THE REALITY OF COMMUNICATION: INFLUENCER AND OPINION LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

Traditional media has lost its importance with the emergence of the internet. The spread of social networks after the Internet has led to the emergence of "Influencers". In the past, people were political, cultural, religious, etc. When they needed to exchange ideas, they sought the opinions of opinion leaders. The concept of opinion leader, first expressed by Paul Lazarsfeld (1976) with the two-stage flow theory, has been discussed for a long time in terms of people who carry and transmit traditional communication. Opinion leaders have lost their former importance, as today's societies have become completely consumer societies with the development of capitalism. Consumers who follow Influencers in social media environments instead of opinion leaders have become more important to their opinions. In this context, this research aims to question whether influencers can be considered opinion leaders and the reality of communication between influencers and followers in the social media environment. From a theoretical point of view, this study is based on Pierre Bourdieu's (1990) concepts of habitus and consumer society. Virtual ethnography was used as a method. Therefore, the data collected through in-depth interviews through participant observations and messages, which express the detailed examination of the profiles of influencers and their followers and influencers and their followers in the Instagram environment, were analyzed. As a result of the research, it was found that 25 of the 30 influencer followers interviewed were seen as influencers.

Keywords: Influencer, Opinion Leader, Instagram, Virtual Ethnography, Habitus.

İLETİŞİMİN GERÇEKLİĞİ: INFLUENCER VE KANAAT ÖNDERİ

ÖZET

Geleneksel medya, internetin ortaya çıkışıyla eski önemini kaybetmiştir. İnternetin ardından sosyal ağların yaygınlaşması ortaya "Influencerların" çıkmasını sağlamıştır. Geçmişte insanlar politik, kültürel, dini vb. fikir alışverişine ihtiyaç duydukları zaman kanaat önderlerinin görüşlerine başvurmaktaydılar. İlk olarak Paul Lazarsfeld (1976) tarafından iki aşamalı akış teorisi ile ifade edilen kanaat önderi kavramı, geleneksel iletişimi taşıyan ve aktaran insanlar açısından uzun süredir tartışılmaktadır. Bugünün toplumları kapitalizmin gelişmesi ile tamamıyla tüketim toplumu halini aldığından kanaat önderleri eski önemini kaybetmişlerdir. Kanaat önderleri yerine sosyal medya ortamlarında Influencerları takip eden tüketiciler onların görüşlerini önemser hale gelmiştir. Bu bağlamda, bu araştırma influencerların kanaat önderi sayılıp sayılmayacağı ile sosyal medya ortamındaki influencer ve takipçileri arasındaki iletişimin gerçekliğinin sorgulanmasını amaçlamaktadır. Kuramsal açıdan bu çalışmada Pierre Bourdieu'nun (1990) habitus ve tüketim toplumu kavramları temel alınmıştır. Yöntem olarak sanal etnografi kullanılmıştır. Dolayısıyla influencerlar ve takipçileri ile Instagram ortamında arkadaş olup profillerin ayrıntılı incelenmesini ifade eden katılımcı gözlem ve mesajlar aracılığıyla derinlemesine görüşme aracılığıyla toplanan veriler analiz edilmiştir. Araştırmanın sonucunda görüşülen 30 influencer takipçisinin 25'i influencerları kanaat önderi olarak görüldüğü bulgusuna ulaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Influencer, Kanaat Önderi, Instagram, Sanal Etnografi, Habitus.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of technology around the world has led to unavoidable progress. The resulting changes require humanity to question many things today. After the widespread use of social media tools, a huge and important change has occurred with the emergence of systems called artificial intelligence. In a world of so much change and development, nothing is as before. Since the communication phenomenon that forms the basis of humanity has also received its share from this change, it is aimed to review the communication that has transformed into a different place in this study.

"True Communication", that is, what is called "real communication", includes an interactive process. In this process, there are stages such as giving correct feedback, encoding the message in the most ideal way, and knowing the recipient fully. All of these stages are very necessary for the best communication. Many communicators, especially George Mead (1984), call it true communication, especially in face-to-face communication. On the other hand, with the development of technology, the concept of "Pseudo Communication" that is "fake communication" has started to be mentioned. It is very important to look at words and meanings to better understand the difference between Pseudo and True Communication. Because in fake communication, individuals or societies think that they communicate and understand each other.

But in fact, individuals communicate entirely in this type of communication depending on their interests and point of view and therefore interpret the messages they receive in a different way.

In this case, there is actually a lack of communication. Although there is a lot of data flow with the development of technology, it does not seem possible to talk about a correct and real communication. Although everyone shares their ideas with the whole world through social media and internet tools, it cannot be said that the communication is real and correct. Because many people describe and encode themselves in the way they want while communicating. In other words, reality is a concept that can now be created. In order to better understand this part of the work, by analyzing Pierre Bourdieu's ideas about created reality in detail, a connection between so-called communication will be attempted. However, it is thought that it is important to establish a connection between the concept of "post-truth" in other words, the loss of the truth and pseudo communication, which emerged after political events in the world, both in the literature and in the English language.

There were "opinion leaders" in the previous periods, but nowadays there are people called "influencers" in the social media environment. Because the lives of individuals were not determined by "consumption" in ancient times. Today, every area of life is surrounded by consumption. For this reason, opinion leaders have lost their former importance and consumption promoters called "influencers" have started to form a remarkable part of people's lives. These people affect the life view, style, point of view, choices etc. of many people in the world with their posts on social media.

Within the scope of this study, first of all, in order to understand how communication is established in today's post truth environment and what it turns into, data were collected by using virtual ethnography method in social media environment with influencers. I ended my interviews "at the point where the answers received from the interviewers started to be the same", which is the method form of ethnographic study. I held my meetings with influencers over a period of about eight months.

1. DEFINITION, HISTORY AND FEATURES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Considering the literature, although Web 2.0 technologies and social media are positioned differently, they are also different in terms of meaning (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012). Web 1.0 technologies provided a non-interactive static content management, and Web 2.0 technologies constitute a much more advanced and advanced version of the traditional web environment (Cormode and Krishnamurthy, 2008). Thanks to this new web technology, the target audience can easily perform activities such as making friends with people they want, being a member of a group, Really Simple Syndication (RSS). Beyond that, it has been transformed into a Web 2.0-equipped social media with many add-ons such as users' ability to comment on each other, user tagging, comment or comment on content, visual sharing such as photos, videos, and instant messaging (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

In addition to all these established networks, the real identities are fully shared with the virtual world with the emergence of the name "Facebook". In 2004, Mark Zuckerberg, a student from Harvard University and his friends, was founded within Harvard University, in other words, Facebook, which emerged with the idea of a virtual school yearbook, has exceeded its original purpose and has become a structure that opens to the world and is one of the most used social media tools today (Irak and Yazıcıoğlu, 2012, p. 16).

Twitter, which came after Facebook among social media tools and continues to be popular today, has emerged with a different content. Twitter, which enables people to express themselves with short sentences, has named these short sentences Twit and mostly aims to communicate with their target audience with the help of short sentences by young people, movie stars, musicians and politicians. In addition to these two major social media tools, "Tumblr" and "Osmosus", a microblog with "FriendFeed" and "GlobalGrind", in 2007, "Ping Fm" and "Kontain" in 2008, "NetLog" and "Posterous", providing location sharing and location "Foursquare" was founded in 2009, focused on sharing. Along with the Google Buzz and Sportpost tools, Instagram was invented in 2010, which still maintains its popularity today and provides photography, video and live streaming facilities that form the basis of this research. (Hazar, 2011, p. 155-156). "Yahoo! 360, YouTube, Cyword and Black Planet" emerged in 2005 (Junco et al., 2011).

Instagram Influencers

Both researchers and marketers have been talking about the definition of the concept of "influencer" for nearly fifty years. In 1955, "Paul Lazarsfeld" and "Elihu Katz" developed a "two-stage information model" during the first periods of communication, and they stated that some of the individuals had a disproportionate effect on others. Since this statement is suitable for the general subject of this study, it can be considered as the first definition for today's influencers (Yaman, 2018, p. 270).

The term "Influencer" as a lexical meaning is defined as "influencing and changing people's behavior using social media" (www.cambridgedictionary.com, Accessed: 07 February 2020). In the social media environment, especially on Instagram, individuals who have more than a certain number of followers and create many contents for their followers are called "influencers" (Sevinç, 2018).

There are some features required to be an influencer.Although these features are listed differently in many sources, this ranking seems much more appropriate in terms of the context of this study.

1. "Originality": Influencers attract the attention of the target audience by preparing different and new contents (Güney, 2018).

2. "Being Honest and Trustworthy": Influencers express their thoughts clearly and reveal their opinions and approaches on the subject. In this context, all messages transmitted by the influencer should be easily understood, clearly, consistently and clearly coded (Güney, 2018).

3. "Self-Renewal": Influencers always have to do research on the content they create for their followers and renew themselves by following the agenda. It is important to make good selection of the keywords used so that users can easily access the designed content (Güney, 2018).

4. "Naturalness": It is important that the content planned before sharing is compatible with both the Influencer and the stance, mission and language structure of the brand, in terms of creating a positive perception of the content on behalf of the brand. The new product and the harmony between brands, which the influencer coding the sharing represented with its shares before showing the product it promoted, is also seen as a return of naturalness (Güney, 2018).

5. "Continuity of Communication": It is important for an influencer to be in constant communication with influencers in social networks (Güney, 2018).

Real Communication and Fake Communication

When it comes to real communication, the first thing that comes to mind is that interpersonal interaction is an indispensable component. It seems useful to first look at the basic communication processes in order to understand what real communication is. Communication consists of symbols in the rough sense. These symbols can be verbal and / or non-verbal. American theorist George Herbert Mead, who has worked on symbols, stated that communication begins and continues with the feedback that emerges as a result of the effect of a movement or expression on the opposite side (Mead, 193, p. 81). When communication is interrupted when it is not continuing, noise, misunderstanding, false expression, silence spiral, etc., communication is not considered to have occurred. In this context, it is accepted that there should be communication flow that continues in harmony with both the sender and the receiver, and this situation constitutes the basic communication. In addition to all these, words, expressions, gestures and gestures that constitute a large part of the communication process between individuals are actually considered as conceptual symbols. Since communication consists of symbols, when symbols are not used in the right place and time, it is inevitable that there will be misunderstandings and distortions in communication. Because every symbol has positive as well as negative meanings.

On the other hand, if we look at the concept of communication from a different point of view, it appears that communication is a "transference process" in the most basic sense by many theorists. The communication process, which operates through an invisible model in conversations and dialogues, is constantly alternating between the sender and the recipient, with the sequence of "sending messages" and "receiving messages" becoming a flow. In the light of these views, communication actually refers to the final situation that arises as a result of the exchange of messages from a process, that is, communication starts only when the sender receives feedback from the receiver after transmitting a message. In this case, real communication takes place within this process. The real communication is not interrupted and it arrives after a certain positive and / or negative way as it started. Although sometimes the "noise" factor between the sender and the receiver interrupts the communication, then the communication either ends or results negatively, but it definitely reaches an end (Kellerman, 1992).

True communication refers to the process of sending messages, negotiating terms and references, interpreting messages, and responding in various ways. In addition to these, real communication, even if negative, includes misunderstanding, automatic mental scenarios, questioning and cognitive imagination strategies (Craig, 1999). On the other hand, when it comes to real communication, the expressions of speaking, active listening, understanding and taking action come to mind. Working on real communication, Fabian defined this concept as sharing public opinion and thoughts (Fabian, 1979).

If we take a different expression on the basis of all this information, real communication is located in a different place than the communication established through computers, social media, smart mobile phones, etc. today. Because in real communication, it is important for people to see each other's expressions. Gestures and mimics are clearly displayed in real communication. Although there are negative situations, misunderstandings, communication interruptions, everything that happens in real communication is built on reality. Expressions, symbols, words, sound everything is real. Unlike the communication made in the computer environment via social media, everything, whether positive or negative, is evident and understood in face-to-face communication (Daugherty, 1995). For example; Any manipulation and deceit can be understood much more easily through observation in real communication. On the other hand, communication established in the social media environment is as real as only text, photographs, videos and images express. Therefore, it is not certain whether the statements are true or true, since people do not see each other while communicating on social media tools.

Today, depending on technology, life and working styles have changed so much that individuals have to replace real communication with internet-based fake communication and have gotten used to this convenience very quickly. However, although there are many claims in the literature that internet-based communication is fake communication, these claims are not very interesting for individuals who use internet communication almost all of their lives. In addition, the aim of studies on real and fake communication is not to actually compare the two modes of communication (because this is not possible), but to reveal the distinction between the two (Schober and Conrad, 2008).

In addition, this so-called communication, which emerged, naturally affected the real communication styles. Even when the individual communicates face to face, he/she is not completely detached from the internet environment. Because today, laptops and more importantly, smart phones that can be carried everywhere have become an inseparable part of people. Abbreviations, smiles, videos and photos used on the internet suddenly appear when individuals communicate face to face. The individual, who uses such abbreviations during communication, is in a way not communicating fully, as if he is establishing "fragmented communication". Because for the individual who spends a lot of time on the internet and gets used to the abbreviations there, everything in real life is now short and brief. Because of this situation, the individual started to lose their ability to explain, think and express over time.

When communicating in the social media environment, there is no specific subject or actually a goal, so the issues are constantly changing, almost nothing can be concluded. This situation has started to cause these problems in face-to-face communication over time. For all these reasons, it has become very difficult to talk about real communication where there is internet today.

As a result, the communication style used in the social media environment that emerged with the advent of the internet is first considered in this study as pseudo communication since it does not contain basic communication elements and is realized through certain pre-designed templates. Influencers, whose influence is strong in the social media environment where the biggest part of communication takes place, and is considered to direct communication, is considered worth examining within the scope of this form of communication.

Pierre Bourdieu, Reality, Communication and Habitus

It is impossible to describe the habitus put forward by Bourdieu with a precise definition. In a seminar he gave in France, Bourdieu revealed that he could not make a definite definition of habitus (Bourdiue and Wacquant, 2010). In this context, the concept of habitus can classify practices while generating objectively classifiable decisions. The relationships that arise between the two capacities mentioned also express habitus. "The representation of the social world and the space of lifestyles - that is, the social space", "is determined by the relations between classifiable practices and the productive capacity of works and the capacity that differentiates and appraises these practices, that is, that produces habitus." He argues that habitus does not only mean the "constructive structure" that regulates practices and perceptions of practices, on the other hand, it also refers to the "structured structure" conceptualized as the principles of division within the logical classification that regulates social world perceptions (Bourdiue, 1984, p. 170). In this way, habitus is included in structured structures and at the same time continues the function of structuring structures. Within the scope of Bourdiue's view, habitus is a root that expresses the whole of a life style that carries the connected and inherent characteristics of any location, in other words, a kind of preferences that includes people, places and practices completely (Bourdieu, 2006, p. 21).

Bourdieu mostly uses the metaphor of "game" when explaining the habitus. According to this metaphor, he states that the ability of agents to be successful in games depends on their habitus ability. However, Bourdieu has a predetermined area of rules that contains its own strategy for each game. Players will behave in the game within the scope of their interests and profits, and as a result they will strive to be successful in the game. For this reason, habitus has to act depending on the area and determine a strategy accordingly (Bourdieu, 2006, p. 139). In this context, Bourdieu states that habitus fulfills the role of a player in games that are formed in social space or social space. Expressing a talented and productive structure, the success of habitus in the field is measured by its ability to play the game well according to the rules of the field. Expressed as "social game" by Bourdieu, habitus is embedded in the biological structure of human beings. In this way, "habitus manifests itself as structured in a behavioral model or form of the instinctive feeling of what a person will gain or gain" (Calhoun, 2007, p. 103).

After mentioning the concept of habitus introduced by Bourdieu, it would be appropriate and complementary to mention Bourdieu's views on the consumer society. The concept of the body, which was built by the society and accompanied by powerful symbolic and cultural discourses, waits to be blessed with the rhetoric of the powerful media that has been made effective in all aspects within the post-modern consumption culture. In this new era, where technology has been effective, the social purchasing power provided by the advantages provided by physical images to the individual has increased so much that it is much more appreciated than the highest level of individual effort and talent can achieve (Bourdieu, 1990). This is also true for influencers. Because they get the effect with the power of their bodies and use it on people for the continuity of consumption, almost without any obvious effort and ability.

Pierre Bourdieu in his famous work named Distinction; social practices, social qualities that have been inherited, in other words, habitus, cultured middle class, middle class and popular class, basically endeavored to express qualitatively the preferences and tastes of the strata in society. According to this study, especially the public class comes to terms with the material and spiritual conditions they face in terms of their symbolic power and their destiny and related consumption processes. In addition to this situation, Bourdieu reveals the interactions between the classes between the consumption processes by talking about the working class's substitution of luxury consumption goods with cheap goods and the efforts to imitate and resemble the dominant class in the case of the working class following the dominant class in society (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 33-46).

The situation is actually no different for the products and services marketed by influencers today. In fact, influencers share products of many qualities and suitable for the purchasing power of various economic classes in order to appeal to individuals from all walks of life. Even in this context, influencers are diversifying. For example, because influencers marketing make-up products are in question, influencers sharing upper segment brands such as mac, sephora, etc., and influencers who try and share lower segment brands such as flormar and golden rose do not appeal to the same income group. However, as stated by Bourdieu, individuals who want to position themselves in the upper segment or be like them, even if they are not in this group in terms of economic income group, for example, buy the fake product of the Mac brand and feel themselves psychologically within this income group. In this context, according to the research carried out by Bourdieu, just like today, the working class can buy cheap goods instead of rare products, as the working class has a certain income. For example, the fact that they are turning to sparkling white wine instead of champagne, artificial leather instead of real leather, and reproduced versions of these pictures instead of pictures, it has been shown that this class tends to gain status and value by imitating the ruling class, in relation to the current purchasing power of this class.

Regarding the consumption of cultural products, Bourdieu, who mentions the point of view of the consumers that the imitation products have the same effect as the real ones, although the cost of the counterfeit products is lower than the consumption of the cultural products, Bourdieu has interpreted as "an unconscious bluff that cheats even the bluff" (Bourdieu, 2006: 468).

When this situation is evaluated within the framework of the influencers that constitute the subject of the study, it comes to the fore that many influencer followers prefer imitation products because they are more affordable. As a result of this situation, which emerges with the sharing of people, it is noticed that those who have a similar, in other words, imitated one in more economic conditions, feel better. On the other hand, there are also people who do not show that they use counterfeit products in any way and want to maintain close relations with circles that have the power to get the realities of those products by presenting them as if they are real.

The Relationship Between Opinion Leader and Influencer

While opinion leaders consist of people who have the power to influence people living in the community, influencers are also composed of individuals who take part in social media tools and people who are well-known in their fields who can influence the whole society through these individuals. While opinion leaders shape the communication habits of the groups in the society they live in in the context of world-view, they are accepted as a reliable and respected leader within the groups and they create their influence power thanks to these features. Opinion leaders, who can have many professions and socioeconomic positions, can be present at all levels in order to reach people at every status level (Erdoğan and Alemdar, 1990).

As mentioned above, the first opinion leader statement emerged through a research conducted during the US Presidential election in 1940. American sociologists named Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld, in their work within the scope of the liberal approach tradition in the media, stated that opinion leaders are much more effective than the media in voting decisions. As a result of this study, they found the "two-stage flow model". The mentioned model emphasizes how the effects of mass media diminish with the effect people leave on each other. The first stage reveals the transition of ideas and facts from mass media to opinion leaders in local communities, and the second from opinion leaders to people who are not very active in the community (Laughey, 2010).

Along with rapidly developing communication technologies, the area dominated by opinion leaders has both changed and expanded. Over time, these people started to take their places in columns, radio programs, television programs and online media. Especially with the increasing efficiency of social media tools day by day, individuals have started to be seen as an opinion leader in these channels. In fact, according to many researchers, in today's consumer society, people called influencers have replaced the opinion leaders. Influencers, also known as "micro-celebrities", are made up of people who have become popular thanks to social media tools and have a large number of followers (Boyd and Ellison, 2007).

Shares made by influencers affect their followers too much. In this context, these people create advertising potential for many companies and brands (Aslan and Ünlü, 2016, p. 44). Influencers even make individual branding "with attitude, reputation, style and skill" in a very short time through social media tools. The first thing that influencers try to do is to increase the number of followers in online environments and to gain popularity and make themselves a brand. After gaining popularity, they can make an impact on their followers just like an opinion leader (Aslan and Ünlü, 2016, p. 53).

However, individuals respond to influencers who are seen as opinion leaders in social media tools with activities such as commenting, reacting, sharing and liking instantly. In this way, while people can establish a direct relationship with influencers, they also have the opportunity to easily express their supportive and responsive behaviors.

Considering all these studies on the subject, it is revealed that people who actively share information on many issues in social media tools have the potential to influence the attitudes and behaviors of their followers online. But besides all research, Bennett and Manheim found that improved communication tools and changes in information and information retrieval reduced the influence of opinion leaders. In particular, technological and social changes allow messages that can be directly addressed to individuals to be produced and spread. In this work, Bennett and Manheim claim that the role that opinion leaders played in receiving and interpreting messages for those who seek ideas has disappeared. In addition, they also stated that online users are much more likely to use information within the framework of their own comments, choosing from the unlimited pile of information that stands before them within the framework of their own views (Bennett and Manheim, 2006, p. 214).

2. OBJECTIVE AND METHOD

The aim of this study is to reveal the change in communication. It is necessary to replace the old communication models with the new ones, especially in today's world where technological advances take effect rapidly. In this context, this study tries to understand whether the people who are known as opinion leaders in the period when the first communication emerged, are seen as equivalent to influencers in today's consumption society. As a result, the new form of communication in society will be defined together with digital communication and social media. Thanks to this definition, it is aimed to better understand and research the communication established today.

The data of the study were collected by using virtual ethnography method with influencers in social media environment. Due to the nature of ethnographic studies, randomly selected people were interviewed without determining any age, gender, etc., and the study was terminated at the 30th person, since the data of the interviewed people did not change after 30 people.

In the Sage Online Research Methods Handbook, Christine Hine, an academic known for her decisive work on virtual ethnography, stated that "Virtual ethnography is embedded in academic culture as a convenient way of investigating how people understand the possibilities offered by the Internet." (Hine, 2008, p. 260).

On the other hand, Hine mentions that virtual ethnography has a very important place even in "critical cyber culture studies", which is made more suitable for the social, political and economic contextual structure of the internet (Hine, 2008: 262). Because, basically, virtual ethnography, in the opinion of many theorists, is an imitation of ethnographic work. Therefore, these studies do not have population and sample concerns.

The number of people interviewed and demographic data are not important either. The important thing is that the data is detailed on the basis of the ethnography obtained. On the other hand, if we look at the difference between both virtual and real ethnographic studies, it is revealed that ethnography is based on the obvious evidence of the "real" culture, while virtual ethnography points to a cultural structure that is already created and shaped because it deals with the virtual environment, not reality. In this context, the "ethnographic fieldwork" practice of ethnography, which means traveling and approaching another culture, does not directly translate into online culture research in the form of virtual ethnography. Because what is sought and wondered in virtual ethnography is not exactly the same as in ethnographic fieldwork. In this case, it is basically about reality and virtuality (Kozinets, 2010).

In this study, in the context of virtual ethnography method, thirty influencers were made friends in the Instagram environment, in-depth interviews were made with them for six months and their pages were examined using the participant observation method.

3. FINDINGS

Analysis of Interviews with Influencers

According to the interviews with the influencers, it is noteworthy that they care about acting naturally as much as possible. In fact, according to experts and / or famous people in the field, there is the opinion that one of the most important reasons for following influencers and valuing their opinions is that they claim to be natural and sincere. Despite the fact that influencers find themselves natural and sincere, I asked thirty influencer followers in this context to understand what their followers think about them. As a result of these questions, influencer followers generally stated that they find influencers natural and sincere, however, only five people stated that they do not find influencers naturally, contrary to these views. For example, the statements of one of the negative respondents are as follows; "I don't find the behavior of the influencers I follow mostly sincere. Because their main purpose is to increase the number of followers and get hits and they do whatever it takes to achieve this.

Another view is as follows; "I think influencers are designing something and sharing those designs before they post. They do not reflect their natural state instantly. They even artificialize naturalness to look natural. " Twenty-five of the thirty influencer followers interviewed gave close answers to this sample answer. In this context, a certain segment of followers, albeit small, claims that influencers offer a "built reality".

Another issue was also related to understanding whether influencer followers saw them as opinion leaders, despite the responses that the majority of influencers received that they saw themselves as opinion leaders. In general, influencer followers stated that they see influencers as opinion leaders. An influencer follower expressed his views with the following sentences; "I think they are the absolute opinion leaders. Because their views on many issues are very important to us. I do almost all my shopping with their direction".

Another view is; "Today, people are not too interested in a political view or an ideological structure anymore. Consumption and shopping are more important, so influencers that I follow are opinion leaders in my opinion. Sometimes there are influencers who even interpret political and ideological issues". Twenty infleuncer followers interviewed gave similar responses to the examples. In this context, in today's post-consumer society, the individual no longer wants to deal with complex structures and thoughts. The important thing is to meet his daily needs from unlimited options and reach satisfaction. In this context, influencer views are seen much more important than many academicians, politicians, experts, field experts, etc. Perhaps the most important reason for this situation is that influencers appeal to every segment of the society and have a simple and plain expression.

Many of the influencers appear to be public figures promoting their products and / or giving advice to their followers. But over time, influencers with increasing followers become popular. In fact, these people, who share videos and interviews with famous people, promote many famous brands and participate in their activities, do not differ much from famous people over time. What his followers thought on this situation seemed remarkable within the scope of the study. Because the thoughts of the followers, who see and follow the influencers as the public and sincere people, create an important framework within the framework of the effect, reality and opinion leadership about the change of the famous influencers over time. Except for only 4 out of 30 people, all followers have stated that the famous influencers have changed and mostly moved away from their purpose. One of the followers expressed his thoughts on the subject with the following sentences; "Influencers, who became famous over time and increase their followers, change a lot, most of them are far from sincerity. Because I think their main goal is to become famous and live like celebrities". Another view is; "I am becoming famous and unfollowing changing influencers. Because from the beginning I was following them for being sincere. I also find the posts of those who are not realistic and sincere and who are changing, insecure". In response to this thought; "I think it's normal for famous influencers to change. He put in so much effort and succeeded in the end, he will rightfully skim the cream ☺ I think characterlessness is another thing, change is another".

Another follower says, "I find the behavior of influencers acting like celebrities repulsive. After all, such fast celebrities are disappearing fast today. That's why doing permanent work is more important for me". Another view against these ideas; "What does it mean to be famous today anyway? As Andy Warhol said, "One day everyone will be famous, even for fifteen minutes," we live in the screen world. I think there is not much difference between influencers and celebrities from the beginning. It can brighten and fade in an instant on both sides". As a result of the research, it was found that 25 of the 30 influencer followers interviewed were seen as influencers opinion leaders.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

First of all, it should be stated within the general context of the research that all the influencers interviewed saw themselves as "opinion leaders". Another important point here is that expressions of "opinion and / or opinion" sharing are used rather than "opinion". For this reason, first of all, "Do you see yourself as an opinion leader for today's societies?" When asked, it was first necessary to explain to seventeen influencers what the concept of "opinion leader" was. Because they are foreign to this concept. The fact that the concept of "opinion" is not used much in the society over time can be thought to have an effect on this situation. Considering that today's societies are consumption-based societies, when individuals want to gain an opinion on any subject and / or purchasing behavior, they first follow the relevant posts of the influencers they follow.

On the other hand, all of the interviewed influencers are also aware that their main duties are "impact" and "influence". For example, while talking to an influencer, "What do you think is the main purpose of influencers?" When asked, he replied, "It can influence as many followers as possible and encourage them to buy products." In this context, it would be appropriate to say that influencers always make an effort to increase their potency. Some influencers admitted that they are working hard to make quite extreme and remarkable posts in order to increase their power of influence. Because, according to their opinion, influencers with high power can both gain a large number of followers and have the chance to work with famous brands. Thus, it is revealed that the main purpose of influencers is to ensure the sale of the products they share. Because the more famous brand products they can have in their posts or the more they can get their followers to buy these products, the more they will achieve their goals.

In today's societies where everything changes very rapidly, modern people get bored of everything they face very quickly and enter the need for change. For these situations, influencers look just right. In this context, Pierre Bourdieu's expression "habitus" also stands out. Since most of the society has the same habitus as influencers, they care about their opinions. Again, as Bourdieu has stated, even the intellectual segment, whose "cultural capital" is at a certain level, has positioned its habitus in a different place, it cannot help entering the environment that attracts the attention of the masses and at least take a look at it. Even if he does not say that he follows these people openly with his surroundings and that he shoots in line with their opinions and shapes his life, many people follow influencers even out of curiosity and often cannot resist them. As such, it turns out that the situation is far beyond economic, cultural capital and habitus. Individuals now take an attitude to be a "part of the multitude". Because those who are minorities are the ones who are left alone in the society. However, while the behavioral codes of many people in society and in their environment are different, they display different codes of behavior when left alone. As a result of this situation, individual approaches rather than precise and clear statements are much more appropriate in terms of understanding the subject. In particular, they also stated that "the social media environment is not a very natural environment yet, and what should be expected here is honesty rather than naturalness, and since influencers are natural as well as ordinary people, there is no difference from a standard social media user".

As can be understood from these thoughts, most of the followers are disturbed by the change of influencers they follow. He expects them to be sincere and realistic. In response to all these thoughts, they prefer social media communication, which is a virtual environment where direct sincerity is not shown. In fact, there is a contrast in this formation. This situation is basically related to the existence of the person. Even though people seem to have adopted the technology that they did not have in their essence and adopted later on, they actually experience contradictions within themselves. Jean Baudrillard gave many examples while talking about hyper-reality. On the other hand, the famous German philosopher Martin Heidegger mentions that people experience moments of "angst-fear" due to their nature from time to time. He makes inquiries about human existence in these moments of fear. Because, even if not in every moment of daily life, individuals can distinguish between truth and truth more clearly when they look inside and question. In this context, since the reality is replaced by hyper-realities in social media tools, which are now the simulation environment, the person is sometimes uncomfortable with this situation and compares what should be with what is happening. After all, some either do not care about the situation or criticize it and want it to return to the way it should be. Influencers are basically marketing a lifestyle for their followers.

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