

HALIL IBRAHIM GURCAN
Anadolu University, Faculty of Communication Sciences
Eskisehir, Turkey
higurcan@gmail.com

The influence of mobile communication technologies on news dissemination process: an evaluation in Turkey scale within the context of media ecology theory

INTRODUCTION

Media ecology approach examines communication technology itself (verbal expressions, writing, press, television, internet etc) rather than message content in communication processes and economy-politics of communication.

N. Postman, in his book titled "What is Media Ecology?", focuses on how communication media affects perception and understanding of "human" as well as his values and feelings. He further suggests that ecology, or environment, involves complex message systems that expose certain thought, feeling and behavior patterns. Shaped by the interaction of multi communication technologies, media ecology restructures the perceptions, discourses and behaviors of individuals, assigns certain roles to people and help them to fulfill these roles. Similarly, it controls what should be done or not be done depending on the nature of the prevailing environment through enforcements having various levels and formality (Alver; 2004:198).

Media ecology presents a certain environment or a part of life; however, the effects it creates cause changes in overall culture, harm public communication space and environment, spoil ecological balance and create new balances. The studies focusing on life and communication conditions since the invention of printing machine - especially how children culture are affected (Postman; 1994:9) deals with communication tools to address a specific culture - conclude that the strengths and weaknesses of the culture should be clearly stated and media is the most convenient tool to realize that. (Postman; 1994:10) argues that message is a worldly design and designs affect life by break into pieces the world. By realizing reality designs, media affects not only culture and cultural environment but also individuals, and shapes their personalities.

Social networking sites are Web 2.0 internet technology-based applications that enable their users to create their own content. Web 2.0 technology involves blogs, wikis, social network sites (such as Facebook, MySpace), web-based communication channels (chat groups), photograph sharing (Flickr, Instagram etc), video uploading and sharing (such as Youtube), public announcements, websites and more. It also provides different dimensions and advantages. Such changes directly affect social and cultural life and restructure them.

Since the advancements in computer and internet technologies facilitate message sharing and make distances closer in this networking age, message management has gained more importance. Especially, thanks to the emergence of mobile technologies, communication has been more interactional, the global dimension of communication has expanded and become location free. The communication in social media environment has been more than just a type communication among individuals and affected economic relations, politics and diplomacy. Digital life and media ecology, which have emerged following mobile communication technologies, have caused radical changes in news production and consumption processes by allowing location free communication (Alver; 2004: 202).

Today, there are virtual environments where individuals who shoot images everywhere, edit them with their own point of views are given opportunities to display them and share their ideas and knowledge.

In today's world, the individuals communicating via social media share their attitudes towards to what is happening in terms of feelings, thoughts and social life in the form of verbal, written and auidal expressions. Such shares sometimes manipulated the masses in public domain. Nowadays, mobile communication technologies not only influence many areas ranging from economy to politics, from culture to social relationships but also result in the emergence of new perception patterns (Alver; 2004: 207). Technology and its extensions have been significant factors that altered many things in terms of time, space and relationships and affected our perceptions regarding our ways of thinking and actions, daily life, cultural life and political life.

The internet enables an individual to address large number of people, disseminate and share information within a network in a controlled way. In addition, it provides opportunities for users to actively participate in discussions in platforms, which makes the internet and social media ideal environments for content shares. Therefore; social media has been the most popular media tool because it is an interactive communication tool, it contributes to socialization and social capitals of individuals and enables individuals to express themselves clearly in a freer and more democratic environment (Alver; 2004: 217).

Background

Especially since the beginning of the year 2000, mobile communication technologies have been changing our lives in all aspects. Within this change, instead of traditional media environments, all communication environments ranging from internet and social media to newspapers and radio, and from music records to television broadcasting have been adapted to the mobile technologies. With smart phones and tablets which have become widespread since the beginning of 2000, the dimensions of communication have changed and in news consumption people have inclined towards both news sites in mobile communication environments and news shared in social media. With the transformation of cell phones into smart phones and with granting access to fast internet even in extensive locations through wi-fi or 4G technologies, differences have been experienced in

journalism dimensions such as access to news, news consumption, or the transfer of a visual related with an emergent event to a news channel.

With mobile communication technologies, elements in the process of receiving or sending information by using smart phones and tablets and by connecting to internet with wi-fi and 4G technologies are defined. The communication environment that mobile communication technologies influenced the most were mobile news environments instead of news environments in the traditional media. In the media and news environment, in which the speed and quantity increased, social media transformed into a news source and started to be perceived as a news agency in processes such as giving, gathering and consuming news. Mobile technologies presents various advantages such as acquiring information cheaply, timeliness, access from everywhere, opportunity of multi-options, warnings for the news missed, sharing a news with other people, and listing the relevant news with the user identification system.

Objectives

In this study, it is explained the environment of the media and its technology that is used for online news gathering and publishing processes.

Method and expected result

In this research, within the context of media ecology theory, which tries to explain the environment that the media is in and the evolutionary nature of the media thanks to the developments in technology, how internet users in Turkey use mobile technologies in disseminating news will be analyzed according to the statistical data derived from Turkish Statistical Institute.

It is concluded that the online news sites professionals' are using the mobile technology by improving trends, because the users moving the smartphone application so quickly. For that, online news sites are being improved their technological infrastructures almost weekly.

FINDINGS

This study presents data obtained from a case analysis in Turkish context regarding the use of social media in news production and consumption. The data was obtained from the statistical figures about the use of internet and mobile communication technologies, which were released by Turkish Statistical Institute (TSI) in the early 2016.

According to Address-based Population Registration System prepared by Turkish Statistical Institute, the population of Turkey is 79.741.053 and active users of internet is 46.280.000 (58%).

90% of Turkish population (71.000.000) has subscriptions for mobile internet service from an internet service provider company.

The number of active social media users is 42.000.000 (54%).

There are 36.000.000 active mobile social media users in Turkey. In other words, 46% of Turkish population use social media in a mobile way via their smart phones or tablets.

There was a 10% increase in the number of internet users from January 2015 to January 2016.

The number of active social media users increased 5% from 2015.

The 13% increase in the number of individuals actively accessing social media in a mobile way clearly proves the preference for mobile technology.

56% of mobile phone owners in Turkey have smart phones. 5% of digital device owners has wearable technology products – which are devices designed to increase life quality such as Google Glass, smart watch, glass, bracelet and other recent wearable devices developed for various sectors- and 1% has e-book readers.

Internet users spend an average of 4 hours and 14 minutes on the internet with their computers or tablets.

The average time spent in a day by Turkish internet users on social media is 2 hours 32 minutes and average time spent by watching TV is 2 hours 18 minutes. This situation clearly shows that social media is preferred more than TV by Turkish people.

77% of internet users in Turkey access the internet every day. This percentage is 16% for those who access to the internet once a week and 3% for once a month.

The most popular social platform used in Turkey is Facebook, which is followed by WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Twitter and Instagram respectively.

As for the age range of Facebook users, 20-29 is the range involving the highest number of users.

63% of Facebook users in Turkey is male and 37% female.

55% of mobile internet users is pre-paid subscribers and 45% post-paid.

The percentage for those using broadband (3 G and 4,5 G) with their mobile access is 39.

As of April 2015, the percentages for computer and internet use by individuals in the age range 16-74 are 54.8% and 55.9% respectively. These figures were 64% and 65.8% for males and 45.6% and 46.1% for females. In 2014, the percentages for computer and internet use were 53.5% and 53.6%.

7 out of 10 homes have access to the internet. The percentage of homes having internet access across Turkey was 69.5% in April 2015.

59.5% of the homes without internet access stated that they do not have internet access because they did not feel need to do so, which was followed by "lack of information about this access" (44.7%) and "high cost of subscriptions" (38.5%).

The percentage of homes with broadband internet access is 67.8%. Accordingly, 37.4% of these homes have fixed line broadband (ADSL, wired internet, fiber etc) and 58.7% mobile broadband. Only 2.7% of homes has narrowband for internet access.

As of April 2015, 96.8% of homes owned mobile phones or smart phones, while the percentage for fixed land line phones was 29.6. Similarly, 25.2% of homes owned desktop computers, 43.2% laptop computers and 20.9% TVs with internet access.

As for the reasons of internet use, social media was stated as the most popular reason. 80.9% of internet users in the first three months of 2015 shared content such as photographs, sent messages and created profiles on social media. 70.2% stated that they used internet to read online news websites, newspapers and magazines; 66.3% searched for health information, 62.1% created content such as texts, images, photographs, video, music etc to upload any websites and 59.4% searched information about goods and services.

The most popular place internet users preferred for internet access was home in the first three months of 2015. 87.1% of internet users at 16-74 age range accessed internet from their homes, which was followed by offices (42.5%), a relative's or friend's home (37.7%), places offering free wireless internet services such as shopping centers and airport etc (29.2%), and internet cafes (10.6%).

The use of portable devices for internet access increased. 74.4% of internet users used their mobile phones or smart phones to access wireless internet connection when they are not at home or offices and 28.9% computer (desktop, netbook, tablet etc) in the first three months of 2015. These figures were 58% and 28.5% for the same period of 2014 respectively.

53.2% of internet users used e-government services. In other words, more than half of the users accessed the internet personally to communicate with governmental offices and benefit from public services between April 2014 and April 2015, which was 53.3% in the previous year- between April 2013 and April 2014. As for the reasons of using the internet, obtaining information from the websites of governmental offices has the percentage of 50.5% as the most popular reason.

The use of the internet for online shopping to order products for personal use has increased to 33.1% from 30.8% in one year.

As for the percentages of items purchased online between April 2014 and March 2015, the following figures are presented: 57.4% clothing and sports equipment; 27% travel tickets and car rental etc; 25.5% household goods (furniture, toy, domestic appliances etc); 22.4% electronic devices (mobile phone, camera, radio, TV, DVD player etc); and 18.4% book, magazine, newspaper (including e-book).

23.2% of the internet users who bought or ordered items online between April 2014 and March 2015 experienced problems with online shopping. The problems experienced the most were late delivery of the items (47%) and the delivery of wrong or damaged items (45.4%).

The number of regular internet users also increased. The percentage of internet users who accessed the internet every day or at least once a week in the first three months of 2015 was 94.2% (TSI: 2016)

1998	16 959 500	3 382 137	229 885
1999	18 054 047	7 562 972	436 610
2000	18 395 171	14 970 745	1 629 156
2001	18 904 486	19 502 897	1 619 270
2002	18 914 857	23 323 118	1 309 770
2003	18 916 721	27 887 535	906 650
2004	19 125 163	34 707 549	1 474 590
2005	18 978 223	43 608 965	2 248 105
2006	18 831 616	52 662 709	3 180 580
2007	18 201 006	61 975 807	4 842 798
2008	17 502 205	65 824 110	5 804 923
2009	16 534 356	62 779 554	8 849 779
2010	16 201 466	61 769 635	14 443 644
2011	15 210 846	65 321 745	22 371 441
2012	13 859 672	67 680 547	27 649 055

2013	13 551 705	69 661 108	32 613 930
2014	12 528 865	71 888 416	41 272 940
2015	11 493 057	73 639 261	48 617 291

Source: TurkStat, Ministry of Transport, Maritime Affairs and Communications, Information and Communications Technologies Authority

CONCLUSION

According to the statistical data, Turkish people use the internet and social media to get news from the different sources. Turkish people spend time on media is that:

- Average daily internet use on tablet, laptop or computer: 4 hours 37 minutes
- Average daily internet use on mobile phone: 2 hours 51 minutes
- Average daily social media use on any device: 2 hours 56 minutes
- Average TV viewing time of internet users: 2 hours 17 minutes

Turkish people also use social media to sharing news and related videos as journalist, that can be said the citizen journalism. However this is needed another research that has been already planned.

REFERENCES

- Alver, F. (2004). "Neil Postman'ın Çocukluğun Yok Oluş Sürecinde İletişim Teknolojisi Eleştirisinin Eleştirisi". **Ankara Üniversitesi – İletişim Araştırmaları Journal**, 2(2): 129-141
- Castells, Manuel, 2000. **Network Society and The Era of Information**. Vol .1, Toplum ve Kültür İstanbul; Bogazici University Press.
- Topbaş, H. And Isik, U.(2014). "Kurgu ile Gerçeklik Arasında Gezi Parkı Eylemleri ve Sosyal Medya", **Birey ve Toplum**, Spring 2014, Vol.4, No.7.
- Postman Neil(1994). **Televizyon Öldüren Eğlence**, Ayrıntı Publishing.
- <http://eticaretmag.com/btk-turkiye-mobil- cihaz-kullanim-verilerini-acikladi/>
- <http://www.tusbeyinli.com/2015/05/dunyada-turkiyede-dijital-mobil-sosyal-medya-kullanim-istatistikleri.html>
- <http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=18660>
- <http://www.tusbeyinli.com/2015/05/dunyada-turkiyede-dijital-mobil-sosyal-medya-kullanim-istatistikleri.html>