

**CHANGES IN THE CONSERVATIVE LIFESTYLE: THE CASE OF WOMEN
INSTAGRAMMERS**

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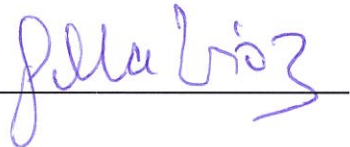
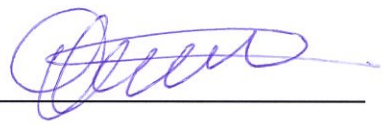
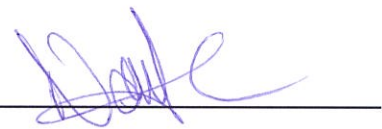
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This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Cultural Studies.

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Selvanur', written in a cursive style.

ABSTRACT

CHANGES IN THE CONSERVATIVE LIFESTYLE: THE CASE OF WOMEN INSTAGRAMMERS

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Ordinary internet users, benefiting from the content creation ability provided to all individuals by the social media channels, has been experiencing a change from consumer usership to producer usership for the last twenty years. Instagram, a visual-based social media channel that allows users to present lifestyle representations, upgrades the place of the producer users to one level higher and offers them the opportunity to become influencers. This thesis investigates the relationship between one of the social groups that has gained fame and followers with the lifestyle representations on Instagram, the young women conservative influencers, and the Instagram culture. In this thesis, the method of digital ethnography is used. Ten influencer accounts, five conservatives and five non-conservatives, that share lifestyle-themed posts is observed for a year as an online participant and their one-month long posts are analyzed in-depth. The goal of this study is to see whether Instagram culture and the experience of being an influencer have similar effects on different social groups and to detect the point the understanding of conservative lifestyle reached in this new culture. As a result, it is observed that the understanding of conservative lifestyles adapted to the Instagram culture and the conservative women influencers that are examined in this study adopted new lifestyle understandings suitable for this culture.

Keywords: Instagram, social media channels, conservatism, lifestyle, influencer, digital ethnography

ÖZ

MUHAFAZAKÂR HAYAT TARZINDAKİ DEĞİŞİMLER: KADIN INSTAGRAMMERLAR ÖRNEĞİ

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Sosyal medya kanallarının tüm bireylere sunduğu içerik yaratma imkânından yararlanan sıradan internet kullanıcıları, yaklaşık son yirmi yıldır tüketici kullanıcılıktan üretici kullanıcılığa geçiş tecrübesi yaşamaktadırlar. Görselliğe dayalı olan ve kullanıcıların hayat tarzı temsillerini sergilemesine olanak sağlayan Instagram ise, üretici kullanıcıların sosyal medya kanallarındaki konumunu bir seviye daha yukarı taşımakta ve onlara influencer (etki lideri) olma şansı tanımaktadır. Bu tez, Instagram'daki hayat tarzı temsilleriyle ün ve kitle kazanan sosyal gruplardan biri olan muhafazakar genç kadın influencerların Instagram kültürü ile olan ilişkisini incelemektedir. Bu tezde, dijital etnografi yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Beş muhafazakar, beş muhafazakar olmayan, hayat tarzı temalı paylaşımlar yapan on influencer hesabı, bir yıl boyunca çevrim içi katılımcı olarak gözlemlenmiştir ve bir aylık paylaşımları derinlemesine analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmanın amacı, Instagram kültürünün ve influencer olma deneyimlerinin farklı sosyal gruplar üzerinde benzer etkileri olup olmadığını görmek ve muhafazakâr hayat tarzı anlayışlarının bu yeni kültür içerisinde geldiği noktayı tespit etmektir. Sonuç olarak; muhafazakâr hayat tarzı anlayışlarının Instagram kültürüne adapte olduğu ve araştırılan muhafazakar kadın influencerların bu kültüre uygun yeni hayat tarzı anlayışları benimsedikleri gözlemlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Instagram, sosyal medya, muhafazakarlık, hayat tarzı, influencer, dijital etnografi

To my dear husband, Burak...



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The 2000s and the later years were different than before as due to social media, we experienced the political, economic, social and daily events both in Turkey and the world rather differently. For example, in 2001, The President of the Philippines Joseph Estrada had to give up the presidency few days after the people organized protests against him through the social media (Shirky, 2017). In 2009, in the University of California campuses, with the collaboration of students and professors, protest meetings were organized and thanks to these protests, the state of California increased funding for the university and the students were free of tuition (Samuels, 2011). The Arab Spring in 2011, Occupy Wall Street in 2012, in Turkey the Gezi Park Protests in 2013 and the prevention of the military coup attempt in 2016 by the public were all due to ordinary people getting organized over the social media and acting on it. All these events heralds that the media, with its “new face”, stood before us and a notable space is created for the ordinary users in this “new media”.

The rights ordinary users gained through social media were not just political ones. The basic outcome of Web 2.0 era, thanks to wikis, blogs, folksonomies and social networking sites, was that ordinary users were allowed to create and broadcast content without having any technical knowledge (Laughey, 2010). This situation caused the polarisation between public and private media to disappear slowly, and helped ordinary individuals to reach masses -a property of public media- and to send mass messages (Miller et al., 2016, pg. 2). Blogs and social networking sites was filled with the visual and textual content created by ordinary users. Therefore, the field was open to anyone who wants to spread their lives, thoughts and messages throughout the world. The people we didn't know existed until recently transformed into influencers admired by the public (Khamis et al., 2017). In this context, social media took up an important space in the daily life and social issues with visual-based channels such as Youtube, Snapchat, Vine or Instagram;

just like it affected the direction of political and economic events through channels like Facebook and Twitter. In the former social networking sites, which created their own influencers, the main topic was more popular issues and lifestyle representations.

In these social media channels, new celebrities creating content in different areas from music to literature, from makeup to healthy living, from fashion to lifestyle found life. For example, Justin Bieber, the singer with millions of fans, was just a 12-year-old child when he started publishing song videos on Youtube. After he was discovered, he turned into a superstar and achieved many things including nominations for the Grammys (Johnston, 2014). Another example is Huda Kattan. She became famous with her makeup videos on Instagram and Youtube. She now has more than 38 million followers, her own makeup brand and made millions from many different projects (Mediakix, 2018). Then, becoming a celebrity, earning money, affecting the decision/purchasing processes of the masses or starting political protests and causing social change are not impossible with the help of social media.

Media optimists see the benefits granted by the social media channels to individuals and societies as democratic gains and claim that social media transforms users into producers (Costa, 2016), media pessimists stand across this view and claim that Web 2.0 technology and the social media tools are regular parts of the status quo. Social media, on one hand, gives the individuals a voice never seen before; but on the other hand, it is accused of silencing and ignoring some voices, i.e. of acting “biased”. For example, in the 2012 Olympic Games in London, a The Independent reporter criticized the broadcaster NBC on his Twitter account, after which his Twitter account is suspended. This was an unexpected event and it is believed that behind this was the corporate collaboration between Twitter and NBC during the Olympics (Garcia, 2013). Similarly, Facebook suspending the accounts of Palestinian reporters reporting on Facebook about the attacks by Israeli army on Palestine in 2016 was similarly criticized (Hyatt, 2016).

This ambivalent structure of social media fueled the debates that whether users are producers or consumers. Morozov, at this point, claims that all this digital world and the selection of entertainment transformed individuals into easily manipulatable by the governments, thoughtless, intellectual and apolitical pawns (as cited in Thierer, 2011). Additionally, the content and the performances created on social media, especially in the context of lifestyle (Goffman, 1959), were more of assistants feeding the wheel of consumer culture than they are posts that individuals freely share about their natural and objective lives (Adorno, 1975). For example, an ordinary young woman can get fame and interest, and later money, by sharing her own lifestyle on Instagram. This seems to be standing before us as a new and better option, which did not exist before. However, this lives that we share as our supposedly own lifestyles goes subordinate to fashion and new trends, carrying the consumer culture to farther points than traditional media ever could, much more easily.

In Turkey –as in the world-, Instagram, the second most popular social media channel as of 2019, comes across as one of the foci of these debates revolving around the axis of social media. Instagram’s main feature separating it from other popular social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter is that it is visual-based and presents a concept allowing the creation of lifestyle-themed content. Instagram’s Discover section categorizes the photos and videos that can be discovered in this section as follows: Style, Decoration, TV and Movies, Beauty, Food, Science and Technology, Travel, Nature, Music, Cars, Art and Comics¹. As this categorization points out, Instagram keeps growing each day as an SNS appealing to its users’ different lifestyles, hobbies and interests and creates its own influencers. One of the groups that gained fame and followers with their own lifestyle representations are, without a doubt, conservative and headscarved young women. These young women who define themselves, their dressing styles and lifestyles as conservative and modest were ordinary individuals not known by the public before they joined Instagram; but with their posts on Instagram, they gained more than a

¹ For more information, see: <https://www.instagram.com/explore/>

hundred thousand followers. Some of them made this environment in which they share their lifestyles a place of business; started to sell the clothes and scarves they wear. Some collaborated with brands and started posting ads. Thus, while experiencing all these, they started to experience changes and transformations in their practices of conservative culture, thereby providing a topic -the lifestyle representations of young influencer women inside Instagram culture- worthy of study.

In this thesis, I focus on the lifestyle examples presented by the conservative women instagrammers on Instagram. I observe five conservative and five non-conservative women instagrammers, their posts, the messages contained in these posts and their relationship with their followers; for a year using an ethnographic analysis in digital channels. Later, I compare the one-month long posts of each of these instagrammers by analyzing them in-depth. The goal in this study is to see the impact Instagram culture has on both conservative and non-conservative users. The size and the content of this impact shows us whether Instagram culture has the same impact on different social groups, and carry us back to the debate in the beginning. How liberating Instagram – and social media culture- really is for the ordinary individuals and at what level do they provide these individuals with the opportunity to be real “producers” who can undermine the system and speak freely and genuinely? The main aim of this study is to raise this question and look for answers.

1.1. Outline of Thesis

This thesis consists of three main chapters. In Chapter Two, I talk about the Web 2.0 technology that entered our lives with the advent of internet technologies, and its basic features. Then, I touch upon the emergence of social media as an output of these features. In what order did the social networking sites emerge, how they developed, what types of characteristics they have are beneficial to know as it helps us to have a sense of perspective. On the other hand, I share the social media statistics in Turkey and the world in detail in this chapter. In the further pages, I focus on the transforming user

experience due to the user-oriented approach of social media, from SNSs in general to Instagram in specific. In the user journey from consumership to producership, to influencership, I discuss the concept of instagammership that arose from the Instagram culture and conclude this chapter.

In Chapter Three, I concentrate on the main topic of my study, namely the Instagram culture, lifestyle concept and the lifestyle performances Turkish conservative young women experience on Instagram. The first goal in this chapter is, before jumping on to the analysis, to discuss what a lifestyle is and how it is experienced with the Instagram culture. In this context, I touch upon the influencers who define themselves as “lifestyle instagrammer/influencer” and the main features of their posts. In the second half of this chapter, I try to understand the “conservative life culture” these users have and the identities of these veiled modern young women that have become stronger and more visible in Turkey. The participation of this group, which has developed in terms of economic and social aspects, to the Instagram culture is the starting point of my study. After getting to know these accounts, which present “lifestyle” representations on Instagram in posts with themes such as fashion, makeup, outfit, relationships and private life, I move on to the next chapter for the analysis.

In Chapter Four, I start by talking about the methodology, namely digital ethnography, my topic of research, its goals, importance, scope and limitations. Then, I introduce the accounts I study and pass on to findings and analysis. This section contains screenshots of photos and captions shared by these accounts. Using these figures, I categorize the 1-month-long posts of these accounts into three basic categories. These are the analyses of visual, verbal and message contents. I focus on my research question over these posts of the conservative and non-conservative women lifestyle influencers. The outcome derived from this study presents important results as to the participation of Turkish conservative young women influencers to the Instagram culture and the related changes in their understanding of conservative lifestyle.

CHAPTER 2

THE EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA CULTURE

A few decades ago, internet was not as “social” as it is today. Network sites developed in the 1970s-80s within the means of the World Wide Web like Plato System and CBCC are considered as the firsts in the history of social media (Glenn, 2012). However in the first decade of the 21st century, new social media channels -later will be named social networking sites (boyd & Ellison, 2007, pg. 211)- were going to whisper the beginning of a new era to our ears. These social networking sites with broadcast media monologues converted to social media dialogues (Berthon et al., 2012, pg. 263), internet consumers turned into creative consumers and user generated content gaining importance (Mandiberg, 2012), were the footsteps of a milestone, namely the Web 2.0 era.

Over the years, many social networking sites containing all the opportunities offered by Web 2.0 has been established and developed. Each SNS has its own idiosyncratic features. However, the common thing in all of them, which has the potential to have an effect on civil society on a worldwide scale, is the producership opportunity it provided to ordinary individuals (Shirky, 2017). That the internet technologies lifting the borders individuals face and making them more “accessible” have brought about many events that had the chance to affect the results of many political and social incidents in many countries in 2000s. Although the internet and social networking sites are much lauded for this aspect and seen as a revolution, that Web 2.0 is more democratic and user-oriented was open to debate (Laughey, 2010). Social media channels that entered into our lives swiftly provided certain rights to ordinary users, but also pushed all its users under the spell of the new culture it created. In this section, the point SNSs has reached today from their creation and the effects of new social media culture on users will be discussed.

2.1. Web 2.0 Technologies and the Emergence of Social Media

Web 2.0, due to its name, may sound like an ordinarily named era right after Web 1.0. However, contrary to belief, the first conceptualized era was Web 2.0. Since Dale Dougherty of O'Reilly Media first mentioned Web 2.0 in an internet conference in 2004, its content as a concept were widely discussed but never fully understood. A year after the conference, Tim O'Reilly, wanting to establish a ground to these discussions, wrote an article and described the core competencies of Web 2.0.

O'Reilly's (2007) "What Is Web 2.0: Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software" article sheds light on the previous and current state and divide it into periods. O'Reilly (2007) summarizes the fundamental breakthroughs arriving with Web 2.0 in seven points: These are services, not packaged software, with cost-effective scalability control over unique, hard-to-recreate data sources that get richer as more people use them; trusting users as co-developers; harnessing collective intelligence; leveraging the long tail through customer self-service; software above the level of a single device; lightweight user interfaces, development models and business models. As O'Reilly emphasizes (2007), the most important feature of Web 2.0 is its tendency to present web not as a service but as a product (pg. 30) This tendency converted the web from a limited and narrow online space to a platform. In this context, since 2000s, the web has transformed from a static web model to a customer-interactive open model. Therefore, it has become easy to broadcast a text, a visual or a sound on the web (Terranova & Donovan 2013, pg. 297). We can claim that, Web 1.0 concerns itself with creating and viewing the online content, Web 2.0, as a platform, provides the user with the ability to find the content and manipulate it (Barnatt, 2012).

The most obvious example regarding this may be the first company websites generated with Web 1.0 technologies. When we think back a little bit, we can remember that these websites are the mirroring images of the paper company flyers on the screen. These websites, called "brochureware" (Berthon et al., 2012, pg. 261), later left their places to

e-commerce websites that allow the users actively participate and consume. Websites developed rapidly and provided the brands' customers with websites that allow consumer-generated content (Berthon et al., 2012).

Another important competency of Web 2.0 is harnessing collective intelligence. O'Reilly (2007), in the section in which he talks about the development of blogs, likens this collective intelligence to some kind of a global brain. He proposes that blogosphere is a manifestation of the constant mental dialogue in our forebrain (pg. 26). Simultaneously with the Web 2.0 technologies, the blogosphere that came forward from the end of the 90s, was the first channel in which collective intelligence and user generated content sprang to life. In various areas, from food to fashion or from sports to culture and arts, numerous online content generated by ordinary users found a big archive for itself in the big data of the internet. Based on this, one of the most important opportunities offered to ordinary people by Web 2.0, the blog, was a critical step towards movement to the social networking site period.

Dan Gillmor, talks about Web 2.0 providing the opportunity to the people who used to be audiences to decide what is important in the backseats they occupy (as cited in O'Reilly, 2007). O'Reilly, on the other hand, explains this situation with one of the most important features of Web 2.0, "trusting users as co-developers" (pg. 27). We call the area in which users turn into co-developers social media. We can proclaim that the social media platforms in which consumers became producers, contents shaped in the hands of creative users is the most important output of Web 2.0. In this context, even though social media started synchronously with the blogosphere period, it went a step further not just due to its content/form diversity, but also due to the crowds it managed to reach. Therefore, it would not be wrong to say that the social media channels that occupy a space in our lives for the last 15 years was the most significant result of Web 2.0 in having the most transforming effect on society.

2.2. Social Networking Sites in the World and in Turkey

Many websites that sprang with the Web 1.0 technology, although basically were in the general concept of social media, will not be covered in this study. "Social media channels", "social network sites" or "social networking sites"; just like these names they were given and thanks to the new features provided by Web 2.0, will be studied as the rapid and impactful social realities that they are. In this context, social media channels that we started talking about with the advent of the 21st century are now at a position that allow itself to be studied socially, culturally and economically from many aspects. Communications theorists and academics have been trying to come up with a definition for the "social media" concept since these social networking sites came to fruition.

For example, Shirky (2008) calls the social media a tool that allow people to go beyond the traditional institutions in sharing, collaborating and protesting. Boyd (2009) describes social media as a collection of software that enables individuals and communities to gather, communicate, share, and in some cases collaborate or play. Van Dijk (2013) says that, due to interconnection of platforms, there arose a new ecosystem of connective media. According to him, transition to the platformed society in networked communication happened in a timespan as short as ten years (pg. 11). Terranova and Donovan (2013) defines social media as a new information distribution topology that depends on real social connections and supported by daily and algorithmic connections (pg. 297) and Lovink (2011) presents social media as a platform that streamlines the usage and socialness thanks to Web 2.0 and that allows users to broadcast visuals and contents for free (pg. 5). On the other hand, there are views that (Meikle and Young, 2012) claim social media facilitating a convergence between personal communication and public communication and blurring the space between them. As can be seen, social media definitions sound similar in respect to the points they focus on. The main focal points of the social media concept are a platform that allow users to compose-broadcast open content, its focus on socialness, networking and communication, and entered our lives with the advent of Web 2.0 network technologies.

Boyd & Ellison (2007) defines social network/ing sites (SNS) as follows:

...social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. (pg. 211)

The first SNS that is both a product of the Web 2.0 technology and suits this definition is SixDegrees.com, launched in 1997. In social media launch times, this site and date has its place as a milestone. After this date, social media channels diversified rapidly, and some other web sites revised their applications and converted themselves into social media sites. 2000 onwards, there was a boom in the number of SNSs. Some SNSs that create reactions and were actively used are as follows: Friendster (2002), Couchsurfing (2003), MySpace (2003), LinkedIn (2003), Flickr (2004), Facebook (Harvard only) (2004), Youtube (2005), Facebook (Everyone) (2006), Twitter (2006), Tumblr (2007), Pinterest (2010), Instagram (2010), Snapchat (2011), Vine (2013), Periscope (2015).

Table 2.1. Some of the Most Prominent Social Networking Sites

Social Networking Sites	Date Launched	Founder	Definition and Key Features	Number of Users (2019)
Friendster	2002	Jonathan Abrams	Originally a social networking site, later went through a revamp and became a social gaming site. Closed, as of 2018	-
Couchsurfing	2003	Casey Fenton and Daniel Hoffer	A network through which people find accommodation and can crash on other users' houses for short amounts of time for free.	15 million
MySpace	2003	Chris DeWolfe and Tom Anderson	A social networking site that allows users to connect with their friends and share visuals, texts, blogs etc.	15 million (2016)
LinkedIn	2003	Reid Hoffman	A business networking site in which users can post their CVs and job opportunities.	604 million
Flickr	2004	Catherine Fake and Stewart Butterfield	An image and video hosting website	90 million
Youtube	2005	Chad Hurley and Steve Chen	An online video sharing site	1,900 billion
Facebook	2006 (Harvard Only, 2004)	Mark Zuckerberg	An online networking site that allows users to add friends and connect with them	2,271 billion

Table 2.1. (Continued)

Twitter	2006	Jack Dorsey	A networking website in which users can share their thoughts, ideas, news, visuals and etc. in 140-character posts, later increased to 280 characters	326 million
Tumblr	2007	David Karp	A blogging social media site. It allows its users to send multimedia or other types of content to a short form blog.	459 million
Pinterest	2010	Paul Sciarra, Evan Sharp and Ben Silbermann	A network in which users share all kinds of visuals and works as a pin board.	250 million
Instagram	2010	Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger	A photo sharing app that allows users to share captioned photos with their followers	1 billion
Snapchat	2011	Evan Spiegel	Multimedia message sharing app that allows users send photos, videos, voices and texts to each other, which are available for view for a limited amount of time	287 million
Vine	2013	Dom Hofmann, Rus Yusupov and Colin Kroll	A video sharing app It allowed its users to share 6-second, looping videos Acquired by Twitter in 2012, ceased operations in 2017	-
Periscope	2015	Kayvon Beykpour and Joe Bernstein	A live video streaming app Acquired by twitter before its launch	10 million

Even though there were other SNSs before it, Youtube's activation in 2005 is generally considered as the turning point in the social media history. Because, the first time in history were the opportunities offered by Web 2.0 technology being exploited, and the completely-user-generated content establishes hegemony in a platform. According to Irak and Yazicioğlu (2012), the virtual communities occurring from the reflection of real life in previous SNSs and forums were reestablished in the new period starting with Youtube and continuing with other SNSs with new identities, stronger and almost independent from the real world. According to the same view, real identities surfacing in the social media occurred with Facebook, which was established by Mark Zuckerberg, a Harvard student, in 2004 with the intention of a virtual school yearbook. The biggest difference Facebook had from the "virtuality in social media" trend up to itself was that it was as real as you can learn a lot about the person across you but as virtual as you can adjust the dose of communication. Due to these reasons Irak and Yazicioğlu (2012) claims that the social media as we know and understand it started with Facebook.

It is hard not to agree with this view. As Facebook opened itself to the world in 2006 and with it containing the features of SNSs before itself, channels like Friendster, MySpace, Flickr, FriendFeed, etc. became obsolete and lost their impact over time. Twitter, established in 2006 by differentiating itself from Facebook, became another milestone in social media history. Twitter's difference was that it was plain, simple, mobile friendly. Unlike Facebook, it was designed for mobile use and was much faster. It was text oriented and was based on communicating what you think shortly -in 140 characters- and immediately. This "instantaneity" and "mobile" features of Twitter help carry itself to its position today. Moreover, by that social media gained another ground in which citizens can exist with their political identities (Irak & Yazicioğlu, 2012).

When we get to 2010s, we see that in social networking sites -as we will see in detail later- visuality trend started to dominate. As Instagram, Pinterest and Snapchat came to existence, a new threshold was overcome in the development of SNSs. In the following

years, we witnessed some SNSs buying out others, or some of them being shut down. For example, Facebook bought Instagram for \$1 billion in 2012 and Whatsapp for \$19 billion in 2014, both of which were significant developments in the history of technology. Google bought Youtube and Microsoft bought Skype and helped them improve and spread all over the world. Twitter brought Periscope under its own roof in 2005. Vine, a 6-second video sharing site, was closed down in 2017. Finally, in April 2019, Google announced its users that it will cease operations in its Google Plus service. As these developments continue happening in the world of social media, the spread of social media use in the world goes on inevitably stands before us as a fact.

According to the Digital in 2019 report, which is one of the most comprehensive studies prepared jointly by wearesocial.com and Hootsuite², SNS usage and the number of “active” social media users increase rapidly each year. The number of active social media users in the world by 2019 is 3.484 billion. This put the social media penetration at a staggering 45% of the world population. Moreover, among internet users, this percentage climbs up to 57%. Therefore, we see that internet usage and social media usage accompany each other. Another important statistic demonstrate that from 2018 to 2019, active social media users increased by 9%. In other words, we see that the increase in only one year is 288 million users. This is an indication that social media usage is gaining speed across the world, proving that social media is a huge phenomenon in our lives day by day.

In Turkey, just like in the world, internet and social media usage continues its ever-growing trend. From a historical perspective, it is possible to say that internet and social media develops in Turkey in the same order but rather slowly, when compared to the world. Our pace in adopting the Web 2.0 technology and the following social media applications gained speed with developments in household internet accessibility. Internet forums, dictionaries (notably EkşiSözlük) and blogs were the first and oldest

² Retrived from April 21, 2019. <https://wearesocial.com/global-digital-report-2019>

channels of Turkish social media scene. Development of these channels were directly linked to onset of broadband internet in Turkey and lowering of its price (Irak & Yazicioğlu, 2012). 24-hour internet accessibility of the people in Turkey occurred with the kickoff of ADSL services in 2000s. While developments in terms of internet access and its speed in Turkey, new social media channels were being established in the world (Irak & Yazicioğlu, 2012). Therefore, our integration to these social media channels was successfully completed.

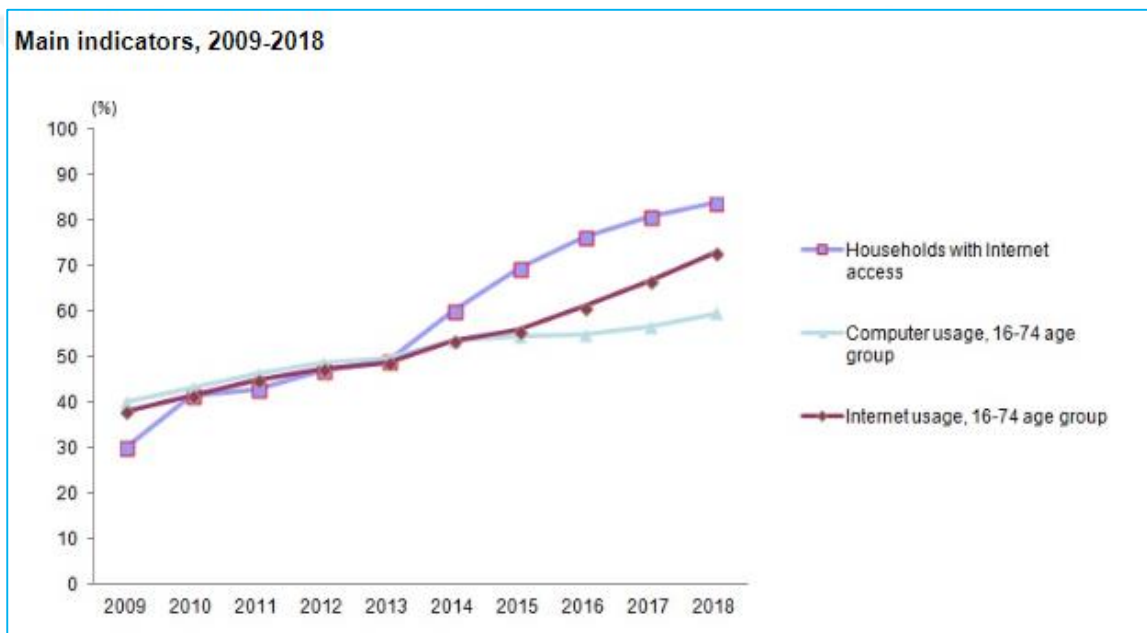


Figure 2.1. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Usage Survey on Households and Individuals, Turkstat 2018

When looked at the annual research done by Turkstat about household computer and internet usage in Turkey, we see that internet usage rapidly increased in the last 14 years. According to this report, in 2005 17.65% of individuals told that they used internet in the last 3 months. This number jumped to 72.9% in 2018. Same report shows that 8 out of 10 homes have access to internet and computer/internet usage increases accordingly.

(Turkstat, 2018).³ Related to these developments, social media channel usage shows a considerable increase each year.

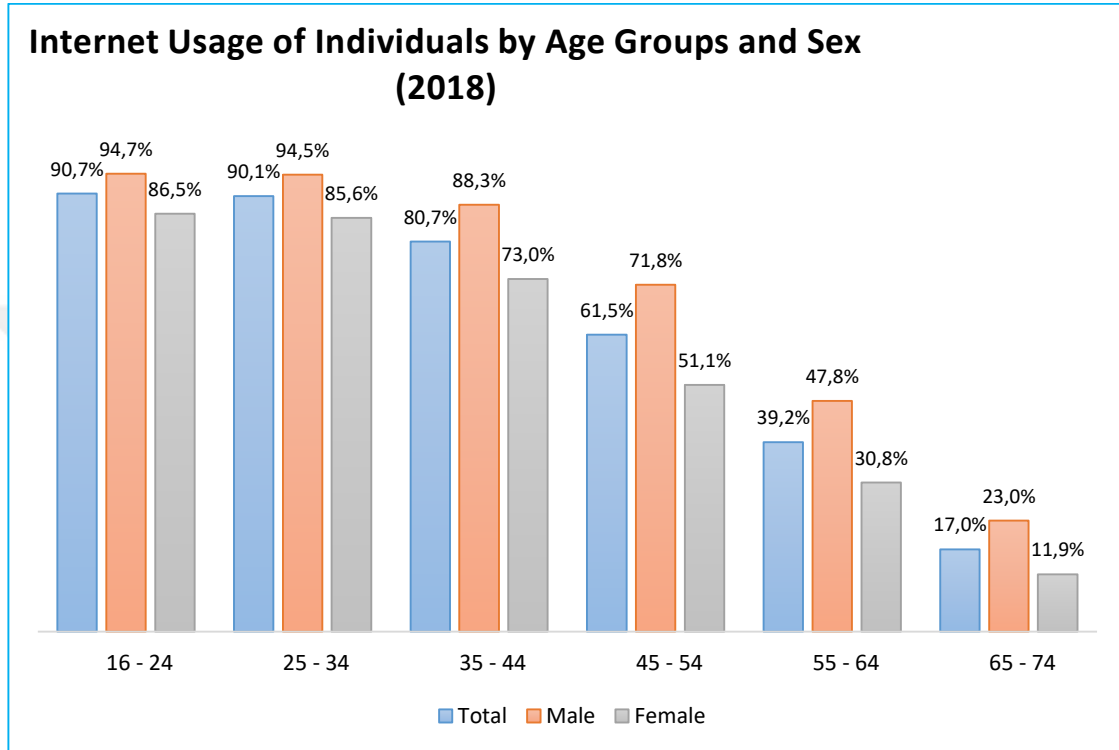


Figure 2.2. Internet Usage of Individuals by Age Groups and Sex, Turkstat 2018

According to the Digital Report (Hootsuite & WeAreSocial, 2019), as of 2019, there are 59.36 million active internet users and 52 million of these are active social media users in Turkey. The ration of active social media users to the country's population is 63%. Among the most used internet languages, Turkish is ranked 12th (Hootsuite & WeAreSocial, 2018). If we consider the international languages' heavy use and the languages with large number of speakers, the position of Turkish on the internet goes to show how accepted internet is in Turkey. Moreover, daily social media usage in Turkey even passes daily TV viewing. Turkish society spends about 2 hours 44 minutes across the box with a screen, while they spend 2 hours 48 minutes on the social media. Long story short, with its competition with TV viewing, social media provides clues for a new

³ Retrieved on April 22, 2019, <http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=27819>

media culture's existence. The impact of the consequences of this new media culture in Turkish sociology will be an issue worth researching of the upcoming years.

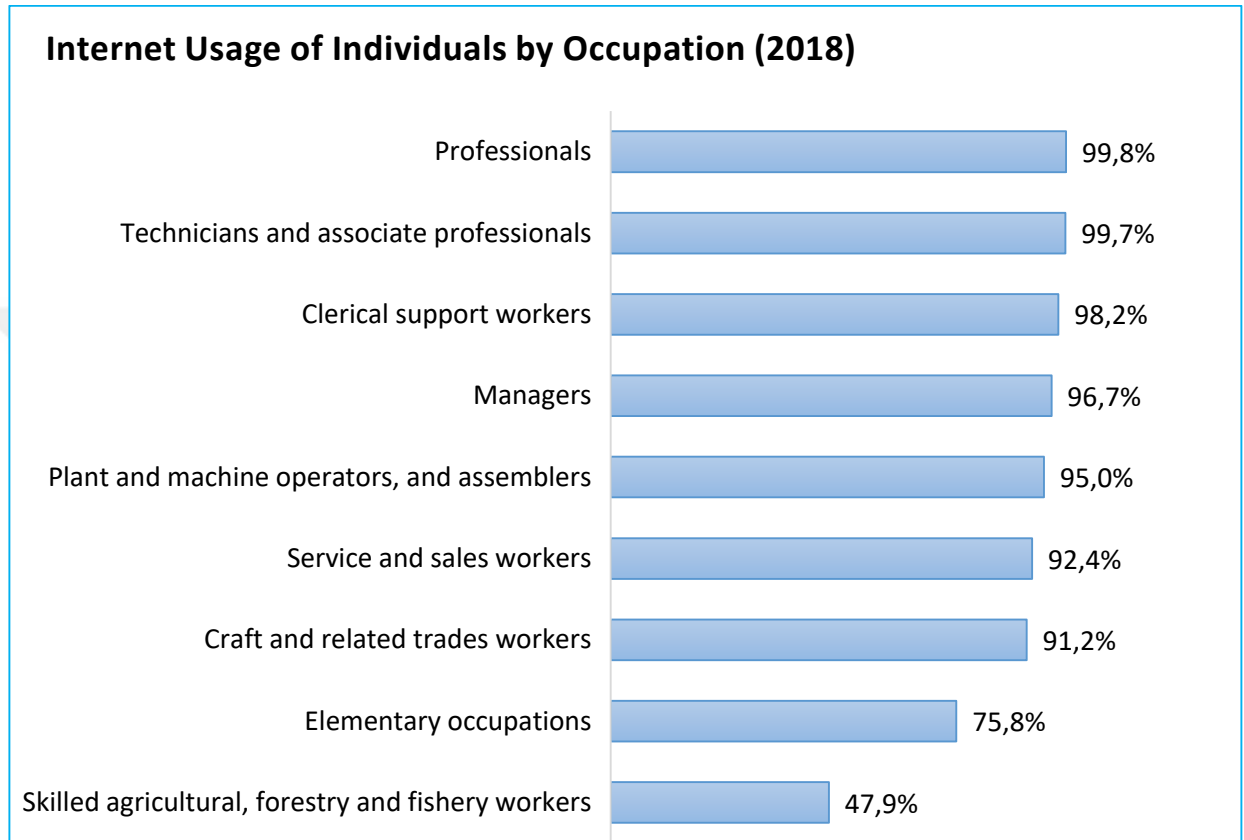


Figure 2.3. Internet Usage of Individuals by Occupation, Turkstat 2018

According to globalwebindex.com surveys (Hootsuite & WeAreSocial, 2018), 70% of internet users living in Turkey are “digital optimistic”, meaning a large portion of Turkish society believes that technological improvements will bring more good than harm and supports them. All these data points to the fact that in Turkey, internet and social media especially will gain importance today and in the future. Moreover, these results indicate that the new social media culture is adopted and internalized by the Turkish, and pushes researchers to go into these issues in detail.

While the improvement of the digital continues in Turkey and the world, we need to point out another important issue: An insight that prophecies the more visualization of

the social media and the digital world. With the rise of video, image search and visual addressing features, we can claim that visuality will keep its position of being one of the most important concepts of social media. (Hootsuite & WeAreSocial, 2019) When looked at the most used social networking sites in Turkey and the world, we see the dominance of the visual-based ones. Apart from Messenger/Chat applications, two of the three most used SNSs are completely visual-based: Youtube and Instagram.

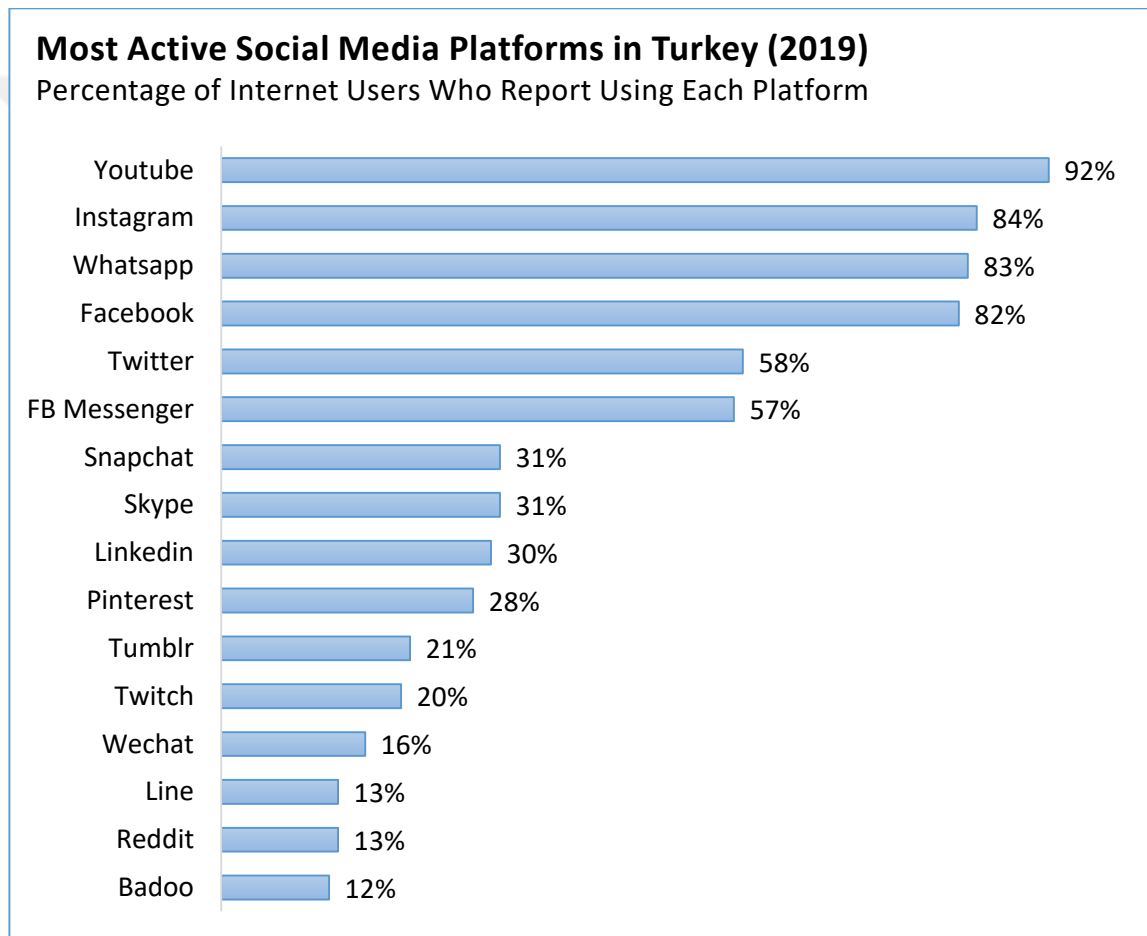


Figure 2.4. Digital in 2019, Hootsuite and wearesocial.com, 2019

The three most active SNSs in Turkey are Youtube, Instagram and Facebook. As of 2019, monthly active Facebook users reached 2.271 billion people. 1 billion people use Instagram actively. These numbers go up day-by-day and active social media users

become more meaningful as users. Routines break regarding being a user, and user-experience in SNSs becomes open for debate.

2.3. From Consumership to Producership: User Experience Transformed by Social Media

The most important impact of SNSs, which were developed thanks to Web 2.0 provided the users the chance to be “co-developers”, in social terms is its transformation of user experience. Internet stopped being the product and have become a platform, thereby converting users from consumers to producers during this process. Users added the “creative” title to their “user” title and started creating content, visuals and discussions, etc. on the world of internet. The monologue period on the internet left its place to the dialogue and democratic one. The social consequences of these user-generated contents were various, and we see these new consequences every day. On the other hand, it would be impossible to explain all this creative production process in one way only. Why and what do the producer users of the social media produce? When we approach the “producer” concept from a sociological point of view, it will be obvious that the results are not one-dimensional and unilateral.

Being creative process of the users first started with them being active fans of the programs they follow on the traditional media channels. During the period in which social media channels first started appearing, Jenkins called the fan clubs “first ones to adopt the developing media and their creative users” (2006/2016). Masses that were the ardent followers of the programs and the people on the traditional media channels would join the program they watch on one channel through a different channel. For example, a fan of a TV show would share his/her comments regarding this program on a blog or a bulletin board. Media consumers of the past are now fans or gamers; therefore move from being a consumer to a producer.

Jenkins claims that from 2000s onwards we entered a new media age. He foretold that the most important feature of this new media age is that the media consumers moved from passive to active, i.e. they were promoted to the productive position, and this situation will cause changes in the structure of the media (Jenkins, 2006/2016). This prophecy indeed came to fruition, and through new channels that entered our lives in 2000s such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Youtube, striking changes occurred in the media order. After all these developments, participative culture broke its chains from fan participation. User participation, whose borders began disappearing, managed to spread widely on the web.

Futurist Alvin Toffler (1984) also suggested the term prosumer for the proactive consumers in 1970s. According to him, the concept of prosumer "...highlights the emergence of a more informed, more involved consumer of goods who would need to be addressed by allowing for a greater customizability and individualizability of products." (Bruns, 2007, pg.3). This term, symbolizing passage from mass production to tailor-made production, resurfaced again in the social media environment in 2000s with user-led content creation. Just at this point Axel Bruns (2007) suggests a new concept for producing collaborative content in modern information settings.

According to Bruns, produsage is the name we can give to the process of user-managed online content generation and development. This new hybrid model, generated with combination of the words production and usage, destroys the traditional borders between producer and consumer or production and consumption, allows all users to become producers and users allowing each participation to be production. Everyone participating in the produsage process becomes "producers". Bruns claims that user-led content and produsage were widely generated in many online content generation areas such as social networking, knowledge management, multi-user online gaming, open-source software development, creative practices and citizen journalism (Bruns, 2007).

Therefore, we can say that the terms like user-led content, producer, prosumer or produser are closer to the ordinary people, i.e. all users, more than ever. Contrary to the traditional media, ordinary people found a place for themselves among the users that have access to digital media. Stark (2006) conceptualized the new user experience gained by the ordinary people due to digital technologies as *semiotic democracy*. According to her, we have the ability to produce and disseminate new creations and take part in public cultural discourse. For example, singers that produce their own songs and share their recordings with their audience on the social media are quite common. Here, Stark draws attention to a very important point that individual artists, producers, and musicians need no longer depend on the power of major corporations as producers or distributors.

In the world, as well as in Turkey, we can easily see fashionistas, mother bloggers and musicians getting much more popular than many celebrities thanks to the SNSs of the last decade. According to Galov (2019), there are more than 500 million blogs in the world, making up a third of the total web sites. Therefore, this phenomenon shows us the opportunities presented by social media equally to everyone to be producers. For those who want to get their own works published by a good publisher, the path passes through social media. Books of those who prove themselves on these platforms are published by high-level publishers and find their places on the best-seller lists of famous booksellers. All these examples show that nowadays SNSs provide creative production and cultural communication. Moreover, corporate loyalty diminishes the hegemony of those that hold the economic power on these sectors cracks.

That SNSs breaking the hold of major corporations and monopoly of economic powers led to crucial cultural changes. These changes that saved ordinary people from being just “audiences” also carried them to a place at which they could decide on and shape the events. For example, decisions made by governments were retracted by protests over the social media. Alternatively, new decisions that could affect the society as a whole

were made by evaluating the demands made on the social media. On the other hand, a new breed of journalism was born consisting of ordinary users on the social media. This type of communication, called “Citizen Journalism” (Allan & Thorsen, 2009), our ability to listen to the news from more objective and varying points of view improved. Compared to the biased news by the traditional media channels, citizen news whose impact and audience could compare to the former were able to reach to the citizens.

All these new opportunities provided by SNSs creates the chance to read De Certeau’s strategies and tactics concepts in terms of network technologies (as cited in Garcia, 2013). Furthermore, social media became a place in which strategies and tactics -in De Certeau’s words- were applied. De Certeau, reproduces these two militaristic concepts - strategy vs. tactic- in a different context. According to him, strategies are used by the power or something that is more powerful than others whereas tactic is used by individuals. Strategy is a path taken by the power groups like institutions or states, which has an impact or authority over society. On the other hand, tactics help an individual to *“...create for himself a space in which he can find ways of using the constraining order of the place or of the language. Without living the place where he has no choice but to live and which lays down its law for him, he establishes within it a degree of plurality and creativity. By an art of being in between, he draws unexpected results from his situation”* (de Certeau, 1984, pg. 30).

According to de Certeau, as individuals, we stay in the system in our everyday lives but we can undermine the system from within. In this context, the tactics we apply in everyday life are productions and have value. In recent years, many events took place affected by the tactics on the social media and its consequences. Arab Spring and Wall Street protests in the world, and Gezi Park events and resistance to the July 15 coup attempt in Turkey are the most important examples we can provide on the impact of social media. Campaigns generated, signatures collected and unplanned reactions on the social media regarding not just big and important events, but also small ones led to

positive results. Long story short, a user that uploaded a song he wrote on Youtube and received millions of likes, as well as a user that caused a revolution or stopped a coup with her tweets were users that saw the social media as a tactical field and witnessed the transforming internet user.

However, social media channels does not just belongs to the individuals or tactic users, but also to the institutions, states and corporations, i.e. strategies. When looked at the report cards of SNSs, we see that they are not so innocent. ⁴ Facebook only was called out with many image-hurting incidents. The last and the biggest one of these was its sharing of the personal information of its users with a research company and did not even bother to notify these users⁵. At this point, Stalder (2012, pg. 248) mentions two layers of 'the era of the social web', the front-end and the back-end. According to him, the front-end is where users interact, whereas the back-end is which the owners have access. In his concepts, the front-end is the part in which we make tactics come alive and the back-end is where strategic management, control, manipulation and a token participation takes place. In the network world, these two are nested in each other. According to Stalder, there is a tension at the core of the social web created by the uneasy (mis)match of the commercial interests that rule the back-end, and community interests advanced through the front-end.

Naturally, products coming from the front-end section of social web are not made for some divine purpose or to shake things up. Beyond the ones that were mentioned in the previous paragraphs, posts towards the individuals' egos come across as the most intense interaction-receiving posts of SNSs. Therefore, we can say that another important application of semiotic democracy achieved through social media is, without

⁴ There are many cases as examples of how SNSs would become a party to some events and people. For one: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/09/facebook-blocks-accounts-palestinian-journalists-160925095126952.html>

⁵ For more information: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/mar/17/cambridge-analytica-facebook-influence-us-election>

a doubt, self-presentation (Smith & Sanderson, 2015). As we know that individuals are always constructing, performing and presenting themselves consciously in particular ways (Goffman, as cited in Miller et al., 2016); social media channels provide a rather suitable space to do such things. The important point here is the following: The focus and the main element of social media, where self-presentation takes place, also participates in determining the space people create for themselves in these channels. In this context, Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) was evaluated from the perspective of the new media, and reevaluations claiming that the producership experience of the social media users could also be ego presentations.

Goffman (1959) claims that when individuals confront other people, they have a desire to keep the spectators' (other people) impressions under control. He calls the activities to impress the ones we confront "performances" (pg. 15). He also discusses about certain performances being delivered in certain places, which he call them "settings". According to him, "*The ones who would use a particular setting as part of their performance cannot begin their act until they have brought themselves to the appropriate place and must terminate their performance when they leave it.*" (pg. 22). In this context, performances exhibited by the people of SNSs become important once more. For example, the posts on Instagram, the lifestyle or life practice intensive SNS, could be considered in a Goffmanian way (Smith&Sandersen, 2015).

The use of social media as an exhibition place brings the producer vs. consumer discussion up again. There are those thinking that the changing user experience due to SNSs does not really promise a real production. The main claim of this discussion, which generally comes up through posts about self-presentation, is that social media feeds and regenerates popular culture. In this context, selfies that help people to express themselves the way they like it, albeit seen as a liberating and naturalizing phenomenon, in a way a product of visual popular culture. Blogger Sarah Gram (2013) say that women mostly use selfies and that they see the selfies as a ticket to the world of consumer

capitalism. According to Iqani and Schroeder (2016), selfies, just like any other visual popular culture product, represents a product of labor women, especially young girls, use to reclaim themselves in a cultural system (capitalism) that only values them in certain ways (like beautiful faces and bodies) by turning themselves into an object.

Kellner too, thinks that the consumer culture and the media work hand-in-hand. According to him, media keeps producing consumable content that is suitable to people's thoughts, beliefs and behavior. Kellner also accepts that in the digital age we live in, people's media use heads towards more interactive tastes (Kellner, 2003). To him, consumers, just as they consume movies and TV shows, through social media platforms that contain user-generated content produce content suitable for themselves. Therefore, he thinks, content produced by the consumers simultaneously does not stop them being products of consumer culture and the capitalist world.

All these views base their foundations on the *Culture Industry* theory of Adorno and Horkheimer (1944/2006). This theory supports that even though the content generated on the SNSs are generated by independent and individual users, they cannot avoid from being commodities and social media channels are marketplaces. According to this view, it is not possible to talk about a 100% producership in its truest meaning. Because according to the culture industry, masses are not subjects but objects. In addition, all the culture industry does is to transfer the profit instinct to cultural shapes (Adorno, 1975, pg. 318). Actually, the new cultural shape discussed at this point is the social networking site.

When we approach to the creative production done by ordinary users on social media in terms of culture industry discussion of Adorno, we have to, sadly, say that this production feeds culture industry. According to Adorno, a new generation of singers getting famous from the songs they uploaded on Youtube, becomes the expendables of the culture industry in the second act. They will try to exist in the fashion dictated by the

system, struggling in the same race with traditional singers. In the same vein, can we claim that a fashion influencer who established her own brand on Instagram stand on an independent and activist point? These ordinary social media users who strive to take part in the important venues of the mass culture, music and fashion, build themselves a place with the opportunity granted to users by social media. This is true, but the aspect Adorno is interested in is the afterwards.

According to this perspective of Adorno, producing in social media cannot be considered as being unique, independent and creative. Because he proposes that opposition as well is built by the industry, so the product produced by this opposition will be the part of the construct of the industry, and therefore will mean nothing for the disorganization of the system. (Adorno, 1975). Right at this point, Chouliaraki's (2010, pg. 227) warning and question becomes meaningful. Chouliaraki mentions that the opportunity of self-expression provided by new digital platforms are crucial in terms of providing ordinary people to participate in the public culture through intermediaries. However, she stops right there and reminds the reader that these digital self-expression platforms are embedded in the regulatory regimes of the state or the market.

Another name that is against the view that SNSs bring freedom, equality and democracy to masses is Morozov (2017). He defines himself as "cyber-realist" as opposed to the cyber-utopians and he finds the view suggesting social media and digital tools as the leader of social change overrated. He calls the Silicon Valley's constant claim "empowerment of the user" a fairytale, he posits that the opportunities provided by SNSs only equalizes the access to communication services but this wouldn't mean that other inequalities in society are removed. On the contrary, there are costs for this access, like sharing your personal information with SNSs and allowing them to sell this information to companies... At this point, Morozov claims that the equality presented by social media is only an "equality of consumption" (pg. 31).

To sum up, the issue of the transformation of web users from being consumers to producers and their contribution to the cultural public discourse is a large one in terms of its consequences. It is a fact that the cultural public discourse and the social, political and economic agendas are not solely generated by producer users. Governments and politicians, popular culture and cultural industry, or SNSs themselves naturally take active part in all these processes. However, what is important for us is the impact and the results of this opportunity of “participation”, which did not exist before Web 2.0 and social media, on society today.

2.4. From Producership to Influencership: Place of Instagram in the New Social Media Culture

As SNS use becomes widespread, new cultural debates stemming from the experiences of users were not limited to producer vs. consumer discussions. Each SNS created their own user types with their own particular features. These users sometimes produced content, and sometimes consumed it; and sometime it became difficult to put a border between and all these experiences overlapped. One of the most important outputs of this new social media culture is the change and expansion in the cluster of “mediatic” people. Through different concepted posts in different SNSs, thousands of people became “social mediatic”.

Many new names were suggested in the foreign literature for the social media users that became famous through social media networks. Some of which are: “micro-celebrities” (Gamson, 2011; Marwick & boyd, 2011; Senft, 2008), “microfame” (Sorgatz, 2008), “Youtube stars” (Burgess & Green, 2009), “YouTube celebrities” (Marwick, 2013), “Internet celebrity” (Gamson, 2011), “Web stars” (Senft, 2008) and “Internet famous” (Tanz, 2008). However, the most-widely accepted terms were micro-celebrity (mikro ünlü in Turkish) in the foreign literature and social media phenomenon (sosyal medya fenomeni in Turkish) in Turkey (Sabuncuoğlu & Gülay, 2014).

After the point at which micro-celebrities start turning their fame to tangible or non-tangible value, the term “influencer” became widely used (Khamis et al., 2017). Moreover, for the clarification of this concept in Turkey, the term “impact leader (etki lideri)” was put in circulation and came into use. (www.dijitaltopuklar.com, 2018). Influencers, with their posts on social media, started to have real impact on the consumer habits of many people. According to Hackley and Hackley, this case can be summarized as celebrity posts becoming the part of the daily application of millions of consumers (2015). In other words, social media influencers, through their posts on the social media, are third-party supporters that affect the behavior and decision-making processes of the masses. (Freberg et al., 2011).

As people that are famous through their social media posts become part of our lives, discussions of the transformation of the celebrity culture surfaced. I believe that to understand the social media influencers and the new social media culture, it is necessary to monitor the changes in the celebrity culture. At this point, talking about the term “celebrification”, a concept mentioned by Jerslev (2016) in his study about Youtubers, will be beneficial. Jerslev points to the change in the definition and borders of the concept of celebrification with social media. According to her, in celebrity culture “there has been a move away from celebrity as a being to a doing and from celebrity to celebrification”. Turner calls this phenomenon “online stardom” and adds that it is a “familiar mode of cyber-self-presentation” (Turner, 2010).

While exploring the celebrification concept, Couldry gives examples from reality shows that entered our lives in 2000s, which are by itself a topic of research. He says that the main aim of the show Big Brother is to make ordinary people celebrities (Couldry, 2004). At the point we are today, we can say that celebrity culture turned into a culture that ordinary people experience without any help from mass media in a much more democratic and open space. On the other hand, the main goal changed from being celebrities and influencers to doing something to influence somebody. In other words,

in the broadcast era, celebrity was something a person was; in the Internet era, microcelebrity is something people do (Marwick, 2015). For example, super stars who reached the masses through breakouts in their lives had to share their fame and power of influence with influencers who are constantly active and online and in a friendly relationship with their followers. Of course, for some followers and fans, the distance to the celebrity is an important trigger, but as Jerslev mentions, this condition keeps its relevancy more in the traditional media outlets (2016).

We can see that, especially in channels like Twitter, Instagram and Youtube, many people without backgrounds in conventional media having more followers than traditional celebrities. People like Huda Kattan (38.1 million followers in Instagram), Zach King (20.5 million followers in Instagram) and Cameron Dallas (21.2 million followers in Instagram) are the examples of worldwide social media micro/celebrities (CBS News, 2018). I will discuss the reasons for this important analysis through certain names I studied in the following chapters. For now, this important point can suffice: In social media channels, users share their own lifestyles in unique ways with new methods. In addition to that, in their authentic self-performances, they act with strategies like connectedness, accessibility and intimacy. Therefore, we can conclude that social media channels are platforms that shorten the distance between celebrities and fans (Jerslev, 2016). As I mentioned in the previous chapters, Jenkins, in the early years, presented this distance-shortening tendency created by new media with the concept of convergence culture (Jenkins, 2006/2016). Marwick (2015), in this context, thinks that social media represents a convergence of cultural forces and summarizes the conclusions brought by social media as a participatory media in two sections: The first is the unmediated interaction traditional celebrities establish with their fans. The second is the microcelebrities created by social media.

We can safely claim at this point that the social media, which we started to use thanks to Web 2.0 technologies and became an indispensable part of our lives, affected and

changed the celebrity culture as well. The thing it changed is not just the borders of the celebrity concept, but also the celebrity-fan relationship. New media culture, with its borders being wide, shortened the distance between fans, followers, celebrities, influencers; and with the impact of the relationship between them, increased the visibility of all these groups significantly (Jerslev, 2016).

Among the many social media channels, in terms of number of active users and popularity, we see that Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Youtube lead the way. Worldwide studies about social media usage display the social impact of these channels. According to the report of a statistics website named Similarweb.com, Youtube (21M 36S Time Per Visit), Facebook (11M 44S Time Per Visit) and Instagram (06M 25S Time Per Visit) rank among the world's most visited websites (Hootsuite&WeAreSocial, 2019). On the other hand, these channels are the ones in which microcelebrities and influencers flourish the most. Many popular influencers came out of these channels thanks to these channels' popularities.

Instagram, the topic of my research, is one of the visual-based communication-relationship based social media channels with idiosyncratic types of influencers such as instagrammers and the instafamous (Khamis et al., 2017). Moreover, it's less studied in depth than other mainstream and political SNSs like Facebook and Twitter. Instagram is created by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger in 2010, as an iOS and Android compatible mobile photo sharing app. This rapidly growing app is bought by Facebook for \$1 billion in 2012 (Marwick, 2015). At the time of the transaction, it had only 13 employees (Marwick, 2015). Moreover, after the sale, using the brand power of Facebook, clocked a dramatic increase in usage. With many features added along the way, it continues its voyage as a full-fledged social media channel.

Instagram first started operating as an SNS that was based on taking photos, making them more pleasing to the eye by applying various filters, sharing them and getting likes

and followers (Marwick, 2015). It is a fundamentally visual and amateur photography based SNS. Starting with filtered photo sharing, Instagram overdone itself each day by adding new features. It is possible to appeal to wider audiences with its hashtag (#) feature, as well as reach all the posts around the world in the searched topic. This feature helps Instagram to go beyond local usages and create a worldwide interaction and dialogue. On the interface of the app, in the lower hand side, Home, Discover, Share, Likes and Profile tabs appear respectively. The Discover tab requires a closer attention. Through hashtag use, the Instagram algorithm that connects the followed users and liked posts presents personally selected post to the user in the Discover tab. Therefore, people can easily follow their topics of interest and trends. I think the biggest revolution in Instagram is the addition of “story” feature. Thanks to this feature, snatched from Snapchat in 2016 August (Özhan, 2016) and applied successfully, the channel attained various new capabilities. In the subfeatures of the story feature, new updates are applied constantly; interactions increase thanks to other features like gifs, surveys, hashtags, videos and igtv. All of the different subfeatures presented in Instagram Story has one thing in common: To activate both the user and the followers, in other words as I mentioned previously, incentivize them to become “producer” users. Millions of users try these new features without question, and adapt to the ever-new system swiftly.

Another important feature Instagram offers to the users is the ability to open “Instagram Business Profiles”. Therefore, it allows its users to be more than just a user that produces content, but one that can get insights and statistics about their followers, advertise, and earn money with a corporate identity. Moreover, many brands use Instagram in this fashion and advertise. From this perspective, the Instagram Insights and Instagram Business features achieved popularity as both corporate brands and ordinary users can use them. My main study topic, the Instagram influencers, are not the accounts that gained fame and followers through ads but through more authentic and organic posts who later used this fame for profit and continued appearing in Instagram using ads.

With all of these features, Instagram continues to increase its impact both in Turkey and in the world day-by-day. According to Digital in 2019 Report (Hootsuite & WeAreSocial, 2019) there are 1 billion Instagram users in the world. 895 million of those are active users, and this number also shows the total advertising audience on Instagram. Therefore, Instagram ranks second after Facebook in terms of size of advertisement audiences. On top of that, in the last year, the SNS with the biggest increase in number of users is Instagram. Just in the last three months, it increased number of its users by 4.4% and it is ranked third in terms of total number of users, after Facebook and Youtube. This can be read as a massive success for Instagram. Furthermore, the gender distribution of users is 50.3% female and 49.7% male, with 65% of the users fall into the 18-34 age group; showing that women and the young are more active on Instagram.

In Turkey, the number of Instagram users come to 38 million. After Youtube, Instagram is the second most active platform in Turkey. Facebook, used to be the first, but now follows these two as of 2019. In addition, hashtags like as #fashion, #beautiful, #style etc. have important places in both Instagram Turkey and world; so we can have an idea about Instagram usage in general. It would not be wrong to say that the most important purposes of Instagram usage are self-presentation and fashion (Murray, 2015; Fardouly et al., 2018; Smith & Sanderson, 2015). What makes Instagram associated with these is that, without a doubt, Instagram is a visual-based channel and it supports new movements and the birth of influencers with the visual culture construction opportunity it presents.

Right at this junction, we can claim that Instagram, as a social media channel, differs from the text-intensive channels such as Facebook, Twitter etc. (Beta, 2014), and therefore the properties of the area it opens to the users may differ as well. When compared to Facebook, it can be said while Facebook constrains self-presentation within a rigid profile structure; Instagram provides users with fairly open-ended social media tool, suggesting that individuals could choose to represent themselves using a range of techniques

(Marwick, 2015). For example, just like other visual-based social media channels like Youtube or Snapchat, Instagram is a platform in which intellectual discussion or comment take less space and most of its content are instant, natural and regarding daily life practices of people. It also offers the users the chance to provide captions under the photos. However, in terms of Instagram usage, this is a peripheral option. Just as many Instagram researches propose, when the subject is Instagram, a photo is worth a thousand words (Hu et al., 2014).

That Instagram's focus on visuality and concept related to this ended up being the determinant of space created by Instagram users for themselves in this platform. As Instagram usage became widespread in Turkey and the world, celebrities belonging to the entertainment and culture industry started giving more importance to their Instagram accounts, increased and controlled their fan bases. However, the much important part, which will be the focus of this thesis, is the following: Thanks to the new user experience presented by Instagram, a new kind of visual based influencers was born. These people that join to the public discourse with presentations about their lifestyles and beautiful photos opened themselves up a space in the celebrity concept under the name of "instagrammers" or "instafamous". Instafamous describes an individual who became famous via their profile on Instagram and is familiar to most users of this media (Khamis et al., 2017). The Instagram posts and the instagrammer-follower/fan relationship in this extent are intensely related to the new social media culture.

As known, each SNS has a usage sociology. While Facebook users build "friendships", in Twitter we can follow people we do not know for their views. Just like Twitter, Instagram makes people "follow" each other. There is no need for permission or obligation of a mutual expectation following (Marwick, 2015). Therefore, for the user with large number of followers, it assigns another position. Influencers rise from concepts such as lifestyle, technology, fashion, etc. These influencers get stronger by time and a relationship, not

so much different from the one between a celebrity and his/her fan, is established between them and their followers. Social media culture separates itself from the fandom culture and participatory culture proposed by Jenkins (2006/2016) a few decades ago. Influencers and fans communicate on an equal level. There are no restrictions whatsoever against a fan/follower to turn into an influencer/instagrammer.

In Turkey, just like in the world, instagrammership has come up as a new title and has been spreading rapidly. Some instagrammers, apart from their professions, fool around with social media as producers; some others convert social media channels to their places of business and earn a living by coaching their followers on fashion, arts, dining, lifestyle or selling stuff to them. Instagram transformed the lives of many. For numerous people that are unable to reach the mainstream structures and entities regarding media, arts, entertainment and culture, it became the source of change and innovation.

CHAPTER 3

THE EFFECT OF INSTAGRAM CULTURE ON THE CHANGE OF THE UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE LIFESTYLE

Instagram, with its features mentioned in the previous chapter and the developments it causes, has managed to create a large and original field of impact for itself. The online world of Instagram, with the features it presents, the users using these features and the influencer-follower relationship, is an uncharted treasure for us researchers. Instagram, as an SNS in which visual-based and self-presentation focusing daily life practices are presented, allows ordinary users to post whatever they want in an environment whose borders are determined by its users, just like other social media channels. Individuals, with their profiles in Instagram, can be promoted to producer from consumer and to influencer from there. On the other hand, when the relationships of the users with each other, relationships with the channel itself and the products are examined, it will be possible to talk about an Instagram culture, which contains all its users and brings them together under “similar” features. At the end of the day, the content and the size of this new Instagram culture’s impact on the users and their lifestyles is worthy of a discussion.

When we focus on the content of the shared photos, videos and the related texts and commentary in Instagram’s 24/7 flow, we can talk about the existence of a common concept in all of them. Each user -whether be an influencer/instagrammer or not- shares segments of his/her lifestyle in his/her Instagram account. Makeup, fashion, clothing, motherhood, marriage, music, intellectual life, etc. are among the post topics that come to mind first. The concept of lifestyle, which entered our lives due to the impact of capitalism and modernity in the last century, cannot be considered separate from the social media culture -the Instagram culture in particular-. In this section of this study in which I try to find meaningful connections between the understanding of lifestyle of different cultures, the changes in them and the Instagram culture, I will focus on the concept of lifestyle, which will be followed by the concept of lifestyle as a type of sharing

in Instagram. At the end of this chapter, in which I touch upon the conservative culture that conservative and headscarved young female Instagram users hail from and the transformation of the veiling fashion from the 90s to today, I will provide segments from the conservative lifestyles exhibited on Instagram.

3.1. The Concept of Lifestyle and Sharing the Lifestyles via Instagram

Lifestyle is defined in the dictionary as “the typical way of life of an individual, group, or culture” (Merriam-Webster, 2019). The concept of lifestyle, which we use to define the actions of ourselves and others, entered our lives with modernity and modern society. According to Chaney, who first explained the lifestyle concept as “a modern social form”, we use the term lifestyle for any type of behavior without really questioning its meaning. Because lifestyles are part of everyday social life of the modern world and they help us to make sense of what people do, and why they do it, and what doing it means to them and others (Chaney, 1996, pg. 4). Lifestyle concept, as a modern social form, is directly related to consumer culture and our contemporary consumer behavior.

Concept of lifestyle entered our lives as a concept that cannot be held separate from class structures and their foundation, the social organization of production. To elaborate, with modernity, people stopped seeing their productive status in society as the foundation of their social identities. Instead, they started the struggle to make their status and jobs consistent with their “lifestyle values”. On the other hand, that consumption became the central focus of both social life and cultural values depending on a more general consumer culture, the concepts of consumer and leisure culture became critically important for the social affiliations of lifestyles. We can even say that consumer culture gave life to the concept of lifestyle (Chaney, 1996). Chaney exemplifies the discussion with the example of “shopping”, that with consumer culture the term shopping stopped being defined as the quenching of the needs, and

instead we can talk about a “lifestyle shopping”. Therefore, we live in times in which shopping is not a need any more, but a lifestyle practice and necessity.

Bourdieu, on the other hand, explains the relationship between lifestyle and socioeconomic structure with the capital, lifestyle theory and the habitus construct. Dividing capital into three categories, he defends that habitus and lifestyles of people shape with respect to economic, social and cultural capital. According to his capital theory, capital is distributed among societies and their different segments with respect to different factors. Then, capital has an idiosyncratic activity and movement space so that even social classes and stati are identified and shaped according to the distribution of these capital categories (Bourdieu, 1984). Therefore, evaluating a social class only with respect to its economic capital will not be holistic, as social and cultural capital are as important as the economic one.

Social classes, shaped with respect to the realm of existence of cultural, social and economic capital types, and the habitus has a connection. Bourdieu’s habitus theory connects social structure and lifestyle. In short, individuals, with their innate dispositions and other features they gained through social interactions, receive a certain style of perception, thought and action, all of which becomes their habitus. While selecting our cultural pleasures and preferences, we get affected by our habitus. And it becomes possible to mention lifestyle at this point. The choices we make regarding our lifestyles is primarily affected from the habitus we are in and affects the habitus as well (Frie & Janssen, 2009).

In seeking how we can embody Bourdieu’s these conceptualizations in specific to lifestyle, we can approach the musical tastes. For example, while social classes with high economic and social capital prefer classical music (Frie & Janssen, 2009), classes with low capital will prefer more economically and socially accessible genres such as alternative or arabesque. Even listening to classical music have certain rules and necessities and

following this type of art requires a particular economic and social power a habitus. Or it can be said that as classes with high cultural capital live in more privileged neighborhoods and therefore exercise more, they live more “healthier lives” (Frie & Janssen, 2009). Because thanks to their levels of capital and habitus, they have the chance to live such a life. All these examples shows us the impact of the capital and the habitus on lifestyles.

Bourdieu mentions that the new lifestyle concept can get along well with the “new petit bourgeoisie”, a habitus that produces and distributes its own consumer culture imagery and information (Bourdieu, 1984). According to him, the new petit bourgeoisie is a class fraction that is not actually intellectual, merely pretending to be one, and that acts as a cultural intermediary between intellectuals and the public. These people, mainly belonging to the new types of occupations such as public relations, marketing, media producers and presenters, marriage counsellors, dieticians, guidance counsellors, magazine journalists, fashion writers, pediatric advisors, youth leaders and counsellors, are individuals who sees everything they do in life as an investment and constantly try to improve themselves in certain subjects (Featherstone, 1987). Bourdieu claims that these people borrowed the easily borrowable parts of intellectualness. Subject such as cinema, strip cartoons, sexuality, cosmetics, child rearing, leisure, love are the focus points of the new petit bourgeoisie. They can pretend in these subjects (Bourdieu, 1984, pg. 370).

There are parallels with this 1980s fraction, which has limited cultural capital and try to create new cultural spaces in their own habitus and affect masses, and the social media phenomena of today. When thought in terms of the subject of this study, the Instagram influencers, we see that the “lifestyle subjects” they focus on are almost identical to the subjects mentioned by Bourdieu. On the other hand, even though they are not experts in the subjects of their posts such as fashion, childcare etc., that people hanging onto every word they say put them into a cultural intermediary position, just like the petite bourgeoisie. These influencers, who became famous not on the mass

media but on social media with their posts, are in a reciprocal interaction with the Instagram culture with their limited cultural capital. In this context, it can be claimed that the concept of lifestyle has been created from the similar cultural groups, classes and habitus all these years and its relation to consumer culture continues.

There are other views about the relationship between lifestyle practices, and consumer culture and contemporary capitalism. For example, Featherstone (1987), like Chaney, emphasizes that the concept of lifestyle has gained new meanings with the contemporary consumer culture. According to him *“one’s body, clothes, speech, leisure pastimes, eating and drinking preferences, home, car, choice of holidays, etc. are to be regarded as indicators of the individuality of taste and sense of style of the owner/consumer”* (pg. 55). The new heroes of the consumption culture, instead of lifestyles obtained from routines, choose to make the lifestyle a life project. With individuality and a sense of style, they come up with a new style with their clothing, appearance and experiences (pg. 59).

In this point, it is necessary to mention Baudrillard and his comments and analyses regarding consumer culture. He also takes on culture, lifestyle and capitalism together and talks about the importance of culture in reproduction of capitalism. According to him, consumer culture is a postmodern culture in which all values have become transvalued and in this culture art defeats reality (Baudrillard, as cited in Featherstone, 1987). For Baudrillard, this change in our perception of reality with the consumer culture is of great importance. In life that we experience with consumer culture products, everything is nothing but a simulation of reality. For example, we watch the scenes on mass media as if they are real. As fictional things presented as reality, our look to reality changes, and after a point in time we will not need reality anymore. This simulation theory of Baudrillard (1983) brings an important point regarding the transformation in our understanding of lifestyle out in the open. “The aestheticization of reality” situation he mentions are constantly reinforced by the modernist market dynamics as it

introduces new fashion, styles and experiences all the time. (Featherstone, 1987). That way, in the direction of these influences, we update our lifestyles, create styles that may not be ours to being with and experience these new lifestyles with enjoyment.

We can make meaningful connections when we think Baudrillard's simulation theory and Instagram culture together. When focused on the lifestyle examples presented in Instagram culture, we see that the presentation style of the details of influencers' lives are generally positive and exaggerated. The research done through interviews with the followers show that the positive high-quality images of influencers are thought to be inspirational. Additionally, followers assert that seeing successful lifestyle examples on Instagram make them happy (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2018). On the other hand, most of the influencers share posts that follow the trends on mass and social media, feeds and recreates fashion, and keeps up with the contemporary. Therefore, the discussion of whether the lifestyle posts created and supported by the Instagram culture is one of the simulations Baudrillard talks about gains importance. As seen, when thinkers' views about the concept of lifestyle is adapted to today, we can create meaningful connections with the concept of lifestyle in the Instagram culture. Discussion the concept of lifestyle in the axis of modernity, capitalism and consumer culture seems appropriate today. Additionally, that the concept of lifestyle has strong connections with social media and Instagram culture deepens the debate.

Thanks to the opportunities presented by Instagram over the last years, millions of people share sections of their lifestyle. Instagrammers/influencers, who benefited from the autonomous and democratic aspect offered by the social media culture (Stark, 2006) and transformed from consumers to producers, have been shaping the Instagram culture. However, when we look at these posts in light of the discussions about the concept of lifestyle, we notice that what kind of an influence Instagram culture has in these people's view of life. Does Instagram's open-to-everyone, no-limits structure, which allows the emergence of new instagrammers/influencers, also let these

influencers to exist with different and original lifestyle examples? In this section, before getting to the results, I will focus on the Instagram influencers, the features of their posts and the understanding of lifestyle of the conservative young women instagrammers, the subject of my study.

3.2. Main Characteristics of the New “Lifestyle Instagrammers / Influencers” Of Instagram

In Instagram, as of April 2019, there are 174 million posts with the hashtag #lifestyle.

Moreover, there are many similar-themed tags and posts present such as #lifestyleblogger (15 million posts), #lifestyleblog (3 million posts), #lifestylechange (3 million posts). On the other hand, Instagram algorithm suggests users searching the tag #lifestyle the following tags: #gym, #billionaire, #luxury #luxurylifestyle #instafitness #motivation #fit #fashionstyle. These are the tags of the other topics users searching for the #lifestyle tag are interested in. In the one of the most important lifestyle tags, the #fashion tag (for the users interested in fashion/clothing/skincare), the number of posts hit the incredible number of 667 million so far. Adding the presumably similar number of posts in sum in the related hashtags such as #fashionblogger, #fashionblog, #fashionable, #outfit, #style, we see that different subjects and concepts that can be regarded as part of the lifestyle type posts get shared more with their own tags.⁶

On the other hand, there are some studies, although not enough, on the categories and topics of publication on Instagram. According to one of these studies, carried out by Hu et al. (2014), Instagram user posts around the world can be classified in the following categories: friends, food, gadgets, subtitled photo, pets, activity, selfie, fashion. In a study of all social media channels, the following fifteen types of visual aids are mentioned: relationships, selfies, anecdotes, mandatory sharing, chicken soup for the soul, humor, fantasy, children, travel, archives, events, political, food, anti-mainstream, and commercial. The Chicken Soup for the Soul genre refers to a series of books from the

⁶ Retrieved on April, 23, 2019. <https://www.instagram.com/>

United States, consisting of true and inspiring stories about how normal people have managed to live happy and successful lives. Giving this title to this category means sharing articles and photos on social networks offering career and lifestyle tips (Wang, 2016).

As seen, #tag based searches as well as data analysis based studies cannot completely classify the sharing categories and the post topics of Instagram users. On the other hand, it is obvious that “influencer accounts” needs to be held and studied separately from the accounts with lower number of followers. This study, to overcome the scarcity, chooses to generalize the posts influencer accounts share to show their own lives, in the “lifestyle” general category. Therefore, I will be able to add subcategories like #selfie, #friends, #relationships, #fashion, #fantasy, #motherhood, #travel to the instagrammer posts I plan to study and evaluate.

Gaining followers in Instagram through lifestyle type posts in these categories is a trend in both Turkey and the world. All users follow influencers with respect to their interests; travel blogs if planning a travel, instagrammers with motherhood type posts if pregnant, or lifestyle influencers if the lifestyles of said influencers seem interesting. There are many different features separating these new generation Instagram users, who started this trend and appeal to masses, from regular celebrities. Their most common feature is that they have no “expertise” or “fame” gained beforehand, but they share their own lifestyles and seem appealing to the eye. Getting to know these new celebrities requires examining how these users make use of the opportunities presented to ordinary people by Instagram and which features of Instagram they choose to use.

The first of the striking aspects of the lifestyle posts of the Instagrammers / Instafamous is that they are “visual-based”, i.e. visuality is its most important component. In this regard, visuality is the dominant type of expression in Instagram, just like in some other SNSs (Miller et al., 2016). According to Wang’s research, 64% of

people think that a text containing a visual is more convincing than a text without one and 85% of them prefer a visual-based post than a text-based one. Moreover, it is a fact that photo taking became more widespread with social media use. 79% of the people says that they have been taking more photos since they started using social media. (Wang, 2016).

Therefore, this SNS, with even its video and live broadcasting features getting added later, has shown improvements as a channel that lays a ground for sharing the ordinary moments of life and amateur photography (Hu et al., 2014). At this point, it will be meaningful to remember Bourdieu, a sociologist who made a detailed analysis about photos and photography, and his characterization regarding photography. He calls photography a middlebrow art (Bourdieu, 1996/1998). Amateur photography being carried on Instagram today is not a high-art form, however it still appeals to the eye at some level and allows ordinary people to express and present themselves using visuality.

According to Winston (2013), photographs have always been able to present the identity and the perspective; nowadays, people use them more than ever to show themselves. In other words, Schwarz thinks there is a change from photographing others for self-consumption to self-documentation for consumption by others. Therefore, with the spread of SNSs based on photo taking and sharing like Instagram, our view of the concept of photography and photo-taking applications have shown change over time. Thanks to the photography applications, users can view themselves as the “perfect subjects” while posting their routine activities. Because of all these, Beta (2014) claims that Instagram has become the repositories of middle class lifestyles. Thereby agendas like interesting places, touristic trips, shopping in malls etc. have become the ordinary but important subjects of the lifestyles presented on Instagram.

When thought of as a self-presentation platform, one of the most important methods of photo sharing on Instagram are the selfies. Selfies shared by young and old, ordinary and

famous alike present themselves as the most common way of self-expression. As of April 2019, there are 388 million photos shared on Instagram with the hashtag #selfie. Various studies on selfies provides us with clues regarding the visual space opened to individuals by Instagram (Senft & Baym, 2015; Marwick, 2015; Tifentale & Manovich, 2015). In one of them, the work of Iqani and Schroeder, this is due to the nature of “mobile phone photography”. In this context, selfie shows “the world our image we want the world to see” (2016).

Just like text-based SNS provide their users with the opportunity to present and compare themselves and their ideas textually, Instagram provides its users to express themselves in any way they desire. According to Zappavigna, for self-expression, visual representation is more impactful than text. Therefore, she explains the use of visual-based SNSs with people sharing their images with others due to a desire for social connection (2016). In this context, Goffman’s *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) has been evaluated in terms of new media studies and readings have been conducted regarding social media use as a type of presentation of self. In the context that Goffman characterizes the activities people do to impress the ones before them as “performances”, Instagram users’ posts have been evaluated as performances (Smith & Sandersen, 2015).

So one of the most important channel features used by the new generation of celebrities rising with the advent of Instagram are visual focality, photo focality and self-presentation. With the help of these fundamental features, the instagrammers working to be new celebrities can share intriguingly impressive lifestyle posts. However, the properties that separate these posts –thereby the instagrammers- from traditional celebrities are not limited to these. For instance, authenticity/being authentic is another property of the posts produced and shared on Instagram. Ordinary people sharing excerpts from their lives are regarded by their followers to be genuine, original and natural, and liked accordingly. The fact that photograph is a tool that reflects the emotion

and the feeling across easily and rapidly has obviously some part in this naturality (Goh et al., as cited in Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2018).

Furthermore, the new celebrities of Instagram experience the authentic behavior that we have not seen in the traditional media era and traditional celebrities before. We can easily remember that traditional celebrities tried to avoid tabloid journalists on the street during the 90s when TV culture was widespread. They did not want to be seen in public with no makeup in their everyday clothing and protected their visual images with great care. However, due to the authentic aspect of social media, this formal relationship with the fans/followers have been broken. As micro-celebrities, especially instagrammers, shared their natural photos, from home without any makeup on, ordinary images became normalized. These social media celebrities with posts themed “How to put on makeup, how to put on the hijab, how to combine clothing and etc.” have established (or claimed so) realistic relationships with their followers. In constant dialogue with their followers, through directly addressing to them in their videos and answering questions they ask, instagrammers have taken the lead in the change in celebrity culture. Banet-Weiser (2012) believes that in social media that is full on marketing rhetoric and celebrity culture, narratives of authenticity and realness still has a significant impact.

Related to authenticity, another features coming before us on Instagram is that competence rules instead of expertise. Influencers sharing lifestyle posts on Instagram never act like “experts” but instead pay attention to sharing “experiences”. Because most of these influencers lack in-depth academic or scientific knowledge on the topics they share. Therefore, they avoid sharing posts that contain false claims/comments or ones that may cause negative reaction from followers on topics like health, childcare or fashion. Such that when they go too far, numerous reactionary comments pile up under the photos, followers argue among themselves, sometimes forcing the influencer to

make statements regarding the post. To avoid such incidents, starting with the phrase *“As you know, I am no expert but ...”* is a good idea (Jerslev, 2016).

After such an introduction, they provide positive or negative guidance to their followers in the topic they are interested in (fashion, marriage, children, shopping, etc.). An attitude like this does not generally receive negative reactions; on the contrary, it attracts sympathy. The results of the interviews conducted by Djafarova and Trofimenko (2018) with the followers of the instafamous on Instagram are meaningful and important in this regard. The interviews show that ‘expertise’ was replaced by ‘competence’ as the respondents believed it was not necessary for micro-celebrities to be experts with certain qualifications, rather they needed to be competent (possess relevant experience) when communicating information (pg. 9). All these features instagrammers make use of while sharing their lifestyles build a channel of communication with their followers and an intimacy not seen in traditional celebrity culture.

Another reason why followers feel close to the instafamous is that the spontaneity/nowness in Instagram’s nature (Jerslev, 2016). Even though, there exists views that Instagram photos are not “point and shoot” in style and they are open to image manipulation like filtering, cropping, blurring and etc. (Zappavigna, 2016) what is meant by spontaneity is something different. Instagram’s new photo/video sharing system with these “fast editing” options – especially after the insertion of Instagram story and live broadcasting features- allows influencers to share instantaneous photos/videos, necessarily adding spontaneity to the posts. For example, Jerslev, in his study in which he evaluates Zoella, a lifestyle influencer, talks about the Zoella’s vlogs that she broadcasts without correcting any linguistic errors and confessional videos. All of these remove the concept of celebrity from being a distant exclusive phenomenon and pull it closer to us followers (Jerslev, 2016).

We can add one last feature, one that is fundamentally related to all the features I mentioned before, to the features making Instagram different and natural, affecting and changing celebrity culture, and creating a new Instagram culture. It is that Instagram is a mobile and always-on app, easily accessible with a machine that is in the hands of technology-age individuals 24/7. Such that, Beta (2014) claims that as Instagram became Android compatible, class diversity on Instagram went up. According to him, Instagram, now able to reach 70-dollar phones, appeals to everyone from a middle class student to a young hijabi girl. And this is the foremost reason for Instagram culture to get easily widespread. In addition, Chesher (2012) claims that the individual's photos taken by her own smartphone reflects the everyday point of view and experience of that individual. So mobile photography, in a way, a source nourishing both Instagram itself and all these features presented to users. Considering that 93% of the social media users in the world reach social media through their social media accounts (Hootsuite & WeAreSocial, 2019), we see how important is being mobile and mobile photography to Instagram.

All the Instagram features I mentioned in the previous paragraphs presents a very important asset to the new celebrities of Instagram: "Simple and attainable fame" (Marwick, 2015). We can evaluate accessibility here in two different ways. The first one is a kind of accessibility that reminds us that these influencers are "just like us". The most important indication of which is that the authentic, spontaneous, realistic and sincere posts they share are for the benefit of "their followers". Different from the traditional celebrity culture, Instagram's influencers appeal not to "fans" but to "followers" (Marwick & boyd, 2011). This, in turn, hides the status elevation and the sense of social distance between these two sides (Abidin, 2016). The second meaning of accessible and simple fame is that any follower can one day be an influencer. Marwick (2015) explains this as follows: *"While many young people dream of fame, the work involved in becoming an athlete or a singer may be many steps removed from their day-to-day lives. Yet posting on Instagram, or tagging a selfie with #instafame, is relatively simple."* (pg. 157). We can call this the realization of Andy Warhol's prophecy of *"In the future, everybody will be*

world famous for fifteen minutes.”, or we can believe that more stable and sustainable fame is possible for everyone. In any way, the fact that Instagram culture and new lifestyle instagrammers changed the celebrity culture and its practice stands before us (Jerslev, 2016).

After evaluating these features provided by the new Instagram culture to influencers, it is now time to question how the new influencers’ (that exist in, cultivate and feed from this culture) lifestyle posts get affected by this culture. What kind of representations were put forth by these instagrammers using these features mentioned above? Asking whether different influencers hailing from various social and cultural environments with various backgrounds and lifestyles have similar and different posts under the Instagram culture has importance. How does the new social media culture –the Instagram culture in particular- I’ve been talking about since the start of this study affect the posts, and thereby the lifestyles, of the influencers? What kind of effects was the “lifestyle” concept I discussed in the first section of this chapter exposed to after the advent of social media, especially Instagram? Thinking about these questions will lead us to the research this thesis is focusing on.

3.3. Understanding “The Islamic / Conservative Lifestyle” and Its Historical Transformation in Turkey

As known, one of the many lifestyles that became visible on the social media is the one that we call Islamic or conservative. These are the lifestyle representations of -mostly- young female women belonging to the Muslim communities, mainly expressing itself through fashion. These representations, shaped and spread on “female identity”, obviously did not start with social media. Its history goes back to way past that. Especially from the beginnings of the 90s in Turkey, i.e. the time in which headscarf is accepted as a “modern way of veiling” and started appearing in universities and social life, the Muslim veiled women representations in social life has become an important point of agenda (Bekaroğlu, 2008, pg. 75). However, with the advent of social media age, the

transformation of these representations and lifestyle focus standing out comes across as the crucial points. To understand this transformation, we have to first get to know the Islamic lifestyle concept and its ancillary concepts, and evaluate the historical changes happened around these concepts.

Islam, as a religion, does not consist of practices in the temples and the private lives of people, but a set of rules and models that spread all parts of life. One of the most important binary oppositions in Islam, haram and halal expresses the borderline that defines the life of a Muslim. In many verses of the Quran, the Islamic holy book, concerns itself with rules about haram and halal.⁷ Al-Halal, an Arabic word, in Al-Qaradawi's definition, means permitted, with respect no restriction exists, and the doing of which the Law-Giver, Allah has allowed (Boediman, 2017). Haram means unlawful or forbidden. In the light of these definitions, Muslims prefer the halal option in all parts of life from food to clothing, from business to investing, from holiday to entertainment. Therefore, the most important aspect separating the Islamic/conservative lifestyles from others is that it is (or claims to be) halal. Their daily lives, consumption habits, fashion and entertainment styles, i.e. their lifestyles belongs to a framework we can call a "halal lifestyle".

According to Boediman, halal lifestyle has four important elements (2017): The first is the "product", the second is the "service", both comprised of halal food and drinks. Boediman includes all types of hospitality and services into these categories. The third is "prosperity" it is for good of human and natural resources. The final one is "human dignity", which includes values, norms and rules of ethic. People experiencing Islam, a social religion, have to prefer a lifestyle in the public space both as individuals and as a society in order to integrate these halal elements into their lives. In other words, a muslim applying his/her religious preference to his/her social life, has to exist in social

⁷ For some of the verses of the Quran in which terms of concepts of haram and halal are mentioned, see: 2/85, 168, 172, 173, 275; 4/23-24, 160; 5/2-3, 26, 87, 88; 7/32-33, 50, 157; 9/5, 37; 16/35, 67 115.

life openly with this identity. For example, a hijabi woman exists in all parts of life with her hijab, which means she sometimes is discriminated against; she is not allowed to enter certain places with her hijab on. Alternatively, a person who avoids alcohol or pork, as they are haram will choose not to consume such products in a work dinner, thereby revealing his/her identity. Therefore, we can say that religious practices that sets rules regarding social life adds certain identities and attributes to individuals.

In Turkey, the type of people trying to live in such a lifestyle are called “conservative segment” (Demirezen, 2016). Conservativeness is a style of thought/political ideology based on the values and institutions a society historically has such as family, tradition and religion, rejecting radical left or right political projects, and advocating a more moderate change (Özipek, 2007). As can be seen from this definition, conservativeness is the general name given to a vast system of thought with many aspects. In this context, conservatism is seen as one of the most important three political doctrines, along with liberalism and socialism (Özipek, 2007). However, the conservative concept has many areas of use besides the political literature. One of these areas is the term “conservative” used for people, in the context of daily life sociology, that give the impression of belonging to a certain segment with their lifestyles and daily habits. The term “conservative lifestyle” that I use in this section is for the segment of society of Turkey after 2002 who gained power and visibility under the management of the conservative Justice and Development Party government and went through changes in lifestyles and status. The reason I call this lifestyle Islamic/conservative (by which I mean I use both words) is to clear any misunderstandings regarding the meaning of the word conservative. Providing any commentary about whether these Islamic / conservative lifestyles adopt conservatism as a political ideology is not an aim of this study.

The most visible and open-to-discussion feature of the society called conservative segment in Turkey is without a doubt the issue of hijab/veiling, which is discussed through visibility of women. Hijab/headscarf is the traditional veil worn by Muslim

women that covers their heads and necks (and sometimes their faces, except the eyes) (Siraj, 2011). The word comes from the root ha-ja-ba, meaning to veil / to cover (El Guindi, 1999). This rule passes in the 31st verse of Surah An-Noor in the Quran as follows:

And say to the faithful women to lower their gazes, and to guard their private parts, and not to display their adornment except what is apparent of it, and to extend their headcoverings (khimars) to cover their bosoms (jaybs), and not to display their adornment except to their husbands, or their fathers, or their husband's fathers, or their sons, or their husband's sons, or their brothers, or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their womenfolk, or what their right hands rule (slaves), or the followers from the men who do not feel sexual desire, or the small children to whom the nakedness of women is not apparent, and not to strike their feet (on the ground) so as to make known what they hide of their adornments. And turn in repentance to Allah together, O you the faithful, in order that you are successful.

According to the dictionary, hijab also means the veiling or seclusion of women in some Islamic societies, customarily practiced in order to maintain standards of modesty (Latiff & Alam, 2013). Throughout history, Muslim women from different Muslim societies around the world practiced hijab in different ways. Face veil is included in hijab in some societies, but not in others. In the Turkish example, headscarf has always been an important and hot topic in Turkish society. Related to the ever-changing political and social conjecture, the style with which headscarf is worn changed and diversified; and many changes occurred in terms of the lifestyles headscarved women experience with their “headscarved” identities. Also needs to be remarked that the concept of “hijab” in world literature, which is used for covering the whole body, is reduced only to “headscarf” in Turkey and further degraded to “an accessory worn over hair” during the political symbol discussions. It is even called “turban” and “sıkmabaş” (sıkma: clamped, baş: head), mostly pejoratively. Therefore, I use the term “headscarf” instead of “hijab” when I talk about veiling fashion in this study.

The reason why headscarf had such an important place in Turkish society is that headscarf, just like many types of religious rituals, has not just a personal but a social side as well. This circumstance causes headscarved women to have a visibility more than expected. Related to this, the second reason is that headscarved women were at a public position that was naturally affected by the political, social and cultural transformations Turkey went through after the republic. At this point, we ought to touch briefly upon the journey of the headscarf from the first years of the young Turkish republic. Republic of Turkey is a country that was established in 1923 by leaving its previous legacy behind. The most important feature of this new republic regime for the mostly Sunni Muslim Turkish population was the fact that it was a secular republic (Warhola & Bezci, 2018). Kuru claims that secularism was more actively imposed compared to Christian countries because Muslim societies are more pervasive in terms of guiding the society (as cited in Warhola & Bezci, 2018). Because of the strong position of religion in Turkish society, the new republic incentivized modernity and secularism strongly to its citizens. Therefore, the headscarf, worn by women for religious purposes, gained a more traditional meaning from the first years of the republic. Women in cities stopped wearing headscarves and move onto more Western style of clothing; rural women started using headscarf more of a local piece of clothing. According to Gökarıksel, with migration to Turkey's urban centers in the 1960s and 70s, the headscarf came to symbolize migrants' lower class and rural origins (as cited in Gökarıksel & Secor, 2010).

Turkey went through significant breakthroughs in terms of politics, economy and thought in the 1980s. After the 1980 military coup, liberal and Islamic political parties started to have a bigger voice in Turkish politics and reciprocity among the people. Simultaneously, the economic policies had an impact on the social change as well. As Yavuz iterates, economic neoliberal efforts in this period helped new class of conservative entrepreneurs/business people where secular elites dominated previously (2004). While all these transformations took place, members of the Islamic/conservative segment developed and rose intellectually as well. Young women who wore the

headscarf not for traditional reasons but out of religious preference started the struggle against university headscarf bans.

That veiling gained a modern meaning and evaluated in the capitalist system began in the Özal period, in which Turkey started modernizing in many ways. Turgut Özal was the 8th President of Turkey from 1989 to 1993 and the 26th Prime Minister of Turkey from 1983 to 1989. We see that in 1990s, veiling began transforming into fashion. In understanding this transformation, the veiling advertisements and the language and messages in these ads were of high value. According to Bekaroğlu, modern Muslim women were supplied a sense of fashion in that period. The fact that veiling had become a fashion style bolstered the strength of both the modern Muslim woman and the modern Turkish Republic (Bekaroğlu, 2008).

Therefore, the development of the fashion in veiling began with the advertising made by the veiling brands during this period. Regarding this period, Bekaroğlu's study of newspaper advertisements about the development of veiling-fashion from the 90s to the 2000s is quite valuable (2008). He divides this period into three sub-periods: In the early years, there were no female models the commercials. Instead, drawings of women were preferred. In addition, the branding and institutionalization of veiling stores have not yet begun. Some newly established veiling stores began putting up ads to the conservative newspapers and magazines. Then, in the mid-1990s, ads started containing real women, which was a remarkable change. On the other hand, the slogans used in these ads changed. There was an increasing emphasis on the "change and development of the hijab" and "modern heads of the cover".

We can clearly observe quite impressive changes in the veiling ads after 1996. First, the women in the ads began becoming increasingly bold. Secondly, the emphasis on "the women", "the beauty", and "the body" was put on in these ads. The headscarves, which were presented as headscarves for covering only the heads of women in previous sub-

period ads, became an accessories to be worn on the necks of unveiled female models. From then on, the emphasis on “the change” strengthened and this shift in the style of veiling spread rapidly among Muslim veiled women in Turkey. Eventually, the dominant language in the traditional fashion started dominating the veiling fashion industry as well (Bekaroğlu, 2008). This domination process seems to be an ongoing process, which has yet to be completed. In this context, the situation in which the conservative culture under the dominance of modern and universal practices of life emerges as a subject to be investigated.

Obviously, this journey of headscarf, developing and transforming under the roof of Islamic marketing, was not just limited to Turkey. According to Sandıkçı, the Muslim were marginalized as low-income and uneducated people who did not constitute a significant market for branded products and therefore were omitted by the world of marketing (Sandikci, 2011). This marginalization even defended that Islamic fundamentalism contradicted the conditions of postmodernity completely. Turner (1994) defends the “consumerism offers or promises a range of possible lifestyles which compete with and in many cases, contradict the uniform lifestyle demanded by Islamic fundamentalism” view (pg. 90). This process that rendered Muslim consumers and producers in Turkey and the world invisible has fractured in the last few decades. The world of marketing has realized that as it started covering the Islamic, it received a large and exciting response from the Muslim consumer.

The 2000s were the decades of significant changes for the conservatives in Turkey. With the Justice and Development Party, which has a conservative and Islamic background, in power, conservative Muslim segments of the society have renewed their self-confidence and gained a chance for greater freedom of speech compared to the previous years. On the other hand, this conservative community have managed to turn the economic liberalization period Turkey’s going through into an advantage for themselves. According to Yavuz (2004), these market-oriented new spaces was very effective in propagating the

Islamic lifestyles and generating financial resources for the Islamic movements. As a result, conservative and veiled women gained visibility in many areas of the society. This democratization experience also influenced the veiling-fashion in a positive sense, many conservative fashion magazines have begun publishing during this period. The veiling stores corporatized and significant space on TV commercials and digital media channels were allocated to the veiling brands. Thus, the veiling-fashion started turning into a huge sector from then on.

That veiling fashion began appearing in media organs other than advertising and public relations works with the advent of Islamic fashion magazines. The first such magazine was *Ala Magazine*, which began being published in 2011. It was followed by the others such as *Hesna*, *Enda*, *Şems-i Tuba*, *İkra*, *Aysha* and so forth. The topics discussed in these magazines included life of women, fashion, Islam, family and the articles were written by female authors. On the other hand, similar to traditional fashion magazines, ads comprised of a significant share in terms of pages. (Meşe, 2015) The contemporary veiling-fashion that created an extensive effect through the media achieved to construct both its own conservative and modern women subjects. To this end, Cihan Aktaş (2013) claims that conservative women may have many different reasoning regarding the transformation in the perception of veiling. She also expresses that the one of the most important of these reasons was the "accumulation of being oppressed". According to Aktaş, Muslim women were exposed to an operation of disfigurement by the system for many years; so the transformation process that they experience today is a reaction for such an oppression (2013).

As Aktaş mentioned, many different sociological and individual reasons, which has significance in the journey of the modernization of Muslim women, lie under the development of veiling-fashion. However, there is another point that should not be missed here is that the reading this transformation only in terms of Turkey's historical and conjectural change will be inadequate and misleading. When looked at the other

research examining the veiling/modest fashion and young Muslim women, we see that change is universal and inevitable. For example, Beta (2014) in her study titled *“How young urban Muslim women redefine themselves in Indonesia”* focuses on how young Indonesian women were affected by the discourse of Islamic cultural industries and popular piety cultures (pg. 378). She asserts that young and urban women, which she calls “hijabers”, express an entertaining and colorful type of Islam with their hijabs (Beta, 2014). Fealy and White (2008) emphasizes that Muslims recently have a more personal understanding of Islam. Therefore, it will not be wrong to claim that the veiling-fashion developing with conjectural processes in both Turkey and the world and the transformation of young conservative women’s perception of Islam and veiling goes hand-in-hand.

Another point of advancement in the development of veiling fashion is the change in the conservative community in terms of being the consumer in Islamic marketing to being the producer. In the recent years, many entrepreneurs living a conservative lifestyle entered the veiling fashion industry. According to Sandıkçı (2011); from Malaysia to Turkey, India, Syria, the UK and Australia, these entrepreneurs design, manufacture and market products that are crucial to the development of modern Muslim identities as consumer subjects. She also suggests that the common point of all these conservative enterprises is that, apart from business success, the Muslim also work and struggle to live in a righteous life. Taking off of such a pretense, with the success of the entrepreneurs and the conservative masses’ adoption, the veiling fashion today became a case study even worldwide brands put on their agendas.

This is the summary of how the perception of veiling developed and improved among the conservative lifestyle culture throughout the years. The current position regarding the conservative lifestyle and veiling fashion is that, just like any other subject, this issue also moved on to the digital and the social media. The conservative community, aforementioned Islamic marketing’s consumer and the producer, try to make the most

of the opportunities presented by social media and carry their activities and lifestyle on the social media, just like everybody else. So, this once limited and only conservative community accessible world now became open to the access of everyone around the world, a universal phenomenon. One of the most visible outcomes of this phenomenon is that conservative lifestyle representations began to exist, especially on Instagram, under tags themed #fashion, and the unfolding of many conservative female instagrammers. Of course, this outcome entailed new discussions and questions. Arguments that internet and social media is transforming the conservative lifestyle, perception of veiling and veiling fashion has been risen lately (Bunt, 2009; Akou, 2010; Lewis, 2013). At this point, the question I asked in the previous section becomes more valuable. We see that the influencer of the Instagram culture and the question of how it affected and transformed the lifestyles of Islamic/conservative lifestyle instagrammers is still in need of an analysis.

3. 4. Conservative Instagrammers and Their Lifestyle Posts in Instagram Culture

Instagram, which was integrated into our lives in the last decade, with its millions of users of different looks, identities, beliefs and lifestyles, and the content generated by these users, has created a new open culture worthy of discussion. Everyone was able to exist in this Instagram culture with the photos and videos they share. Especially young women with posts themed lifestyle and fashion were one of the main ingredients of the Instagram culture. Just like in the world, many non-famous young women in Turkey affected masses with their own lifestyles, earning the name influencer. The lifestyles posts of these women generally comprised of female topic such as fashion, clothing, makeup, marriage, relationships and motherhood. Headscarved and conservative women who represent an important social segment in Turkey occupied a significant place in Instagram culture with the lifestyle they presented, even if these sometimes went to the point of conflict with religious rules and traditional norms.

In the years Instagram became widespread, conservative -or modest- fashion sector was speeding up. The conservative entrepreneurs I mentioned previously (a respectable number of these were women) took advantage of the opportunities offered by Instagram and took positions where digital was a part of the business. In this period, we began to see many boutiques/corporate accounts that was based on conservative women's clothing on Instagram. Beyond these, we observed conservative women lifestyle instagrammers to convert their accounts into corporate ones and to begin to sell the attires they design and wear. In the beginning of the last decade, this expansion of the social media user micro-entrepreneurs was giving the signal that "social media marketing" would occupy a notable space in our shopping experience as an effective marketing channel (Mehta & Anand, 2012). Other than these, the number of conservative lifestyle instagrammers who just share personal posts without selling anything was also skyrocketing. As I mentioned before, the lifestyle concept on Instagram, although nested with fashion, did not just consist of fashion. The most important characteristic of these women was that they carried every moment and subject of their lives into this SNS.

When we look at the lifestyle posts of these women, we see that what is being presented is not just a piece of clothing, an accessory or an object. It is the whole life of the person carrying that piece of clothing or an accessory. The place in which the photo is taken, the caption written under the photo, other messages given by the instagrammer with regards to her life (for example, a wedding ring hinting of a happy marriage) as a whole represent a lifestyle. It looks like for these influencer women personal stories and autobiographical details are as important as visual representations (Beta, 2014). Many instagrammers prefer to use their accounts without regard to corporate / personal differentiation. In other words, in one post, she puts a piece of clothing she designed up for sale; in the next one she shares a happy memory with her husband or children. Both contexts feed each other; the instagrammer stops being just a fashion designer trying to

earn money in the eyes of the followers and, through wearing the clothes she designed and sharing a part of her life, becomes a real “influencer”, i.e. influences the follower.

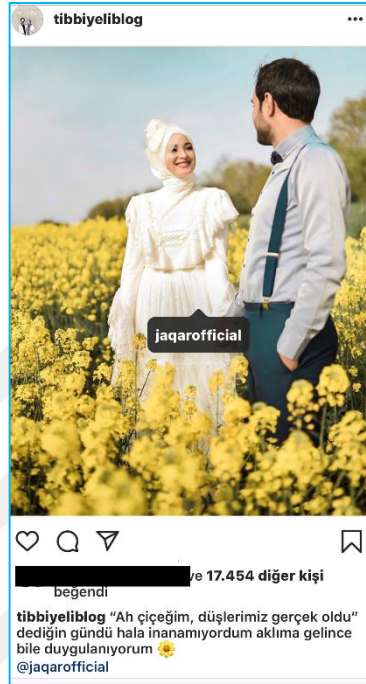


Figure 3.1. Marriage and relationship theme was one of the themes most commonly used by conservative women instagrammers. This post, shared by an instagrammer called tibbiyeliblog, shows that lifestyle concept is a more inclusive concept containing fashion as well.

In Djafarova’s (et. al, 2017) study about the online Instagram celebrities having an effect on the shopping habits of young female users, views of the participants about the issue seems to confirm the comments above. According to this study, participants trust Instagram celebrities more than traditional ones and think former are more influential. And in their purchasing behavior and decisions, the impact of these instagrammers are obvious. One of the reason for this result is that these instagrammers are more “lower-scale” than traditional celebrities. Therefore, for the followers, following these influencers and make role models out of them are much more “affordable” (pg. 14).



Figure 3.2. Fashion and shopping themed photo and video posts make up a significant percentage of the lifestyle posts of conservative women instagrammers.

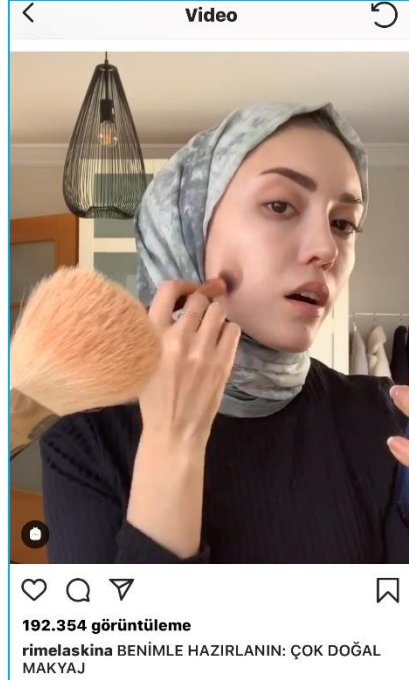


Figure 3.3. Makeup is another significant theme in the posts of conservative women influencers.

Another striking point in the lifestyle posts of conservative women instagrammers is their tendency to associate modesty -or conservatism in a way- with the whatever aspect of life they are sharing a post about. This characteristic is indeed related to the previous one. Conservative instagrammers, who choose to present their whole lives as a lifestyle, feel the need to emphasize that piety and modesty are a part of their lives. For example, these accounts make an effort to celebrate religious days and festivals. They try to keep traditional ceremonies about special days such as marriage or childbirth alive (such as memorial service and prayers when they have a child or have an animal sacrificed before getting married...). In this context, Beta (2014) describes one of the conservative instagrammers he examines as follows:

Although she travels in style, she expresses 'modesty' at the same time. Her shopping sprees and fashion items are described in some detail, leading readers to understand that she has the purchasing power of an upper-class woman. However, she has also visited Mecca a number of times, taking pictures of her pilgrimages. The pictures posted suggest she has visited different countries in the Middle East a number of times, enjoying the lifestyles of conventional Muslim societies. Her photos suggest both luxury and 'modesty' to her readers, mostly 18–24 year-olds. (pg. 382)

All these catchy characteristics in the lifestyle posts of the conservative women instagrammers bring us to a concept intensely experienced in social media: Personal branding or Self-branding (Peters, 1997). According to Peters, each individual has the strength and capability to self-brand and has to be his/her own marketer. Thanks to social media and everybody having the chance to get this power, self-branding is more widespread than ever. According to Liu and Suh (2018), self-branding is mainly examined as a set of practices or mindset to become salable product to attract attention and acquire value cultural and monetary through SNS's. In the light of this definition, influencers that exist with their lifestyles on Instagram can be considered as being their own self-marketers and ad people who sell their own lifestyles as products.

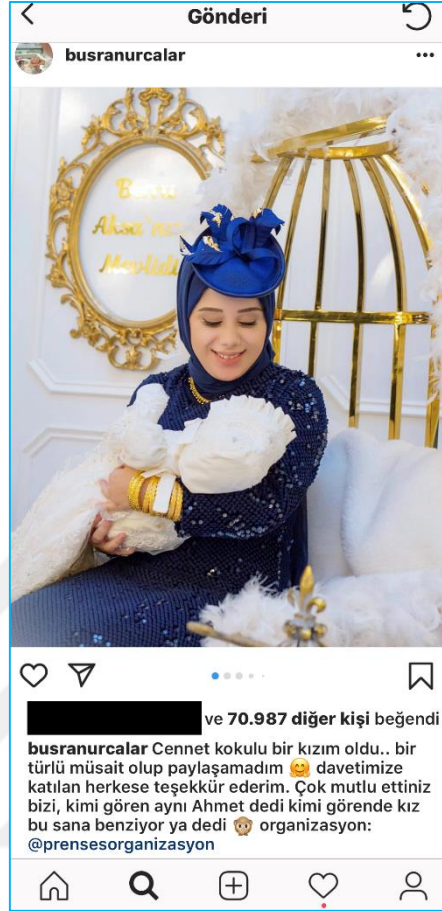


Figure 3.4. Motherhood experiences of conservative women instagrammers holds a special place in lifestyle posts. Influencers both share their experiences regarding pregnancy, birth or baby care, and posts ads regarding baby stuff and organizations.

Therefore, we have to maintain that the conservative women instagrammers that we categorized in the beginning of this chapter as “earning money” and “only presenting their lifestyles without financial goals” are not so much different from each other. It is possible to observe that, earning money or not, all the lifestyle instagrammers that exist on Instagram thanks to self-branding act with respect to certain unwritten rules and methods and struggle to earn cultural value. Not only conservative women lifestyle instagrammers, many Instagram users with different attributes experience this self-branding and lifestyle presentations and this can be considered, in this context, as one of the most important outcomes of the Instagram culture. These conservative women instagrammers try to position themselves differently with their identities and attributes

in this Instagram culture. However, when looked from the viewpoints of produced brand perception, presented lifestyles and followers' rationale for following, whether different cultural representatives exist in this channel with different, creative and original content and messages is not without question.



Figure 3.5. For instagrammers, in concept (with nobody in them) photos, accessories and their placements are important. Each accessory provides us with clues regarding the lifestyle of the instagrammer.

Right at this point, we have to focus on the fact that the democratic, free, equal production and performance opportunities presented by the means producership and influencersip provided by social media may not be the only meaningful result of social media use. Instagram, with its idiosyncratic usage sociology, is one of the most popular SNSs and the question of the outcomes of Instagram usage other than the yields provided by social media technologies is valuable for me.



Figure 3.6. Travel theme is an indispensable part of the lifestyle concept. As seen in the photo, travel and fashion elements go hand in hand in the photos presented to followers.



Figure 3.7. Conservative women lifestyle instagrammers tend to use Islamic elements abundantly and reflect a modest lifestyle to their followers. Examples of which are Hajj (pilgrimage) or Ummah visits, Ramadan meals, Islamic holy day celebrations and etc.

Therefore, the social transformation conservative women instagrammers go through in Instagram culture is a topic worthy of a study in this context. The questions of whether Instagram culture, which brings different types of users and influencers under similar themes and methods, homologize people and cultures and change their understanding of lifestyle are of capital importance.

To evaluate the position of where Islamic / conservative lifestyle and veiling fashion, history of which we examined the historical and the cyclical context, reached through the representation of conservative women instagrammers, we also have to review non-conservative instagrammers with similar style of posts. Only then, we will be able to see different understandings of lifestyles and find meaningful relationships between the changes in the understanding of conservative lifestyle and Instagram culture. To elaborate, when we compare the lifestyle posts of other micro-celebrities and instagrammers who gained followers with the self-branding method, we will be able to see the commonalities and differences between them and conservative lifestyle instagrammers. When we evaluate the theme of the message, the visual and textual language, the objects used, relationships presented and the reactions of the followers of these posts comparatively, we will be able to understand whether Instagram culture has any impact on the transformation of the understanding of conservative lifestyle.

CHAPTER 4

A STUDY ON THE CHANGE IN THE UNDERSTANDING OF CONSERVATIVE LIFESTYLE DUE TO INSTAGRAM CULTURE

4.1. Research Methodology: Digital Ethnography

Regarding ethnography, one of the most commonly used methods used by scholars working in social sciences; Marcus (1995) provides a detailed account. Instead of conducting one-aspect studies taking place in one field for a long time, he suggests multi-sited ethnography. According to him, multi-sited ethnography does not only mean a geographical concept; this approach also calls for the necessity to look at a topic from different perspectives. In a multi-sited ethnographic research, the researcher needs to be able to make connections. For example, an ethnographer can follow a person, a metaphor, a thing, a life, a story or a conflict and collect information regarding the subject from various perspectives. Then, in a multi aspect ethnographic study, observing only the physical environment of the subject in question, assets in cyber environments are as important as the physical ones.

In this context, Marcus (1995) suggest that media studies is one of the most suitable fields for multi-sited ethnography to emerge (pg. 103). In this view, media channels should be included in the ethnographic research. At this point, social media warrants a mention. That social media encompassing a notable part of our daily lives and affecting our real lives physically and mentally, made it investigable not just within the scope of media studies, but also under social sciences in general. The methodology, expanding and improving with Marcus' (1995) multi-sited ethnography, came into prominence once more with the advent of Web 2.0 technologies and prevalence of social media channels. Social media channels and the new social media culture have become new spaces in which millions of people are online 24/7, providing segments of their lifestyles and interacting with other people, begging to be researched ethnographically. Therefore, ethnographical studies gained another aspect through online spaces.

The literature regarding cyber culture and cyberanthropology goes way back than digital ethnography, which is newer and more contemporary methods (Escobar, 1994). According to Budka (2011), “virtual or online communities” and “online social networks” that arose with internet technologies present researchers a field ripe for study. Therefore, researchers can conduct holistic online ethnographic research into the new language, social structures and cultural identities generated by this “computer-mediated communication (pg. 5). In this context, Miller and Slater (2000)’s study on the internet usage of Trinidadians is considered to be the first holistic ethnographic study about the internet. Moreover, Miller conducted another ethnographic study in the same place, but this time about the Facebook usage of the natives (2010).

One of the first other online ethnographers is Christine Hine, who in the late 1990s launched the term *virtual ethnography*, a concept thereafter heavily supported in research literature (Ducheneaut, as cited in Bengtsson, 2014). Until today, similar methods with different terminologies are suggested such as *virtual anthropology* (Boellstorff, 2008), *digital anthropology* (Miller and Horst, 2012), *cyber-ethnography* (Teli et al. 2007), *digital ethnography* (Murthy 2008), *netnography* (Kozinets, 2010). Underberg ve Zorn (2013) defines digital ethnography as a method that presents real life cultures augmented by the features of digital media. From all these names, what we generally call “digital ethnography” is the ethnographic methodology that observes in detail the lives of individuals and groups in online network spaces.

When we consider social networking sites as field sites, we can talk about statistical, big-data-oriented methods such as web content analysis, social network analysis. However, these methods, unlike digital ethnography, do not provide us answers to the questions of “how” and “why” (Postill and Pink, 2012). In online spaces, only numbers or commentary based on statistics are not enough to decode the sociology of these environments. At this point, two different methods can be chosen. The first is through

benefiting from online while investigating offline spaces, i.e. conducting internet-related ethnography (Postill and Pink, 2012). The other is focusing on the online space in particular and conducting a complete internet ethnography through putting the lives of users on the internet at the center.

The most important different aspect of digital (internet) ethnography from the classical ethnographic studies is that it brings online participant observation, instead of face-to-face observation. This, the fact that both the researcher is in the environment he/she's researching and the observees not noticing it, is most important advantage presented by digital ethnography. At this point Bealieu (2004) talks about *the idea of lurker*. A lurker is someone who is part of an activity on the internet, but without making explicit/overt contribution to it (pg. 160). For example, being a member to a group or following someone in a social media channel without providing any comments to the group or the followed can be called being a lurker. According to Bealieu (2004), to lurk on the internet as an ethnographer provides a "greater availability and accessibility of unobtrusive techniques" (pg. 146). Additionally, this method helps the people being observed not get disturbed. Moreover, as he/she does not know that he/she's being observed the researcher is able to observe her/his authentic reactions, providing a more accurate outcome.

Due to all these reasons, I have decided that, in the study I am conducting regarding the "influencers" who exist on Instagram, an SNS, and appeal to thousands of people, this method is the most suitable. Observing the influencers who became famous through the presentation of their lives on Instagram, spending at least half of their days as "online" in this channel, whose offline and online lives intersect and mix with each other provided me a significant freedom space. In my study, I followed and observed Instagram accounts I chose and many similar accounts / accounts interacting with them for a year. From main page posts to stories, from livefeeds to follower comments, I became a part of the daily online life-taking place in Instagram. In this process, I used my personal Instagram

account. Following these accounts as an ordinary Instagram user and a fan/follower was another necessity of being a lurker. That is why I did not want to draw attention by opening an account special for this study. I used 10 Instagrammers who I followed, got to know and observed for a year and selected their May 2019 posts to analyze and compare in detail. Therefore, this study consists both of my general observations and investigations, and a 1-month-long detailed analysis.

4.1.1. Subject of the Research

The subject of my study is the impact of Instagram culture on conservative women instagrammers' understanding of lifestyle. To elaborate, the similarities of social media users with different cultural and conjectural pasts on the adaptation to the Instagram culture is worth noting. One of these cultural groups are, without a doubt, veiled and self-dubbed "conservative" young women Instagram users. In Chapter III, I mentioned the historical background of conservative lifestyle and fashion, and how these concepts get reproduced and lived inside the Instagram culture. Thus, in my study, I focus on what an impact Instagram – and indirectly, social media- has on cultures and lifestyles in the example of conservative women lifestyle influencers. I arrived at the conclusion that Instagram culture changes cultures and lifestyles, both of which end up converging to a common point.

4.1.2. Purpose and Importance of the Research

The purpose of this study is to look for answers to the questions of whether Instagram culture homologizes people and cultures and changes the understandings of lifestyle. In other words, to discuss how SNSs, which allegedly provide equal and democratic opportunities to individuals and have an effect on the free representation of differences (Stark, 2016), affect user communities with their idiosyncratic, non-written rules and the universal social media culture they created. To that effect, first, I conducted a detailed literature review on the development of social media channels and the creation of social media culture in Chapter II. In this context, I detected that the most important

opportunity provided by Web 2.0 technology to SNSs is the “user-generated content” (Mandiberg, 2012) and the chance offered to individuals to exist on social media equally and freely. So, the new social media culture is often discussed in these contexts.

However, the research I conducted on the lifestyle-themed posts on Instagram, one of the most popular SNSs presents, reveals a never-mentioned-before effect of Instagram. This effect can be discussed over the similarities shared by the posts of social groups from various cultures and backgrounds. The importance of this study is exactly this. This study, in which I analyzed the lifestyle-themed posts of conservative and non-conservative young women instagrammers, provides us with the opportunity to discuss the consequences of the Instagram cultures that were never discussed before.

Instagram, with its idiosyncratic rules and atmosphere, created a new online cultural environment (Hu et al., 2014). With influencer users, follower/fan users, lifestyle posts and representations, millions of people live an online life every day. Therefore, how the conservative lifestyle is represented, lived and changed compared to the past are rather important. I believe that this study, conducted for a master’s degree, will be a nice milestone for the research that will follow.

4.1.3. Scope and Limitations of the Research

The populace I focus on in this research are young women Instagram users who has more than 100 thousand followers, are veiled, define themselves as “conservative” and has the theme “lifestyle” written in their profiles and in their posts. These users are people who use the title “influencer” or “instagrammer” per literature and cater to certain fan/follower masses with their Instagram posts. None of them was famous before in the traditional sense. They opened up their accounts after the spread of SNS use and the people’s acceptance of Instagram in Turkey. However, their common trait was that all of them has Instagram as the SNS they most use and put emphasis on. In 2018, I started surveying Instagram for my test subject accounts through investigating the people my

friends follow, as my friend circles is related to the study I'm conducting. "Discover" option of Instagram helped me discover active and influential conservative women instagrammers thanks to its algorithms. I followed about 30 instagrammers in a few months.

After a while, I decided that I should include non-conservative women instagrammers to my study. This way, I would have gotten the chance to examine conservative women instagrammers' lifestyle posts comparatively. I found some of these non-conservative influencers through the conservative ones I started following. Again, I also made use of the "Discover" tab. I ended up following 12 non-conservative women instagrammers. By 2019, I eliminated some of these influencers, who I have gotten to know better over time. I tried to select influencers with different traits, belonging to different communities, who are not friends with each other, to diversify my subject pool. Finally, I selected 5 conservative and 5 non-conservative influencer accounts and investigated all of their posts, stories and livefeeds for a month in depth.

Due to the method I use, my study is a completely online one. I did not offer any surveys or in-depth interviews to the influencers. Instead, I watched the videos they shared in which they talked about themselves in detail and answered questions from followers, and analyzed old photos. Even though these influencers are my topic of study, I read follower comments under their posts meticulously. In short, my study, thanks to the method I choose, does not include offline and quantitative methods. Moreover, although there are numerous accounts, which share the features I am investigating, by choosing only 10 people, I prefer to narrow down my thesis. The only field of my study is the Instagram channel. However, in investigation, as necessity demanded, I looked at these influencers' use of other SNSs. I fed from these; however, my focus is on what kind of representations they created on Instagram.

Analyzing the Instagram culture and its impact on users using quantitative methods or bigger samples may provide more inclusive and general results. Especially in Turkey, the literature about Turkish influencers are quite limited. I hope that this humble study may help jumpstart other studies in these topics with different methodologies. SNSs, especially Instagram, with their huge implications on social change await further studies.

4.2. Research and Findings

In the extent of this study, I investigated 10 instagrammer accounts (5 conservative and 5 non-conservative). Among these accounts, the conservative ones and their number of followers are as follows: *Rabiacaoa* (270k), *Tıbbiyeli Blog* (332k), *Aybüke Nur Demirci* (361k), *Ayşegül Güneş* (161k) and *By Seda Aydın* (138k). The other accounts whom I selected for comparison are these: *Mevy* (767k), *Aslı Özdel* (155k), *Sebibebi* (404k), *Ece Targıt* (142k) and *Cansu Dengey* (159k). The study contains all sharing tools offered by Instagram and used by these users. As the basic tools used by influencers are the posts in the profiles and the story photos and videos that are available for 24 hours, my focus is on these. However, IGTV videos, livefeeds and the Youtube videos that the influencers direct their followers through links they put on their profiles are sometimes considered in this study from time to time.

4.2.1. Conservative and Non-Conservative Women Instagrammers' Profiles

The common aspect shared by these account owners of various age, private lives, social and cultural classes is that all of them use Instagram as a tool of lifestyle representation and take this job quite seriously. I would like to introduce these influencers as I got to somewhat know them in the duration of my study.

Rabiacaoa is a conservative lifestyle instagrammers with a rather interesting story. She memorized the Quran when she was in a Quranic School as a teenager. She shares her memories in the videos she films and posts on Instagram to introduce herself.⁸ When

⁸ To see her videos on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOKaGPIBy-EABdH7reGd0vQ>

she was in Quranic School, she says that she did not like the way she had to dress, even though she was quite young. She shares that she felt bad in the topcoats she wore during those days. She notices that there were no clothing available to suit her age and sense of style and decides to design these pieces of clothing. She takes many tailoring, fashion design and self-help courses and later starts a business and opens a boutique. When she became known by the Instagram community, she also opened a Youtube account. She states that, after being an active Instagram user, she rummages through non-conservative lifestyle accounts on Instagram. She admits that she has learned how to put on makeup by watching influencers such as Merve Özkaynak and Duygu Özaslan. She also states that she took a course called Fundamentals of Makeup, in order to broadcast makeup videos in her profile. The biggest criticism she gets from her followers is regarding her Quranic education background. Some of her followers accuse her of not living a life associated with a scholar of Quran and voice their criticisms in every occasion.

Tıbbiyeli Blog belongs to a 4th year med student named Şule. The fact that she is a well-dressed, well-groomed, veiled doctor candidate who is also dating (later married) a fellow med student deems her quite an attractive prospect in the eyes of the followers. She shared only photos for a while, however after she passed 300k followers, she opened up a Youtube channel and started sharing videos with her followers. She receives questions mostly about medical school, life as a veiled med school student, life as a married med school student. She continues her impact on Instagram by answering these questions and giving suggestions to her followers about fashion/makeup.

Ayşegül Güneş, has a boutique in which she sells scarves and pieces of clothing she designs. She is also an instagrammer who sells her goods on her Instagram account. She is married and has a baby. She often shares posts regarding her husband and baby to a generally positive feedback. The difference separating Ayşegül from the other 4 conservative instagrammers I investigate is that she belongs to the Zeruj Community, an enterprise known among influencers for its activities combining social media and

conservative fashion. Zeruj⁹ is a well-known by Turkish conservative women in recent years. It is started by Zehra Özkaymaz, a conservative entrepreneur. Thanks to Zeruj, many young conservative women has been able to enter our lives in 2010s with their conservative fashion brands. It began in 2013 with annual shopping festivals by these women and reached to a point that they established a shopping mall with the motto “Turkey’s first women-themed conservative fashion shopping mall” in 2018.

Zeruj, is a nickname given to Zehra Özkaymaz by young women around her. It’s made up by combining her name “Zehra” and the Turkish word for lipstick “Ruj”. She states that they created a story from a meaningless word and adds:

This is a female success story. However, it is not my story. Zeruj has nothing to do with me. Zeruj has become a word synonymous with happiness, getting together, holding hands, undertaking enterprises, women supporting each other and festivals (Çetinkaya, 2018).

Zeruj platform, which claims to be founded to introduce influencers who became famous on social media and successful women entrepreneurs to the world, is a product of a recent example of the conservative culture and it is worth a study. Therefore, Ayşegül Güneş is an entrepreneur and an influencer who contributed to the success of Zeruj initiative as a member of Zehra Özkaymaz’s team. In fact, all influencers who are interested in conservative fashion cross paths with Zeruj in one way or another and many instagrammers are in interaction with it. However, I believe that including a main team member to my study would yield better result for a study that investigates conservative lifestyle instagrammers.

Another instagrammer included in this study is bysedaaydin. Seda Aydın, who is positioned far away from the Zeruj team and its audience, presents a more individual and different lifestyle representation. In this account, we encounter more glamour and riches compared to the other accounts examined in this study. Seda, who is married,

⁹ <http://www.zeruj.com/zeruj-hakkinda/>

gained many followers in 2017 during which she shared a luxury lifestyle concept from her henna night (an event like a bachelorette party at which henna is applied to the hands of the bride and the participants), marriage and honeymoon. She mainly shares about conservative fashion and, just like others, she shares contractual ads. Additionally, she shares a lot about her private life, which consists of her husband, parents and 7 siblings, which brings more followers for her.

The final conservative women lifestyle instagrammer is Aybüke Nur. The youngest of the bunch and joined to the world of influencers rather late compared to others (around 2017) but has the most followers among conservative influencers. She amassed more than 361 thousand followers in a short amount time, 2 years, and continues expanding her follower base. She is a recent bride and, as I witnessed in my 1-year-long observation, posting about events like engagements, weddings and other special days hold a big importance for the influencers whose follower bases mainly consist of young women. Aybüke, with her new marriage, home, life, and in addition, her genial, talkative and sincere demeanor makes her the most popular conservative influencer lately. Moreover, she uses the promotion and brand participation features of Instagram effectively and one who prefers advertising posts that pertain to various brands.

All these five account owners and many other conservative lifestyle influencer have one crucially important thing in common, among many: They define themselves, the way they dress and live as “conservative”. The response given by Zehra Özkaymaz, the entrepreneur behind the Zeruj initiative, to the criticism regarding her unusual way of wearing the veil is quite valuable in terms of summarizing the point Turkish conservativeness and the veiling fashion has arrived in their historical journey:

Veiled and non-veiled is history now. Because in the past, the veiled was covered completely and the non-veiled was non-veiled. However, now we have something call conservative. Some of them are not veiled and some covers her hair but in different ways. Veiling has no fashion. Its rules are obvious and strict. I am no veiled. I used to be though. We went through quite a struggle at

university. We had to wear wigs in order to enter the university. Compromise brought in more compromise. I am also not non-veiled. My answer to the question “Are you veiled or not?” is “I am moderate (Aydın, 2017).

Another commonality shared by these conservative women is that they exhibit their lifestyles over Instagram and cater to masses. Some of them also sell goods and receive monetary benefits and some others, even though they do not sell anything, gain presents from brands by advertising their products. From some the posts shared by these influencers, we see that they see Instagram as a job. Just like any normal job with its rules and corporate culture, Instagram culture affects these “workers” and their lives. At this point, while investigating how conservative lifestyle gets affected by Instagram culture, it becomes meaningful to insert “the other” influencers and their lifestyle representations.

For this purpose, I want to introduce briefly five non-conservative accounts I selected and their owners. The first account belongs to Sebile Ölmez called Sebibebi. She has 404k followers and is much older than all of the other influencers I am considering in this study. The reason why I included her in my study is that she is married, has a daughter and she shares posts about motherhood, fashion and makeup. As motherhood is an important daily topic and subject of sharing for conservative instagrammers, I wanted to add a non-conservative instagrammer who presents her motherhood in her Instagram profile. Sebibebi started her appealing-to-the-masses journey of hers on Instagram and Youtube with makeup photos and videos. After becoming a mother, her areas of interest shifted and she opened a separate Instagram account for posts about motherhood. I include her older account in this study, since she provided spaces for various elements of the lifestyle theme. Sebibebi, who became a mother at a rather older age after going through treatment for that effect, provides segments of her private life and the struggles she went through.

Mevy, as one of the most famous and oldest makeup experts of Instagram and social media channels in general, has 767k followers. We can call her a micro-celebrity who successfully focused on visuality, with her pretty face and high-quality makeup tutorials. She is married to the founder of Ekşi Sözlük¹⁰, one of the firsts of the Web 2.0 social media channels in Turkey, and uses social media like quite professionally. She had advertisement contracts with cosmetics brands and currently the brand face for Mac cosmetics and promoted their products with a social media campaign. She has a four-year-old daughter and she opened up another Youtube account with her pregnancy and uploaded many videos. This, it seems like though, did not last very long. Compared to her other accounts on which she shares about her family and daughter, this account is much more stagnant.

Aslı Özdel, is the owner of another account from the non-conservative category. She is 27 and identifies herself as a makeup artist. She entered Instagram in 2014 and has been sharing informative posts about makeup and collecting followers. The fact that she received a formal education on makeup in the US and she approaches makeup as a profession separates her from some other influencers. She married her boyfriend on February 2019 and shortly after announced that she is pregnant. Although some of her followers criticised her about this, she has been sharing posts about pregnancy and motherhood on her account.

Ece Targit identifies herself as “lifestyle influencer” and aptly fits to this description. Her motto on social media is “Let us travel, see, taste, discover, and try”. One thing that makes her different from the others is that she does not limit herself into one field and is constantly active in many fields of the “lifestyle” theme. She travels a lot and shares from these locations. Moreover, under the photos, she provides long captions that reflect her views on life and suggestions. She also comments on self-help and is interested in yoga and meditation professionally. She even has a studio in which she

¹⁰ To see the website of Ekşi Sözlük: <https://eksisozluk.com/>

teaches yoga and meditation. She collaborates with various brands and promote them on her account transparently with her followers.

Cansu Dengey is similar to Ece Targit with her lifestyle presentations on Instagram. She states that she shares on her profile with tags #beauty, #food, #music and #travel. She majored in Public Relations and Promotion and is a communications and marketing expert. So we can call her an influencer that continues working in corporate and also builds her own brand on social media. So in this context, she uses her professional information while using social media. She also has a Youtube account on which she shares vlogs showing a few days of her life from every aspect. Actually, most of these instagrammers are also youtubers. Especially, before the IGTV and story features of Instagram debuted; they used to use Youtube to reach to their followers in longer and persistent fashion. However, Youtube and other SNSs does not diminish the undeniable importance of Instagram in these influencers daily life. Because vivacity and flow continues on Instagram 24/7. We can say that they continue their daily interactions with their followers on this channel.

4.2.2. Conservative and Non-Conservative Women Instagrammers' Lifestyle Posts

In the scope of this research, I divided the post, story and other in-channel sharings of these ten instagrammer accounts into three important and fundamental categories. I analyzed all the content in these categories. As known, what differentiates Instagram from other SNSs like Facebook or Twitter is that it is visual-based (Hu et al., 2014) However, for a study that aims to analyze lifestyle posts in-depth, investigating only the visual aspect of Instagram will not be enough. The main theme of the content generated on Instagram is mostly about visuality, but it exists with a caption if the user uses a photo, and with a content complementing the visual if the user uses a video. This verbal or written content is sometimes related to the visual content, but sometimes it is difficult to make a connection between the two. That is why all representations and presentations on Instagram requires analyses from written, verbal and visual angles.











CONSERVATIVE ACCOUNTS	NON-CONSERVATIVE ACCOUNTS
<p>< rabiaca ...</p> <p> 3.163 gönderi 270B takipçi 889 takip</p> <p>Mesaj Gönder</p> <p>Rabia Karaca Video İçeriği Üretici rabiaca.com/</p>	<p>< sebibebi ...</p> <p> 2.739 gönderi 404B takipçi 1.000 takip</p> <p>Mesaj Gönder</p> <p>Sebile Ömez® Tanınmış Kişi Beauty Guru-Youtuber Fashion Momm Shark Anne sayfam @venusluanne pr@sebibebi.com youtu.be/IR3CGVs8Pk</p>
<p>< tibbiyeliblog ...</p> <p> 292 gönderi 332B takipçi 188 takip</p> <p>Mesaj Gönder</p> <p>Şule ÇELİK PAÜ TIP 4/6 Stj. Dr youtu.be/E6iS0_PZ7FQ</p>	<p>< mevy ...</p> <p> 2.672 gönderi 767B takipçi 547 takip</p> <p>Mesaj Gönder</p> <p>Merve Özkan Tanınmış Kişi Son video: MAC x MERVEÖZKAN SETİMLE MAKYAJ youtu.be/b_MG6Oa-1l</p>
<p>< aysegulgunes ...</p> <p> 336 gönderi 161B takipçi 557 takip</p> <p>Mesaj Gönder</p> <p>Ayşegül Güngör Kişisel Blog Kazlı Çeşme mh. Asım Kazancıgil cd. Zeruj Port Avm No:46 Zeytinburnu/İSTANBUL WhatsApp Sipariş: 0530 079 76 69 www.aysegulgunes.com/</p>	<p>< asliozdel ...</p> <p> 938 gönderi 155B takipçi 568 takip</p> <p>Mesaj Gönder</p> <p>Aslı Özdel Makyaj Sanatçısı Hamilelik Videosu youtu.be/_vxpVXHVM0</p>
<p>< bysedaaydin ...</p> <p> 538 gönderi 138B takipçi 394 takip</p> <p>Mesaj Gönder</p> <p>SEDA AYDIN ARSLAN Tanınmış Kişi Only Arslan Fashion / Life / Travel İşbirlikleriniz için; iletisim@sedaaydin.com www.sedaaydin.com/</p>	<p>< ecetargit ...</p> <p> 1.209 gönderi 142B takipçi 793 takip</p> <p>Mesaj Gönder</p> <p>ece targit Kişisel Blog chief fairy officer @flovstudio podcast #yoldayizgeliyormusun www.ecetargit.com melis@ecetargit.com youtube.com/ecetargit</p>
<p>< aybuenurdemirci ...</p> <p> 724 gönderi 361B takipçi 624 takip</p> <p>Mesaj Gönder</p> <p>AYBÜKE NUR Tanınmış Kişi #Hayallerimiz gerçek olmayı hak ediyor. •Modest Fashion life&style youtu.be/jhPpSeHYThg</p>	<p>< cansudengey ...</p> <p> 1.560 gönderi 159B takipçi 743 takip</p> <p>Mesaj Gönder</p> <p>Cansu Dengey Acar Video İçeriği Üretici Lifestyle Vlogger #beauty #food #music #travel info@cansudengey.com YENİ VIDEO youtu.be/S7p0Fy3mk38</p>

Figure 4.1. The profiles of conservative and non-conservative accounts

Additionally, another category is needed, which does not reveal itself on Instagram posts and other types of sharing but is as important as the other categories: Message category. What I mean by message category is that the post should be evaluated with its visual, written and verbal contents as a whole, analyzed and categorized accordingly. All of the ten instagrammers' lifestyle representations on Instagram is evaluated according to these categories. Commonalities and differences are handled under categories. This section considers the posts and interactions of these accounts on May 2019.

Even though instagrammers provide visual and written content about the private spaces of their lifestyles, they sometimes share posts that cannot be included in these categories or ones that supersede these categories. To elaborate, results of their posts in all categories has sometimes carry important/different messages. These messages reach the other side, i.e. followers, and be effective. Therefore, one of the biggest dimensions of this category are the influencer-follower relationships and the comments dropped by the followers. As a result, it will be beneficial to evaluate these posts under such a category. All of the ten instagrammers' lifestyle representations on Instagram is evaluated according to these categories. Commonalities and differences are handled under categories. This section considers the posts and interactions of these accounts on May 2019.

4.2.2.1. Visual Content Categories

The foundation of the posts shared by the instagrammers I examine rely, without a doubt, on visuality. I noticed that when I investigated the posts of these ten conservative and non-conservative women I could categorize the visual materials into three categories. These are selfies that focus on the face, body/posture photos focusing on physical beauty and photos with special concepts in which the individual is not at the foreground and the objects used emphasizing the lifestyle.

4.2.2.1.1. Presentation of the Self

Selfies, the “photographic or digital self-portraits” the individual snaps via a phone or webcam have become the universal phenomenon of the last decade (Wang, 2016, pg. 61). On Instagram, they used to find themselves a place on the profiles of the users, however, recently they came to the forefront through them being used in stories. For the influencers in my study, the photos and videos they take themselves focusing on their faces take up most of the visual content of their posts.



Figure 4.2.

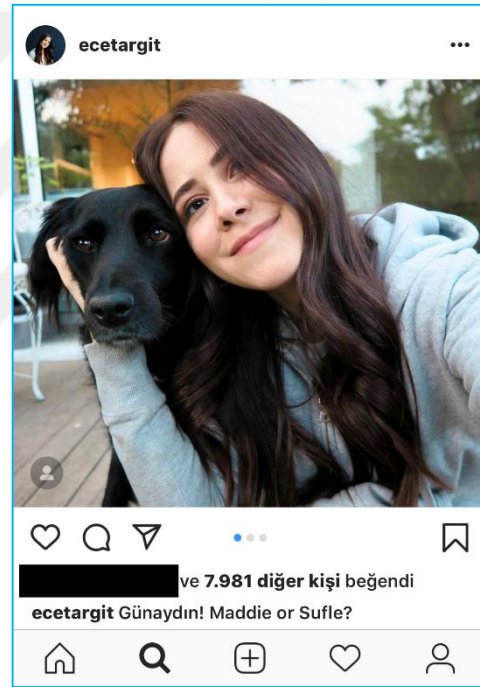


Figure 4.3.

First, I have to say that in the posts of the women influencers I study selfies coalesce with makeup, beauty and face themes. Because makeup videos and videos, being the most common type of posts, makes selfies necessary. All of the ten accounts I study, without exception, apply makeup techniques on their faces, film it and share with their followers. The interesting point here is that the most preferred visual content of these instagrammers who call themselves conservative/modest are these makeup and facial

visuals. However, the acceptance and the ordinarization of the makeup and faces with makeup in Turkish conservativeness stands before us as a new case.

Additionally, it is possible to say that instagrammers often use the facial visuals outside of photos in which they explain the makeup techniques. The striking issue here is that the closeup/face-focused photos and videos of the individual take up a big space in the lifestyle-themed posts. No matter what the text below the photo or the message is, influencers support these with selfies as a visual content.

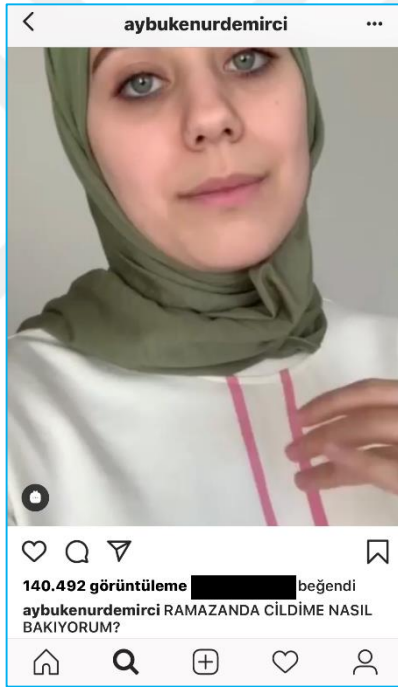


Figure 4.4.



Figure 4.5.

For example, Tibbiyeli Blog uses a selfie in a post in which she narrates the notes for a successfully finished school year (Figure 4.6), or Aybüke shares a selfie for the photo announcing and advertising post (Figure 4.7). Similarly, Cansu, one of the non-conservative influencers, shares posts that talk about her daily life with photos focusing on her face (Figure 4.8). All these examples I observed during the study show that selfie is a visual tool individuals make use of to create a positive image of themselves. In this

context, just like previous literature claims, selfie functions as a means of self-expression, a construction of a positive image, a tool of self-promotion, a cry for attention and love, and a way to express belonging to a certain community (Tifentale & Manovich, 2015).



Figure 4.6.



Figure 4.7.

If we think of selfie as the most effective visual method the influencer users use to present themselves to their followers with the message they desire, we can place the non-makeup selfies influencers post from time to time in a meaningful position. The shared selfies posted by the Zeruj community during their umrah visit in the month of Ramadan can be an example of this (Figure 4.9). During my research, that conservative influencers posting photos with no makeup on was a rare event.

However, Zeruj community members did not hesitate posting zero makeup selfies during their umrah visit in Ramadan. And this example seems to verify the claim that influencers use selfies –facial photos that reflect the emotions, mimics and expressions of the individual naturally- to produce certain images. So, the influencers, who are natural and

sincere during their religious service and share this with their followers, make use of the authenticity feature provided by Instagram to the user, as I mentioned in the previous sections.



Figure 4.8.



Figure 4.9.

4.2.2.1.2. Presentation of the Body

Brown and Tiggemann (2016), in the research they did using Instagram as a field, detected that young female university students being exposed to the body images of the celebrities and their peers on Instagram increases the dissatisfaction with their bodies. The result of another study (Murphy, 2014) presents that 82% of women says that while defining beauty they get influenced by social media. Concept of beauty has always been shaped and changed by the media and the perception of visibility. Therefore, it's only natural that it's affected by the social media as well. Instagram, a channel most suitable for self-presentation, has reached a point with its popularity that it can have an impact on the concept of beauty. Apart from the face, body photos are one of the most shared types of visuals on Instagram.

In this context, one of the post content I ran into in the posts I examined are the ones in which the influencers use their own bodies or the bodies of others. As we know, lifestyle-concepted photos of the conservative and non-conservative instagrammers mostly consist of displaying clothing and accessories. While displaying these pieces, they prefer to use their own bodies in doing so. As we can see in Figure 4.10 and 4.11, all these women somewhat perform the duties of a model on their Instagram profiles. They plan and choose everything especially for these photo shoots, from photographer to location, from poses to clothing combinations. All these body and posture photos depend on physical beauty and conform to social beauty norms. In this aspect, we can claim that both conservative and non-conservative accounts tend to accept these beauty norms, sustained by traditional media with its patriarchal emphasis and they do not exhibit any idiosyncratic or particular attitudes inside the social media culture.



Figure 4.10.



Figure 4.11.

Just at this point, I can talk about Aslı, who stands out from the other nine accounts. In the interval in which I examine the accounts, Aslı (a non-conservative instagrammer) was

seven-month pregnant. She stood out in body posts and shared photos of her pregnant belly at each step, went out on a limb with the criticisms about intimacy and sometimes even quarreled with her followers in the comment section (Figure 4.12 and 4.13). She emphasized during the body/posture posts she made about pregnancy that “female body is not something to be hid” and “female body is beautiful no matter what”. From this angle, her body posts are in line with the body positivity movement -which posits that being plus size is nothing to be ashamed about and women can share every aspect of their bodies with confidently and free from the traditional social beauty norms- currently trending on social media. Bingöl (2016) explains body positivity as, with the help of Web 2.0 technologies, an output of social media culture that provide a more free, multi-voiced and feminist space than traditional media. Content most in line with the body positivity movement comes across in Aslı’s account among the ones I consider in this study.



Figure 4.12.

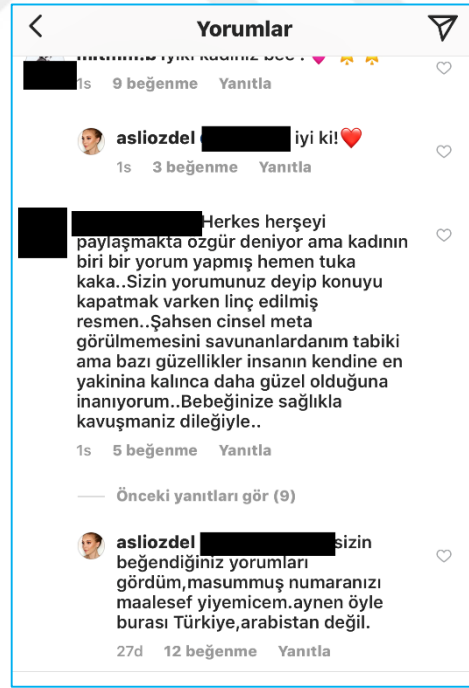


Figure 4.13.

Besides the pregnancy-special and “brave” posts of Aslı, the body representations of the conservative and non-conservative accounts I examine followed an ordinary line that are

not so much different from each other and the traditional media. Naturally, conservative instagrammers, with their “conservative” clothing belonging to modest fashion, were not able to share posts the same as non-conservatives. However, when the poses, the posture and the fact that the body being put on display are considered, they continued to struggle to exist in this channel with posts that is appropriate for the social media culture and undermine conservative culture.

4.2.2.1.3. Presentation of the Lifestyle

The final visual content category in the posts of the instagrammers I study is the conceptual photos that are specially designed with no people in them and more thematic content. These visuals are created sometimes by photographing a corner of a house or an indoor place, and sometimes by positioning things like coffee cups, books, flowers and etc. in the frame decoratively. A beautiful landscape view shared within a concept can be considered an example of this category.

These types of visuals generally shared as a photo. Users prefer to share them as permanent profile post, instead of as a story, which is temporary. Visual aesthetics, one of the most important components of a visual-based SNS like Instagram, is necessary for photos in this category. The face/body focused photos are generally easier to get a buzz from the crowds, but photos belonging to this category needs to be high quality all around or supported with texts to get the desired interaction. The accounts I consider here has sporadically posted such photos. As far as I can see, the reason they prefer such photos is to avoid the repetition by sharing their faces and bodies and boring their followers, thereby livening up their profiles.



Figure 4.14.

For example, the proportion of concept photos is higher in Aybüke’s profile compared to other nine instagrammers. The reason might be that she share more photos daily than the others do. This influencer, who uses Instagram constantly as a “space to give messages”, might be trying to present different content in order not to bore her followers. As can be seen in Figure 4.14, the photo can be evaluated as an authentic and aesthetic image taken in a historical part of the city they live in. On the other hand, both conservative and non-conservative instagrammers share concept photos like those seen in Figure 4.15, 4.16, 4.17 and 4.18. In my opinion, one of the most important features of these photos is that they are created/designed meticulously from color, lighting, contrast, background and style aspects. This shows the necessity of aesthetics in the visuals on Instagram. Whatever the visual category on Instagram, being appealing to the eye and drawing attention is necessary.

Finally, I have to say that all these thematic and conceptual photos can be read as a visual presentation of the lifestyle element these influencers want to present from their own

lives. These women, who choose to process their lifestyles with themes like #beauty, #fashion, #makeup, sometimes want to exploit the power of the humanless aesthetics and the photos that emulate art. Therefore, they take advantage of the opportunity presented by Instagram to take “artsy” photos that have become easy thanks to the many features on Instagram and put their lifestyles into certain concepts and present them to us in an aesthetic fashion.



Figure 4.15.

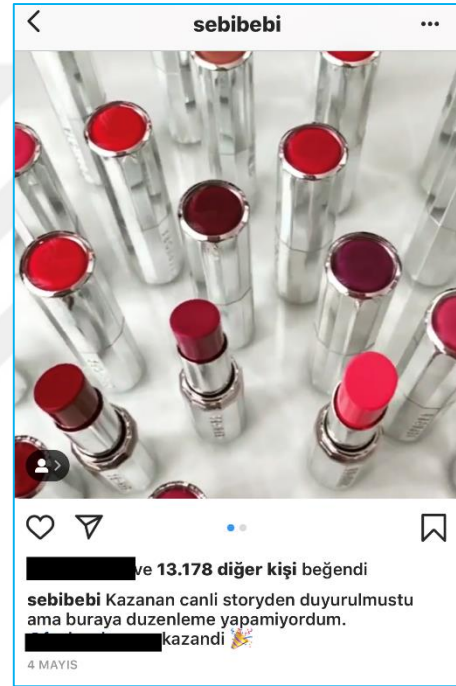


Figure 4.16.



Figure 4.17.



Figure 4.18.

4.2.2.2. Written & Verbal Content Categories

The next important contents after the visuals produced by the Instagram accounts I study is the written and verbal contents. Even though Instagrammers share some of their posts with only a photo or with a short caption, most of the time, the texts under the posts bear important points for an ethnographic analysis. On the other hand, as video content become more widespread with the story and IGTV features, the content of the videos shared by the instagrammers have become more valuable for content analysis. After a month-long in-depth analysis and ethnographic observations, I have divided the written and verbal contents produced by these ten Instagram accounts into three categories. These are; beauty and fashion, private life and advertisement posts.

4.2.2.2.1. Everything about Beauty and Fashion: Makeup and Clothing Posts

In written contents that are closely related to the visual content, instagrammers communicate their knowledge and comments about topics such as beauty, skincare, fashion and clothing. In this context, the dominant form of written and verbal content

belongs to these topics in the ten accounts I investigate. When looked at the posts in general, we see that conservative and non-conservative users' post contents, especially in makeup and fashion, are strikingly similar. In subjects like makeup techniques, makeup brands, current trends in fashion etc., both groups keeps providing a similar commentary. I think this is an important point, since the product these people who call themselves "conservative" and come from different segment of the society, put on the social media being not even a little bit different from the non-conservative ones shows that these conservative influencers identify completely with the Instagram culture and fail to put on a authentic stance. In the Instagram culture, in which it is trendy to provide beauty and skincare tips, conservatives do not present a protest or an extraordinary attitude, and adopt the dominant trend of the culture they exist in.



Figure 4.19.

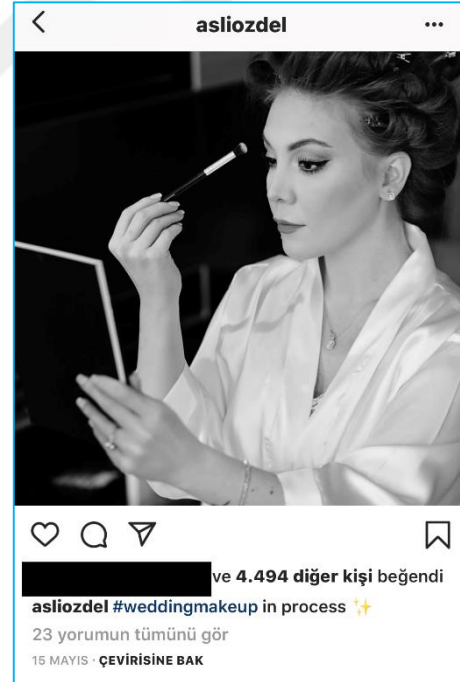


Figure 4.20.

I want to touch upon my observations on makeup in particular: In makeup, non-conservatives like Mevy, Aslı Özdel and Sebibebi has competence tantamount to expertness. They are people who earned their spurs in this subject. At this point, I

observed that, in terms of makeup, conservatives seems to follow non-conservatives and learn from them. For example, in the Q&A sessions they do with their followers in the story section, to the questions such as “who does the best makeup?” or “what other influencers you follow?”, they give out the names of some non-conservative influencers. They sometimes even admit that, as can be seen in Figure 4.21 and 4.22, they are inspired from these influencers on makeup. Apparently, in terms of makeup, non-conservatives are a step ahead of the conservatives, and conservative influencers try a fan/follower experience by following these non-conservative accounts. Moreover, this shows the combining and homologising effect of Instagram culture.



Figure 4.21.



Figure 4.22.

Similarly, I witness that, in fashion and clothing posts, conservative instagrammers follow the veiling fashion brands they founded as well as globally recognized brands. Even though they differ in the style of clothing (veiled and non-veiled), in common accessories like trousers, bags, sunglasses and shoes similar trends can be seen. In other words, both groups follow fashion/trends closely and direct their followers in these directions. Then,

the only thing that the conservatives are different is the tips they provide into the intricacies of “veiling fashion”. Tricks like non-wrinkling scarves, bonnets that prevent sweating, non-transparent dresses and etc. are phenomena stranger to the world of the non-conservative and special to the world of the conservative. They seem to be able to make these concepts absorbed into the Instagram culture.

4.2.2.2.2. All About the Private Life: Relationships, Spouses and Children

“Private life” comes across a much differentiated concept with the advent of Instagram culture. Until a few decades ago, as dictated by the verbal social rules, what is inside the home was never shared with anybody outside. Especially the conservative segment of the society based this rule on religious foundations and followed it more strictly. Mass media tools first brought the lives of others into our homes. Then new media tools and user-generated content allowed us to share our own lives with others. At this point, the place Instagram culture occupies is meaningful. With its own particular opportunities, the diversity of its visual, written and verbal contents, and suitable environment for lifestyle presentations, Instagram has found a place in our lives as one of the most suitable SNSs for sharing our private lives.

As such, another written & verbal content common to all of the accounts I examine is the one about their private lives. Influencers that are married, in a relationship, have kids share all personal and private information -using visuals- about their husbands, boyfriends and children, respectively. The most important result I encountered in my observations is that content is of utmost importance and impact for the followers. The features most responsible for the influencers to get interaction is that they are natural, authentic and spontaneous. I witnessed that they earned these features by presenting their private lives in their posts.



Figure 4.23.



Figure 4.24.



Figure 4.25.



Figure 4.26.

On the other hand, these tabloid type of posts are consumed by their followers with great appetite. The private lives traditional celebrities claimed to hide but actually served to the tabloid press deliberately were depleted by the TV consumers rapidly. Now, influencers get rid of the traditional intermediaries like TV and the press. They present their own tabloid briefings and give their family interviews themselves.

As can be seen in the visuals, we get to know a great detail of the private lives of the conservative and non-conservative influencers. Then we can make the following deduction: These Instagram users' understanding of "conservative lifestyle" transforms, changes and even damages the concept of privacy, a foundational pillar of the conservative culture, inside the Instagram culture.

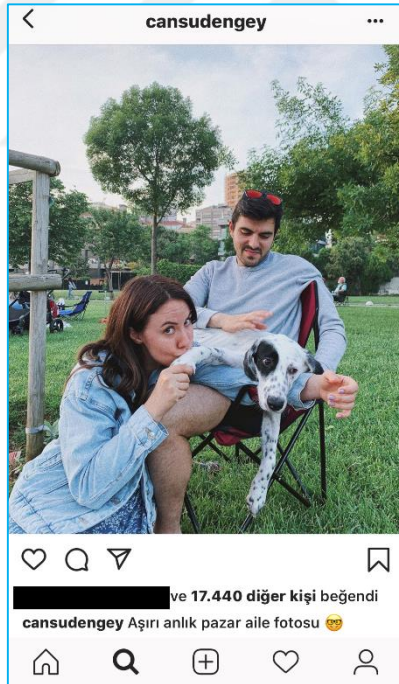


Figure 4.27.



Figure 4.28. In a Q&A section, bysedaaydin tells how her number of followers increased rapidly after her wedding.

4.2.2.2.3. And Now the Commercials

In my opinion, the advertisement content is the most striking type of content among the written or verbal content category. And this comes across as the purpose of life for the conservative and non-conservative influencers profiles. To admit, I did not think that lifestyle influencers were this much open to advertising content. However, I witnessed that the Instagram culture has a structure that shaped within itself over all these years. To elaborate, in the first years of Instagram, instagrammers were users that gained followers organically and became famous without any commercialized content. Today, though, they were replaced by instagrammers that transformed this SNS into a business center by using the Instagram Business feature, gaining followers through the stats feature provided by Instagram and sharing sponsored content. All of the instagrammers I followed for this study were the members of this club.



Figure 4.29. Non-conservative influencer tagging brands.

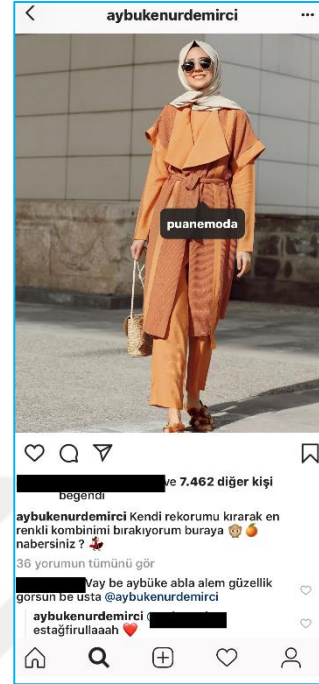


Figure 4.30. Conservative influencer tagging brands.

So that, one of these instagrammers who gained the popularity from her followers with the claim that she is natural and sincere, Ece, explains, in detail, how they make money through social media (especially Instagram) in a Youtube video.¹¹ While using the social media, Ece tells that people expect reality; therefore you have to show your reality to the people and present something by building a connection with that reality. Moreover, she claims that in recent years, influencer marketing increases its impact as a method much cheaper and more effective than traditional methods. She tells that they collaborate with brands using methods like product placement, barter or event-hosting, and claims that doing this with the knowledge of the followers is totally acceptable. All these influencers use one or more of these methods. Especially the barter method seems like a quite effective and easy way to collaborate with brands on Instagram.

¹¹ To watch the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5q2Hhciqnk>



Figure 4.31.

Barter is method of trade used since the old ages. It is the method of trading consisting of swaps of goods and services, without the use of money (Boynukalın, 2018). Giving and receiving ads as a barter on Instagram has recently become one of the most applied methods. For example, the barter most commonly used by the instagrammers I examine in this study are gift promotions. Brands send influencers their products as gifts, and these influencers try these items on and advertise them to their followers. These items are generally pieces of clothing, accessories and makeup. However, I witnessed during my research that the influencer marketing on Instagram has reached a wider market. For example, nowadays, many companies from sectors such as food, home appliances, baby products, accommodation collaborate with the influencers I study. For instance, we are able to watch the ads of hotels sending the influencers to free vacations for a week.

Another example is the collaboration of Aybüke and Migros, a supermarket chain in Turkey, during the holy month of Ramadan called “Your Address for the Ramadan Shopping: Migros” (Figure 4.31). This ad, which has nothing to do with her usual interests such as the lifestyle posts, fashion, arts and etc., provided an odd look on her profile. It seems like the reach of Instagram culture arrived to the food sector.



Figure 4.32.

Merve, or Mevy in Instagram, is an influencer who uses her account for advertisement completely. Her being older on Instagram helped her to be one-step ahead in terms of advertisement compared to others. She uses her account as a business and makes advertisement contracts with brands all the time. In the month that I observed the accounts, she made an advertisement campaign with the famous makeup brand, MAC (Figure 4.32).

She is the face of the brand on digital channels, and she prepared a makeup set using the products of this brand, applied it to her face and broadcasted it on her channel. Followers

of the brand and Mevy could buy this special concept set and apply it on themselves. This campaign, which was effective during the time I followed these accounts and received positive feedback, is an important example showing how tight the relationship between Instagram culture and advertisement sector and to remind us the relationship between Instagram and consumer culture.



Figure 4.33. Baby brands send their products to moms or moms-to-be instagrammers.

Figure 4.34. These influencer moms use and promote them.

I can say that advertisement content is necessary in the accounts I investigated. The lifestyle themed posts, especially the ones about fashion and clothing, are already suitable for being content of advertisement. Influencers enjoy the best of both worlds, i.e. share their daily activities such as clothes, makeup, participating in events, presenting a lifestyle representation and making money during the process. In this category as well, I fail to see a difference in the contents produced by conservative and non-conservative influencers. I even witnessed the conservative and non-conservative influencers promoting the same product or brand the same day. Therefore, we are able to watch the commercial of the same brand from different perspectives in stories. It seems like, in the

democratic and equal environment of the Instagram culture, conservative and non-conservative people's, who share posts in the line of their lifestyles and transform into influencers from ordinary users, social media use are almost identical in terms of "advertisement" as well. This atmosphere of Instagram seems to homologize them and their lifestyles.



Figure 4.35. Instagrammers promote the very same brand in the same day and even simultaneously.



Figure 4.36.



Figure 4.37.



Figure 4.38. The conservative and non-conservative instagrammers usually promote some of the same makeup and beauty brands.

4.2.2.3. Message Categories

The posts I examine gets important messages across in the “message category”, which comprises the visual and textual categories as well. The posts in this category shows itself mostly in the stories. For these messages, which are not preferred by the influencers to stay in a permanent post in terms of visual and textual meanings, story section is indeed the suitable location as the message will reach its destination, after which is going to be deleted.

4.2.2.3.1. Messages that Promote Consumption

The biggest and the most important message behind the lifestyle representations of the instagrammers I investigate is the message “to promote consumption”. So that, as a researcher that spent a lot of time on the field, I sometimes fell under this message, felt inclined in the products these influencers suggested and even bought some of them.

Posts that call to us with messages like “Do not miss this discount today.”, “Look at this beautiful shopping list I made for you.”, “If you need it, now is the time.” settle in our subconscious unavoidably. Many followers drop comments under these posts asking about the details of these shopping items. Alternatively, sometimes when an influencer posts an outfit, followers flock to ask the influencer questions like “Where are the shoes from?”, “Where is the scarf from?”, and etc.



Figure 4.39. Aybüke’s caption for this post is quite meaningful: “Life is short, so buy that bag!”

The point that should not be missed here is that conservative instagrammers are just like the others in terms of promoting over-consumption, and overconsuming themselves. After the notion of “private”, it seems like another basic concept of the conservative society, the concept of “waste”, has become eviscerated as well. Conservative instagrammers sell their wardrobes full of clothes over some apps or give them out as presents. However, they still have wardrobes full of clothes. Therefore, in terms of “promoting the consumption”, there seems no meaningful and visible different stance among these ten accounts. At the end, this situation presents meaningful result showing

the relationship between consumption culture, popular culture and social media that was mentioned in the literature review section.

4.2.2.3.2. Social and Political Messages

In the profiles of the instagrammers, not only the planned and edited lifestyle contents exist. There are also spontaneous daily life posts that shows the followers how real and sincere person the user is. During the research period, I ran into several posts that are about daily life, contemporary social issues and events. For example, celebrations of religious and national holidays, social messages on special days (such as mother's day), commentaries on the agenda of the country, and etc. took a significant space in the pages of both conservative and non-conservative instagrammers.



Figure 4.40. Influencers feel obliged to be sensitive to the invitations to social responsibility projects for a while.



Figure 4.41. Influencers usually only repost these invitations.

For instance, promoting social responsibility projects, supporting aid campaigns by associations are social approaches taken by all of these influencers (Figure 4.40 and

Figure 4.41). However, the thing I observed about these posts is that they are nowhere near dominant and effective compared to the main posts. In other words, it did not go very far and not beyond sharing the announcements provided by others. An issue occupying the country's agenda was only a story post long in their profiles. Moreover, even this is depleted after posting another unrelated story shared a few hours later. On the other hand, I noticed that there is no understanding of social responsibility or project adoption that we see in traditional celebrities.



Figure 4.42. Among many different type of lifestyle posts, Aybüke shared this prayer list for a Ramadan suggestion to their followers.

The month of the research was May, which in that year included Ramadan, the Islamic holy month, as well as 19 May, the Commemoration of Atatürk, Youth and Sports Day. Moreover, there was a special political agenda in the country: The follow-up of the 31 March election atmosphere. The elections were to be repeated in Istanbul, which was quite a controversial issue in the society. The projection of these social and political events on the profiles of these instagrammers were as follows: The month of Ramadan was a topic of importance for the conservative instagrammers. In written and verbal

forms, they talked about and celebrated Ramadan, shared prayers, mentioned the easy and difficult sides of fasting.



Figure 4.43. Influencers see Ramadan as a theme of lifestyle concept and share recipes for suhoor and iftar.



Figure 4.44. Influencers see Ramadan as a theme of lifestyle concept and share skincare tips for the drying skin.

Therefore, Ramadan was ever-present as a social message in their posts. However, this did not have an effect on their usual lifestyle posts in terms of their frequency and intensity. They did not take a break in Ramadan. The month of Ramadan is expected to be spend with prayers and in quiescence and it is suggested that while fasting physically, one should also fast spiritually. However, this was not the case for these instagrammers who live inside the Instagram culture. Many suhoor and iftar events, and “eid combinations” towards the eid found themselves plenty of space in the profiles. On the other hand, there were no Ramadan agenda for the non-conservative instagrammers. They did not issue any special celebrations or messages. One sensitivity of some of them should be mentioned though. Some of the non-conservative profiles refrained from

sharing posts about food during daytime. Other than that, for the non-conservatives, the month of Ramadan passed with plans for the upcoming holiday.



Figure 4.45. Conservative influencer celebrating May 19th, Commemoration of Atatürk, Youth and Sports Day.



Figure 4.46. Non-conservative influencer celebrating May 19th, Commemoration of Atatürk, Youth and Sports Day.

Interestingly though, 19 May, the Commemoration of Atatürk, Youth and Sports Day is embraced by all of the instagrammers. Although non-conservatives were a bit more enthusiastic, conservatives did not forgo this day. This, I believe, tells us a story about the stance the conservative accounts present inside the Instagram culture. My observations tells me that conservative instagrammers are more practical and willing in adopting certain features of Instagram culture, such as universality, “being a citizen of the world” and “appealing to all world-views”. Another example that supports this analysis is the political messages given during the month of May. Non-conservatives kept sharing posts about the political parties and candidates they support during this month, however conservative accounts preferred not to get involved in this agenda. They

avoided any potential arguments and strived for a peaceful environment. In contrast, most of non-conservatives did not abstain from sharing their political identities and responded to the tensions from followers.

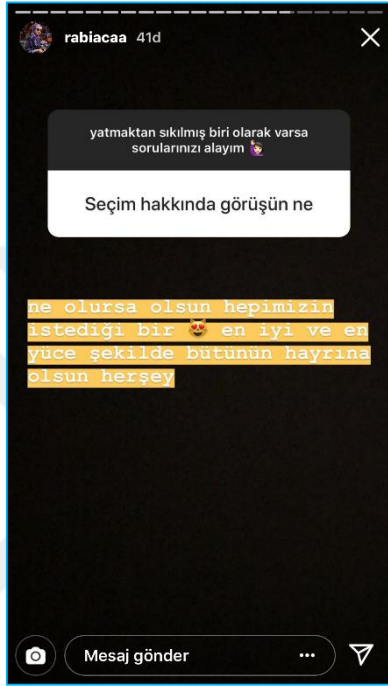


Figure 4.47. Conservatives keep silent about their political views.



Figure 4.48. However, non-conservatives are quite open on this subject.

Another example is the answer given by Rabiaca to a question asked by a follower about prayers. As can be seen in Figure 4.49 and 4.50 while conducting a Q&A session with her followers, the question “I want to start performing the prayer but I don’t know how to do it. How can I learn it, do you have any suggestions?” pops up. The answer given by Rabiaca “Ask Google, all the information you need is standing before you.” attracted criticism by the followers. Her attitude and commentary shows us the following: She has no intention to “influence” in religious topics; we can even claim that she avoids that. The field in which she desires to influence is “lifestyle” and she does this with fashion and makeup posts. Social, political and religious topics are second grade for her profile and stand in the background unless they are necessary. All these examples I mentioned

here provide us with clues and allows us to deduct on how conservative instagrammers exist in the Instagram culture.

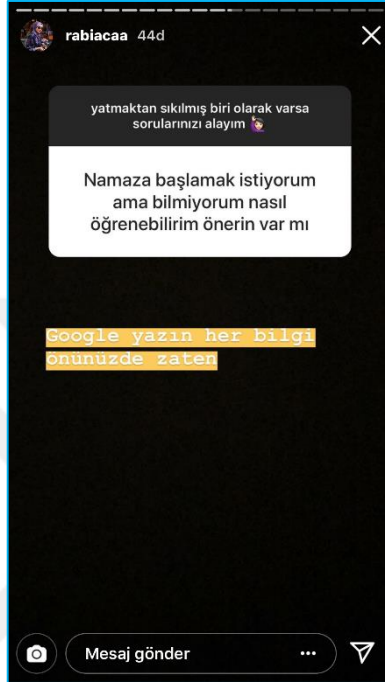


Figure 4.49.

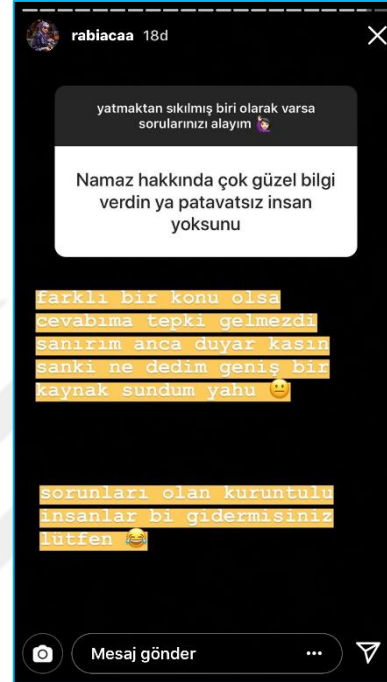


Figure 4.50.

Another social message I observed in all of the ten accounts during the month is the message of not welcoming any criticism. I have never witnessed any of the accounts responding positively and reasonably to any criticism regarding various issues provided by their followers. Both conservative and non-conservative influencers benefit in the largest extent from the freedom of thought and “speech” opportunities supplied by social media. So that, in this environment in which they make money and try to hold on to their followers, the criticism does not affect them at all. In the contrary, they criticize and block the critics. Frankly, with this aspect, Instagram culture fails to deliver a “dialogue” between the follower and the influencer. In some settings, there springs a cacophonous environment in which everyone talks but no one listens. Even though conservative influencers hail from a culture in which “ a Muslim warns another Muslim if he/she’s in

the wrong” is a must –not an option-, they seem to adapt this aspect of Instagram culture completely too.

For example, the way they cover their hair with scarves comes across as a routine topic of criticism for the conservative instagrammers. Similarly, Aslı was criticized for the photos she shared showing her uncovered belly. The theme of both criticism was the same: Visuality and privacy. And the response of both types of influencers were similar. They stand behind their posts, which are seen by their followers as private, and provide no chance of a dialogue with their followers to understand them. Then, we can say that all of the social arguments which can be considered in the message category may help us to talk about the transformational effect of the Instagram culture on the conservative culture. How the Instagram concept we call “Conservative Lifestyle” and the conservative culture in the historical and social context differ from each other can be evaluated over these post examples.

4.2.3. Similarities and Differences between Conservative and Non-Conservative Women Instagrammers’ Lifestyle Representations/Posts

As all these observations and analyses show, conservative and non-conservative instagrammers, are quite similar to each other from the perspectives of lifestyle examples, post categories and content they produce inside the Instagram culture. Both sociological groups, when their posts are examined, has a general framework that bears meaningful similarities. In terms of visual, written, verbal and message aspects, all users adhere to this main framework all along. Everything necessary to be liked and to stand out is done, Instagram’s rules are followed. Especially for the conservative instagrammers, who define themselves as members of the “conservative culture” by writing in their profiles phrases like “conservative lifestyle”, “modest fashion”, and etc., this conformity to Instagram culture and the similarities to other influencers can be seen as important results. About the similarities and differences in all the photos, videos and texts examined, in general terms beyond the categorical view, we can say the following:



Figure 4.51.



Figure 4.52.



Figure 4.53.

Firstly, all these instagrammers make use of all the business opportunities, statistical data, filters and technical properties etc. offered by Instagram as an SNS. For example, when Instagram announces a new filter or a new photo-sharing feature, these instagrammers adopt this new feature swiftly and start using it (Figure 4.51, 4.52 and 4.53). For instagrammers, adapting to these new visual experiences is as necessary as these visual experiences are to Instagram, an SNS with a visual focus. Moreover, it is critical for the influencers to get interaction with comments and likes. Because, as this interaction goes up, it will be more likely that they will be featured in the Discover section of Instagram and get new followers. To that end, instagrammers do certain tricks to get more interaction. Some of them create these tricks, others will follow suit and use them and help spreading them. So the tricks used by conservative and non-conservative instagrammers –like gift draws, Q&A sessions over the story feature, sharing posts during primetimes, sharing two photos and putting them up for a vote- are rather similar.



Figure 4.54. Aybüke is whining about her posts getting affected from prime-time and that she's unable to reach her followers.



Figure 4.55. Influencers often perform gift draws for their followers.



Figure 4.56. The real reason of these gift draws is obviously to increase follower engagement.

Secondly, I have to remark that conservative instagrammers know and follow many non-conservative instagrammers. They even, from time to time, attend events attended by these influencers and share memorial photos taken with them. Again, they repost the posts of these instagrammers or use the products they advertise and use them as reference. However we do not see such actions from the non-conservative instagrammers. No non-conservative follows the conservatives. Moreover, non-conservatives have no such agenda towards conservative lifestyle or its implementers. No product from conservative brands have been advertised on non-conservative influencer profiles. Therefore, we have an asymmetrical environment here. While conservatives are interested in the lifestyles of non-conservatives, conservative lifestyle is able to find itself a place only in a certain society.

This, indeed points to an important reality: Conservative instagrammers, get affected from the generalizing and homogenizing aspects of Instagram culture, and other people on this channel through the communications they built using this channel. Naturally, Instagram culture affects all types of people that exist on Instagram, may it be influencer or follower, conservative or non-conservative, to various degrees. The field on these effects is wide open for study. However, as far as my study was able to analyze, conservative culture melts inside the Instagram culture and the new culture conservatives experience takes a more universal and homogenizing form. In other words, even though some conservative discourses and actions remain untouched (such as importance given to religious days or that veiling fashion being kept on the agenda), the understanding of conservative lifestyles of the conservatives has been affected and changed during this process.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Social media channels did not fall behind in terms of timing in Turkey compared to the world. According to Saka (2014), one of the first internet phenomena hailed from Turkey and so it has always been at the forefront inside the social media culture. Therefore, just like in the world, there was no homogenous internet environment in Turkey. There were many different net communities geographically, socio-culturally and economically. Instagram was a comparatively late comer in the game of social media and has become quite dominant in the social media culture in the last decade. In this context, participation of various social groups in Instagram culture stands before us as a topic worthy of a study.

In my thesis, I aimed to focus on a social group on the rise in recent years in Turkey economically and culturally, the conservative women, and their participation in the Instagram culture. I use the method of digital ethnography to analyze the Instagram users with numerous followers, generally named as influencers, who share posts towards conservative/modest fashion under the theme lifestyle, in-depth. In doing that, my goal was to observe whether the “understanding of the lifestyles” of these conservative women influencers with the effect of Instagram culture. Also by cross comparing these influencers with non-conservative women influencers, I aimed to see what types of visual and textual content these women create for their many followers. In this comparative analysis, I had the chance to observe the common aspects of Instagram culture and elements in affecting different social groups. Moreover, as a crucial research output, I observed that conservative women are influenced by the content created by non-conservative women on Instagram and sometimes mimic them in their own profiles

I established the theoretical foundation of my study over the debate between two conflicting theories: The theory “social media creates an equal, free and user-friendly environment” (Stark, 2006) and the theory “social media creates a fake agency and free environment” (Morozov, 2012), i.e. social media supporting popular culture and consumer culture” (Chouliaraki, 2010). In this sense, does Instagram, as an SNS, and the new cultural atmosphere it created provide the individuals with the opportunity to be freer, equal, participatory and producers? Alternatively, is it a continuation of popular culture and the traditional media order with its visual-based content, follower-influencer relationships and incentive to consume? I looked for answers to these questions by investigating how the content produced by a social group belonging to concepts such as conservativeness, veiling, privacy, halal-haram affected these concepts. At what degree are the conservative influencers free and producers in this channel? Does Instagram culture allow different cultures’ contrary-to-mainstream and with special aspects to flourish? How does the understandings of lifestyle of these conservative women influencers are shaped in such a culture? The answers I found to these question aims to contribute, albeit small, to the great debate in the field of new media.

My goal in beginning to my study and deciding on the accounts I am going to investigate was the examples of “ordinary individuals” getting stronger with the friendly structure presented by Web 2.0 and turning into “influencers”. I managed to do this selected both conservative and non-conservative accounts accordingly. All of the owners of the accounts I study were once ordinary Instagram users and have become influencers later. However, one of the most important results I ran into during the study was that these ordinary users shone out with the power granted them by Instagram and that they have become the center of attention for the traditional brands and the bosses of the marketing world. As Saka (2014) emphasizes, in the first period of Internet, more utopian and activist actors used to produce content, but as time went by internet has become more and more commercialized with big companies investing in the cyberspace. The equivalent of this situation on Instagram was a new marketing concept called “influencer

marketing” (Brown & Hayes, 2008). At this point, all of the women instagrammers I examine carried the lifestyle-themed posts they produce to a commercial dimension and started “marketing their lifestyles” by collaborating with brands. Moreover, this, naturally, carried them to a different point than they were “ordinary users” creating independent content.

A special attention need to be drawn to the women users’ dual positioning as influencer vs. follower in terms of Instagram and influencer marketing. Previous research found that women are more open to social influence than men (Bearden et al., as cited in Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017) and women social media users’ probability to buy products endorsed by celebrities they like are higher (Khan & Dar, as cited in Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). I arrived at the conclusion in my study concerning the lifestyle experiences of women that between women influencers and women followers, there exists a real and organic trust. The “consumer women”, who are constantly online in the pages of the accounts they follow with likes, comments and questions, approach the products suggested by the influencers more willingly than the ones they see on traditional media. Because women influencers do not advertise in the usual traditional media way. They advertise products they use and make a part of their lifestyles to their followers. In one way, they continue living their own lives -get married, have children, etc.-, on the other they put on commercials with the brands they use in this process. This nature of influencer marketing makes them more trustworthy, authentic, spontaneous and sincere in the eyes of their followers than the traditional media faces.

The result I arrived when I observed the lifestyle representations presented on Instagram contained some eye-catching remarks about women influencers. The lifestyle understanding the conservative women influencers exhibit on their Instagram accounts -albeit containing conservative elements- contradicts some of the basic discourses and actions of the conservative lifestyle in the contexts of visual, textual and message contents. They even sometimes recreate the conservative lifestyle concept in a different

format. There lies a change of understanding and the Instagram culture was the enabler of which, as the environment in which conservative women feel empowered and exist as “producers” in the first degree. Conservative influencers use the concept of “conservative” as a cultural element in their posts, but choose to share posts that “appeals to everyone” or “like everyone”. For example, using the concept of “modesty”, an important aspect of the conservative lifestyle, the clothes and accessories these influencers use are named “modest fashion”. However, the posts by these influencers tend to promote consumption, waste and vanity, contain brand collaborations etc., which was not so much different from the posts by influencers who do not define themselves as conservatives. Another example shows that these women present a lifestyle as if there is place in their daily lives for concepts such as “privacy”, “halal” and “haram”, however, with the content they produce concerning makeup and skincare, they overlap with non-conservative influencers completely. They act in videos and photos in ways that conservative lifestyle does not allow at all. Alternatively, sensitivities about “private life”, which is of paramount importance in conservative culture, disappear in Instagram culture, again homologizing with the posts of others. They introduce their homes, husband, children, domestic lives etc. to thousands of people on the internet, allowing them to pry on everything conservative culture holds dear, without feeling bothered.

On the other hand, even though they portray a conservative profile with their veiled clothes and the headscarves, they avoid taking sides in social, religious or political issues, do not share their views openly and shun providing religious / moral suggestions. They do not think that they represent their religions and they do not claim to set an example for their fellow Muslims. They all object to the criticism of their followers criticizing their headscarves, showing of their hair, wearing makeup, sharing photos that are not appropriate with respect to Islamic rules, and bring the individuality of the religious way of living. According to them, nobody should talk about their headscarves and just be interested in the fashion, culture and lifestyle themes they exhibit on Instagram.

However, the conservative culture, which they hail from sees Muslims as a collective structure, suggests communitarian socializing and rules that two Muslims should warn for each other's wrongdoings.

Apparently, conservative young women with their lifestyle representations on Instagram, in which they have been quite busy for the last decade, and the messages through these representations adopted a new understanding of conservative lifestyle inside the Instagram culture. They respect the unwritten but strictly admired rules of Instagram and try to stay closer to the Instagram culture and the lifestyles of other users, especially their non-conservative counterparts. They continue to use the symbolic and sloganic elements of conservativeness -like not missing out celebrating religious days-, but in the space they occupy in Instagram culture, this becomes negligible. Therefore, even though the (supposed) agency and the producership features of Instagram seems to be applied, the content and the messages produced by influencers serve a common purpose. These goals naturally promotes consumer culture, and fashion and trends, one of the most important tools of popular culture. Commercial concerns stand out and the Instagram culture stops being a platform for the free and objective exhibition of new cultures and becomes a tool of consumer culture and the capitalist industry.

At this point, the debates on social media starts to make sense again. The results of my study points to the outcome that social media, Instagram in particular, does not present a meaningful freedom, equality and producership opportunities; even if it looks like it does, it points to a delusion, just as Morozov believes. According to him, internet technologies equalizes the entertainment options of the people living in authoritarian regimes to the ones in democratic regimes. However, this is not a positive result; on the contrary, it creates social apathy, incentivizes consumption and makes all individuals easier to manipulate (Morozov, 2012 pg. 81). Compatible with this view, the study I conducted about instagrammers hailing from various backgrounds and experiencing Instagram culture shows that: The conservative women instagrammers, who were once

ordinary users but eventually have become producers and influencers thanks to social media, put their so-called cultural baggage away, adopted a new lifestyle understanding and engaged with the dominant consumer culture. This is an understanding, which is based around popular culture and far away from the social, political and intellectual issues.

As a last remark, this study, acknowledging its limitations, aimed to set an example for further studies that will take on the little-investigated topic of Instagram and its culture. The opportunities offered to and the changes brought in the lives of the users by all social media channels, especially Instagram, are important topics that need to be studied sociologically. In particular, the relationship between social media and conservatives in Turkey is wide open for study from various aspects.

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