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## NEWS READING HABITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA USERS: COMMENTS, SHARES AND LIKES

### ABSTRACT

News reading habits of readers vary with the arrival of the new media. Readers can like, comment and share so readily what they what. Sensational headlines, interesting ve current issues can draw more attention and get more feedbacks. Internet mediated and virtual communication can lead to comfortable and irresponsible behaviors that are seen less face to face. Internet platforms and news site pages sometimes can turn into lynch and hate situation. Desire to express oneself and momentary reaction greatly is seen in comments and sharings. Comments, sharings and likes find out that readers react what kind of news and topics. In this study, haberturk.com.tr that is Turkish news web site is examined in terms of what kind of news topics that readers comment, share and like in a specific date. Research results indicate that what kind of news are more or less responsive in terms of readers.

**Keywords:** Social Media, News Sites, Social Media News, User Behaviours, Digital Media

## SOSYAL MEDYA KULLANICILARININ HABER OKUMA ALIŞKANLIKLARI: YORUMLAR, PAYLAŞIMLAR VE BEĞENİLER

### ÖZ

Yeni Medyanın ortaya çıkması ile birlikte, okuyucuların haber okuma alışkanlıkları da değişiklik göstermektedir. Okuyucular istediklerini kolay biçimde paylaşabilmekte, beğenebilmekte ve yorum yapabilmektedirler. Sansasyonel başlıklar, ilginç ve güncel olaylar daha fazla dikkat çekeabilmekte ve geri bildirim alabilmektedir. İnternet aracılı ve sanal iletişim yüz yüze iletişimde daha az görülen rahat ve sorumsuz davranışlara neden olabilmektedir. İnternet platformları ve haber sitelerinin sayfaları bazen linç ve nefret haline dönüşebilmektedir. Anlık tepki ve kendini ifade etme isteği yorum ve paylaşımlarda geniş ölçüde görülür. Yorumlar, paylaşım ve beğeniler, okuyucuların ne tür haber ve konulara tepki gösterdiklerini ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Bu çalışmada, Türk haber sitesi olan haberturk.com.tr, belirli tarihlerde okuyucuların ne tür haber konularına yorum yaptıkları, hangi haber konularını paylaştıkları ve beğendikleri incelenmiştir. Araştırma sonuçları okuyucular açısından ne tür haberlerin daha çok veya daha az tepkisel olduğunu göstermektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sosyal Medya, Haber Siteleri, Sosyal Medya Haberleri, Kullanıcı Davranışları, Dijital Medya

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

News engagement is moving from print to digital media day by day. Users prefer to follow news on social media day by day. In addition, the increased use of mobile devices has increased the news engagement on digital and social media. "People who are social media and mobile phone users are now less engaged in print newspaper and television as their source of news and spend much more time on receiving news via their mobile phones and social media" [1]. Mobile phones and social media provide to access to news everywhere and at any time. Social media users can access all kinds of news sources. It is a matter of controversy that the media and the target audience influence each other in terms of the news flow. "Even in countries where the news is primarily a commodity, there is room for speculation whether 'public wants are created by what the media supply', or 'the media offerings are shaped by what audiences demand" [2]. Indeed both the media and the target are influencing each other. Firstly, the media shapes the perception of the people and then the public perception and demands that are shaped by the influence of the media form the media supply. Sensationalism catches the attention of public causing excitement and curiosity. The tabloid press can now find more space in the digital world. In terms of online media, sensational headlines abundantly appear on social share sites and news sites for more clicks on the news. Sensational headlines attract readers to read news. Irrelevance of news text and sensational headline is very common on digital media. The more clicks a news gets, the more valuable and profitable it becomes for news sites. People often use social media for entertainment purposes. People's choice of news on the social media is also entertainment-focused. Entertainment-focused news is often found in digital media and on social media pages. User comments and behaviors also confirm how much interest the users are showing in these messages.

## **2. RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE**

In this study, haberturk.com.tr that is Turkish news web site is examined using content analysis with a fun-focused approach in terms of what kind of news topics that readers comment, share and like in a specific date. The main purpose of this study is to reveal the habits of news reading of social media users. The following section of the study is related to user behaviours, hard-soft news and uses and Gratifications Model, Then haberturk.com's content analysis results are examined.

## **3. USER BEHAVIOURS AND ITS EFFECTS ON NEWS PRODUCTION**

Digital culture and digital media effects on people behaviour are increasing day by day. People behave differently in face-to-face communication and digital communication. Digital invisibility and ease enable users to be more free in their behaviours. People can behave differently in digital environments than in real life. The lack of face-to-face communication can cause users to be comfortable ease and irresponsible. Comments and sharings on social media pages of new sites show these comfortable and sometimes irresponsible behaviours of users. Internet media is a platform where target audience and expectation find more space than printed media. For this reason, the news flow is more audience-oriented. Users can respond for news or shares what they want in social media environments. Users generated content (UGC) is widely used in digital. Web 2.0 technology allows users to easily create content. Users become both producers and consumers. "Entertainment-driven users are much more likely to



participate in UGC activities, closely followed by career driven users" [3]. Social media environments are more fun-oriented. For this reason news sites prefer to publish or share fun-oriented shares, videos, photos on the internet. Most commented, shared and liked contents by users constitute social media news. Thanks to digitalization of journalism, user behaviours can be measured very easily in real time. Web metrics can monitor instantaneously every move of the user. News users prefer usually soft news rather than hard news. Perhaps reading the news in digital is a distraction need for them. "Since 'most viewed lists' are often dominated by news about entertainment, crime and sports, it is assumed that news users are more interested in 'junk' than in 'public affairs' news" [4]. Active users are now a part and participant of news production. Rather than news itself, comments, likes and shares that have been made to the news are sometimes more remarkable on social media. Boundaries between consumption and production increasingly are blurring. Users contribute to news content in a variety of forms. "(...) user-generated content initiatives could provide a source of stories and content for stories" [5]. News content and diversity are increasing thanks to user contents in digital media. News items and diversity are also user-focused because the users are both producers and consumers.

#### **4. HARD AND SOFT NEWS**

Hard news consists of factual and significant events and cases. "The collapse of the twin towers in New York, the first man on the moon, the assassination of John F. Kennedy, income tax goes up by a penny. All these are examples of a hard news story" [6]. Hard news are interesting, immediate and serious cases. Hard news leads people to think. Also hard news develop critical and political aspects of people. However, soft news focus on entertainment and fun that occupy the attention and time of audience. Soft news are related with emotions that provoke the audience. "Father saves son's life by donating a kidney, David Beckham wears a skirt, record numbers gather at Stonehenge to mark the summer solstice, conjoined twins die during surgery. These sorts of stories aren't going to have a direct impact upon people's lives in the way that a tax increase or a change of government will, but they do provoke a reaction in the audience. This is news that makes you go 'Aah!' or 'Wow'" [6]. Interesting and surprising events always draw attention of the audience. People can opt for soft news to escape the tiredness and difficulties of life. Because soft news can make people feel relaxed and make people forget unwanted things. In short, soft news helps people to let it all hang out. Plasser mentions content analysis of Patterson (2000). The analysis comprises during the period 1980 to 1999. It showed that soft news "increased dramatically from less than 35 percent of all news stories in 1980 to roughly 50 percent in 1999" [7]. This rise reaches its peak along with social media. Soft news especially are common on digital media. Users in social sharing sites like to share funny videos, photos or comments. This is also seen on the social sharing pages of news sites. Just as users comment and share on facebook they also behave the same way on social media pages of news sites.

#### **5. USES AND GRATIFICATIONS**

According to this approach, audience uses mass media to meet their own needs. Then, the audience is satisfied by the media use.

There are five elements of Uses and Gratifications Model.

- The audience is conceived of as active (...)



- In the mass communication process much initiative in linking need gratification and media choice lies with the audience member (...)
- A proper view of the role of the media in need satisfaction should take into account other functional alternatives including different, more conventional, and "older" ways of fulfilling needs (...)
- Methodologically speaking, many of the goals of mass media use can be derived from data supplied by individual audience members themselves (...)
- Value judgements about the cultural significance of mass communication should be suspended while audience orientations are explored on their own terms" [8].

The media effect is assessed in various ways. Media sociologically affect people's lives. The four-functional interpretation of the media proposed by Lasswell (1948) [9]. Then, Wright (1960) [10] developed it as macro- and the micro-sociological level. According to these functions "The media served the functions of surveillance, correlation, entertainment, and cultural transmission (or socialization) for society as a whole, as well as for individuals and subgroups within society" [8]. Entertainment that is one of the user gratifications plays an important role in social media and social media news. Users like to use social media for entertaining. Users meet their entertainment needs with social media chat environment. The interactive structure of social media attracts users to the conversation by interacting with them. McQuail, Blumler, and Brown (1972) [11] have put forward a typology. These are "diversion (including escape from the constraints of routine and the burdens of problems, and emotional release); personal relationships (including substitute companionship as well as social utility); personal identity (including personal reference, reality exploration, and value reinforcement); and surveillance" [8].

Social media users usually, comment, like and share somethings such as funny and interesting videos, photos and sharings to make fun, to get rid of the problems of life and emotional relief. For many people, life is very difficult and tiring. People are escaping from these problems amused by social media. Reducing anxiety and diversion need are supplied with social media and other social sharing sites. Politics, hard and troublesome topics usually are ignored by social media users. When you look at comments and likings shared on social media news pages, funny and comic events and topics attract more attention. In virtual societies, participants are in search of information and help. The quest for entertainment, along with the search for information and help, is also driving forces for virtual societies. "People participate and help others because participation is fun, and helping others is enjoyable and brings satisfaction" [12].

According to Uses and Gratifications Model, the audience is active and participant. British Cultural Studies that are called as Birmingham School also comment the audience as active. In terms of Birmingham School, the audience not only consume media texts but also make sense to them. "It is clear that the public's interest in and quest for information (as well as for entertainment) can easily be seen as the sine qua non of all the news media" [2]. Audience and their expectation and wishes are very important for media. Media and especially social media are in search of remarkable things such as funny and humorous videos, photos or sharings that draw the audience's attention.

## 6. ANALYTICAL STUDY AND FINDINGS

On July 18, 2017, haberturk.com's facebook page news was analyzed by content analysis. A total of 71 news news were analyzed. The results revealed that users are more interested in entertainment-oriented news.

Table 1. Distribution of news on facebook page of haberturk.com on 18.07.2017

(Tablo 1. 18.07.2017 tarihinde haberturk.com'un facebook sayfasında yayınlanan haber dağılımı)

News	Number
Agenda News	30
Life News	10
Magazine News	9
Economy News	5
Health News	5
Sport News	5
World News	4

According to Table 1, the most published news at haberturk.com are agenda news.

Table 2. The likes and emoji numbers of news categories on facebook page of haberturk.com on 18.07.2017 (only the likes and \*emoji of the news)

(Table 2. 18.07.2017 tarihinde haberturk.com'un facebook sayfasında yayınlanan haber kategorilerinin emoji ve beğeni sayıları) (sadece haberlerin emoji ve beğeni sayıları)

News	Number
Magazine News	16352
Agenda News	12821
World News	1174
Life News	959
Sport News	667
Economy News	327
Health News	321

\*Emojis: Love, Haha, Surprised, Sad and Angry. These emojis are only facebook emojis. The emojis of users are not included. According to Table 2, likes and emoji numbers of haberturk.com's magazine news are more than other news.

Table 3. Comments and share numbers of news categories  
(Tablo 3. Haber kategorilerinin yorum ve paylaşım sayıları)

News	Number
Magazine News	13409
Agenda News	5820
World News	381
Life News	51
Sport News	100
Economy News	54
Health News	39

Tablo 3 shows that magazine news has the most comments and sharing.

Table 4. User's emoji and response numbers to news comments  
(Tablo 4. Kullanıcıların Haber yorumlarına yaptıkları yanıt ve Emoji Sayıları)

News	Response	*Emojis
Agenda News	730	1937
Magazine News	593	1914
World News	213	284
Life News	9	81
Economy News	8	33
Sport News	2	33
Health News	1	10

\*Emojis: Love, Haha, Surprised, Sad and Angry. These emojis are only facebook emojis. The users own emojis are not included. According to Table 4, agenda comments and magazine news have the most emoji and response numbers to news comments.

Table 5. News categories and headlines that users make the most comments, share and emojis  
(Tablo 5. Kullanıcıların en fazla yorum, paylaşım ve emojilerle tepki gösterdiği haber kategorileri ve başlıkları)

News	Headlines	Comments	Emojis	Shares
Magazine News	Who now pays the account	1137	8614	9951
	Çitos Efe: I do not like the mouse and the snake. Because they are inedible	246	6000	1824
	She was a phenomenon with her hair! Here is the final state	14	1000	23
Agenda News	Here is the moment of flood in the subway	284	2441	1247
	Gayrettepe subway station were flooded	271	1573	505
	Flooding in İstanbul. Governor of Istanbul: The rain will run until the evening	465	1332	321

Tablo 5 shows that users make the most comments, shares and emojis to magazine news.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The symbolic and entertainment-oriented use of social media is also seen on facebook pages of news sites. The facebook pages of the news sites provide a forum for comment and chatting. This means that news sites adopt entertainment-oriented news broadcasts. In this study, the daily news flow of the Facebook page of haberturk.com, dated July 18, 2017, has been reviewed and it is seen that magazine news has got more comments and responses in terms of comments, likes and shares. In particular, magazine and entertainment news such as "Who now pays the account", "Çitos Efe: I do not like the mouse and the snake. Because they are inedible" are most liked and commented news. These news headlines also show that news and communications, including humor and comedy, are attracting more attention. The users responded to the comments made on these messages and the conversation environment was further expanded. The agenda news also receives more comments and emojis like magazine news and reflects the reaction and likes of the users. The agenda news of the flood and hail about



Istanbul received more comments and likes. In particular, torrent images and videos have been highly commented and reacted with emojis.

#### **NOTICE**

This study was presented as an oral presentation at the I. International Scientific and Vocational Studies Congress (BILMES 2017) in Nevşehir/Ürgüp between 5-8 October 2017.

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