

Chapter 5

OPINION LEADERS OF DIGITAL ERA AND THEIR EFFECTS ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

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INTRODUCTION

Consumer behavior refers to the buying behavior of the last consumer, every individual and user of household products and services (Kotler, 2005:178). In other words, people buy products or services without business purposes, for personal use or the use of households (Pride and Ferrell, 2000:195).

Many factors are affecting the purchasing behavior of consumers. These consist of social factors such as culture, subculture, social class, reference groups, family, personal factors such as motivation, personality, perception, learning, and technological, economic, and political factors (Oktay, 2006:198). According to the theories of consumer behavior, the purchasing decisions of consumers are influenced by the reference groups in which they want to exist or to be present (Odabaşı and Barış, 2002). Consumers want to take advantage of the experience of other people, who have previously used the same or similar products, before buying a new product. These consumers are usually a part of a reference group. Within each reference group, there are opinion leaders who consumers trust, and these opinion leaders make the purchasing behavior of consumers easier.

Today, many brands are trying to identify suitable opinion leaders for the promotion of their products, and they are marketing them directly. Marketers who create and find information about products and brands through opinion leaders deliver them to the consumers by using word of mouth communication (Kotler and Armstrong, 2005:142). Word-of-mouth communication is a very close and related concept with the concept of personal effect. The personal effect, which is also found in studies of ancient origin, is connected with the Word-of-mouth communication. In modern marketing researches, this issue has been mentioned after the 1940s (Buttle, 1998:241).

The personal impression is defined as the effect or change that occurs in the attitudes or behavior of the person as a result of communication with others

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fluencer marketing is in the 3rd place with 11 %. Virtual and augmented reality are at 4th place with 10%, while paid content or enrichments are the last with 8% (Source: Statista, Social media trends expected to have the biggest effect on marketing strategies in the US, September 2017-kpmg.com.tr).

Internet access and use of social media in terms of Turkey are also in line with the world. Turkey is also among the countries with high rates of users regarding social media. The rate of Internet usage in Turkey, corresponds to 67% of the population, seems to be approximately 54.33 million Internet users. Social media users account for 63% of the population and 51 million people. 84% of users say they use digital channels every day. Looking at the most frequently visited social media channels in Turkey, it is clearly seen that the winners are Youtube, Facebook, and Instagram (We Are Social-Hootsuite, 2018).

Users who enter social media from various vehicles spend an average of 2 hours, 56 minutes per day. When we look at the activities and rates of mobile users on social media, social media applications are used 24%, while videos are at 28%, and games are used at the rate of 22%. In the study, there are rates of use of social networks. According to this, Facebook is preferred by 26%, Twitter by 17%, Google+ by 14%, Instagram by 12%, LinkedIn by 8%, and Pinterest by 7 %. Instagram has about 3.5 billion likes per day, with an average of 80 million shared photos per day (www.instagram.com, 2015).

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