological Factors

Psychological characteristics that affect consumer buying behavior can be listed as personality and sense of self, values and lifestyle as well as attitudes and emotions.

2.3.4.4.1. Personality and Sense of Self

Personality is a distinctive, consistent, and structured relationship established with an individual's internal and external environment (Cüceoğlu,1991). Many factors play a role in the formation of personality such as family, society, any physical characteristics that distinguish one person from another, mental ability, and competence.

Personality is one of the most important criteria that distinguishes individuals from each other in society. In terms of consumption habits, people exhibit behaviors in line with their personalities.

According to Freud, three concepts are effective in personality differences: the id, the superego, and the ego. Personality differences among individuals are explained by the difference in the balance between these three factors (Sheth, Mittal, & Newman, 1999);

The id; is the source of instinctive and unconscious behaviors.

The superego; determines the behavior of the person through the moral rules, values and cultural influences of the society.

The ego; provides a balance between the superego and the id.

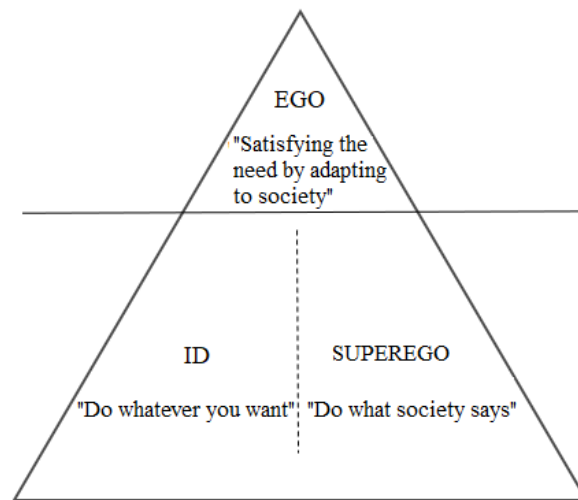


Figure 20. Three Main Units of Personality

Source: Odabaşı, Y. & Barış, G. (2019). *Tüketici Davranışı*. (İstanbul: MediaCat).
p.193.

The sense of self is the way people perceive themselves. It explains where and how they see themselves relative to those around them. It is formed as a result of relationships with parents, friends, teachers, and others who are important to the person. Self has two key aspects: the real self and ideal self (Hawkins, Roger, & Coney, 1998).

	True self	Ideal self
Inner self	How do I see myself?	How would I like to see myself?
Outer self	How do others see me?	How do I want others to see me?

Figure 21. Concept of Sense of Self for Consumers

Source: Hawkins, D., Roger J., & Kennet A. C. (1998). *Consumer Behavior Building Marketing Strategy*. (Boston, Irwin-McGraw). p.430.

Personality and self-perception can also affect behavior, which is reflected in people's consumption habits. These differences make consumption preferences personal in terms of many variables such as determining needs, product, brand, color, or size.

2.3.4.4.2. Values and Lifestyle

Values are persistent beliefs that make some behaviors and goals more preferable individually or socially than others. People apply their values through their behaviors (Odabaşı & Barış, 2019).

Personal and social values affect behaviors as well as consumption and buying behaviors. Values affect attitudes and judgments of individuals; thus, individuals tend to prefer brands that contribute to or support their values.

Lifestyle represents how individuals lead a life and is the expression of self-concept. It is one of the most important factors affecting consumption behavior. Lifestyle provides the motivation for many buying activities.

2.3.4.4.3. Attitudes and Emotions

Attitude refers to the tendency to react positively or negatively to objects or events. These attitudes towards the environment also affect buying behavior. Studies show that attitude consists of three components: cognitive, emotional and behavioral (Odabaşı & Barış, 2019).

The cognitive component relates to the positive-negative knowledge and belief of the consumer about the brand, product, or service.

The emotional aspect is formed by emotional reactions towards the brand, product or service.

The behavioral piece is the point at which the consumer tends towards a particular brand, product, or service and acts (Blythe, 2001).

If consumers believe that a product or service is beneficial, they are more likely to prefer the product or service in question. As a result, they have a positive attitude about the product and make a purchase.

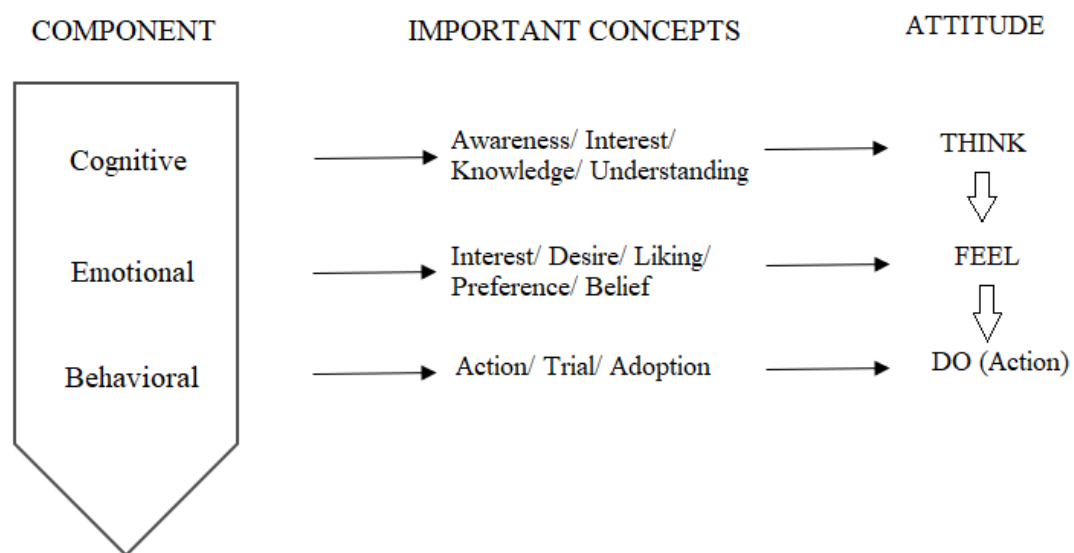


Figure 22. Attitude Components and Attitude Development Process

Source: Pickton, D., & Broderick, A. (2019). *Integrated Marketing Communication*. (Harlow: Financial Times). p.468.

Emotions of individuals are affected by external events. Fun, sadness, joy, and excitement are typical reactions to external events. There are also emotional changes in the inner world of the individuals. Emotions are linked to behavior. From this point of view, the moves made by brands towards the emotional activities of individuals can affect their buying activities.

Consumers may tend to prefer products or services that stimulate their emotions in a positive way. However, there may be differences in buying preferences according to the frequency of change in emotions.

2.3.5. Buying Processes of Consumers

People make many decisions in their daily lives. The clothes chosen to wear in the morning and the dinner menu prepared for the evening are simple examples. Consumer buying behaviors also change based on the outcome of decision-making processes. Whether an individual will buy a product or service they need or desire becomes clear after the decision-making process.

Figure 23 illustrates the consumer decision-making process which typically consists of five stages (Zikmund & D'amica, 1984).

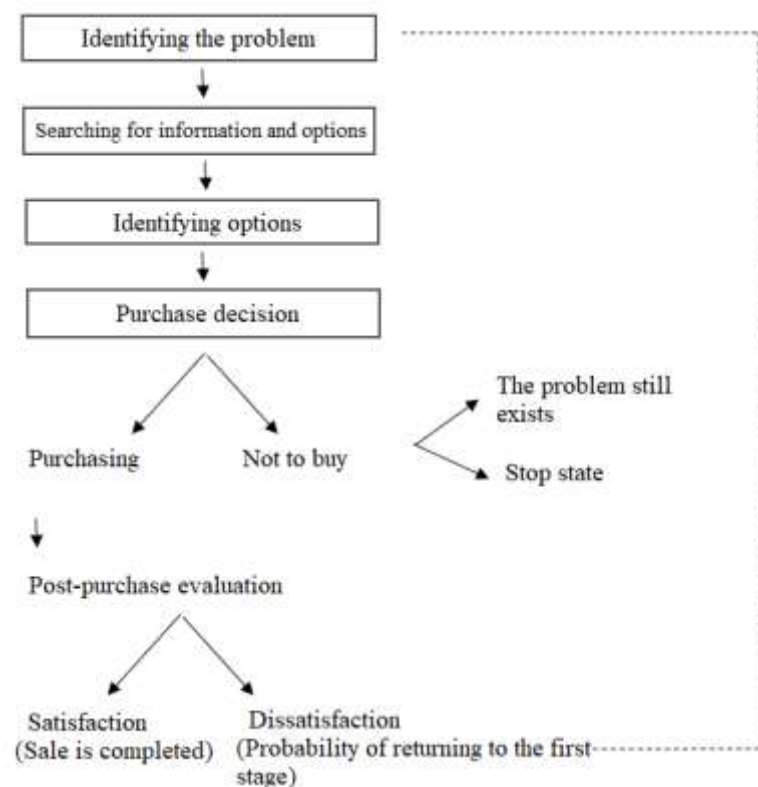


Figure 23. Stages of Decision-making Process for Buying

Source: Zikmund, W., & D'amica, M. (1984). *Marketing*. (Newyork: John Wiley and Sons Inc). p.218.

Buying behavior is the process of solving a problem, and it is usually the consumer who solves this problem. Consumers may be under the influence of various situational variables while managing this process. Their emotional state, physical or social factors, and timing can cause variability in consumer preferences.

2.3.5.1. Emergence of Need

The consumer buying process begins with the consumer's awareness of their own needs. In this process, there are internal and external stimuli that trigger the consumer to feel the need. Internal stimuli can be physiological needs such as hunger, thirst, or tension that arise as a result of psychological needs. External stimuli are those that the consumer is exposed to as a result of sensory factors such as hearing, smelling, and seeing (Aydın Aslaner, 2019).

The formation of the need due to the occurrence of a problem is the first stage of the buying process. Consumers may also tend to buy things they do not need, and the reason for this is explained as desire (Öztürk, 2015).

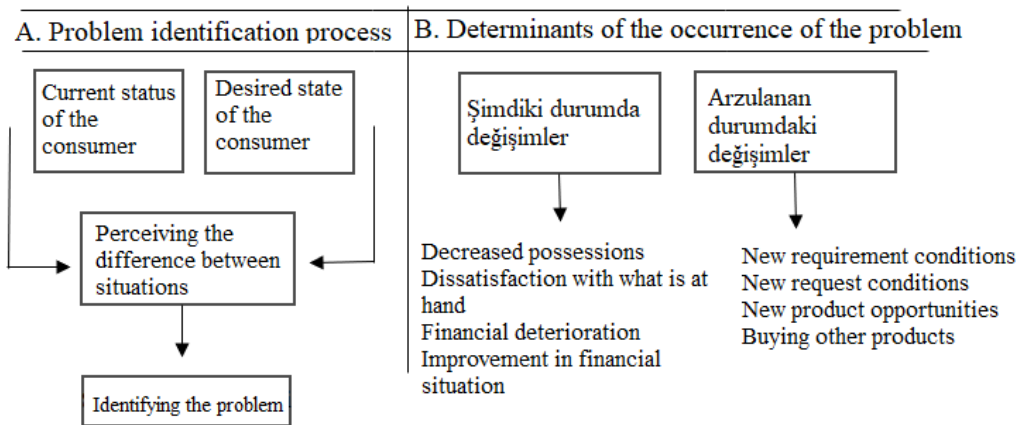


Figure 24. Process of Determining Need for Buying

Source: Koç, E. (2008). *Tüketici Davranışı ve Pazarlama Stratejileri*. (Ankara: Seçkin Yayıncılık). p.300.

The consumer's buying activity begins with the emergence of a need and the perception of a problem. A need may also arise as a result of an existing product or service no longer fulfilling its task or being satisfying. For example, a person may feel compelled to buy a new phone because their phone is not compatible with modern technology or because they feel it is old (Tuncer, Üner, & Ayhan, 1994).

2.3.5.2. Gathering Information and Evaluating Alternatives

After determining the problem, the consumer starts the process of evaluating options that can be solutions to the problem and obtaining information about them. The knowledge that consumers have about a product or service enables them to make easy decisions, reduce risk, and buy the most beneficial alternative for them.

After consumers realize their needs, they tend to seek information in order to choose one of the alternatives. This search can be divided into two as internal search

and external search. In the internal search process, consumers first review their experiences about the product or service by probing their own memory. The external search process, on the other hand, is all external sources that consumers utilize to eliminate the lack of information that may arise due to limited internal resources (Aydın Aslaner, 2019).

The information seeking process of consumers first begins with their evaluation of their own knowledge and experience. A product experienced in the past or knowledge gained through friends and relatives can be evaluated. In case of insufficiency of this information, the consumer tries to obtain more information from external factors.

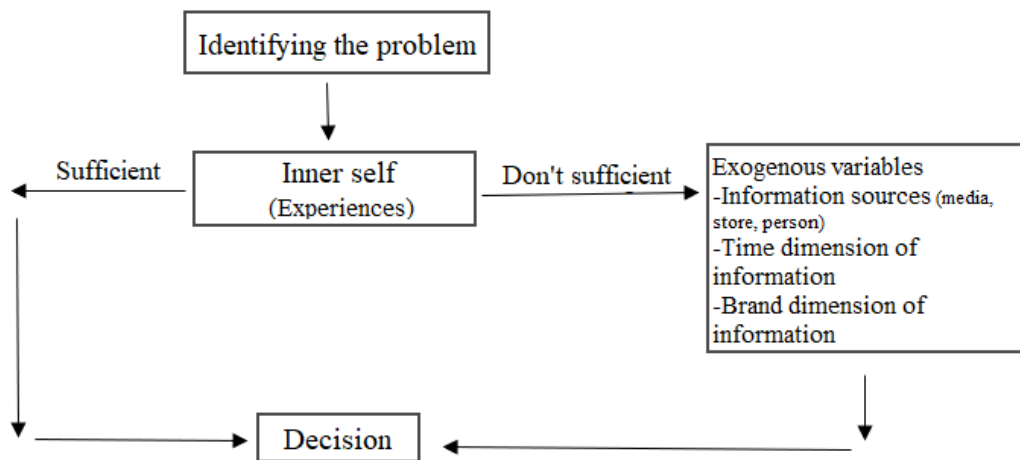


Figure 25. Seçenekleri ve Bilgileri Arama Süreci

Source: Odabaşı, Y., & Barış, G. (2019). *Tüketici Davranışı*. (İstanbul: MediaCat). p.360.

If consumers have the knowledge and experience necessary to meet their needs, their tendency to seek external resources will decrease. The same can be true for brand loyalty.

It is possible to talk about two different levels of interest in the evaluation of alternatives. Consumers may want to have information about a product because their interest in it has increased, or they may search for information about the product because they need it. At this stage, the consumer can search for information about the product on the internet, speak to those in their social circle, or visit a physical store to see the product (Kotler, 2002).

2.3.5.3. Purchasing Decision

The purchase is the final stage of the consumer's decision-making process. At this stage, consumers make their final decision to buy or not buy the product or service in line with their needs. Consumers decide by choosing the most suitable product or service among the alternatives. However, there may be unforeseen circumstances that may prevent the purchase from taking place such as an insufficient budget, health problems, unemployment, or indecision about the features of the product. When faced with such situations, consumers may postpone, change, or abandon their purchasing decisions (Akkaya, 2013).

2.3.5.4. Post-Purchase Attitude

After the purchase decision is complete and the product has been bought, consumers compare the performance of the product with their expectations. Cognitive dissonance is experienced when the product performance does not meet the expectation. Consumers who are satisfied with the product tend to buy the product again. While providing positive feedback about the product, they can also repeat the buying behavior for various products of the brand (Aydın Aslaner, 2019).

At the last stage of the purchasing decision process, the consumers evaluate the effects and consequences of their decisions and shape their behaviors accordingly. The conclusion of the purchasing process reflects positively or negatively on consumer behavior. One of the factors that brands should consider in their marketing strategies is post-purchase satisfaction. The feeling of satisfaction determines whether the consumer becomes a customer.

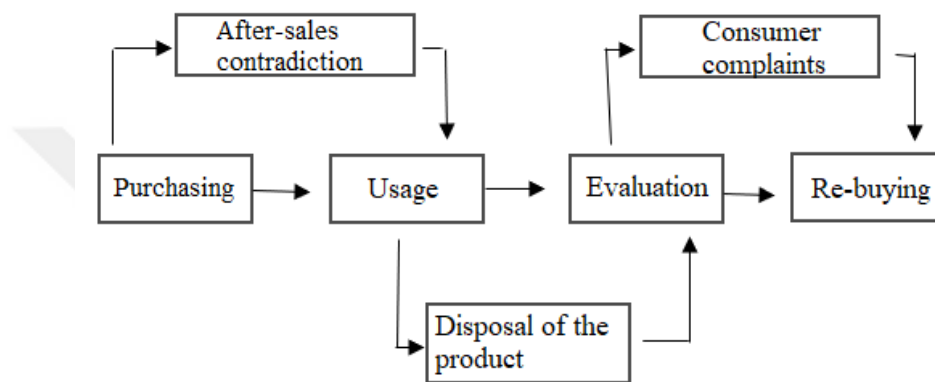


Figure 26. Post-Purchase Consumer Behavior

Source: Pickton, D., & Broderick, A. (2019). *Integrated Marketing Communication*. (Harlow: Financial Times). p.608.

The main reason consumers use a product or service is their need for it. The degree to which the product or service in question satisfies the need provides a positive-negative experience for the consumer. Therefore, it is critical how the product or service performs during the experience. At this stage, three important situations can be mentioned (Odabaşı & Barış, 2019);

- The consumer is satisfied; there is a high probability of choosing the same brand again,
- Partially satisfied, leads to cognitive dissonance,
- The consumer is not satisfied; there is a high probability of complaints.

How consumers react to their purchases can be both positive or negative and these reactions can vary from person to person. Therefore, from the point of view of integrated marketing communication, it is very important for consumers to have positive feelings and thoughts after making their purchase, to recommend the brand/product to their friends and relatives, and to make purchases again.

The fact that there are serious differences between the expectations of the consumers from the brand and the performance offered by the brand causes a negative perception among the consumers and the consumers will avoid purchasing from the relevant brand again (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). On the contrary, satisfied customers will tend to buy products from the same brand again. Considering the variability in consumer behavior, brands need to manage customer relations through good service beyond consumer expectations.

3. RESEARCH

3.1. Content & Focus

Digital marketing has developed through the transition from the marketing concept in which the consumer was kept in second place to modern marketing, wherein the consumer directs the market, and has been included in the daily lives of consumers in many areas thanks to technology. Digital marketing provides the opportunity for brands to communicate with people through various platforms and enables consumers to closely follow these brands.

Social media marketing occupies an important space within the digital marketing activities of brands. The content prepared by the brands for their products and services is frequently exhibited in the pages of social media users as an element that triggers consumption. With the development of digital technologies and the effect of globalization, the shopping habits of consumers have transformed into a digital structure, and shopping has gone online. Such changes and transformations have also affected the consumption habits of individuals.

The evolution of consumer shopping and consumption habits into an online model has caused brands to intensify their digital marketing activities, to frequently share content on social media, and to present these with consumers. Within this framework, this research mainly focuses on how digital marketing affects buying behaviors with the effect of social media.

3.2. Research Questions & Hypotheses

In line with the above focus as the main problem, the sub-problems of this research are as follows;

Q₁: Does the content shared by clothing brands through digital marketing affect the buying behavior of consumers?

Q₂: Does the fact that clothing brands attempt to make themselves memorable on digital platforms and social media encourage consumers who are at the “decision-making” stage of their buying process to purchase?

Q₃: Does the digital content shared by clothing brands via social media affect the buying process of consumers?

Q_{3.1}: Does the use of social media influencers with high popularity for digital content to be shared by clothing brands through social media affect the buying process of consumers?

H₁: The content shared by clothing brands through digital marketing positively affects the buying behavior of consumers.

H₂: The fact that clothing brands attempt to make themselves memorable on digital platforms and social media has a positive effect on the purchase of consumers who are at the “decision-making” stage of their buying process to purchase.

H₃: The digital content shared by clothing brands via social media positively affects the buying process of consumers.

H_{3.1}: The use of social media influencers with high popularity for digital content to be shared by clothing brands through social media positively affects the buying process of consumers.

3.3. Purpose & Scope

This research will examine whether clothing brands that implement digital marketing strategies through social media platforms affect the variability of consumer buying behaviors and shopping practices and will reveal whether there are similarities or differences between consumer buying behaviors and practices.

Within this context, the purpose of this study is;

- To examine whether there is a change in the attitudes of consumers towards the products promoted in the content they are exposed by digital marketing,
- To examine the similarities and differences between the cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors of consumers and their buying behaviors,
- To examine whether the content that consumers are exposed to through social media affects their buying behavior.

3.4. Significance of Research

According to studies in the literature, digital content marketing activities carried out through social media have different effects on consumer buying behavior. Values, lifestyles, and individual psychological factors personalize consumer buying behaviors personal and shape their consumption habits accordingly.

According to several studies conducted in Turkey, the effect of digital marketing on Turkish consumer behavior increased rapidly after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. It can also be seen that online shopping habits have changed direction from young individuals to mature individuals in post-pandemic societies

(Deral & Kazançoğlu, 2021). This has had an impact on stretching the limitations by brands in their digital marketing strategies.

Through revealing the attitudes and behaviors of consumers regarding their buying process, this study will clarify this issue, which draws great attention in global literature, from the point of view of Turkish consumers.

3.5. Methodology

This study will provide information on the effects of digital marketing strategies and content sharing activities on social media platforms of clothing brands on consumer buying attitudes and behaviors. The research aims to explain the frequent use of social media by clothing brands in their digital marketing activities and the buying behavior of consumers who are constantly exposed to social media content. After the research topic was determined and hypotheses were formed, a detailed literature review of related books, theses, articles, sectoral research results, website data, and statistical data was conducted.

A survey was conducted to get opinions from people on the subject. Questionnaires are traditionally used to determine the feelings, thoughts, and attitudes of people on certain issues and are expected to have a scientific value. For this reason, Survey Monkey, a digital survey platform, was preferred for this survey and the participants were reached online. The questionnaire was presented to the participants between December 29, 2021, and January 13, 2022.

The questionnaire was divided into four categories. In the first part, five questions were asked to define the demographic characteristics of the participants. In addition, 15 multiple-choice questions were asked about internet platforms and buying behaviors of consumers. In the second part, 39 Likert-type questions were

asked to measure the effects of cultural and social characteristics of consumers on clothing shopping, attitudes of consumers towards digital marketing activities of clothing brands on the internet, and reactions of consumers to social media advertisements of clothing brands.

3.6. Population and Sample

The population of the research consisted of people located in İstanbul who shop online for clothing. From this population, a sample of 316 people were randomly selected.

3.7. Limitations

Research has to limit its subject by specifying some features. In this way, interference with other issues can be avoided. However, the matters that the researcher wants to do address but cannot within the scope of the research constitute the research limitations (Kıncal, 2010).

The population of this research consisted of randomly selected people living in İstanbul (Turkey), between the ages of 18-66 and above, with online shopping experience. Therefore, the research was limited to the city of İstanbul, where the most online shopping is performed in Turkey.

The research examined the effect of digital marketing activities of brands via social media platforms on consumer buying behavior. The research was also limited to the clothing sector. This sector was selected because of the advantages provided to it through digital technologies. According to data from the Turkish Ministry of Commerce, clothing expenditures made through e-commerce websites were worth

10.9 billion TL in 2021, making clothing the second largest sector in e-commerce income distribution (E-commerce information platform, 2021).

The communication of clothing brands, which are active on social media platforms, with their target audience is critical for the continuity of their brands. As a result of the abovementioned selections, it can be said that focusing on the clothing sector and on consumers living in Turkey were the main limitations of this research.



4. RESULTS

In order to measure the effects of digital marketing activities of clothing brands via social media on consumer behavior, a questionnaire was conducted using Likert scale questions. 316 people participated in the questionnaire. 5 demographic and 15 multiple choice questions were prepared to measure the internet usage habits of the participants in the first section. In the second part of the questionnaire, Likert scale questions consisting of three different categories were asked to the participants: 16 related to consumer habits in terms of buying attitudes and behaviors, 12 related to habits in terms of the effects of digital marketing on buying behaviors, and 10 to determine consumer habits related to the effects of social media marketing on buying behaviors.

The results obtained from the questionnaires are statistically explained in the tables below.

4.1. Demographic Characteristics

Of the participants, 53.18% (167) were male and 46.82% (149) were female (see Table 1).

Table 1

Distribution of Participants by Sex

	Frequency	Percentage
Male	167	53,11%
Female	149	46,89%
Total	316	100,00%

As displayed in Table 2, the distribution of the participants by age is as follows: 50.64% (160) 36-45 years, 29.62% (93) 26-35 years, 10.51% (33) 46-55 years, 6.37% (21) 18-25 years, 1.59% (5) 56-65 years, and 1.27% (4) 66 years or above (see Table 2).

Table 2

Distribution of Participants by Age

	Frequency	Percentage
36-45 years	160	50,64%
26-35 years	93	29,62%
46-55 years	33	10,51%
18-25 years	21	6,37%
6-65 years	5	1,59%
66 years or above	4	1,27%
Total	316	100,00%

The distribution of the participants by monthly income is as follows: 47.93% (150) 10001 TL and above, 16.93% (54) 8001- 10000 TL, 12.46% (39) 6001-8000 TL, 10.86% (34) 4001- 6000 TL, 6.71% (23) 2001- 4000 TL, and 5.11% (16) less than 2000 TL (see Table 3).

Table 3

Distribution of Participants by Income

	Frequency	Percentage
10001 TL and above	150	47,93%
8001- 10000 TL	54	16,93%
6001-8000 TL	39	12,46%
4001- 6000 TL	34	10,86%
2001- 4000 TL	23	6,71%
Less than 2000TL	16	5,11%
Total	316	100,00%

As seen in Table 4, the distribution of the participants by education level is as follows: 46.82% (147) undergraduate, 34.70% (110) master's / doctorate, 9.24% (30) associate degree, 7.64% (24) high school, 0.96% (3) primary school, and 0.64% (2) secondary school (see Table 4).

Table 4

Distribution of Participants by Education Level

	Frequency	Percentage
Undergraduate	147	46,82%
Master's / Doctorate	110	34,70%
Associate Degree	30	9,24%
High School	24	7,64%
Primary School	3	0,96%
Secondary School	2	0,64%
Total	316	100,00%

Finally, as seen in Table 5, 64.13% (202) of participants are married and 35.87% (114) single (see Table 5).

Table 5

Distribution of Participants by Marital Status

	Frequency	Percentage
Married	202	64,13%
Single	114	35,87%
Total	316	100,00%

4.2. Daily Internet Use Habits & Social Media Use Habits

The distribution of the participants by frequency of daily internet use is as follows: 55.87% (176) 0-8 hours, 37.46% (118) 9-15 hours, 5.08% (16) 16-20 hours, and 1.59% (6) 21 hours or more (see Table 6). In terms of daily internet use, it can be seen that the participants are relatively clustered in the 0-8 hour range.

Table 6

Distribution of Participants by Daily Internet Use Habits

	Frequency	Percentage
0-8 Hours	176	55,87%
9-15 Hours	118	37,46%
16-20 Hours	16	5,08%
21 Hours and more	6	1,59%
Total	316	100,00%

The distribution of the participants by daily social media use is as follows: 91.11% (287) 0-8 hours, 7.30% (24) 9-15 hours, 1.27% (4) 16-20 hours, and 0.32% (1) 21 hours or more. In terms of social media use, Table 7 shows that the participants are again relatively clustered in the 0-8 hour range.

Table 7

Distribution of Participants by Daily Social Media Use Habits

	Frequency	Percentage
0-8 Hours	287	91,11%
9-15 Hours	24	7,30%
16-20 Hours	4	1,27%
21 Hours and more	1	0,32%
Total	316	100,00%

4.3. Social Media Access Types & Most Preferred Applications

As seen in Table 8, the preferred devices used by participants to access social media are as follows: 95.54% (302) smartphone, 3.18% (10) computer, 0.64% (2) tablet, 0.64% (2) other (see Table 8).

Table 8

Distribution of Participants by Devices Used to Access Social Media

	Frequency	Percentage
Smartphone	302	95,54%
Computer	10	3,18%
Tablet	2	0,64%
Other	2	0,64%
Total	316	100,00%

The top three applications most preferred by the participants for social media are WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube, respectively (see Table 9).

Table 9

Top Three Social Media Applications Preferred by Participants

	Frequency	Percentage
Whatsapp	291	92.09%
Instagram	269	85.13%
Youtube	184	58.23%
Twitter	105	5.06%
LinkedIn	53	4.43%
Facebook	40	33.23%
Telegram	16	2.53%
Pinterest	14	16.77%
TikTok	8	12.66%
Skype	5	1.58%
Twitch	3	0.95%
Facebook Messenger	3	0.95%
Tumblr	1	0.32%
Reddit	1	0.32%
Wechat	0	0.00%

4.4. Habits on Shopping via Internet and Social Media

The distribution of the participants by frequency of online shopping is as follows: 31.01% (98) once a month, 21.20% (67) once a week, 20.25% (64) multiple times a week, 18.04% (57) multiple times a month, 5.70% (18) once a year, and 3.80% (12) never (see Table 10).

Table 10

Distribution of Participants by Online Shopping Habits

	Frequency	Percentage
Once a month	98	31,01%
Once a week	67	21,20%
Multiple times a week	64	20,25%
Multiple times a month	57	18,04%
Once a year	18	5,70%
Never	12	3,80%
Total	316	100,00%

As seen in Table 11, the distribution of participants by the platform used to search for brands is as follows: 57.59% (182) search engines, 22.16% (70) popular shopping apps, 12.97% (41) brand websites, 5.70% (18) brand social media accounts, and 1.58% (5) brand stores (see Table 11).

Table 11

Distribution of Participants by Platforms to Perform Brand Search

	Frequency	Percentage
Search engines (Google Search, chorome, Yandex etc.)	182	57,59%
Popular shopping apps	70	22,16%
Brand websites	41	12,97%
Brand social media accounts	18	5,70%
Brand stores	5	1,58%
Total	316	100,00%

The distribution of participants by their first-choice social media platform to search for brands is as follows: 55.45% (175) Instagram, 30.77% (98) YouTube, 7.05% (22) Twitter, 3.53% (11) Facebook, 1.60% (5) LinkedIn, and 1.60% (5) Pinterest (see Table 12).

Table 12

Distribution of Participants by Their First-Choice Social Media Platform to Search for Brands

	Frequency	Percentage
Instagram	175	55,45%
Youtube	98	30,77%
Twitter	22	7,05%
Facebook	11	3,53%
Youtube	5	1,60%
Pinterest	5	1,60%
Total	316	100,00%

4.5. Reasons, Frequency, and Preferred Categories for Shopping Online

In the list of reasons that encourage participants to shop online, easy access and use ranks first, 24/7 shopping ranks second, and more variety and more affordable prices ranks third (see Table 13). Easy access, comparison of products or services, and financial diversity were the main reasons participants chose to shop online

Table 13

Distribution of Participants by Their Reasons for Preferring Online Shopping

	Frequency	Percentage
Easy access and use	221	70.16%
24/7 shopping	192	60.95%
More variety and more affordable price	159	50.48%
Opportunity to access user experiences of product buyers and experts	91	3.81%
Opportunity to compare products and features	83	3.17%
Opportunity to find products that are not available in stores	80	28.89%
Easy return for products	56	26.35%
Easy payment for products	46	25.40%
Better customer service	12	17.78%
Entertaining experience	10	14.60%

The distribution of the participants by their top sectors of online shopping is as follows: 41.40% (130) clothing, 25.16% (79) food and fast-moving consumer goods, 23.89% (75) technological products, 6.05% (20) books, culture, art, and 3.50% (12) cosmetics (see Table 14). It can be seen that the sector for which the participants of this study preferred to shop online was the clothing sector.

Table 14

Distribution of Participants by Their Top Sectors of Online Shopping

	Frequency	Percentage
Clothing	130	41,40%
Food and Fast-moving consumer goods	79	25,16%
Technological products	75	23,89%
Books, Culture, Art	20	6,05%
Cosmetics	12	3,50%
Total	316	100,00%

As seen in Table 15, the distribution of participants by their first-choice devices for online shopping is as follows: 79.37% (250) smartphone, 17.46% (55) computer, 2.22% (7) other, and 0.95% (4) tablet (see Table 15).

Table 15

Distribution of Participants by Their First-Choice Devices for Online Shopping

	Frequency	Percentage
Smartphone	250	79,37%
Computer	55	17,46%
Other	7	2,22%
Tablet	4	0,95%
Total	316	100,00%

The distribution of the participants by online shopping frequency is as follows: 40.63% (128) once a month, 20.63% (65) once a year, 17.78% (56) multiple times a month, 9.52% (30) once a week, 6.98% (20) never and 4.46% (15) multiple times a week (see Table 16).

Table 16

Distribution of Participants by Online Shopping Frequency

	Frequency	Percentage
Once a month	128	40,63%
Once a year	65	20,63%
Multiple times a month	56	17,78%
Once a week	30	9,52%
Never	22	6,98%
multiple times a week	15	4,46%
Total	316	100,00%

The distribution of the participants by the frequency of shopping for clothing with traditional methods is as follows: 45.08% (143) once a month, 31.11% (98) once a year, 14.29% (45) multiple times a month, 4.13% (13) never, 2.86% (9) once a week, and 2.53% (8) multiple times a week (see Table 17).

Table 17

Distribution of Participants by Frequency of Shopping for Clothing with Traditional Methods

	Frequency	Percentage
Once a month	143	45,08%
Once a year	98	31,11%
Multiple times a month	45	14,29%
Never	13	4,13%
Once a week	9	2,86%
Multiple times a week	8	2,53%
Total	316	100,00%

As seen in Table 18, the distribution of the participants by the emotions they experience after shopping is as follows: 53.18% (167) happiness, 32.49% (104) satisfaction, 9.87% (31) excitement, and 4.46% (14) regret.

Table 18

Distribution of Participants by Emotions after Shopping

	Frequency	Percentage
Happiness	167	53,18%
Satisfaction	104	32,49%
Excitement	31	9,87%
Regret	14	4,46%
Total	316	100,00%

The distribution of the participants by most influential traditional advertisements in terms of clothing shopping is as follows: 59.16% (187) TV ads, 20.90% (65) outdoor ads, 14.47% (47) magazine ads, 3.54% (11) cinema ads, and 1.93% (6) newspaper ads (see Table 19).

Table 19

Distribution of Participants by Most Influential Traditional Advertisements regarding Clothing Shopping

	Frekans	Yüzde
TV ads.	187	59,16%
Outdoor ads. (Billboard, Durak, Poster Pano etc.)	65	20,90%
Magazine ads.	47	14,47%
Cinema ads.	11	3,54%
Newspaper ads.	6	1,93%
Total	316	100,00%

Table 20 shows that the distribution of the participants by most influential social media advertisements in terms of clothing shopping is as follows: 53.36% (168) sponsored content on Instagram, 28.12% (89) influencer posts, 10.22% (33) YouTube ads, 4.15% (13) Twitter ads, and 4.15% (13) Facebook ads.

Table 20

Distribution of Participants by Most Influential Social Media Advertisements regarding Clothing Shopping

	Frekans	Yüzde
Sponsored content on Instagram	168	53,36%
Influencer posts	89	28,12%
Youtube ads.	33	10,22%
Facebook ads.	13	4,15%
Twitter ads.	13	4,15%
Total	316	100,00%

4.6. Attitudes and Behaviors of Consumers towards Digital Marketing and Social Media Marketing Activities

The second part of the questionnaire provided to participants asked questions related to three categories using a Likert scale. Research questions were formed in line with the conceptual framework.

In the first category, participants were asked to consider to what extent they agreed with certain statements related to their buying activities. The percentage distribution of participant responses is as follows:

It is very important that the clothing I buy reflect my values (Culture, social class): 49.19% (153) agree, 17.92% (57) neutral, 15.96% (51) disagree, 14.98% (48) strongly agree, 1.95% (7) strongly disagree.

It is very important for me that the clothing products I buy are approved by my close circle (Family, Friends): 44.88% (139) agree, 20.13% (64) disagree, 18.15% (58) neutral, 12.87% (41) strongly agree, 3.96% (13) strongly disagree.

My standards and expectations for the clothing products I buy are quite high: 58.28% (179) agree, 16.56% (53) strongly agree, 12.91% (42) neutral, 10.26% (34) disagree, 1.99% (8) strongly disagree.

The fact that a clothing brand is very expensive is an indicator of quality for me: 39.07% (121) disagree, 22.52% (71) neutral, 21.85% (69) agree, 11.26% (36) strongly disagree, 5.3% (19) strongly agree.

I usually prefer to buy expensive clothing brands: 36.88% (114) disagree, 24.58% (77) neutral, 23.92% (75) agree, 9.63% (32) strongly disagree.

When shopping for clothes, I do not pay attention to the price of the products I like: 41.33% (127) disagree, 20.33% (64) agree, 20% (63) strongly disagree, 12.67% (41) neutral, 5.67% (21) strongly agree.

I usually prefer to buy clothing brands that are on sale (discount): 54.82% (168) agree, 17.61% (56) neutral, 15.95% (51) strongly agree, 10.3% (34) disagree, 1.33% (7) strongly disagree.

When shopping for clothes, I pay attention to the price of the products I buy: 55.33% (169) agree, 30.67% (95) strongly agree, 7.67% (26) neutral, 5.33% (19) disagree, 1% (7) strongly disagree.

I have favorite clothing brands that I constantly buy: 58.8% (180) agree, 9.3% (31) disagree, 7.31% (25) neutral, 22.92% (12) strongly agree, 1.66% (8) strongly disagree.

The more I know about the clothing brands, the harder it is for me to reach a conclusion: 38.33% (118) disagree, 27.33% (85) neutral, 20.67% (63) agree, 7% (25) strongly disagree, 6.67% (23) strongly agree.

My psychological state has a significant effect on my clothing shopping: 45.82% (140) agree, 21.4% (68) disagree, 15.72% (50) neutral, 12.37% (40) strongly agree, 4.68% (18) strongly disagree.

The clothing products I buy have the kinds of features I want my friends and relatives to see me with: 35.33% (109) agree, 29% (90) disagree, 19.33% (61) neutral, 11% (36) strongly agree, 5.33% (20) strongly disagree.

As long as the clothing products I buy make me happy, I am not affected by external factors: 49.33% (151) agree, 22% (69) strongly agree, 17.33% (55) neutral, 10% (33) disagree, 1.33% (8) strongly disagree.

When I find a clothing product I like, I immediately buy it: 44.3% (136) agree, 24.16% (75) neutral, 16.78% (53) strongly agree, 12.42% (41) disagree, 2.35% (10) strongly disagree.

When my favorite clothing brands are on sale (discount), I buy products even if I don't need them: 35.69% (109) disagree, 26.26% (90) agree, 16.5% (51) neutral, 12.12% (37) strongly disagree, 9.43% (29) strongly agree.

Before deciding to buy clothing products, I first think of my needs and then decide: 47.33% (145) agree, 21.67% (68) strongly agree, 20% (63) neutral, 9.33% (31) disagree, 1.67% (9) strongly disagree.

The table below shows the detailed proportional distribution of the results (see Table 21)

Table 21

Buying Attitudes and Behaviors of Consumers

Item No	In this section, you will see several statements to determine your views on the "Buying Attitudes and Behaviors of Consumers".	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	It is very important that the clothing I buy reflect my values (Culture, social class).	14,98% (48)	49,19% (153)	17,92% (57)	15,96% (51)	1,95% (7)
2.	It is very important for me that the clothing products I buy are approved by my close circle (Family, Friends).	12,87% (41)	44,88% (139)	18,15% (58)	20,13% (64)	3,96% (13)
3.	My standards and expectations for the clothing products I buy are quite high.	16,56% (53)	58,28% (179)	12,91% (42)	10,26% (34)	%1,99 (8)
4.	The fact that a clothing brand is very expensive is an indicator of quality for me.	5,3% (19)	21,85% (69)	22,52% (71)	39,07% (121)	11,26% (36)
5.	I usually prefer to buy expensive clothing brands.	4,98% (18)	23,92% (75)	24,58% (77)	36,88% (114)	9,63% (32)
6.	When shopping for clothes, I do not pay attention to the price of the products I like.	5,67% (21)	20,33% (64)	12,67% (41)	41,33% (127)	20% (63)
7.	I usually prefer to buy clothing brands that are on sale (discount).	15,95% (51)	54,82% (168)	17,61% (56)	10,3% (34)	1,33% (7)
8.	When shopping for clothes, I pay attention to the price of the products I buy.	30,67% (95)	55,33% (169)	7,67% (26)	5,33% (19)	1% (7)
9.	I have favorite clothing brands that I constantly buy.	22,92% (12)	58,8% (180)	7,31% (25)	9,3% (31)	1,66% (8)
10.	The more I know about the clothing brands, the harder it is for me to reach a conclusion.	6,67% (23)	20,67% (63)	27,33% (85)	38,33% (118)	7% (25)
11.	My psychological state has a significant effect on my clothing shopping.	12,37% (40)	45,82% (140)	15,72% (50)	21,4% (68)	4,68% (18)
12.	The clothing products I buy have the kinds of features I want my friends and relatives to see me with.	11% (36)	35,33% (109)	19,33% (61)	29% (90)	5,33% (20)
13.	As long as the clothing products I buy make me happy, I am not affected by external factors.	22% (69)	49,33% (151)	17,33% (55)	10% (33)	1,33% (8)
14.	When I find a clothing product I like, I immediately buy it.	16,78% (53)	44,3% (136)	24,16% (75)	12,42% (41)	2,35% (10)
15.	When my favorite clothing brands are on sale (discount), I buy products even if I don't need them.	9,43% (29)	26,26% (90)	16,5% (51)	35,69% (109)	12,12% (37)
16.	Before deciding to buy clothing products, I first think of my needs and then decide.	21,67% (68)	47,33% (145)	20% (63)	9,33% (31)	1,67% (9)

In the second category, participants were asked to consider to what extent they agreed with statements related to their attitudes towards the digital marketing activities of the brands in the clothing sector. The percentage distribution of their responses is as follows:

I prefer to shop for clothing using traditional methods (Stores): 32.8% (105) agree, 24.2% (76) disagree, 22.29% (70) neutral, 15.61% (49) strongly agree, 5.1% (16) strongly disagree.

I prefer to shop for clothing online (Social Media, Shopping Apps, Brand Websites): 43.91% (138) agree, 24.68% (77) neutral, 18.27% (59) strongly agree, 9.29% (29) disagree, 3.85% (13) strongly disagree.

Promotional advertisements in the clothing category on online platforms are very informative and positively affect my buying process: 47.28% (149) agree, 26.2% (82) neutral, 12.78% (40) disagree, 9.9% (33) strongly agree, 3.83% (12) strongly disagree.

Traditional advertisements for clothing positively affect my buying process (TV, Newspaper-Magazine, Cinema, Outdoor): 38.02% (121) agree, 29.71% (93) neutral, 21.41% (68) disagree, 6.71% (21) strongly agree, 4.15% (13) strongly disagree.

Digital content advertisements for clothing positively affect my buying process (Social media ads, Website banner ads, App banners, etc.): 52.24% (164) agree, 21.79% (69) neutral, 13.78% (45) strongly agree, 9.62% (30) disagree, 2.56% (8) strongly disagree.

Written content shared by clothing brands on social media affects me positively: 47.44% (151) agree, 27.24% (86) neutral, 13.14% (41) disagree, 7.37% (23) strongly agree, 4.81% (15) strongly disagree.

Audio content shared by clothing brands on social media affects me positively: 45.02% (143) agree, 26.69% (83) neutral, 16.72% (52) disagree, 7.72% (26) strongly agree, 3.86% (12) strongly disagree.

Visual content shared by clothing brands on social media affects me positively: 58.25% (183) agree, 15.21% (48) neutral, 14.56% (46) strongly agree, 8.09% (26) disagree, 3.88% (13) strongly disagree.

Video content shared by clothing brands on social media affects me positively: 53.25% (166) agree, 21.1% (67) neutral, 12.34% (39) strongly agree, 9.74% (31) disagree, 3.57% (13) strongly disagree.

Giyim markalarının e-posta üzerinden paylaştığı içerikler satın alım sürecimi olumlu etkiler. 33,11% (103) katılmıyorum, 24,26% (76) katılıyorum, 22,3% (71) kararsızım, 17,38% (55) kesinlikle katılmıyorum, 2,95% (11) kesinlikle katılıyorum.

Reminders of clothing brands on different websites encourages unplanned buying activities: 33.22% (104) disagree, 26.06% (82) agree, 21.82% (69) neutral, 12.05% (38) strongly disagree, 6.84% (23) strongly agree.

Reminders of clothing brands on different websites makes my buying process faster: 32.24% (100) agree, 27.63% (87) disagree, 22.7% (71) neutral, 11.18% (36) strongly disagree, 6.25% (22) strongly agree.

The table below shows the detailed proportional distribution of the results (see Table 22).

Table 22

Effect of Digital Marketing on Consumer Buying Behavior

Item No	In this section, you will see several statements to determine your views on the "Effect of Digital Marketing on Consumer Buying Behavior".	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I prefer to shop for clothing using traditional methods (Stores).	15,61% (49)	32,8% (105)	22,29% (70)	24,2% (76)	5,1% (16)
2.	I prefer to shop for clothing online (Social Media, Shopping Apps, Brand Websites).	18,27% (59)	43,91% (138)	24,68% (77)	9,29% (29)	3,85% (13)
3.	Promotional advertisements in the clothing category on online platforms are very informative and positively affect my buying process.	9,9% (33)	47,28% (149)	26,2% (82)	12,78% (40)	3,83% (12)
4.	Traditional advertisements for clothing positively affect my buying process (TV, Newspaper-Magazine, Cinema, Outdoor).	6,71% (21)	38,02% (121)	29,71% (93)	21,41% (68)	4,15% (13)
5.	Digital content advertisements for clothing positively affect my buying process (Social media ads, Website banner ads, App banners, etc.)	13,78% (45)	52,24% (164)	21,79% (69)	9,62% (30)	2,56% (8)
6.	Written content shared by clothing brands on social media affects me positively.	7,37% (23)	47,44% (151)	27,24% (86)	13,14% (41)	4,81% (15)
7.	Audio content shared by clothing brands on social media affects me positively.	7,72% (26)	45,02% (143)	26,69% (83)	16,72% (52)	3,86% (12)
8.	Visual content shared by clothing brands on social media affects me positively.	14,56% (46)	58,25% (183)	15,21% (48)	8,09% (26)	3,88% (13)
9.	Video content shared by clothing brands on social media affects me positively.	12,34% (39)	53,25% (166)	21,1% (67)	9,74% (31)	%3,57 (13)
10.	Content shared by clothing brands via e-mail positively affects my buying process.	2,95% (11)	24,26% (76)	22,3% (71)	33,11% (103)	17,38% (55)
11.	Reminders of clothing brands on different websites encourages unplanned buying activities.	6,84% (23)	26,06% (82)	21,82% (69)	33,22% (104)	%12,05 (38)
12.	Reminders of clothing brands on different websites makes my buying process faster.	6,25% (22)	32,24% (100)	22,7% (71)	27,63% (87)	11,18% (36)

In the third category, participants were asked to consider to what extent they agreed with statements related to their attitudes towards the social media marketing activities of the brands in the clothing sector. The percentage distribution of their responses is as follows:

Content sharing by clothing brands on social media allows me to get up-to-date information about products: 66.89% (206) agree, 16.72% (53) strongly agree, 10.16% (33) neutral, 4.59% (15) disagree, 1.64% (7) strongly disagree.

I find content sharing by clothing brands on social media more entertaining than traditional media content: 56.95% (175) agree, 19.21% (61) strongly agree, 14.57% (47) neutral, 6.29% (22) disagree, 2.98% (11) strongly disagree.

I benefit from discounts and opportunities announced by clothing brands through content sharing on social media: 62.25% (191) agree, 21.52% (68) strongly agree, 12.25% (40) neutral, 2.65% (11) disagree, 1.32% (6) strongly disagree.

Comments on a brand under shared content of that clothing brand on social media affect my perspective on the brand: 53.97% (166) agree, 20.53% (65) strongly agree, 15.23% (49) neutral, 7.62% (26) disagree, 2.65% (10) strongly disagree.

When clothing brands have a large number of followers on social media, I have a more positive attitude towards the brand: 40.13% (123) agree, 22.41% (70) neutral, 20.07% (64) disagree, 11.04% (36) strongly agree, 6.35% (23) strongly disagree.

If the content shared by clothing brands on social media interests me, I share it with my close circle: 54.49% (167) agree, 16.28% (52) neutral, 12.96% (42) disagree, 11.3% (37) strongly agree, 4.98% (18) strongly disagree.

I make comments on social media about the products of clothing brands that satisfied me when I used them: 29.77% (93) disagree, 29.43% (91) agree, 24.08% (75) neutral, 9.03% (31) strongly disagree, 7.69% (26) strongly agree.

I make comments on social media about the products of clothing brands that did not satisfy me when I used them: 41.06% (127) agree, 19.54% (62) disagree, 17.88% (57) neutral, 15.56% (50) strongly agree, 5.96% (20) strongly disagree.

When clothing brands notice my dissatisfaction through social media and solve my problems, this positively affects my opinion of the brand: 58.67% (179) agree, 21% (66) strongly agree, 15.33% (49) neutral, 4% (14) disagree, 1% (7) strongly disagree.

I trust the clothing brands promoted by the Influencers/YouTubers that I follow with interest on social media and buy their products: 29.9% (93) agree, 27.91% (87) neutral, 25.25% (79) disagree, 10.96% (36) strongly disagree, 5.98% (21) strongly agree.

The table below shows the detailed proportional distribution of the results (see Table 23).

Table 23

Effect of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Buying Behavior

Item No	In this section, you will see several statements to determine your views on the " <i>Effect of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Buying Behavior</i> ".	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Content sharing by clothing brands on social media allows me to get up-to-date information about products.	16,72% (53)	66,89% (206)	10,16% (33)	4,59% (15)	1,64% (7)
2.	I find content sharing by clothing brands on social media more entertaining than traditional media content.	19,21% (61)	56,95% (175)	14,57% (47)	6,29% (22)	2,98% (11)
3.	I benefit from discounts and opportunities announced by clothing brands through content sharing on social media.	21,52% (68)	62,25% (191)	12,25% (40)	2,65% (11)	1,32% (6)
4.	Comments on a brand under shared content of that clothing brand on social media affect my perspective on the brand.	20,53% (65)	53,97% (166)	15,23% (49)	7,62% (26)	2,65% (10)
5.	When a clothing brand has a large number of followers on social media, I have a more positive attitude towards the brand.	11,04% (36)	40,13% (123)	22,41% (70)	20,07% (64)	6,35% (23)
6.	If the content shared by clothing brands on social media interests me, I share it with my close circle.	11,3% (37)	54,49% (167)	16,28% (52)	12,96% (42)	4,98% (18)
7.	I make comments on social media about the products of clothing brands that satisfied me when I used them.	7,69% (26)	29,43% (91)	24,08% (75)	29,77% (93)	9,03% (31)
8.	I make comments on social media about the products of clothing brands that did not satisfy me when I used them.	15,56% (50)	41,06% (127)	17,88% (57)	19,54% (62)	5,96% (20)
9.	When clothing brands notice my dissatisfaction through social media and solve my problems, this positively affects my opinion of the brand.	21% (66)	58,67% (179)	15,33% (49)	4% (14)	1% (7)
10.	I trust the clothing brands promoted by the Influencers/YouTubers that I follow with interest on social media and buy their products.	5,98% (21)	29,9% (93)	27,91% (87)	25,25% (79)	10,96% (36)

5. DISCUSSION

Thanks to developing technology, the social and private lives of individuals, as well as their habits, desires, and needs, are reshaped and evolve in line with the trends and tendencies of the period. In particular, there have been radical changes in both the individual and sectoral phases of social media and consumers.

This study examines the digital marketing activities of clothing brands in Turkey for consumers via social media and the attitudes and behaviors of consumers towards these activities.

An especially important concept has emerged as a result of the evolution of traditional marketing activities into a modern marketing understanding by changing over time: the consumer-oriented approach. Developing technology has led the way for the formation of a conscious consumer society that can easily access information and determine their needs. Thus, brands have started to focus on consumers for their marketing activities and adopt a consumer-oriented integrated approach from the production phase to the product presentation to the consumer, and even to post-purchase services.

The power of the consumer to shape marketing dynamics has increased as a result of the development and intensive use of social media. The active use of social media and the spread of interpersonal interaction on an international scale have not only made social media an important opportunity for brands to use in their marketing activities, but also a platform requiring brands to take care in their communication with the consumer. Therefore, consumer behavior needs to be closely managed.

This study examines the services provided by clothing brands to their consumers through digital marketing and social media within its conceptual

framework. In addition to focusing on the consumer-oriented concept, this study also examined how psychological, cultural, social, and personal factors affect buying processes as well as the types of consumer buying behaviors and processes.

The results of the questionnaire carried out within the scope of this study indicated that the participants generally use the internet and social media between 0 to 8 hours per day. Most of the participants were between the ages of 36 and 45 years; however, there were some 66 years and above. Therefore, it can be said that the activities carried out by clothing brands on social media can appeal to all age groups.

According to the questionnaire, social network access was largely carried out via the use of mobile phones with the most preferred social media applications being WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube, respectively.

The participants of this study tended to shop online once a month. Their first choice for an internet search of a product was search engines, and their first choice for a social media search of a product was Instagram.

The results indicate that participants preferred to shop online due to the opportunity to shop 24/7 and greater variety and more affordable prices, respectively. Thus, the fact that online shopping is practical and includes diverse options is a reason for preference.

Further, the questionnaire responses indicated that participants preferred to shop online for clothing. Online clothing shopping was mostly done via mobile phones, and clothing shopping was mostly done once a month. The questionnaire responses also indicated that the emotional state experienced as a result of clothing shopping was generally "happiness". When asked which of the traditional and digital marketing activities carried out by clothing brands most encourage consumers to

shop, the majority of participants responded TV commercials and Influencer-sponsored content.

The marketing activities of clothing brands on digital platforms ensure that consumers, especially social media users, are in constant interaction with the brands they are interested in. As long as the consumer shows interest in the brand content, the content repeats itself on a variety of different platforms. Consumers are exposed to many influential economic, social, and cultural factors and thus regularly follow such content in order to reinforce their sense of satisfaction and adapt to popular culture. From this perspective, hypothesis **H₁** (The content shared by clothing brands through digital marketing positively affects the buying behavior of consumers) is proven.

According to participant responses related to buying attitudes and behaviors of consumers, buying clothing representing their social and cultural values was of great importance. While it was observed that the expectations for preferred clothing brands were high, the high prices of preferred clothing brands did not create the perception that the products were of high quality. This highlights the importance of brands being in close contact with their consumers. According to the participants, price was an important factor affecting the buying process. The fact that their favorite brands offer discounts in the clothing category led participants to give priority to the brands in question, but the product price and need status must be at an ideal level for them to complete their shopping. This situation changed depending on the emotional state of the consumer, or could be influenced by high appreciation for the product.

Related to the effects of digital marketing on consumer buying behavior, it can be seen that the participants tended to prefer online shopping for clothing. There are many options available for online clothing shopping. It can be understood from the data above that the participant population conducted their shopping research through

different platforms in line with their own needs. As a result of the constant interaction between consumers and brands, presenting the promotional content to the consumers in a dynamic structure through reminders did not affect the buying process of consumers in the "search for information and options" stage, which is accepted as the second stage of the buying process. However, if the consumers were in the "decision-making" stage of the buying process, the fact that products are constantly repeated on different platforms affected their buying process positively. Accordingly, hypothesis H₂ (The fact that clothing brands attempt to make themselves memorable on digital platforms and social media has a positive effect on the purchase of consumers who are at the "decision-making" stage of their buying process to purchase) is proven.

Social media-based digital marketing activities for the clothing category have a positive effect on the buying process. When digital marketing activities on websites and social media were compared with traditional marketing activities in terms of encouraging participants to buy clothing products, it can be said that social media was more influential in this sense. In the clothing category, marketing activities carried out through social media with written, visual, and audio content had a positive effect in terms of directing the participants of this research to shop for clothing. Accordingly, hypothesis H₃ (The digital content shared by clothing brands via social media positively affects the buying process of consumers) is proven. Interestingly, content sharing via e-mail did not encourage the participants of this research to shop.

Related to the effect of social media marketing on consumer buying behavior, the research participants found the information shared by clothing brands on their social media accounts useful and believed that content sharing on social media was more entertaining than traditional marketing activities. Participants closely followed opportunities announced by clothing brands on social media and evaluated them

according to their levels of need. The number of social media followers clothing brands have, and the comments made by other users on the brand's products were important for the research participants in terms of choosing the brand and product. If the participants found the content shared by clothing brands useful, they shared it with their friends and relatives. If the consumer was satisfied with the clothing products they bought, they reflected that with a positive message through social media. However, the rate of sharing negative experiences was higher compared to positive experiences. The fact that clothing brands take into account and solve problems conveyed through social media positively changed the opinion of research participants about the product and brand. It can be seen that influencers, which are the social media reflection of popular culture, had a positive effect on the participants.

There are many reasons why social media influencers are appreciated and followed. One of the biggest benefits is the interpretation of a product, which is subject to the curiosity of consumers, by a user whose opinions are valued. According to the participants, a clothing brand promoted by a popular social media influencer was considered reliable and this was reflected positively in their buying process. Accordingly, hypothesis **H₃₋₁** (The use of social media influencers with high popularity for digital content to be shared by clothing brands through social media positively affects the buying process of consumers) is proven.

As can be seen in the results of this research, shopping via online platforms has become a part of daily life. Regardless of what consumers need, they can find relevant products and brands with their mobile phones in line with their budget options. The opportunity to immediately access the desired product or service easily upon the emergence of consumption needs, the fact that any product can be bought at

any time and any day, and the fact that many types of products can be compared at once make online shopping attractive for consumers.

According to the results of this research focusing on clothing brands, consumers prefer brands that are active users of social media, sensitive to their dissatisfaction, and can adapt to emerging trends. Social media-based digital content sharing of clothing brands is followed closely by social media users and the shared content positively affects consumers in their buying processes. The fact that social media allows the interaction of millions of users regardless of their education level, marital status, sex, and age provides a suitable medium for clothing brands to update themselves in line with popular trends. From this perspective, it can be seen that digital content marketing activities in the clothing sector are carried out in an integrated structure through social networks. Clothing brands can meet the expectations of their target audiences when they offer their products and services to consumers in an integrated manner with their social network content.

In this study, the shopping practices and buying behaviors of consumers who shop for clothing online were evaluated, and the various findings were presented. However, larger sample groups via a variety of studies would allow access to more comprehensive data and comparative results in order to better examine consumption behaviors towards the clothing sector. From this point of view, examining the consumption habits and behavior patterns of different participant groups in the future would contribute to studies on the effect of digital marketing on consumer behavior.

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APPENDIX A: Abbreviations

- TV -- television
- GSM -- global system for mobile
- P -- page
- Ads -- Advertisement

