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Forms of Capital and Generation Z's Digital Media Consumption in Turkey  
Sermaye Türleri ve Z Jenerasyonunun Türkiye'de Dijital Medya Kullanımı

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## ABSTRACT

The thesis aims to focus on Turkish Generation Z's digital media consumption habits, uses and patterns in terms of experiencing digital media as online social sphere, their self-presentation in digital media along with their capitals (economic, social and cultural) The data of this study is based on in-depth interviews with Generation Z from Istanbul, who are at the age of 19 to 23.

In the dissertation, it was argued that digital media has 2 aspects: On the one hand, it opens a space to challenge the societal norms, roles and the status quo, it also reproduces them implicitly and explicitly, on the other hand. So based on this argument, in the first chapter, it was aimed to explore the usage of digital media as an online public sphere regarding interviewees' trajectories in this use. In the second chapter, I argued that even though digital media opens a free space for self-presentation in which young people can present themselves comfortably as they are,

Lastly, it was argued that digital media perpetuates distinction in Bourdieu's sense regarding users' consumption preferences and tendencies, even though it absorbs its users within it

Key words: digital media, Generation Z, online public sphere, self-presentation, forms of capitals, habitus

## ÖZET

Bu tez, Türkiye’de yaşayan Z Jenerasyonunun dijital medya tüketimleri, kullanım amaçları ve deneyimlerini anlamaya yöneliktir. Bununla birlikte Pierre Bourdieu’nün ‘Ayrım ve Beğeni Yargısının Toplumsal Eleştiri ve Eril Tahakküm teorileri çerçevesinde genç insanların sahip oldukları kapitaller ve dijital medyada tükettikleri içeriklerin ve takip ettikleri kişiler arasında bir ilişki olup olmadığını da incelenmiştir. Dijital medya ve Türkiye’deki Z Jenerasyonun dijital medya kullanımları arasındaki ilişki 3 ana başlıkta toplanmıştır. İlk olarak Türkiye’deki Z Jenerasyonun dijital medyayı sosyal bir alan olarak nasıl ve ne amaçla kullandığı nasıl deneyimledikleri ve dijital medyayı online bir kamusal alan olarak deneyimledikleri anlaşılmaya çalışılmıştır. İkinci olarak ise, Türkiye’deki Y Jenerasyonunun bu online sosyal alanda benliklerini nasıl yansıttıkları ve dijital medyanın bu benliklerin üzerinde nasıl bir etkisi sahibi olduğu da görülmeye çalışılmıştır. Son olarak ise Bourdieu çerçevesinde, yeni jenerasyonun dijital medyada takip ettikleri ve tükettikleri içeriklerin, sahip oldukları kapitaller arasında bir ilişki var mı, buna bakılmıştır. Bununla birlikte, Bourdieu’nun 2’li gruplar için de kullandığı habitus kavramının dijital medyada nasıl yansıdığı da bu tezin son bölümünün konusu olmuştur. Özellikle cinsiyet konusuna kadın-erkek rolleri, normları grup habitusları aracılığıyla dijital medyada nasıl görülüyor ve bu durumun Z Jenerasyonu üzerinde nasıl bir etkisi var, incelenmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: dijital medya, Z Jenerasyonu, çevrimiçi kamusal alan, benlik sunumu, sermaye türleri, habitus

## INTRODUCTION

Generation Z is the demographic cohort after Generation Y and X's.<sup>1</sup> They have grown up with the internet throughout the 1990s and so, they use the Internet comfortably. They generally socialize with their peers through social media (Yadav and Rai, 2017). In contrast, according to the research done by Kasasa<sup>2</sup>, Baby boomers consume traditional media like TV, radio, magazines and newspapers, as well as having Facebook accounts through which they socialize with their family members. Similar to baby boomers, Generation X still consumes newspapers, magazines, listens to the radio and watches TV. They spend almost 7 hours a week on Facebook. Generation Y (millennials), on the other hand, composed of people between the age 24 to 39 (birth years 1980 to 1994), are also known as 'digital natives.' Technology is part of their ordinary lives and their activities, communication with their peers and socialization are mediated by multiple screens (Iberdrola.com). Although they still watch traditional TV, platforms like Netflix have not only become one of the most popular alternatives, but they also have started to prefer Netflix over TV. This generation uses mobile devices with ease, and 32% will still use a computer for purchase. They have a variety of social media accounts in social media: Twitter, Instagram, YouTube accounts and they also work through digital media. Compared with all previous generations, Generation Z is the latest and the youngest generation, its members having grown up within technology and the internet. (birth years: after 1995), while traditional media has no longer significance in their lives. At the same time, according to Deloitte's research, 'What

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<sup>1</sup> This is according to Brosdahl and Carpenter's (2001) classification of generations using the birth year for each cohort. Generation X (1961-1980), Generation Y (1980-1994) and Generation Z (1995 and after).

<sup>2</sup>Kasasa is a financial technology and marketing services company that provides reward checking accounts consumers love, the first ever loan with take back, and ongoing expert consulting services to community financial institutions.



is the future of work? Redefining work, workforces and workplace.’ (2009) in the US, Generation Z constitute more than a quarter of the population and by 2020, will be the most diverse generation in the US’s history’.<sup>3</sup> According to the research, their impact will be dramatic for the workplace, retail consumption, and technology as well as in politics and culture. They are tech-dependent, prefer digital communication and avoid face-to-face interaction. At the same time, their attention span is short, with only 8 seconds, which is why they do not watch long contents, or read long articles. (Deloitte, 2009)

According to measurements from the multiple sources, it can be said that digital media is at the very centre of Generation Z’s lives. For this reason, exploring their practices, their purposes for using social sites and observing how they contribute to the formation of digital media, will enable us to naturally make sense of the media functions and culture of today. Today, digital media and Generation Z are the two main global trends within social sciences or global business and are the determinants of today’s consumption practices and consumer behaviours.

However, although there are numbers of researches on Generation Z and their digital media consumption regarding to their economic and social resources in marketing researches address to likely business goals, there is little research on social sciences, primarily in sociology focusing on Turkey and Turkish young people. That is why, in this thesis, I intended to discover Generation Z’s digital media consumption patterns in Turkey, along with their capitals (in Bourdieu’s sense) to see whether economic, social or cultural capitals have impact upon digital media consumption.

Let us begin with what digital media can be defined as the transmission of information in the form of binary signals - 0s and 1s - to converge them into audio, video graphics texts etc. This signifies that through this transfiguration, whenever we use computers, applications, smart phones we are consuming digital media. So, digital media is both the process of formation of the digital products and the categorization of the products which are generated through this process. Traditional

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<sup>3</sup> Bloomberg News, ‘Gen Z is Set to Outnumber millennials within a year’ by Lee J. Miller and Wei Lu, August 20, 2018

media products are newspapers, magazines, books and so on were counted as the first sorts of traditional media. The emergence of radio and TV in the maintained the traditional media and constructed the mass media and enabled the emergence of mass media culture. Today, apart from mass media, we talk about the digital media that brought forward new types of media structures based on transmission techniques and devices. Today, digital media types can be found as audio, include digital radio stations, podcasts (Apple podcasts), audiobook (Kindle) music streaming applications (Spotify, Soundcloud), video –including Netflix, YouTube or Twitch, and social media, with sites like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Snapchat and so on. (Maryville.edu)

In this thesis, the term digital media was used to represent these types of mediums under the frame of digital media. So, I am to look upon the consumption and usage of these digital media types. Along with the term digital media, mediatization is also an important term to illuminate how these types of mediums have mediatized our everyday lives, our relations with people, or even our sense of beings. Thus, mediatization can be used to address the process of the change through digital media (methods and devices) in this frame. The term mediatization has been put forward by different names in different contexts throughout the media studies, to the impact of media on people’s daily and social lives (Krotz, 2007), as well as the process through which the realm of media culture is bolstered and expanded. (Jansson, 2012 p.14)

So, mediatization of everyday life is a good starting point of digital media use. Not only digital media is used for communication purposes any longer, but also is used for a variety of goals such as education, business, shopping, etc. Thus, digital media opens a space for different usages. In this context, digital media can be thought of as an online social sphere. Social sphere according to Hess and Gutsche (2018) is the part of everyday life where people can make sense of their own lives and others’ lives as collectives. According Hess, ‘It is in these spheres we construct connections to others beyond our intimate lives and where appropriate, meaningful behaviour and practices are negotiated’ (Hess and Gutsche Jr, 2018) By the means of social sphere, based on my sample of upper class Istanbulite Generation Z’s

consumption patterns and on their statements, I argued that digital media has two facets that goes hands to hand. On the one hand, it opens an online social sphere for young people to discuss political, social and cultural issues with their peers and to participate in online debates in a partly democratic way. For this group of people, this online sphere opens a gateway to present themselves comfortably. However, on the other hand, digital media regenerates social norms and roles and maintains status quo along with masculine domination. Lastly, based on the data that I gathered from my sample, it could be asserted that despite the fact that young peoples' capital types and volumes have an impact on their content consumption and on following preferences that reveal itself in their speeches, and in their practices in digital media. But on the other hand, digital media creates a fracture in distinction by moulding everybody in the same realm by bombing the same sorts of contents and exposed information campaigns, products or images where users cannot escape from this bombing. What is more, they do not want to withdraw themselves from this sphere. The thesis thus aimed to discuss the 2 facets of digital media in three chapters, depending on my sample's trajectories and statements that provided me insights about digital media consumption patterns of upper class Istanbulite Generation Z in Turkey. The first chapter was focused on the functionality of digital media as an online public sphere referred to Jurgen Habermas's works, 'The Structural Transformation of Bourgeois Public Sphere' and extended version of it put forward by different scholars, depending on the emergence of internet technologies and digitization at the beginning of the 21st century. Second chapter addressed the use of this sphere for self-presentation and it attempted to explore the questions of whether my sample can present themselves comfortably in this sphere or do they feel constraints, face norms and roles within it. In the same line, last chapter dwelled on distinction and its operation in digital media: To do so, I wanted to make sense how the upper class Istanbulite Generation Z has a trajectory to distinct themselves from the others by the means of discourses and statements about their scholastic achievements, travel or other related experiences.

## **Methodology**

I used the method of semi-structured interviews and I collected the data from in-depth interviews with young participants (age of 19 to 23) from upper-class, Istanbulites, have similar backgrounds, types of capitals and all have well-qualified educational background both in terms of high school and in university. Many of the interviewers graduated from prestigious schools and ranked universities in Istanbul, Ankara, Europe and the US. Parents of the interviewers have either their own company or are C-level professionals and are academics. I limited participants to 16 people and 8 of these participants were female and 8 of them were male. The interviews were conducted between June and August 2020 during the COVID-19 conditions. This is why all the interviews were conducted over Zoom and Skype. COVID-19 conditions impacted the interviewer's final exams deadlines and it impacted their motivation too. because of these handicaps, the date of the interviews changed a lot. During this period, participants' motivation was low and they were mentally exhausted, but nevertheless the interviews went well and sincerely. All the participants shared their opinions openly and talked without hesitations. We mutually discussed the cases and I noticed that they also love discussions about these issues. The interviews lasted nearly 1h30 minutes and I did not want to interrupt the conversation, so it lasted a bit long. However, I am satisfied with the interviews and the data that I gathered. I talked with 16 people: 8 of them were male and 8 of them were female. High school names listed in Turkey are Robert College, Istanbul Erkek High School, German High School, Lycee Français Saint Joseph and Pertevniyal High School and alike. In the meantime, the significant numbers of participants are students in diverse foreign countries, including USA, UK, Vienna and the rest of them are the students of private 'elite' universities of Istanbul and Ankara. The family profile of the participants is composed of business owners, academicians and C-level professionals and lawyers. The family profiles and economic conditions of the participants have resemblances and the participants travel more than 1 time in a year. They have similar career and education purposes

like doing masters after graduation and after having 2 or 3 years in corporate firms, they wish to set their ventures up. 3 of the participants wish to be a scholar in the future. My similar background and point of views as participants do had made it easier to reach them and arrange interviews. I reached them through my family members and my friends: I talked with some of my cousin's friends and talked with some of my friends' siblings. I chose upper class Istanbulite young people in order to see how the distinction perpetuates itself in digital media through the types of capitals (or their effects) that people hold. At the same time, this social group can reach almost all the gateways that digital media provides/offers including know-how, purchasing the products that they wish to buy or reaching the apps/programs/tools for their favour depending on their economic sources - in the sense of both the using the apps to buy products (clothes, accessories, online courses, YouTube premium etc) or to form and present themselves according to their imaginary senses of beings. Collected data is grounded on the interpretation and discursive analysis of interviewer's statements.

It can be argued that my subjectivity contributed to the realization of interviews and participation of young people and therefore they can share their personal lives, intimate relationships or their authentic opinions about social media. My educational background, my class, the impact of sociology and the university, the job that I do had an impact on people's perceptions and thus accepted to be part of dissertation. With regards to these factors, I had both advantages and disadvantages: The advantages where I could reach people easily and the interviews went well and sincerely without the sense of fear and the sense of being judged. Depending on the similar backgrounds and social classes, making sense of their statements or judgements was quite comfortable and they could easily discuss and judge people's behaviours in digital media. They were as critical as me during the interviews. For this reason, I tried to avoid orienting their speech/statements and avoid dictating my opinions and judgements so as not to impact their thoughts and comments. The disadvantages could be I might have not paid attention to some of their statements depending upon my normalisation of the facts - so this could be one of the hindrances that I faced during the decoding of the records.

The first chapter of the thesis discovered the 2 facets of digital media in terms of its usage as an online public sphere: On the one hand digital media is online social sphere, functioned as online public sphere in Habermas' sense - an extended version of it, enables its users to express their opinions and to participate in debates in a rational and democratic ways. But on the other hand, depending on my sample's trajectories in the use of this sphere, digital media regenerates social norms, gender roles and hate speech through online lynchings, masculine domination, online assaults and through the creation of a sense of fear.

The second chapter scrutinized the effects of this online sphere on the self-presentation: I attempted to make sense upper class Istanbulite Generation Z's trajectories based on my sample, in the use of digital media for self-presentation to see whether these people can present themselves as they are or whether their selves are impacted by societal norms and roles (includes gender roles and norms) in this sphere. Plus, in this chapter, the creation of 'glamorous life' - imaginary world by digital media is also discussed and analysed its impacts on young people's self-presentation or creation.

The last chapter focused on distinction and scrutinized how distinction pertains itself in digital media and how upper class Istanbulites Generation Z's in Turkey types and volumes of capitals become significative of distinction that was put forward by Pierre Bourdieu. According to Bourdieu, distinction in social life, in society, emerged and sustained itself through people's or groups capitals which are social, economic and cultural. Differentiated from other class theoreticians, in Bourdieu, economic capital is not the sole determiner of class distinction. He also added other types of capitals that have impact on people's or class's differentiation that are social and cultural capitals. Bourdieu also proposed a term that functions as a bridge adheres people to their capitals - that is called habitus which reflects people's sets of skills, appearances, ways of talking, performing or walking - overall their state of beings. In Bourdieu, habitus reveals 'hints' about people's position, status in social life (or in the fields that are defined in Bourdieu as the realm of the competition arena of people to compete to secure and to expand their positions in social life and eventually in a society. So, what people consume, how they speak,

look or perceive themselves or others are all about related to their habitus and their capitals (the baggage that they carry) and it can be argued that people's capitals and habitus can reveal itself in diverse ways: in consumption, in education in social life etc. Today, digital media is one of the realm integrated into social life and is inculcated into our daily lives so the consumption of the social media contents, the purposes of the usage of it and whom is followed or unfollowed and great indicators of people's capitals and related to their habitus so this chapter looked upon the representation of upper class Istanbulites Generation Z's digital media consumption patterns in Turkey, based on interviewees' statements and discourses.

## **CHAPTER I**

### **DIGITAL MEDIA AS AN ONLINE SOCIAL SPHERE: DOES THIS SPHERE FUNCTION AS ONLINE PUBLIC SPHERE?**

This chapter focused on the 2 facets of digital media as an online social sphere. It is argued in this chapter that digital media has 2 aspects: In the one aspects, it can be asserted that the emergence of internet technologies and the expansion of networked communities created an opportunity for online version of public spheres in which users can express their opinions, participate in online debates or discuss diverse ideas in a rational and democratic way. On the other side, while digital media enables the emergence of this sort of alternative communication and discussion channel, digital media regenerates social norms and roles - including gender roles because of masculine domination - through lynchings, perpetuation of hate speech, and the sense of fear. The impact of digital media on some social movements was seen in the beginning of 2000's in diverse regions where the authoritarian regimes and the media that is controlled by them were challenged by young protestors. Arab Spring in 2011, (Egypt, Tunisia, and other Middle East and North African - MENA countries) The social movement of Occupy Wall Street in September 2011, Gezi Protests in Turkey in 2003 were the prominent social movements that were triggered by the use of digital media - social media app/sites. Those days, governments tried to control traditional media channels and broadcasts to inhibit the movement's expansion and the conflict between traditional and digital media had been aroused. So, governments tried to control digital media apps/sites by censoring and limiting the servers' functionality. Regarding those movements in near history, the functionality of digital media as a public sphere had been subjected to many researches. So, depending on these discussions, in this chapter, I attempted to discuss the two facets of digital media in the sense of online public sphere.



## 1.1. Mediatization of Space

Media is one of the structures of modern society and cannot be separated from cultural, social and political realms. It both serves to communicate between people, parties, groups and be a bridge between people and social or cultural life. To understand better the transition process of the media change - from traditional to digital media - I want to benefit from the term 'mediatization'. Mediatization enabled the emergence of new media culture and products, differing from the traditional media products and culture.

Although this term has a miscellaneous definition, I used Schultz and Jansson's definition which was more applicable to the thesis. Mediatization refers to the period of change in which cultural products were changed and 'gained importance as cultural referents' and helped the cultural communities' continuance and growth. On the other hand, mediatization implies the expansion of the limits of media culture. (Jansson, 2012 p.14) Mediatization, thus both the process of changings of cultural products in a more mediated way and the expansion of the media realm. In this context, it is a more 'long lasting process' by the means social and cultural institutions and mode of interaction are changed as a consequence of the growth of the media influence.' (Hjarward, 2017)

Not only is today's media separated from society and culture, but it is also involved in people's everyday life by reshaping the relations, experiences or the way of communication. While traditional media channels like newspaper, TV, radio or traditional advertising are still being used, digitization led to emergence of new media usage and media structure. To better understand the role of today's media in shaping people everyday lives, identities and way of communication, I would like to refer to the concept of mediatization, a term which can be seen as one of the most significant ones in media sociology to make sense of media in a digital environment. Mediatization is one of the most eminent theories within contemporary media scholars, as it possesses a variety of uses and senses. The definition and the sense of the concept might change according to the contexts and the subjects that it is applied to. In this research, I chose to take into account

the descriptions of Jansson, Schultz and Krotz's in terms of media culture. Jansson outlined mediatization as the process through which mediated cultural products have gained importance as cultural referents and thus contributed to the development and maintenance of cultural communities. In the meantime, the mediatization of culture is the process that bolsters and expands the realm of media culture. (Jansson, 2012 p.14) The media today take a dominant place as providers of cultural products and beliefs. In the context of mediatization, Schulz (2004) put forward different processes of mediatization through which he believed, people's communication and interaction changed - First, media broadens human communication capabilities in terms of time and space dimension. Media also replaces social practices and activities that were before done face to face into mediated communication that had integrated into people's everyday life:

'First, they extend human communication abilities in both time and space. The media substitute social activities that previously took place face to face combined with mediated communication and media infiltrate into everyday life. Finally, actors in many different sectors have to adopt their behaviour to accommodate the media's valuations, formats and routines. Mediatization by its very definition, is always bound in time and to cultural context.' (Krotz, 2007 p.39) 'Mediatization refers to a more long-lasting process whereby social and cultural institutions and modes of interaction are changed as a consequence of the growth of the media influence.' (Hjarward, 2017)

The technology that enabled the emergence of digital media along with the mediatization process, social network sites/applications have been born. In media studies, social media sites have miscellaneous definition, but it can be primarily defined by its potential and openness with regard to content production and distribution.' (Acet, 2003) In the meantime, Toni et al (2001) illustrated social media sites where people have interactions and where they can 'share, produce and exchange information and opinions. In the same line, Kaplan (2012: 61) explained social media 'build on the ideological and technological foundations of WEB 2.0' through which people can create, share and use 'user

generated content' Today, with regard to different sorts of social media serves to different goals: communication, entertainment, socialization, networking, branding or sharing political views or discussion. In the same context, by the means of social media applications/sites we form ourselves (identities), form different communities about different topics or purposes, organize events, meet new people, consume contents about politics, sports, leisure or about cultural issues (fashion, cinema, humour etc)

The use of social media sites - social media sites usage is differentiated according to generation cohorts and to societies as well. According to the participants' statements that make us consider that upper-class Istanbulite Generation Z in Turkey has purpose to use these applications/sites for different reasons. Firstly, Social media applications/sites are the main source of information for the upper class Istanbulites Generation Z in Turkey. Twitter, Instagram and YouTube being some prominent sources in this sense. They do not watch TV news or read newspapers because they do not believe they are authentic. Not only do they read political news on social media, but they also consume diverse contents such as travel blogs, scientific news, cooking, pop culture and so on. Traditional media in this sense are highly "invisible" for Generation Z. They perceive traditional media as "old" and inaccurate, contrary to social media, which allows them to confirm the authenticity of news or of information by looking at different sources. In addition to this, they can tweet, retweet news or even share their opinions about the argument that they engage in, which tends to be dialectical and participative. In YouTube, they can write comments, follow, like or dislike the videos, In Twitter, for instance, tweets can be retweeted, reproduced or be attacked. In social media, information is public and is reproduced constantly and instantly.

I really do not like and read newspapers or watch TV, there is nothing there. I am fully at Twitter and I watch YouTube to have any information; from travelling to science or to pop culture. (Demet, 22)

I really love scrolling on social media with some of my friends. We have a Snapchat group where we send funny things to each other, we have fun and we gossip, like we are at a coffee house! (Yasemin, 19)

I use Snapchat to see what my friends do instantly. I sometimes snap as well. If I discern something funny arounds me or at Instagram, I share them with my friends through Instagram DM's or snap. Thanks to Instagram, I sustain the connection with some of my distant friends. For instance, I haven't seen my summer house friend for a long time, and we don't meet each other face to face, but she hits my story, or I hit hers with emojis. (Lale, 21)

Lale and Yasemin's statements represent social media applications/sites that substitute face-to-face communication. Some social media platforms function as online public spaces where private issues and matters like gossiping or sending photos privately to someone through DMs or through Snapping. These practices are entangled in everyday life and many mundane practices like talking, gossiping or having fun have gradually become dependent on these platforms. (Couldry and Hepp, 2016; Deuze, 2012; Jansson, 2013) Apart from its dependence, it can be argued that digital media enables alternative spaces to realize mundane practices in a quicker or more instant way. Generation Z members of Turkey do not need to organize an event or program regularly to socialize or to have fun. Instant snapchat or Instagram stories, and/or DM messages to hit someone instantly are ways to start a conversation or to sustain relations.

## **1.2. Theorizing Bourgeois Public Sphere and Its Reincarnation in Digital Media**

Although young people prefer to consume social media sites/applications for different purposes, including to have information, it is critical to think whether online social sphere enables an environment for sharing opinions, for discussing political or social issues or for generating contents about the critical topics. Before discussing this question in detail, let us recall the discussions over public sphere, put forward by Jurgen Habermas in his seminal work 'The Structural

Transformation of Public Sphere' (1962) and its reincarnation to online public sphere, discussed by diverse scholars.

Habermas, in his work, talked about the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere since the beginning of the 19th century with regard to emergence of bourgeois society/class after the demolition of kingdoms in Europe. Bourgeois society, consisting of civil servants, intellectuals, legal experts, doctors, clergymen and so on, led to the emergence of public spheres in cities, where they came together and discuss political, social and cultural topics in a democratic and rational way to reach rational outcomes and find solutions to social problems. (Habermas, 2009 p.25) According to Habermas' view, in this 'democratic' environment, political will could be ensured among individuals and for him, the existence of the public sphere, separated from the private realm (family - house) enabled a free space and thus freedom to individuals. (Habermas, 2009) At the same time, Habermas saw the public sphere as the realm of economic relations which led to the consolidation of capitalism/mercantilism that later provided a base for the trading relations between cities. In the same line, regarding information circulation in the public sphere and in cities as well, the press was born. (2005 p.80) Habermas gave much of his attention to the public sphere and the bourgeoisie to imply the composition of a free, democratic and rational environment where political and social issues and problems were discussed to reach a 'consensus' in highly idealistic ways.

However, Habermas' views were criticized by different scholars and perspectives. First of all, the public sphere as the realm for reaching the consensus was seen as idealistic that it was argued that different groups or individuals coming from lower positions or ethnic groups were ignored. According to Ozbek, Habermas gave much of his attention to bourgeoisie's rational consensus and thus he idealised this realm by making it homogeneous and 'monotype.' For her, the bourgeois public sphere had an exclusionary effect. (Ozbek, 2005 p.67-69) In the same line, Negt and Kluge argued that Habermas disregarded 'proletariat public' or 'counter-public' against bourgeois public sphere. (Torun, 2020 p.235) In the same context, Nancy Fraser criticized Habermas for disregarding different groups

like women-lower class worker women, different ethnic groups or political views. According to her, in the 20th century, under democracy discourse, it is not possible to talk about the bourgeois public sphere and for this reason, the public sphere should have been a realm to annihilate social problems and not have been a place just for the discussion. (Fraser, 2005 p.125-131)

Today, when we look upon to digital media along with the new media studies, we can see that the term public sphere is subjected to online environments with regard to internet technologies to discuss whether these technologies enable and 'alternative' public sphere(s) in online (virtual, cyber) environment where different political views or social groups/classes involve. There are miscellaneous studies over this topic. For instance, the possibility for users to change their roles from passive recipients to active participants in debate was highlighted by Yochai Benkler (2006 p.213) Likewise, Zizi Papacharissi put forth the concept "Virtual sphere 2.0" where users participate by "expressing political opinion on YouTube, or on Twitter." (Papacharissi, 2009 p.244)

### **1.2.1 The Impact of Digital Media on Social Movements: The Networked Movements**

With regard to the potential of digital media to function as an online public sphere or 'virtual sphere 2.0' in the near history, the global world saw some social movements against governmental plans and authoritarian practices. In these movements, digital media - social media apps/sites played a significant role in diverse regions, enabled both to public gatherings in urban areas and to citizen journalism of which people gave information, shared images, videos from urban areas over Twitter and Facebook. People all around the world, reached information and communicated directly over these sites and apps, instead of traditional media that were heavily controlled and suppressed by governments. It was dictated that 'the revolution will not be televised, but the revolution will be Tweeted' in the 2010s. (Vatikiotis and Yoruk, 2016 p.6) In this context, Manuell Castells' term 'networked social movements' is determinant to make sense the core structure of

the movements: The Egyptian uprising Indignados in Spain, the Occupy Wall Street in US, the Gezi Protests in Istanbul, can be evaluated as ‘the networked social movements’ (2012) in which digital media had been functioned as online public spheres. According to Castells, ‘horizontality is the norm and there is little need for leadership because the coordination functions can be exercised by the network itself through interaction between its nodes.’ (p.129)

In the same context, Bennett also drew attention to digitally enabled action networks by dictating ‘in this network mode, political demands and grievances are often shared in very personalized accounts that travel over social networking patterns, email lists and online coordinating platforms.’ (Bennett, 2012, p.742)

Moreover, the protests in urban areas revealed that the overlap of offline public areas’ occupation and online constructs of political participation and mobilization are one of the prominent features of today’s protests. In this sense, Jurgenson (2012) signified that ‘it is in this massive implosion of atoms and bits that has created an augmented reality where information spreads faster, more voices become empowered, enhanced organization and consensus capabilities - intersect with the importance of occupying physical space with humans.’ (p.86)

In the same direction, Gherbaudo (2012) pointed out the movements in Tahrir Square, Puerta del Sol and Zuccotti as offline symbolic zones, foregrounding the emergence of a ‘choreography of assembly’, in which digital media played a crucial role in those protests by ‘facilitating the gatherings of participants in public space and gathering an emotional tension towards participation.’ In those contemporary social movements, the ideal of the public sphere had gradually informed the impact of digital media as well in which civil society has intervened.

### **1.2.2. Gezi Protests and the Reincarnation of Online and Physical Public Spheres in Turkey**

The Gezi Protests was a breakthrough in the near history of Turkey, upraised in May 2013, against governmental projects to destroy Gezi Park in Taksim Square in order to reconstruct the 19th century Ottoman Artillery Barracks. In the Gezi, there were diverse social actors coming from different backgrounds, class and ethnic groups in a collective way, ‘the multitude’ Hardt and Negri (2004) - ‘and some protestors participated for the first time in the practices.’ (Vatikiotis and Yoruk, 2016)

‘...surprising encounters between feminists and football fans, secularists and anti-capitalist Muslims, members of Istanbul bourgeoisie and the working class, LGBT activists and professional lawyers, Kurds and Jews.’ (Navarro and Tashin, 2013)

Groups in Taksim Square who protested deconstruction of Gezi Park, were attacked by police forces in a brutal way. Police and Gezi protesters faced off in the streets. That process was not shown in traditional media so, during the days, social media apps/sites were the primary source of information and of communication. In contrast to digital media, traditional media, newspapers, radio and TV channels faced governmental pressure when broadcasting Gezi Protests and police violence. The pro-government media channels decided to disregard the incidents and they also bombarded a series of misinformation and defamation campaigns against protesters. (Vatikiotis and Yoruk, 2016) In this environment, social media apps/sites used severely to gather and to share information. Twitter mainly became almost the only source of information. In this line, it was revealed that between 29 May 2013 to 10 June 2013, Twitter use in a day augmented from 1.8 to 10 million. More than 20 hashtags associated with the protests became popular in the global scene. Moreover, the total number of tweets about Gezi protests reached more than 7 billion and the most popular hashtags were #direngezi, #occupygezi. (Banko and Babaoglan, 2013 p.18-22)



The Turkish Government and the pro-government media attacked social media apps/sites with discourses and with shutdowns. For instance, the PM of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan declared that ‘to me social media is the worst menace to society.’ (Letsch, 2013) It was also exposed that 16 people in İzmir and 13 people in Adana were arrested and charged with posting provocative comments. (*İzmir’de halkı isyana teşvik baskınları*, 2013)

To sum up, Gezi Protests were one of the recent social movements in the near history of Turkey, seen both at the local and global level, up-raised through the use of social media apps/sites for information, participation and for organization that functioned as online and offline public sphere in which the two modes of participation (digital and physical) were merged into another.

‘Without social media’s mediation, the Gezi Protests, like the Occupy Movement, Indignados, Arab Spring, Tahiti Protests and so on would never have been what they are now. In the interactive universe of social media, communication is by no means ‘undistorted’ as such but is always misunderstood, amended, perverted and amplified through dispersion, participation and dissemination in diverse groups of communicative action.’ (Vatikiotis, 2016 p.10)

So, social movements in the near future that emerged in different areas of the world, showed us that through digital media - social media apps/sites, the term public sphere could be reincarnated in the form of online public sphere or virtual sphere 2.0 as Papacharissi named or as Castells named it as ‘the networked society’ along with ‘networked movements.’

In recent decades, the global world and Turkey lived social movements for diverse reasons, but the common feature of these movements was the functionality of digital media sites enabled people to organize protests both in physical spaces and in online sphere and to provide information and communication when the traditional media channels had not been met people’s needs.

Today, it could be asserted that the role of digital media on organising people and on providing information - communication related to social and political issues have continued and have still impacted on protests. The last examples of them were the murder of George Floyd, a black man killed by a white

police officer on May 2020 in Minneapolis, and the Turkish governments' potential withdraw law from 'The Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence' (also known as the Istanbul Convention) were protested both in online spheres and in physical areas in the diverse cities. Digital media apps/sites were again in front of the movements. Today young people all around the world, participated in online and offline movements through the digital media's explicit and implicit executions.

Police violence, re-triggered in US by the murder of George Floyd, caused street protests in the streets of US, started in firstly Minneapolis and spread to other cities through digital media contents - tweets, hashtags, black posts in Instagram, videos, slogans, and so on were produced in the online sphere, were reproduced and reached people in all around the world. In the same context, in Turkey, the governmental attempt to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention faced women protests both in the online and offline spheres. Women in Istanbul, organized street protests through digital media and the protests spread to other cities. In online sphere, the hashtag #challengeaccepted was generated and women used this hashtag with posting one of their black and white self-pictures. Through tagging names, this online movement reached celebrities and influencers across the globe.

The Turkish government attempted to annihilate the Istanbul Convention, but they faced the online organized women participation to challenge the attempt. I loved and supported this participation that was reached to local and global famous women. Women all around the world shared their black and white photos on Instagram to support us. That was inspiring! I found it highly valuable that this quick organization occurred in digital media. (Sonnur, 21)

I think the case of 'BlackLivesMatter' was both inspiring and had me hopeful about social media. I don't know whether this global post sharing's had an impact on real lives but nevertheless it was significant to see people didn't unconcerned with racism and police violence. (Pelin, 21)

Depending on Sonnur and Pelin's statements, it could be asserted that Istanbulite upper class Generation Z in Turkey participated in online social movements to support and to have information about the protests in urban areas

both in Turkey and Istanbul. At the same time, it is believed that through the cases and sharing's, awareness of racism, police violence, and gender equality will be more visible and will be open to discussions. So, apart from triggering social movements in urban areas, it could be asserted that digital media brings out the world's challenging cases and problems on the surface when the mainstream media no longer has this mission.

However, despite the fact that digital media functions as an online social sphere in most cases, it faces challenges and limitations through the control mechanisms of governments and tech companies like Google and Facebook Inc. At the same time, along with limitations and control mechanisms, societal norms and roles including gender have been perpetuated in this online sphere. Now, let us look upon the other side of digital media to better understand how these mechanisms, societal norms and roles exercised.

### **1.3. Does this Sphere Functions as a Real Online Public Sphere?**

As it was discussed in the previous part, digital media does not provide a fully free sphere from control mechanisms or grounded societal norms and roles. First of all, social media sites/applications have become a realm of hate speech and have opened a road for the continuity of socially constructed norms and roles - primarily for women, LGBT community or other ethnic groups. In this frame, Pierre Bourdieu's study 'Symbolic Violation and Masculine Domination' (1990) can be considered with this argument. According to Bourdieu, collective habitus - 'a shared body of dispositions, classificatory categories and generative schemes' pass from one generation to another is at the same time the outcome of collective history. For Bourdieu, both people (social groups) and societies habitus have historical roots and these historical roots transmit from one generation to another. By the means of this classification, genders' habitus are imprinted into people's and eventually to groups bodies and minds - to the overall state of beings. In this social construction of some 'etiquettes' and roles, socially accepted judgements are grounded and become norms: beauty and leanness, how female and male

bodies should be, how females and male should behave, wear or perform and so on can be pointed out as these norms that are re-generated every day both in offline and online world. Social media sites/applications do not open a realm to discuss or to change these grounded norms, in contrast to it, instead of being an alternative sphere to discuss these issues by the means of different sites; social media perpetuates this pattern. Tweets, YouTube channels - and comments under the YouTube channels, Instagram along with videos and images sustain norms and roles in every sharing.

I remember people shared Duygu Ozaslan's photos: one of them was photoshopped and the other was revealing her normal body (without photoshopped) and compared the two by attacking her photocopied photo to imply how 'fat' she is. In *Ekşi Sözlük*, there are still sexist titles to which people still write lots of things under anonymity. It disturbs me and for this reason, I no longer read *Ekşi Sözlük*. (Yasemin, 19)

On social media, people find courage to send the nude photos of themselves with swearing (*küfür*) implying that I like it! But in real life, it is quite impossible to see someone come to your table and start to talk to you. (Yagız, 21)

On the other hand, lynch is another problematic issue which can be discussed in the context of the online public sphere and the continuity of socially constructed norms and roles. Although social media applications/sites enable young people to open up their channels to form a participatory culture on political and social engagement, they face lynch and attacks, coming from different political views or different characters. The reasons of lynch's and attacks are not known, and young people question this pattern in themselves as well.

We composed a platform for youth to engage them in politics and to construct a dialogue among them. It is active on Twitter and YouTube. It has an Instagram account as well. We did 2 activities there. I personally do not open such a platform or do not write somewhere privately, but to me, it is important for groups to raise their voices via these media... I believe Twitter is extremely functional in that sense. But we were lynched regarding our posts and videos. They accused us of being "AKP youth." We are just 28 people there and we have no-one behind us. 300K followed accounts revealed to us. I personally do not care what they say but among us there are some AKP supporters and they were annoyed and got upset. (Su, 20)

Lynch disturbs me a lot in digital media - on YouTube for instance. Both my boyfriend and I have YouTube channels: I share my daily routine in Vienna as a student and give some advice about Vienna and close cities. My boyfriend Can has a channel on sailing. Once a boy wrote 'cringe' and 'fat' under my shared video. Once Can shared a video in which me and Can in the sailboat. During the recording, I was paying attention to my smart phone without noticing the recording and for this reason, had not looked at the camera. After posting the video, people wrote that he should have left me implying that I didn't 'interested' Can and did not 'enjoy the moment with him.' It was written also as comments that Can should have found a girl who could enjoy the moment with him implying that 'he deserves a better girl'. I do not make sense how people dare to judge people on social media - what they see is just 4 or 5 minutes of daily life. They believe everything they see on social media, I guess. (Lale, 21)

Social media sites/applications substitute reality and form an illusionary space where the gap between the real and unreal have become blurry. Lale's statements are significant in that sense. Social media opens a space for both construction of 'reality' through designated areas and scenes, and for composition of imagined selves. Instead of discussing different views about social and political issues, social media sites/applications cause disorder in which the source of the real and unreal no longer is clear.

### **1.3.1 The Sense of Fear and the Need of Self-Control in Digital Media**

I am not a person who holds my tongue at Twitter so when I tweet something about censorship in Twitter or something like that, my friends warn me to erase the tweet that I wrote. I am aware that if I don't, the police can come to my door and to arrest me. I am nervous in that sense. (Fahri, 22)

In the same vein, the mechanism of control and the sense of fear reveal itself on social media. The participants' statements about this fear make us consider that the upper class Istanbulite Generation Z in Turkey is impartial (*çekimser*) in declaring their opinions about Turkish politics or about AKP on Twitter. Although they believe the importance of sharing opinions freely on Twitter, because of the

journalists arrests in Turkey, they prefer just to follow journalists or scholars on Twitter.

This situation represents one more time that social media does not provide a free rational sphere in which young people can discuss their ideas to reach the possible solutions for solving societal problems. In this context, there is a similar pattern that the public sphere faced in the beginning of the 20th century, with regard to escalation of state control and regulation mechanism over public and media institutions. Habermas defined the public sphere as free of both public and private ownership. According to him, it is free from particularistic control, seeing it as a state-free structure during his first works, but changing his point of view later on. (1991) Later on, criticised the influence of widespread advertising and profitability on the press during the 19th century meaning that the public sphere would be under the control of powerful institutions and individuals rather than regular citizens. Along the same line, it can be argued that the digital media realm - social media sites/applications are not fully free from corporate platforms or states either. 'In Western world, corporate platforms like Facebook Inc. or Byte Dance (owner of TikTok) make up the bulk of social media, leaving only a small percentage of non-commercial platforms, and unless alternative ownership models are developed, digital platforms would never meet Habermas' criteria for the public sphere'. (Van Dijck and Nieborg, 2009)

So, while digital media platforms open a space for discussion, it does not have a dominant impact on changing the structures. Likewise, as Habermas highlighted in his late works (1991)

The commercialized mass media have turned the public sphere into a space where the rhetoric and objectives of public relations and advertising are prioritized. Commercial interests, a capitalist economy, and mainstream media content have colonized the public sphere and compromised rational and democratic public discourse extinct, with television frequently playing a vanguard role. (Habermas, 2004). Contemporary media's landscape is similar, as political influence is accumulated by companies like Facebook, Amazon or Google, whose power has increased exponentially. That such a concentration of power and capital on certain

companies was already greater than that of traditional media was highlighted by Mathew Hindman (2009) in *Closing on the Frontier*. With the continuous acquisition of smaller players, the accumulation of power in tech giants has only become more intense in the past decade. It is not only academicians who have observed and warned about this phenomenon, but also figures who have played major roles within the digital media world like eBay founder Pierre Omidyar, who stressed the danger social media poses to democracy and the citizens' trust in it (2017). Other examples of this include the subtitle to Jonathan Taplin's "Move Fast and Break Things", "How Facebook, Google, and Amazon Cornered Culture and Undermined Democracy" (2017) and *The Monthly's* cover for the July 2017 issue where an article argued against the notion that Facebook has democratised the media and is "killing" it instead. (Fiek, 2017; Turner, 2018)

Regarding these cases, overall, it could be asserted that digital media has two facets: On the one hand, digital media enables the emergence of an online public sphere in which people can discuss political and social issues, share their opinions and participate in online discussion over Twitter, forums and Reddit. In the meantime, as we witnessed in Tahrir Square, in Spain and in Gezi at the beginning of the 2000's and in the cases of George Floyd and in Istanbul Convention, digital media functioned almost as the only source of information and communication in contrast to traditional media which ignored the most of the cases. My Interviewers with a couple of young people revealed also that Generation Z in Turkey has a tendency to use digital media sites/apps to share their thoughts on Turkey's and global political and social problems, to participate in online discussions over Twitter and Reddit and to support global movements in the online sphere(s). In contrast to digital media's this functionality, it could also be argued that because of the governmental control mechanisms over tech companies and over public, digital media does not provide a fully democratic sphere for people. It has potential to do so but its functionality is being limited by governments and tech companies. At the same time, it reproduces societal norms and roles explicitly and implicitly, especially for women and LGBT community by means of mainly masculine domination.

## CHAPTER II

### **ONLINE SOCIAL SPHERE FOR SELF PRESENTATION AND SELF-FORMATION: GENERATION Z'S SOCIAL MEDIA USE TO PRESENT AND TO FORM THEMSELVES IN TURKEY**

In the first chapter, it was argued that digital media has 2 aspects. On the one hand, it opens a gateway to emergence of online public sphere and it leads to online and physical social movements but on the other hand, it is not fully free sphere from governmental control mechanisms and it reproduces hate speech, societal norms and roles including gender and masculine domination and so on. This chapter addressed mainly to self-presentation in the online social sphere and to explore the trajectory of upper class Istanbulite Generation Z in Turkey in self presentation in this sphere(s).

Based on the data that I gathered from the interviews, I found a similar pattern as I did in the previous chapter: It was argued that digital media provides a sphere for self-presentation in a comfortable way, as how people are. The movements like body positivity have a great impact on the sustainability of the self-presentation in a comfortable way because it challenges the mentality of having ideal bodies or faces. However, in contrast to this challenge, digital media sites/apps reproduce regularly societal norms, roles and boosts consumption through constructing an imaginary realm by means of online publicity where selves are re-arranged, adjusted or formed that are compatible with the constructed imaginary realm. Now, let us look upon the 2 facets of digital media in terms of self-presentation.

#### **2.1. Contextualizing the concept of self and the self-presentation in Online Social Sphere**

Self-concept is generally thought of as our individual perceptions of our individual features, skills and overall behaviour, including beliefs about one's personality and ability to connect to others. (Bailey, 2003 p.95(5)383-86) This is



developed over a person's life and changes according to their experiences at the same time it helps shape them, while also taking in information from the social context, expectations and power structures. (Markus and Wurf, 1987) Self-concept is a dynamic structure that guides individuals and processes information in a range of aspects. To gain a better understanding of self-concept, it is helpful to consider three terms generally used in the same sense, as explained by Oyserman (2012), namely, self, self-concept and identity.

The self is the ability of one's mind to understand the individual as an agent of thought, allowing for the capacity to place oneself as the object of thoughts and ideas. The self-concept is the amalgamation of a range of thoughts and notions with the individual as an object including past, present and future representations. (Rosenberg, 1979 p.7) In addition to this, rather than a stable unit, the self-concept is composed of different identities which, in turn, may vary depending on context. According to the environment, an individual's understanding of him or herself may vary to different degrees, in relation to social expectations. Identities connect the personal conceptions of the self with the attributes or roles a person assumes in different situations. (Oyserman et.al, 2012)

Another contribution that helps elucidate this matter is that formulated by Carl Roger (1959), who established three components of self-concept: self-image, self-esteem and ideal self. The first is the combination of a number of notions of the self, ranging from the physical to the social, passing through material possessions, achievements and roles, and may not correspond with reality, either by overestimating one's positive characteristics, or by having an exaggerated perception of faults or negative features others may not notice as much. Self-esteem refers to an individual's perceived value of him or herself, which tends to be related to the comparisons established between one and those around and their reactions to social interaction. Finally, the ideal self-constitutes the notion of the desired self, the way an individual wish he or she could be, and that often is different from reality.

According to my sample's representation, it could be highlighted that today, digital media has significant effects on selves and self-reflection. Not only

does digital media enable a free sphere for self-presentation but also perpetuates societal and roles while boosting ideal glamorous lifestyles in which consumption is boosted regularly as well.

I share myself as I am. I don't care what my followers think about me. It is my space. Sometimes I like posting myself with my friends and sometimes, I prefer to post my drawings to make them visible. (Sonnur, 21)

I post every book I read as a story and as a post as well. I also pin these stories in my profile. If anybody wonders what I read, he/she can see them. I am happy with that. I love reading books and, on my Instagram, I love sharing my interests. It motivates me to read more. I don't care if people like them or not. It is for me. (Nilufer, 22)

Based on Nilufer's and Sonnur's statements, it could be argued that digital media sites/apps enable them an online sphere to present themselves as they are without concerning people's judgements and likes and make them feel free in their decisions. Sometimes they post images about their interests or about their hobbies which enable them to also reflect their skills and interests compatible with themselves. In this context, it could be argued that digital media ensures online sphere(s) to show off their productive and creative selves which is important for their motivation and validation. In this context, YouTube channels, Instagram pages for cooking or for their business projects, travel vlogs etc have become mediums to reflect their skills, interests and to form their alternative profiles for their hobbies and interests.

During the quarantine, I was on diet and was cooking healthy foods and snacks for the motivation and to eat healthy alternatives of some foods/desserts. I, therefore, opened an Instagram page about cooking to post my meals along with receipts. It became my professional account. I love sharing my receipts and showing off my products. On Instagram, I care 'likes' more about this account instead of my personal account. (Demet, 21)

With regard to Demet's statements, it can be put forward that the sites/apps have an impact on creativity and on productivity that they provide an opportunity to generate contents about their skills and hobbies. So, social media apps/sites are one of the creative forces of the online world in which people are seen, validated and known through their productivity or skills. According to the

gathered data from my interviews, it could be expressed in their creative and productive parts in themselves depending on how they wish to be. The critical part in digital media is the sites/apps could be used for highlighting the desired parts and for concealing the un-desired parts of selves. Depending on the interviewees' statements, both sides of this usage are revealed. Demet' statements were the examples of the reflection of desired parts of selves. Now, let us look upon the other side of this usage in depth

## **2.2 Concealing the Unwanted Parts of Selves**

While digital media permits a great sphere for self-presentation and constructing different selves at the same time, one can also 'shine' his/her ideal self through rasing the unwanted/unliked parts of selves. 'Ideal self' can be either formed with a collective effort or formed at one's own will. It also shows a person's own perception (cognitive perception) to 'what he/she might become and what they are afraid of becoming' (Markus and Nurius, 1986) For instance Mendelson and Papacharissi (2010, p 4) noted that 'when people use social media as a channel to articulate their identities, they tend to present a highly selective version of themselves.' To reveal a selective version of themselves, people can adjust themselves according to their 'selective selves.' This practice can be similar to the 'front and backstage' metaphor, used by Erving Goffman in his study, 'The self-presentation of self in Everyday Life.' (1959) In his study, he argued that people in social life - for him it is the public space for which he uses the term 'front stage' where people establish a performance according to the person in front of him. It is in this space where the self-definition and the self-consumption take place. In contrast to the front stage, there is also a backstage where people rehearse their attitudes, practices and prepare themselves for the front stage, namely to the public space. For Goffman, 'the front stage is the expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during the performance.' (Goffman, 1959 p.13)

When we are together with friends, let's say we are eating sushi together. Some of my friends want to take photos of the scene and that is why, we arrange the table, we try to pose, laugh and try to be seen "unposed." Everybody tries to be seen as beautiful and ordinary, and if we are at a restaurant, this situation makes me nervous. Just two minutes after the shoot, we will maybe tell our problems to each other but during the shoot we seem to have no problems. These moments create stress and, so, I want to escape from that place. (Sonnur, 21)

This phenomenon indicates implicitly that the gaze, the feedback and the applause are important for the users and if they believe the post shared on Instagram does not have any interaction, it leads them to think they are, or the photo they have shared, are not charming or admirable enough. To prevent this situation, they make their photos and themselves more attractive on Instagram or write something interesting on Twitter. For instance, Ekin, one of the interviewees, explains why he thought of deleting one of his photos, shot in Rize, because of the low interaction done by his peers. But then he changed his mind by criticizing himself on the account of why he cares so much about others' opinions.

When I posted a photo in Rize with my cousin, the interaction was not that and this situation made me think that Rize is not enough "cool" to be liked. I had hesitated these days but then I asked myself why others' opinions are so important to you! This is your image and you should not care much about what others are going to think. Even though that photo has a low number of likes, I did not delete it. But apart from that, likes, comments and interaction are important to me although it seems meaningless. Before, I was trying to calculate and understand in what time people look more at Instagram. According to optimal calculations, I was posting my photos. (Ekin, 21)

It can be seen that the ideal self is harmed, and their self-esteem falls according to interactions and likes, which impact one's own perception of oneself, negatively or positively. Apart from one's self-perception, the gaze on others is also impacted because of the senses of comparison. Ekin's case is meaningful in this context. Digital media allows users to rewind and reset the posts so taken back for not showing them the way they want to. In offline life, a person does not have that chance but in digital media people can orient

themselves on the account of their appearances. After posting the photo, comments and likes did not make him satisfied with his image or with the environment in which he had appeared, so he had a chance to remove it from his page, as it had never existed. In real lives, on the other hand, people are more vulnerable in relation to their appearances or about the places where they belong.

Related to ‘dramaturgical theory’ of Goffman and its applications to digital media and Instagram use of upper class Istanbulite Generation Z, while generating a program, a vlog or an Instagram page devoted to a meaningful purpose are attractive ideas for young people, they do not attempt to begin a creative project or content, alluding to their senses of unreadiness. In this frame, “readiness” is an important state of being both emotionally and mentally, because they believe that they need to have something to show to be admired and appreciated. They relate creation of the valuable contents with self-reliance. In this sense, the contents should be pondered, prepared, edited, and more. Metaphorically, in Goffman’s sense, contents, performances and the users need to be prepared and be well-rehearsed before the stage.

I am not a confident person and, for that reason I am not sure, if I suggest something through Instagram to a wide range of people, or be a decision maker as influencers, will anybody follow me? Probably, I cannot do this! Because I feel that I am not sufficient enough to do this type of thing. It needs self-reliance. As I said, I would like to see my humorous tweets get attention and get “favs”<sup>4</sup> So, I can sense the appreciation and the sense of being funny. (Su, 22)

With my school mates, we went to trip and there we shot our own vlog<sup>5</sup>. There were many districts to discover but in Turkey, there were not enough sources for discovering. We thought that if we put them on YouTube, people can watch our adventures and can learn something through it. It was a great memory for us... I am keen on managing and using YouTube to this purpose is highly effective. We do montages,

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<sup>4</sup> favourites

<sup>5</sup> Vlog signifies type of digital media content in a video format. People can create video contents through specific media tools and share these video contents via their social media accounts.

we interview people etc, I love it, but I need to prepare myself if I will be a Youtuber. It needs a great effort and time spent. I would like to be Youtuber or having a group of fans, but you need strategy and performance to do it. (Borahan, 21)

It makes sense to construct the ideal selves or to perform according to it on digital media. Digital media enhances youngsters' mindset and imagination to form their ideal selves or to perform according to it to be appreciated or admired according to their performances, appearances or suggestions even though it seems to be an act of courage, motivation and most importantly, confidence. Furthermore, while they have possibilities to form their ideal selves and to perform according to them, they can hide or rasp parts away and polish them with a variety of ways or techniques. Youngsters have more power or control over their own selves on digital media than in their daily lives. Hence, through digital media, youngsters can mould their own selves easily like they do in the "backstage" in Goffman's sense.

In social media, people are as they wish to be. I am not as cool as seen in Instagram posts. I am self-reliant, cool, and bossy in social media, but in my real life, I do not have these qualities, I guess. But I feel highly powerful when I can display myself as cool, bossy, a bit cold and so on. In normal life, I am a shy person but in digital media I am not. I like reversing my identity. I set boundaries between my identities. It makes me feel safe. In the meantime, in terms of masculinity and femininity, the same pattern is observable. I can talk about the construction of masculinity in this context. In digital media, nobody produces his own masculinity, I guess. They want to become how they wish to be in and through digital media. In his everyday life, he may not attack women or LGBT community but in digital media to show off his masculinity, he attacks whoever he wants. (Yagız, 21)

Yagız's statements are important insofar as they highlight concealing parts of identities. In social life, people have limited ways to conceal undesirable parts of their identities, but self-construction in digital media makes it possible to express latent and nested identities (Herb and Kaplan, 1999) or to show certain aspects that are not easily shown in the non-virtual social reality. Digital media also enables people to conceal certain attributes of their personality they may dislike, such as age, gender, and appearance, which are only displayed in digital

media to the extent the user chooses to share them with others, which is facilitated by the distance the digital media creates between performer and audience. (Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013) Thus, the media spreads a certain range of expressions, gestures, styles and behaviours across a large number of individuals.

### **2.2.1. Do Online Selves Cause the Dissolution of the Offline Selves?**

So far, it is argued that through digital media people can construct their highly selective versions by the means of concealing their unwanted parts or rasping some parts of themselves. Although it is argued that digital media opens a free space to express themselves regarding interactions between peers, seeing different selves and identities; in contrast to creating an online social sphere, digital media limits people to fully present themselves or make them to adjust themselves into a more acceptable or likeable version of themselves. In this context, digital media makes it easier to separate the selves and by enabling this, it influences also real-life selves. At the end of the day, the real and the other selves (it could be named 'fake' but I don't prefer to call it directly fake - therefore, I used 'other selves' to imply that a person can have more selves in the online world.) have become blurry. In a digital media environment, it is eventually difficult to differentiate the real from the 'fake' or from the 'hyper-real' and the 'stimulated' in Goffman's sense. Related to these arguments that I discussed here; Goffman's view can be a reference point. According to him, if the gap between real and the other selves (he named it 'imagined self') enlarges, this situation influences the audience's and the individual's his/her own perception at the same time. He also argued that 'the collapse of the boundaries invades the self so that real feelings are replaced by the intensities of surface and a simulacrum of affect takes the place of real effect in a manner that one can no longer understand the difference' (Hancock, and Garner, 2014) In this context, the term of hyper-realization can be an appropriate term related to the space formed by digital media dynamics. Goffman used this term to indicate the impact

of the media and primarily advertising on the perception of reality where social life is depicted and hence grasped through the ideals of projections:

‘.....the standardization, exaggeration, and simplification that characterize rituals in general are in commercial posing found to an exaggerated degree, often re-keyed as babyishness, mockery, and other forms of unseriousness. By and large, advertisers do not create the ritualized expressions they employ; they seem to draw upon the same corpus of displays, the same ritual idiom, advertisers conventionalized our conventions, stylize what is already a stylization, make frivolous use of what is already something considerably cut off from contextual controls’. (Goffman, 1979 p.84)

Similar to him, Jean Baudrillard and Frederic Jameson concentrated on the dissolution and even the loss of the self. They argued that the selves are fragmented. Baudrillard in his famous work ‘Simulation and Simulacra’ depicted the environment of media and advertising-oriented society in which reality does not exist because what people perceive as the real is the copies of reproduction and he argued that there are no original forms of these reproductions. He called this repetitive structure a simulacrum. (Baudrillard, 1983) He argued that it is through the simulacrum, ‘commodity production of consumer capitalism’ is structured. Related to this structuring, the object world ‘with an unreality and a free-floating absence of the referent.’ (1983)

In the same direction, Frederic Jameson shared the same view and argued that the current social and cultural life is constructed by a wide range of commodity production, high technology or developed media technologies of the unconscious. (Jameson, 1979)

Both Jameson and Baudrillard had the same views that by the means of the emergence of hyper-space, selves of people are dissolved. Plus, about these discussions, Hancock and Garner: ‘This high-tech media saturated culture is characterised by surface intensities, the loss of the past and dissociated, fragmented states of feeling and patterns of unconsciousness.’ (2014)

Jameson, Baudrillard and Goffman’s statements were partly accurate for the digital media environment and for its ramifications. The digital media



environment and what young people experience within it are just the instant fractions, and the case is the completeness or integrity between the previous and the following of that seen moment do not exist. People watch a story or snap just in 15 seconds and then the scene disappears, the rest of which remains unknown, as does the whether the shared scene was real or belonged to its sender. But this ritual is deeply ingrained, to the degree that it implicitly affects people's perception of reality and state of feelings. What is seen, heard and experienced in digital media are gradually spotted as the real or norm, and ritual.

I observe that girls these days emulate what they see on Instagram. They see a celebrity who is beautiful, fit and who has a good life. They unconsciously act like her just by seeing her on Instagram. They apply the same kind of diet as the celebrity does or they drink the same detox juice just like the celebrity did. I see it regularly in my girlfriends... They are hypnotized by the celebrities and by their lifestyles, I assume sometimes. (Fahri, 22)

However, despite all, today the gap between the real and the hyperreal is not as big as Goffman or other media and culture scholars like Frederic Jameson or Baudrillard had argued in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While young people use digital media extensively, and while they admit that the digital media has a great role in their lives from consumption to socialization and so on, they are not totally blind to discern what the real is, and what impact the media has on them. When the digital media environment overwhelms them, they have the chance to move away from Instagram or can limit their time spent on the application; they are not simply passive viewers or audiences of digital media. As it was discussed in the previous chapter, they also contribute to the emergence of this environment whether real or unreal. But they know how Instagram perpetuates the grounded norms of society and are aware that the full range of positivity portrayed on Instagram does not represent reality.

When I see influencers or when I see my friends on Instagram when I have exams, I ponder and tell myself why I don't have this kind of lifestyle. I say often I wish I could be an influencer and did not have such problems. When I see those scenes and people on Instagram, I often have the impression that they do not have problems and they live in full

happiness, but I know that that does not reflect the reality. Everybody has problems. But if you do not think in a rational way, you get upset! (Gurbuz, 22)

Last year, I did an Instagram detox and it really recharged me. I was unhappy those days and did not want to see the happiness of my friends or did not want to see what they did. When I feel unhappy in my daily life and my life does not go well, seeing happy people on Instagram, annoys me a lot! (Lale, 21)

Gurbuz's impression indicates that digital media, and primarily Instagram, generates an illusion, but it does not replace the reality, nor does it present an alternative reality. In addition to what Gurbuz states, Lale explains the way she handles what she sees on Instagram. Her explanation also reveals how Instagram triggers the impulse of comparison. Although both Gurbuz and Lale are aware of the impact of Instagram on their everyday life and on their mentality, they unconsciously compare themselves with what they see on the screen, even when the screen reflects just a piece or a fragment of the whole scene.

## **2.2. The Emergence of New Sort of Publicity Culture: Glamorous Lifestyles and Influencers**

While digital media perpetuates the sense of the ideal self, it operates as a form, or another way of publicity with its variety of explicit apparatus such as influencers, brand pages, campaigns and so on, to maintain the ideal lifestyles or, put another way, the glamorous lives in which happiness, beauty, and the sense of lovable exist abundantly.

Firstly, in digital media, people are constantly exposed to intense images related to glamour, beauty, happiness. Offline, people are already exposed to these images. In digital media, the intensity of images is higher than in the offline environments. In this sense, John Berger's studies on publicity can be used as a guide to today's digital media environment, in which people show similar patterns as they do in their offline lives. According to Berger, people with city lives see hundreds of publicity images every day in their lives and are not confronted by any other kind of images as frequently. People see them as they

turn the page, as they turn a corner, as a vehicle drives by, people see them on the TV screen while waiting for the commercial break to end. Digital media is not that different, it is active, and it spreads non-stop images, reminding of perfectionism in beauty, in abundance, in happiness or even productivity.

If you have a great number of followers, your credibility increases. It provides you with an active and cool appearance. It is like your LinkedIn profile, if your Instagram page is well in terms of your posts, reflecting beautiful places, like good restaurants in a good quality with your quality clothes, that means you have a good life. It reflects your life. You do not reflect your education on Instagram, you reflect your lifestyle, and it is significant for your social life. It is like your car in high quality. (Berk, 21)

Berk's statement depicts the processing of glamorous lifestyle in and through digital media, with Instagram at the core of this discussion. As offline, while magazines, TV screens, billboards are the signifiers of the ideal, valuable lifestyle, inflated through brands, celebrities or ideologies, online, digital media undertakes this trend, and sustains it explicitly and implicitly as well, in consumerism and the culture industry.

John Berger shared a similar point of view with Goffman on advertising culture. As I discussed in the previous part, Goffman was talking about the standardization, exaggeration that advertising benefits from to replace reality into hyper-reality. Through this replacement, the gap between the real and the 'fake,' or 'simulated' becomes blurry. John Berger had the same understanding on the outcomes of the publicity culture. He argued that instead real things to be used or enjoyed in themselves like clothing, food, cars or make up products, publicity constructs the frame of pleasure upon these real things and links the sense of pleasure to owning these products. For Berger, 'publicity can never really afford to be about the product or opportunity, it is proposing to the buyer who is not enjoying it.' (1972) Therefore, 'publicity is always about the future buyer.' In the digital media environment, particularly in Instagram, this phenomenon is related to influencers. While presenting and boosting brands' products, influencers have emerged as an alternative type of celebrities and/or popular figures. While the term influencer defines a person, who has an influence or impact on people or on

masses, today, athletes, authors, singers, make-up artists are considered influencers on account of their impact on young people's actions and identities. Influencers can be defined as the content creators of the online world in which they can promote brands' products or can have an active role in influencing people with their styles or humorous or proficiencies in a specific field like politics, sports, media or cinema. By possessing the "role" of influencer, celebrities' lives, actions and consumption patterns have become more visible and re-framed in this environment. For instance, one of the young participants mentioned how David Beckham's posts, showing his style and family life had an impact on him. He states that he would like to have a lifestyle similar to the one Beckham has.

I love David Beckham's style and lifestyles as well. I study in Manchester and because of the weather conditions there, I need to wear a trench coat. Sometimes, I see what Beckham chooses to wear and my perception changes. Maybe when I see it on someone else's body, I will not be that much impressed but when I see it on someone that I like or admire, I really wish to buy it and eventually I buy it! (Batucan, 21)

Robert Goldman explained how advertising associate's products or items with a range of meanings related to different contexts, thereby strengthening the value of a commodity as well as its price. Advertising, in this sense, would be a mechanism to arrange and transfer the value of different meanings. Thus, luxury items, for example, may have clearly defined functions that could be satisfied by less expensive alternatives, but their value is increased because they are signs created by images of wealth and the social status associated with it, to the point that these signs, in some cases, become more important than the functions a specific item may have. If I wear Calvin Klein jeans, my experience of the product is qualitatively different than if I wear Levi's jeans - because of the difference in image" (2005).

I follow Yasemin Ozilhan and Rachel Araz. I also look at which brand they wear, they tag the brand that they choose, so we can see where they shop. I generally shop online, and it is often difficult to buy online because you cannot see and understand the products clearly, so the comments of these names are important to me. If they post something about the product that I will buy or choose to buy, I definitely check their

pages out. I feel like the dress or the shoes will be well on me, thanks to them. (Pelin, 21)

What Pelin's told is worth of consideration in two senses: one is how the roles of these women are reframed as influencers and the other is what Ozilhan's and Araz's posts signify in relation to the adoption and reflection of the "good" lifestyles. In Goldman's sense, digital media and Instagram, determine a framework or context in which meanings are reorganised and where the exchange of meanings take place. While Yasemin Ozilhan and Rachel Araz were not particularly popular before Instagram, through social media, their roles and status changed and adopted the position of influencers. Now, through Instagram, the brands they wear, their visible lifestyles, their relationships with their children or with their husband have gained a new frame through which young people have started to identify themselves with and with their consumption habits, as Batucan did the same by following Beckham. The lifestyles, depicted by Ozilhan, Araz, or Beckham are perceived as valuable enough to follow and the products that they wear are remarkable or good enough to adopt.

I really like Michael Jordan and follow him on Instagram. I admire his ambition towards life, his purpose-driven mindset and his resilience. Jordan has impacted on me I guess towards my life and I am trying to apply his philosophy into my life. Before, I gave up so easily but following Jordan really showed me a way to fight as an old basketball player. Now, I fight like Jordan. I also watched his documentary on Netflix and after watching it, I was impressed. Jordan is the prominent influencer of my life! I bought a pair of Air Jordan by looking at him. I guess his documentary boosted the Air Jordan sales, well, including me, lots of people arounds me bought these shoes. (Fahri, 22)

Fahri's statements steer us to the same path. For Fahri, apart from buying Jordan's Air Jordan shoes, his ambition, his mental strengths, put in another way, his ideology, have been significant and worth of telling. Because, in this statement, it is seen that, considered an influencer, Jordan both boosts his life ideology relying on ambition, mental strength or resilience, and the shoes for which Jordan collaborated with Nike. In this respect, by buying a pair of Air Jordan, watching his documentary on Netflix and by following his path, Fahri

feels like Jordan, identifying himself with the basketball star. In this sense, digital media perpetuates the ideal selves by showing in a customized way what is “valuable,” “good,” and “powerful,” and so forth. Customization is important in this frame because a person can choose who to follow or to unfollow. In offline publicity, for instance, a person does not have that chance to narrow her/his choices. Digital media is highly powerful to construct frames and converge meanings into signs that are transmitted to products that are directed to transferring the value of one meaning to another.

### **2.3. Challenges to Norms: Body Positivity in Instagram**

As one of the powerful apparatus of culture industry and consumerism, digital media boosts regularly also the ideal forms of beauty, body shapes, fitness products, or lifestyles to steer people towards more consumption. By doing so, it triggers the senses of comparison, envy or unhappiness, as well as body shaming, causing the reproduction of beauty norms.

While the interviewees are aware of these circumstances, their selves are still impacted by these intense eruptions of images. They try to handle the senses of inadequacy and unhappiness along with the urge of comparison. Digital media today has a great impact on forming and maintaining beauty standards for males, females and LGBT communities. Standardization and at the same time continuity of social beauty norms through digital media, people, particularly young people become more vulnerable and their self-esteem is highly corrupted.

It can be argued that social media applications bombard idealized forms of bodies or reveals ‘unreality’ so, by the means of these idealized forms of images expectations from individuals in society increase. So, in order to meet high expectations that the society puts people’s selves are dissolved and they become more vulnerable. This pattern can be noticed in the discourses of the participants. This leads them to comparison, envy and pushes them to construct different and ‘more acceptable’ selves on digital media. Not only does Instagram create perfection and contribute to the creation of the ideal self, but also conceals

the flawed parts of bodies and impressions. Offline, it could be hard to conceal the flaws, but in digital media, and particularly through Instagram, people have control over their bodies or identities. To do so, young people use different apps to remove the imperfections on their bodies. They make themselves thinner, whiten their teeth and make their legs longer in order to meet the ideal beauty norms (or to be accepted) both in online and in offline world - because the offline world can be seen as the reflection of the online one - the offline is not fully separate from the online life. (Faird, 2009 p.44-48; Elias, 2017)

The adjustments done by apps, Instagram filters, and surgery try-out apps while sharing a post or a video in Instagram regularly create new beauty forms, norms and with its spreading power, these forms and norms ground themselves continuously. What is more, the transition from the old to the new occurs so quick in digital media that what was fashionable a month ago became old fashioned or seen as out of fashion, like make-up trends or the emergence of new sort of nail art techniques or aesthetic-fitness trends, and even pose techniques. These patterns both construct what the popular is and become the determinants of who is popular or social enough. Metaphorically, the determinants of who is in the “game” or “out.”

In a study where Singaporean high-school girls participated, Chua and Chang (2016) observed that they all made comparisons either from a position of superiority or inferiority. Even though all participants qualified peer comparisons as nonsensical and harmful, they all experienced its negative consequences, many of them having eliminated posts or images that received few interactions or likes.

I personally try to escape from this comparison race. I see a photograph on Instagram and then re-evaluate my own photograph by telling myself that I should have been more fit or wished not to share it on Instagram. Instagram triggers unended race among people and pushes to be always seen beautiful, good-looking and cool. This is frightening, and what is more is you cannot escape from it. For instance, in your workplace, you can escape the sense of competition when you go back home, but on Instagram, you cannot. Instagram penetrates into your life, into your everyday, threatens your personality and body. (Su, 20)

In the very first beginning of Instagram, I was sharing my trip photos or landscape photos and remarked that nobody followed me! I then saw in the process that, if you don't post sixpacks or your body on Instagram, you will not have enough followers! If you are a man, you need to show your six packs off; and if you are a woman, you need to post naked photos. I do not have self-reliance enough to share my body, and that is why, my intention is not to increase my followers anymore, because I lost the game, I guess. I am not enough to do this. (Yagız, 21)

In this context, gender roles are also perpetuated. Yagız's statement, about the relation with masculinity and having a six-pack and femininity being related with nudity, is worth focusing on. While before, women magazines and Playboy magazines were causing the perpetuation of grounded gender roles, like women should have a sexy body to be seen and valued, today, Instagram sustains this tradition on a daily basis. What is more, the images are always on sight and people are confined with these images. The three interviewees' statements depicted above share the same understanding that Instagram causes feelings of envy, comparison and lack of sufficient qualifications to be a worthy woman or man. John Berger argued that sexuality has always been the core factor of publicity to promote a product or a service. Sexuality in publicity signifies the good life in which a person can purchase anything she wants. Berger, in this context, related the buying practice to sexual desirability, meaning 'if you are able to buy this product you can be lovable, if you cannot buy it you will be less lovable.' Publicity, for this reason, always perpetuates future buying so 'the present is by definition insufficient.' (Berger, 1972)

To add to what Berger argued on publicity, today apart from buying something that renders you lovable or sexy, you "must" become sexy or desirable, to be lovable, and to be the ideal woman or man. A person thus becomes marketable to be judged as whether woman, man or LGBT.

Despite digital media's impacts on beauty norms and gender roles, counterattacks have blossomed recently against this pattern. In connection to this, body positivity movement, originated on Instagram, is noteworthy. Stemming from feminist fat-acceptance discourse of the 1960s in response to fat discrimination in North America, it aimed to encourage society to question its



ideals related to bodies, especially women's bodies, and to create acceptance for a variety of body-types. (Afful and Ricciardelli, 2015) Likewise, body positivity tries to send a message of acceptance and generate a critical response to body standards, but in a larger scale, with millions of posts using the hashtags #body positivity and #bodypositive on Instagram alone, usually including images of "fat" women performing a variety of activities, such as sports, or wearing the latest fashion, previously exclusive to "thin" women, often with hashtags like #plus size fashion or #styleisizeless. Digital media allows individuals to find a place of visibility where bodies previously shunned from traditional media can be normalised. (Saguy and Ward, 2011)

To sum up, in the second chapter, I argued that digital media ensures a sphere for self-presentation and for self-construction according to people's desires, but on the other hand, it generates societal norms and boosts consumption with influencers, beauty and fitness products by creating an imaginary and glamorous realm. With regard to this argument, it was asserted that in this environment, people adjust, rearrange themselves to be validated, be seen or be appreciated.

In contrast to this sum, to challenge these norms and idealization that sustain themselves in digital media, some movements - like body positivity- have blossomed in digital media to challenge body perfectionism and advocates the acceptance of bodies regardless of physical ability, size, gender race and appearances. By means of this movement, it could be asserted that mainly women are encouraged to post their normal size bodies without feeling the sense of shame and guilt and not to compare their bodies with one another. Depending upon the interviews with a couple of young people for this research, it could be spelled out that young people have a trajectory to support this movement and are keen on sharing their normal bodies, faces and appearances as they are. So, as a result, it can be revealed that digital media on the one hand permits self-presentation in a comfortable way and challenge the societal norms, roles and idealization with movements like body positivism, it regenerates the societal

norms, boosts consumption along with perpetuating glamorous life styles, on the other hand.

**CHAPTER III**  
**FORMS OF CAPITAL AND THE DIGITAL MEDIA**  
**CONSUMPTION OF GENERATION Z IN TURKEY**

The previous chapters addressed the discussions about whether digital media - social media sites/applications could be used as an online social sphere and how this sphere had effect on selves. (or on self-presentation and/or on self-formation)

The third chapter dwelled on distinction in digital media consumption. With regard to my sample's trajectory in digital media consumption habits, content preferences or judgements; it was aimed to scrutinize how capital forms and habitus have impact on digital media consumption. In this chapter, based on interviewees' statements and the data that I gathered, it could be argued that digital media perpetuates distinction through users' trajectories, discourses, following and follower preferences etc and thus secure people's social positions and identities. But in the other respects, digital media refracts this distinction through homogeneity and through providing same opportunities and same contents to everyone. Thus, regardless of users' capital forms, people are exposed to same sort of content intensively that creates an inferential fracture in distinction, neglecting contents or information flow becomes quite impossible.

In that sense, what is critical here is that interviewees' statements and consumption practices are not coherent.

**3.1. Theorising Class Struggle Discussions: Karl Marx, Max Weber and Pierre Bourdieu**

To begin with, Pierre Bourdieu had significant contributions to fields like class struggles, distinction and masculine domination. Before starting to talk about Bourdieu's view on class formation and on the forms of capital, I want to briefly touch upon class discussions in sociology.

Karl Marx, in this sense, is the first name to start with. According to Karl Marx, capitalist society's social structure is determined by the contradictory relationship of capital owner and labour in the production sphere. Workers who generate surplus are accumulated and owned by the owners of the means of production that is through this accumulation of surplus, wealth is created. In Marx's class theory, the notions of capital and labour signify a socialization process beneath the actors and social groups: the capital owners –bourgeoisie– and the proletariat –wage labourers. For Marx, the contradictory relationship of capital owner and proletariat in the process of socialization is the core of the capitalist social structure and social change.

Marx pretended that the proletariat transcends capitalism. In this light, he values the working class' collective practices not in terms of its own collective representations, but in terms of historical necessity which forces the proletariat to work towards its anticipated future. (Joppke, 1986)

For Max Weber (1922), social classes were occupational groups with similarities in relation to lifestyles and access to resources, meaning classes are not only determined by their economic characteristics, but also by their unique cultural features and how these affect their economic interests. A social class includes, then, people of similar economic and life conditions, as well as life experiences, as far as these are determined by access to goods, skills and income. This, however, does not limit the possibilities of group formation. For Weber, aside from the economic factors defining an individual's class, there is a status related to a certain value of "honour", expressed in specific lifestyles being connected and even expected of all members of a specific group, where those with a higher status may be privileged with access to special items, clothes or food, for example. (Krauss, 1976) In this sense, these status groups play central roles in the development of a society, as their economic actions are, at the same time, oriented by fluctuations in group interests and supported by the actor's sense of belonging to the group. (Pyakuryal, 2001)

Bourdieu followed Max Weber's tradition relying on individual's totalities For Weber, people who share the same sorts of qualities and possessions form group

identity which becomes a distinctive way in the realm of distribution. (Weber, 1922) Bourdieu, followed a similar understanding on group identity and hence class distinction. For Bourdieu, different groups in a society had distinctive practices, habits, skills or possessions that are imprinted into their state of beings unconsciously are the objective ways to distance themselves from the others. For Bourdieu, 'class relations, hence, refer to practices which secure and affirm implicit group identities.' (Jopkke, 1986 p.53-78) In Bourdieu's own understanding, capital loses all importance as a factor in the macro-social labour-capital relationship that is completely eliminated from the core of the theory. Therefore, For Bourdieu, capital is 'inheriting the objectivity of things and effecting not everything is equally possible or impossible for social actors.' (Bourdieu, 1983)

The different capacities of power that social actors and social groups have, or dispose of, the context of capital holds a precise sense in the core of Bourdieu's class theory. (1986) Power in Bourdieu is structured and occurs through capital possessions enabling group or individual possessors ' influence and then exist in the field. (Dalal, 2016)

To allow for the analysis of social relations distinct from production, Bourdieu formulated three types of capital: economic, social and cultural. While economic capital is clearly determined by financial and material possessions, cultural capital refers to their use of language, education, particular skills and abilities, among others, and it can also help towards changing someone's position in their own social class. (Bourdieu, 1984) This capital is also learnt within the family and it is, therefore, inherited from one generation to the next.

Bourdieu also referred to the existence of three ways in which cultural capital can be found: embodied, that is, in the individual's own mind, objectified in cultural goods and institutional, in the form of certificates or degrees acknowledging the embodied cultural capital. Cultural elites maintain and expand this capital through upbringing in families with higher education, contact and interaction with other members of the cultural elite, access to educational institutions and focus on fields of knowledge that favour symbolic production.

Cultural capital, thus, plays a key role in the social dynamics and struggles as observed in Bourdieu's overall work.

Bourdieu also formulated the concept of habitus to refer to the mental and physical state of an individual in relation to other individuals, and groups, so that similar proclivities in actual human beings constitute schemes that define the habitus. (1984 p.94-95) According to Jenkins (1992), there were three important meanings to this embodiment. The first was, simply, the habitus is real only as long as it is present in the bodies and minds of individuals. The second was that the habitus is only manifested in and results from the interactions of social actors with others and with their contexts. Finally, the fact that it was in the body and its sensory experience where the schemes that compose the habitus originate, resulting in dualities like male/female or hot/cold.

Bourdieu saw the body as an important element of the habitus because he believed that a person's body holds practical systems, or it can be thought that dispositions, manners and so on that the habitus involves are inculcated into bodies. In this respect, 'the body is mnemonic<sup>6</sup> device upon and in which the very basic of culture the practical taxonomies of the habitus, one printed and encoded in the socialising or learning process which starts early childhood.'

Aside from this, socially competent performances are produced as a matter of routine, without explicit reference to a body of codified knowledge, and without the actors necessarily 'knowing what they are doing' (in the sense of being able adequately to explain what they are doing). (p.95)

People's habitus enable them their positions and placement within a social class, and the habitus is a signifier of the distinction as well. Its reflection enables one to make better interpretation of his/her social status, lifestyles, consumption and production patterns, and eventually one's possessions of capitals. Habitus

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<sup>6</sup>mnemonics are memory devices for the learners to make them remember information pieces in 'the form of lists characteristics, steps, stages, parts, phases.' (learningassistance.com)

enables individual sociality in the means of person's manners, point of views, sentiments, so habitus has a cognitive and affective impact on individuals. (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) For this subjectivity - enables sociality - each individual produces and regenerates as well, 'objective meaning' in the society. Whether people are aware of what their subjectivity has a meaning for the objectivity in the society, or not, 'what they do has more meaning than they know' (1973 p.79)

'On the one hand, the objective structures which the sociologist constructs in the objectivist moment, by setting aside the subjective representations of the agents, are the basis of subjective representations and they constitute the structural constraints which influence interactions; but, on the other hand, these representations also have to be remembered if one wants to account above all/or the daily individual and collective struggles which aim at transforming or preserving these structures.' (Bourdieu 1990 p. 125-26)

Regarding class struggles and hierarchy between the groups, 'field' is one of the significant terms to signify the game arena of these groups. Metaphorically, field signifies an arena where the class struggles take place and the aim of domination one to another occurs. It is thereby a 'game of domination' where the dominating one has power upon the less powerful group. Fields in Bourdieu signifies a status 'game' where people use their capitals to perpetuate the power dynamics and hence to secure their status in the social life. He saw social life as a competition realm where both the groups and the individuals compete for obtaining statuses. Field, in Bourdieu, looked like a 'game' which is composed of specific rules, signs, and strategies adherent to the players to predominate other groups or individuals to secure their 'rank, metaphorically in the competition. To be able to predominate others 'players of the same team have negotiations, signs or the same understandings accepted and grounded between the actors. This is how the competition sustains and hence the 'status game.' (Bourdieu, 1977 p.78)

### **3.2. Cultural Capital and its Relation to Consumption Patterns**

After defining Bourdieu's basic concepts in his book *Distinctions*, now it is possible to analyse interviewees' statements for the research related to Bourdieu's perspectives to have some insights about distinction in digital media. First of all, it can be said that the conflict between social classes to predominate other groups through capitals for having or maintaining status in a field/in a social life forms the class theory of Bourdieu. (Joppke, 1986) Social fields are the places where the conflicting work out and the social reproduction is guaranteed.

In this context, digital media can be interpreted as one of the fields for the status games where the distinction takes place through the reflection of both the individuals and collective habitus' in terms of domination. Because it enables people more visibility when compared to offline. At the same time, digital media enables people to have the right to judge and comment on people's lives, consumption, body, poses, gazes, among others, and therefore, people or social groups can easily distinguish themselves from others. For these reasons, differentiation is more overt in digital media than offline: people's lives are more open, and people are more 'vulnerable' to attacks and criticism.

Skeggs (2004) argued that cultural capital provides 'confidence' and 'empowerment' at the same time. Confidence and empowerment are critical in digital media. Young people who possess the three forms of capitals put forward some socially accepted and 'learned' rules, and the dynamics of their position allow them to distinguish themselves through their practices in digital media.



### **3.2.1. ‘I Don’t Understand Why They Follow Kerimcan Durmaz and Danla Bilic?’: Distinction through Influencer Preferences**

Some people use Instagram so much, especially stories... Some people post 10-15 stories per day, and for me it is not something preferable. I personally post one beautiful post as a story. It is enough for me. If someone does not use Instagram for the business and alike, and posts 10-15 stories in a day, it seems meaningless and ridiculous’. (Pelin, 21)

It is clearly ridiculous to share yourself on Instagram like saying ‘hey, look at me, it’s me! I don’t know how it has become so natural to us and has been normalised. I post nothing on Instagram because I don’t have the intention to explain myself to the public on Instagram. (Yagız, 21)

These testimonies express a rejection to intensive activity in digital media and explicit exposure of private matters is generally not well seen and tends to be perceived as “showing off”. For example, Pelin distinguishes herself from her peers who are active full time on Instagram, because for her, it is not ‘right.’ The same is true for those who have a large number of followers and visibility: People who have lots of followers and who crave to be ‘seen’ were also criticised and judged among Gen Z during the interviews.

Posting my own photos on Instagram seems really odd to me. When I share a selfie on Instagram, I question myself and then often erase it. Then I question why I have an urge to pose my body and my face on Instagram. (Sonnur, 21)

An influencer should inspire me. For instance, I follow and love Elon Musk and Barış Özcan. He inspires me and wishes to see what he does in his daily life, what he writes on Twitter etc. But I don’t follow Danla Bilic, what she really does and why people follow her, I have never understood. (Batucan, 21)

These statements show us how the mass culture and mass practices like make-up videos or clothes combinations are not appreciated the same way selfies are, because of their banality. Along with this distinctive form, they criticise some of their peers for following influencers like Kerimcan Durmaz or Danla Bilic, on account of their absurdities. Interviewees prefer to follow influencers who inspire them and have similar lifestyles to them. In this respect, it could be highlighted

that a person's follow preferences could be related to their habitus and provide some insight about their lifestyles - cultural capital as well - For instance, Instead of Kerimcan Durmaz and Danla Bilic, Batu watches Barış Özcan, a Youtuber who talks about scientific issues in his YouTube channel. Batu also gives credits to Elon Musk because he sees Musk as one his idols due to his scientific inventions. In this regard, specific interests of a person signify the cultural baggage of him/her.

Influencers' statements are reached from '7 to 70' and how influencers act and talk are seen by children. For instance, my cousin, who is in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, told me that, Turkish influencers use bad language (*küfür*) and told he cannot follow them because of this reason. He is aware of this situation and he seems he didn't like it. Many children like him, follow these names. They are harmful for them (Batucan, 21)

This statement is also critical in terms of habitus as learnt dispositions, thoughts and perceptions adjacent to it. Bourdieu argues that habitus is first shaped within the family according to the volume, structure and types of capitals that a family hold. Families are the first places that a child learns how to talk, how to look or, in brief, how to behave according to the environment. Plus, a culture's traditions and norms are also firstly shaped within the family. According to Bourdieu, emotions and thoughts were also related to habitus, and a child's reaction to a specific case, his emotions, judges and thoughts are all related to his habitus. Batu and his cousin's sense of shame in the face of influencers' trash words, and related to this, their reaction to it, are examples of the family dispositions. Batu stated that his cousin did not like this situation and Batu had been uncomfortable with this situation as well, meaning that, in his view, these contents are harmful, even though many children reach them easily. This shows us how the habitus operates and how a person bodily, mentally and emotionally embodies it, or, metaphorically, how a person is wrapped by these faculties that the habitus brings forth.

I took many courses from online platforms such as content like justice, gender and art history. They are all free. I took a justice course from Harvard lately, for instance. Apart from these courses, from YouTube I watch dozens of contents in different contexts

like traveling to rarely known places in the world, or like art history. I spend half of my day on YouTube nowadays. (Yagız, 21)

In Bourdieu's terms, consumption has significance in terms of making sense of one's cultural and economic capital. Cultural capital has found its existence in tastes and consumption practices. While economic capital is related to consumption products exchange value, cultural capital is related to the consumption of aesthetic styles inscribed to 'cultural elite sensibilities' that are socially rare. (Holt, 1998 p.1-25)

In digital media, cultural capital is expressed through the consumed contents and whom you follow. Because digital media is a complex structure that enables a range of contents about different lifestyles and ideologies, sharing the consumer goods such as cars, branded bags or shoes is still an exposure, but this pattern reflects only one's economic resources and is not sufficient to understand one's overall capitals. In this point, apart from posts about consumer goods, the sorts of contents that are being consumed become an expression of one's habitus and the capitals adjacent to it. So, taking courses in UDEMY to expand their knowledge about different subjects or YouTube channels related to their interests or curiosity are the expressions of interviewees' cultural capitals. Institutional courses like, like the justice course from Harvard, academic issues like gender or art history that Yagız had taken from digital media sites, portray the education and intellectuality also matter for the interviewers.

I went to Italy with some of my friends. We have just 6 days and there were concerts these days. It was summer, I guess. We went to Muse's concert in Torino by train and visited the museum of automobiles. Torino is the first place where the first car is produced, hence there is a museum there about the history of cars and alike. Then we went back to Milan, we went to night clubs and tasted local Italian foods. (Batucan, 21)

The data gathered from the interviews showed us that travelling is one of the prominent elements in participants' lives: When the reasons of travelling were demanded, participants' answers were typically connected to their 'unforgettable' experiences like concerts, festivals, tasting local foods, and so on. Niche interests, consumption patterns and preferences reveal one's habitus and the volume and structure of cultural capital that one holds. As it was mentioned

at the beginning of the chapter, habitus, at the same time, ‘functions as the construction of a distinctive set of consumption patterns and lifestyles’ (Holt, 1998 p.4) Traveling and what they do while traveling, in this sense, are the practices related to interviewers’ lifestyles and to cultural capitals too.

### **3.2.2 Securing Social Position in Social Order: Educational and Occupational Opportunities through Global Programs and Network Effects**

Apart from travelling, schools are one element of the reflection of the volume and structure of capital that one holds. Because aside from the economic resources, what the educational institutions offer and bring into table for someone is also related to one’s social and cultural capital. Bourdieu explores how curricular and pedagogic practices of schooling function to generate class struggles, by putting forward the frames of habitus and capital. According to Bourdieu’s thoughts on education and its impact on class inequalities, the school is not a neutral domain culturally, it stands for the culture of the dominant group, confirming it as legitimate and naturally given. (Hout, 1988)

Based on this argument, Borahan’s trip to Tanzania through the Robert’s College agreement with Danish based program, namely, ‘Young Global Pioneers’, could be pointed out as the impact of educational institutions on perpetuating one’s habitus and expanding the volume of cultural and social capitals, and eventually one’s position and power within the field for the present and for the future as well, in terms of the opportunities that will be available in the future.

I was selected as one of the students for the Young Global Pioneers<sup>7</sup> network which is a global talent network in which 28 youth members gather from nearly 30

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<sup>7</sup> <https://youglo.org> Young Global Pioneers’: It is a global organisation in which young people, all around the world, come together through their educational institutions, to develop solutions for a better future. It has 112 members from 28 countries, composed of alumni groups. (youglo.org)

countries. I was asked whether I would like to join the trip or not. I admitted, because in normal times, I might not travel to Tanzania, and for that reason, I thought it was a good opportunity to be there. Through the 3 weeks, we visited three different cities of Tanzania. I recall, we went to one of the cities that is called Arusha - which is undeveloped and is rarely known. In Arusha, there are different tribes and we spend 3 weeks with that tribe. We learnt their dance and tasted their local foods. Later on, we went to Zanzibar Island. There is a SAS Village where orphans live. We stayed there and played with kids. Then lastly, we visited one of the developed cities of Tanzania. By this trip, I had a chance to see three different districts of an African country, where the rural and urban merge into another. Through this trip, I met with new people and with some of them, I became friends. (Borahan, 21)

Borahan's trip to Tanzania by the means of an educational institution can be interpreted in 2 ways: related to both cultural and economic capital, education is highly prioritized in Bourdieu. Besides cultural and economic capital, Bourdieu put forward another capital as well that can be integrated more to education. Because solely economic capital is not enough to cement a person's or a social group's status position in a social space and, hence, in a society. Cultural capital is partly so because if a person does not have connections within fields like business, sports club, art world or elite schools, in other words, cannot hold social capital, his/her position can be weak or cannot sustain his/her power within the fields. Now Borahan's statement is of particular interest when trying to make sense of the impact of educational institutions, and education as well, on the forms of capital by benefiting from the other relevant discourses. Young Global Pioneers is a non-profit organization, based in Denmark, having a 'mission' to 'inspire responsible and global-minded leadership in the next generation'. The organization chooses 112 'hand-picked' members from 28 countries, developed across five interacting journey alumni groups. Borahan, through his high school's contact and the agreement with the organization, had the opportunity of being selected as one of the students to visit three different

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cities in Tanzania and to experience its local culture with their peers from all around the world. In this context, the term hand-picked is highly striking as it refers to the exclusivity and the elite culture, signifying not every child ‘has the chance’ to be part of this community. YGP pledges that it inspires and supports the potential leaders of the future individuals who have global connections, relations and mindset. It commits to provide young children with partnerships with global companies, leading universities, Global Shapers from World Economic Forum, SOS Children’s Village, and other affiliate organizations from around the world, to expand children’s social culture to ensure their access to global networks from business, scholars, worldwide or from non-profit organizations. Bourdieu propelled that education (institutions), are after family heritages, the other realm to infuse the habitus by privileging and legitimizing the dominating classes (groups) cultural capital and thereby verifying their cultural knowledge and tastes. Educational institutions, certificates awards hence mark themselves one of the components of the family heritage and education. (Bourdieu, 1984)

I am a cognitive science student in Tufts University. I really love my department in which philosophy, computer science and psychology merge into another. In the junior year of the school, I found a start-up with my classmate about vending machines for basketballs that can be rented in basketball fields in cities. We were working on it. Because of corona, we stopped the production process but after this period, we will start working again, and will find investments for it. I use LinkedIn actively to expand my network, especially for the business kind things. For instance, through LinkedIn, I could reach one of the Robert graduates to have advice and mentorship for our start-up, whom I knew from the school. I participated into a hackathon<sup>8</sup> and so, I downloaded the Slack<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> A hackathon is a technology event organised in general by a tech company or organization where software developers come together and work on a project in a specific time. The participants work together and rapidly in order to finish the task in a day.

<sup>9</sup> Slack is a communication platform designed for the team members in a company. ‘With Slack, people can work together more effectively, connect all their software tools and services, and find the information they need to do their best work — all within a secure, enterprise-grade environment.’ (slack.com)

to meet and to communicate with the participants all around the world. I saw that Slack is highly fruitful and I could communicate with a number of people over Slack about the related subjects. I am now a member of the 3 different Slack groups about neuro technologies. Roughly four thousand people share random things there. I met dozens of people from different countries and ethnicities. (Ekin, 21)

Business-related skills, knowledge and expertise are also related to educational institutions. Thinking of setting up a business in junior year, opportunities that a student may have, his networks and connections to reach economic capital like investments, taking mentorship sessions from the experts, using digital media tools to accelerate the development of these expertise and skill sets are integrated to one's capital structure and capital volume. Having access to these resources, one can both secure one's exciting position in a field and guarantee a future position as well. Considering this, Ekin's high school connections, university environment, the BA degree in Cognitive science, knowledge about the productivity tools like Slack, and so on are interconnected to each other and perpetuate his habitus, which, in turn, secures his position in the domain of business, of academy and of social realms. In this context, education becomes a tool to accumulate economic resources, and eventually accelerates the accumulation of economic capital.

I am a student at Vienna University of Economics and Business and my department is economics. I graduated from Istanbul Erkek High School and I wanted to continue my education in German. I grew up with the German Ecole and Vienna is a relevant city for international students. I love controlling money. In high school I was in the tracking club and I was responsible for the revenue board. (*maliye*) By tackling monetary issues, expenses and revenues, I liked accounting and capital flows. Therefore, I thought that I could work in any field in the future and could have power to control the capital. From Istanbul Erkek High School some of my friends also preferred to study in Vienna, and thus, I chose economics and Vienna University (Lale, 21)

The same pattern can be seen in Lale's statement, when she was asked why she had chosen to get a BA in Economics, she claimed that she had loved to control money: In this context, controlling money and capital flows are a product of knowledge and power, as well as a chance to retain the money and eventually

economic resources. For the working class, money can be a necessity to survive and a value to meet primary needs, but for the dominant class, 'money' becomes a sort of discipline to learn, where it is necessary to have specific capabilities like financial calculations and so forth, to accumulate and to have power on. In this sense, e, the interviewee's plans and perception of money are a reflection of her family status and lifestyles and the activities she was involved in. Relating to this, Bourdieu put forward that the So, through this continuity of family education and knowledge, the educational system functions as a way of the maintenance of class reproduction. (Bourdieu, 1981)

'Through the Grandes Ecole's in France the Ivy League universities in the USA, the ruling class has retracted the field of academic exclusiveness to elite universities.' (Collins, 1979) To this must be added the surplus effect which results from the fact that a given amount of cultural capital in the form of educational titles can be the better transformed into 'positional property' (Collins, 1979) or economic capital, the greater the amount of societal capital a person can dispose of due to his membership in bourgeois family, kinship and associational units. For these reasons, education and networking that goes 'hand in hand' in a person's life becomes a potent way to secure and expand one's status and the placements in social life. What is more, a digital media assists young people to develop both for networking opportunities to maintain their current or relationships for both educational, business (setting up their own businesses) or career purposes/concerns. So, in this sense, apart from social media sites/applications, productivity tools, the know-how of the usage of these tools, the programs/sites like UDEMY and Coursera to develop their cultural and intellectual knowledge become potent and can be used by upper class Istanbulite Generation Z in Turkey that can be asserted through interviewers' tendencies in digital media - contents - consumptions.



### 3.3. The Rupture in Distinction

Although I don't prefer following any popular influencers, I often check their profiles by searching their names, because I wonder what they post or what they do - where do they travel etc. For instance, I just started to follow one woman, who is a lawyer and a mother at the same time. I followed her because I wonder what she wears, what and from where she buys her clothes. I search some influencers' names to explore which products they suggest. I often bought clothes by looking at their profiles, I must confess. (Nilufer, 21)

In the other aspect of digital media, we can argue that digital media causes fracture in distinction. In this direction, it can be highlighted that interviewers' statements related to their capitals and to habitus about social media and influencers and their practices are not always coherent. For instance, Nilufer, the 21 years old participant confesses that although she does not prefer following popular influencers, she often searches their names and checks what they post or what they suggest. She also confesses that she buys beauty and make up products and garments by paying attention to their pages. This expression can be highlighted that digital media contents are open for all and it can be said that it is impossible to ignore what is happening in that environment. Regardless of capitals, perceptions, beliefs or genders, digital media absorbs everybody and moulds people in it. It could also be asserted that it is impossible to sustain the grounded hierarchies and class differentiation in this sphere. While in the physical/offline world, it could be easier to differentiate spaces, products, cafes or concrete things according to people's capital forms - to habitus - but in digital media, the sphere is transparent, and the layers are not as solid as in physical/offline life. What Nilufer's expressed could be considered this argument: unconsciously, she expresses that she does not prefer 'popular influencers' because she believes that their lifestyles and manners are not preferable but on Instagram, she searches their names and looks for what they do or buy regarding her curiosity. In the same line, Demet, criticizes influencers on being 'cringe' and on their excessive promotions. Although Demet and Nilufer have similar scholastic backgrounds, ages and economic and cultural capitals - and habitus -

their different evaluation of influencers reflects the polarity of digital media in distinction.

I don't care how many followers I have on Instagram, and how my pictures were seen are not important to me. My new profile is private, and I don't have any followers - just some of my friends, because I don't interest in increasing my 'followers'.... I often consider, for what? (Sonnur, 21)

Likes are important to me; I understand whether my friends like or not. If I don't get enough likes for my post, I don't delete the post, but I consider that my friends do not like it! I also wonder why they didn't like it. (Gurbuz, 22)

Same poles can be observed in Sonnur, Gurbuz and Ekin's discourses as well. While the three have similar backgrounds and carry similar capital types, their opinions about Instagram likes and the number of followers is totally different. On the one hand, likes and follower numbers on Instagram are seen as insignificant and are seen as 'meaningfulness' by Sonnur - her manner could be thought as the distinctive elements of her cultural capital, because she holds her profile private and not to prefer to share her life with everyone, but with only close friends. However, on the other hand, in the same case, for Ekin and Gurbuz, likes and followers seem important to them. What is interesting is although Ekin finds the concepts of 'likes and followers' nonsensical, he confesses that he has calculated the right time to have more likes for his posts on Instagram. Gurbuz, in the same line, seems to care about likes and validation from his friends and when his posts do not reach enough likes, he confesses that he thinks the reason for it. Ekin and Gurbuz discourses might make us consider that digital media triggers the urge of validation and of approval in people. Even the terms 'likes' 'followers' private or public accounts etc are related to this urge and reincarnates themselves through the practices of posting, calculating the right times when people spend more time on social media etc or thinking of the reasons for having low likes for a post. For my consideration, the duality of users' practices on Instagram - on evaluation of the terms likes followers or public-private accounts create a fraction in distinction.

When I see my friends' posts and stories on Instagram, an impulse has popped inside me to post something as a story or as a picture. I know, it is a bad thing to be

impacted by your friends' posts, but I also want to show where I went or what I did. Sometimes, a friend of mine (whom I dislike) posts a story and makes me murmur 'this fool posts this or that, I will post this or that too...!' Let us say, I am home for 3 days, after 3 days, when I go to the seaside or to somewhere, I get an urge to post something to be 'seen' But then I feel ashamed to think something like this - I am not a show off person but I feel shame for my thought. (Gurbuz, 22)

Gurbuz's statement is critical in terms of feeling ashamed with regard to posting stories. Although Gurbuz feels ashamed of sharing instants from his daily lives, he has urged to do so because of his peers' daily practices. He also perceives that being impacted by someone's posts and life's is not preferable, but digital media triggers his impulses to be seen or not to be ignored. I believe that this pattern has the most powerful force in fraction, because digital media absorbs everybody in it regardless of their capital types, scholastic backgrounds or virtues. Gurbuz's case can be pointed out as the signifier of this argument. Feeling ashamed and nevertheless wishing to show off what he is doing or going can be pointed out as the main duality of upper-class people - I also believe that this duality is seen both in the offline and online world. Depending on the discourses gathered from my samples, it could also be stated that social media structures like Instagram or Snapchat's algorithms perpetuate this duality and enable users' to be approved, appreciated or criticized etc willingly or unwillingly. In this case, it can be said that distinction becomes transparent - its boundaries become slimmer.

I cannot suspend my account, because I think I am addicted to social media. I know instead of scrolling down on Instagram, I might do more productive things or watch a movie, but I am also aware that I won't do that too. I think we spend our spare times on social media - not on productive things anymore. (Yasemin, 19)

Although I wish to suspend my account for a while to do something better, I cannot. I tried it once but then I re-activated yet you want to see where your friends are, what they do etc. That's why I don't suspend my account. (Fahri, 22)

Productivity is another concept that is adjacent to cultural capital and to habitus - that reincarnates itself in digital media consumption and in leisure time activities. Today, digital media - social media apps/sites substitute spare time activities or hobbies. We can say that for the interviewees as well, there could be

a similar pattern regarding my sample's statements: Fahri and Yasemin's expressions about productivity and spending hours on Instagram could be seen as the indicators of the fact. In this context, Fahri and Yasemin complain about spending a significant amount of time on Instagram instead of doing something productive. Productivity can be related to producing something valuable for oneself, for others or for the environment etc and it needs effort, time, economic capital and knowledge. Based on their understanding, spending hours on social media is unproductive and 'killing' time, so Fahri and Yasemin are not so satisfied with themselves to do 'nothing' but scrolling on Instagram. However, despite the fact that they complain about this situation, they do not take any action to prevent it. In contrast, they fulfil their curiosity and the sense of FOMO which are spawned by digital media - naturally. So, digital media eliminates types of capitals when it comes to boosting curiosity or wishing to be seen or to 'look at' I think in this context, which is interesting is interviewers' statements about leisure time: Both Yasemin and Fahri dictate that they won't do any other productive or intellectual activities like reading books or watching a movie. It may show us that digital media replaced these sorts of activities. Both Fahri and Yasemin are intellectually mature young people regarding their cultural, educational backgrounds and family patterns but when it comes to their spare times, they prefer to spend their time on social media. So, in this sense, forms are capitals and habitus do not have impact on leisure times preferences, in contrast, it might be put forward that leisure times are replaced by social media activities with regard to Fahri's and Yasemin's statements.

To conclude, based on the data gathered from interviewers, it could be asserted that digital media perpetuates distinction in Bourdieu's sense - in terms of users' consumption preferences, judgements, trajectories or their consumption goals. It can also be argued that users' types of capitals and - habitus are related to their digital media consumption practices, goals and users' capitals have impact on their experiences in this sphere. But, next to it, digital media also dashes the distinction patterns by triggering people's curiosity, the sense of FOMO, fulfilling spare times or the urge of validation - of approval. Digital media inherently creates

this environment and people, regardless of their sorts of capitals or social positions etc are absorbed in this environment. So, regarding this conclusion in the last chapter, it could be propounded that as similar to the previous and the second chapter's findings, digital media has two polarities: on the one hand it carries distinction and on the other hand, it absorbs users in it regardless of capitals and challenges the norms. My sample's practices in digital media provided some insights about this pattern to reach this conclusion.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, in this dissertation, based on my sample's, composed of Istanbulite upper class, educated 16 young people (8 of them are male and 8 of them female) at the age of 18 to 23 digital media consumption goals and patterns, It could be argued that digital media has 2 facets: On the one hand, digital media enables its users an online social sphere in which they can participate in political discussions, in online debates with different people coming from diverse ethnic groups, genders, class or social status and in which they can present themselves as they are or as they wish. In the same line, digital media refracts class distinction by means of providing and disseminating the same sorts of information and content exposition. In this sense, regardless of users' forms of capital and social status, they are exposed to the same kind of opportunities. Hence, digital media moulds everybody within it. On the other hand, simultaneously, digital media perpetuates societal norms and roles (masculine gaze and masculine domination) along with sustaining class distinction implicitly and explicitly.

In the first chapter, based on the interviewers' expressions, it could be expressed that digital media is firstly used as an online social sphere in which users socialize, communication and networking. At the same time, it was also revealed that digital media can function as an online public sphere where users can participate in online political debates or express their opinions over Twitter or Reddit and can reach instant information about the world's social and political issues by means of Twitter again and by the other mediums as well. Habermas' studies on the emergence of bourgeois public sphere at the beginning of 19th century with regarding to European's modernisation process, has been re-evaluated by different scholars like Zizi Papacharissi, Manuel Castells or Sonia Livingstone for the internet and tech-dominated media and communication period. They came up with the idea that online public sphere or 'virtual sphere 2.0' or 'networks society' were the novel public sphere(s) for rational and radical political debates and political discussions. They argued that by means of digital media sites/apps or contents like blogging, users can easily participate in political and

social debates and express their thoughts in a democratic way. With regards to my interviewers' statements about political participation in online public spheres, it could be said that digital media has one aspect to carry on this participation - Twitter, Reddit, forming alternative media channels through YouTube or Instagram - have been prominent sites/apps of this online public sphere(s) for the interviewers. On the other hand, although digital media enables emergence to the online public sphere by means of diverse sites/apps, it has a trajectory to sustain societal norms - gender roles (masculine gaze and domination as well) and roles and secure status quo depending on state or big corporations control mechanisms. As a result, with regards to data gathered from the interviewers, it could be highlighted that young people can consume digital media as an online public sphere to participate in political discussions (over Twitter, Reddit and in some cases in Instagram) and in online social movements to support global or local resists. Moreover, they have a tendency to open up a YouTube channel to bring political issues into discussions. Even though they grasp these opportunities via digital media, they face societal norms and gender roles, are attacked by lynchings or hate speech and feel the sense of fear regularly. For these reasons, digital media's functionality in democracy and in online political participation is challenged and is interrupted both in the sense of local and at global levels.

Second chapter addressed self-presentation in digital media and focused on young people's tendencies in self presentation in this online social sphere in terms of how they present themselves and how digital media elements/components have impacts on self-formation. Based on the data gathered from the interviewers' statements about digital media consumption, I came up with the argument that digital media has two directions as well. On the one hand, young people could present themselves freely as how they are without concerning the societal norms and roles, on the other hand, digital media perpetuates societal norms and roles (body perfectionism, the obsession of beauty and wealthy lifestyles - cars, jewellery, shoes and so on) and constructs an imaginary realm in which consumption and glamorous lifestyles are boosted along with influencers and brand's campaigns based on emergence of online publicity. In the same line, with

regards to interviewers' social media sites/apps consumption patterns, it could also be asserted that young people have tendencies to adjust, re-form - rearrange themselves according to these norms and roles to sculpt their imaginary - ideal selves. On this account, self-presentation in online social sphere is analysed referred to Erving Goffman's study on self-presentation in *Everyday Life* to make sense how 'selves' are presented or re-formed by means of digital media sites/apps and how these sites/apps have dominance on this process. In this context, based on interviewers' statements, it could be dictated that they feel the sense of competition, envy and exhaustion in digital media rather than present themselves freely. They have a tendency to feel an urge to be seen and to be validated in this imaginary realm. In this account, selves can be changed, transformed or re-evaluated.

The third chapter of the dissertation dwelled basically on distinction and class domination in digital media. The focus was to see whether and how digital media perpetuates distinction in Pierre Bourdieu's frames, mainly in users' forms of capital and habitus. Depending upon the interviewers' discourses about their social lives, lifestyles, travel or consumption preferences and tendencies or even their scholastic backgrounds, I came up with the argument that digital media perpetuates distinction on the one side, but at the same time, simultaneously, it creates some fractions by melting users in the same pot regardless of their cultural capital and social positions in offline world. So, as a result, it could be highlighted that digital media inherently sustains distinction. Interviewers' critical expressions about influencers' practices and performances in Instagram and in YouTube, their Influencer preferences or the pages they choose to follow, their digital media usage goals - at what purposes, they use digital media sites/apps, how they contribute to expand their social and cultural capitals by means of digital media and even how they judge their peers (or the mass) in digital media through their discourses and so on, all provide us some insights that digital media signalizes users' capitals and habitus adjacent to it, hence it could be said that digital media perpetuates distinction. However, it also cracks this pattern by exposing the same kinds of contents, of images or usages. What is differentiated in the offline world is users



have tendencies not to escape from this environment or what is more, they do not want to withdraw themselves from this realm. They willingly spend their times within it even though they judge, blame, criticise digital media elements like influencers, bloggers or campaigns. So, as a result, users are moulded in this social sphere and they experience the same sorts of things as everyone else. In this frame, while distinction and class domination manifest themselves in interviews' speeches and in discourses, in reality their performances - practices unmatch with those speeches and discourses when it comes to the digital media - contents consumption. Depending upon this insight raised by the participants' speech in the research, it could be asserted that distinction and class domination could be cracked in this online sphere.

Related to my arguments, it could draw attention to some contemporary ideas about internet technologies and new media and communication systems adjacent to these technologies. In the beginning of the 2000's, it was discussed that the emergence of internet technologies and the spread of them would have revolutionary effects on states and big corporates' control and regulative mechanisms. (Kellner and Best, 1999) Many contemporary scholars came with the idea that internet technologies - 'techno culture' (Ross, 1991) would have an impact on societies in terms of political, social or cultural in local and at global levels. Zizi Papacharissi, Manuel Castells, Sonia Livingstone and alike argued that new media systems - digital media is one of them - have an impact on political communication and on participation and according to them, these systems have potential to construct a democratic sphere(s). They championed internet technologies and digital media in its strength in homogeneity and in its decentralized form. In the same line, Douglas Kellner put forward the term 'techno politics' to define the domain of internet in terms of its promotion of democracy by proliferating the range of ideas and information accessible to the mass so assisting to generate a more information and by providing participation to people and diverse groups excluded from the public spheres of political debates and discussions in general. (Kellner, 1999 p.101-103) With regards to Kellner's point of view, it could be asserted that today digital media has a great impact on this

mission and contributes both to sustainability and to discussions of techno politics where mainstream media neglects the authenticity of social events exercised in urban streets. (1999)

In the near future, thanks to digital media, the blossom of Egyptian Revolution in the streets of Tahrir Square in 2011, the Occupy Movement, started in Wall Street and spread to other US cities were more visible and through this visibility, people all around the world witnessed the political and social resistance to state domination. In Turkey, the Gezi Movement blossomed against to the ruling party's authoritarian politics as well. The common point of these movements and the similar ones were the usage of digital media to communicate and to reveal the instant incidents from the urban areas.

Through these movements, digital media sites/apps, were almost mere sources of information and communication enabled different groups and people to come together to challenge authorities' decisions or to raise their voices against inequality or poverty. In Turkey's cases, starting from the beginning of 2000s up to date, digital media has been used as almost the only alternative sources for the political and social issues in terms of both to reach the accurate information and to challenge state's settlements. In this dissertation, based on the interviewers' statements about their digital media consumption goals, I had some insights that digital media has 2 facets that are related to techno politics: On the one side digital media opens a sphere to challenge the status quo and enables operation of techno politics, but on the other side, it perpetuates societal norms and limits people's political participation because of state and corporates' controls of internet and technology domain. So, digital media sites/apps are not fully independent from control mechanisms and its decentralization is not so powerful on these mechanisms.

Moreover, under the frame of techno politics, with regards to it, subcultures could be discussed related to my arguments. According to Richard Khan, subcultures can be defined as 'alternative cultures and practices to the dominant culture of the established society.' (Kahn, 2004) Subcultures are in general against governing culture from and they generate new paradigms of the

day and they are politically resistant to societal orders to ‘institute new grammars and meanings through which they interpret the world, and new practices through which they transform it.’ (2004) Depending upon this definition, it can be argued that today new media and communication systems - digital media - bring forth today’s subcultures by instituting the revolutionary circulation and democratization of information and culture that allow young people ‘the freedom to re-define and construct themselves around the kind of alternative cultural forms, experiences and practices which radical afford. (Witthford and Dyer, 2001) Regarding this definition, it could be argued that today digital media can be perceived as one of the enablers or forms of the subcultures in which people can present themselves freely as they are and re-defined themselves. My findings of this dissertation had a similar pattern: Interviewers’ statements about self-presentation in digital media had some insights that digital media opens a space for self-presentation in a comfortable way. But then again, even though digital media provides a realm to blossom of subcultures, it also perpetuates the running of culture industry and societal norms - gender roles by boosting consumption and commercialization of cultural fields along with influencers, brands’ marketing strategies, touches on online publicity. So, as a result, subcultures (or alternative cultures) become also the commodity of digital media - of new media in which users’ selves are readjusted and reconstructed according to culture industry’s dynamics which are shaped by online publicity (marketing, brand strategies etc) and societal norms and gender roles too, dialectically linked to publicity. In conclusion, the two facets of digital media operate simultaneously where young people have tendencies not to wish withdrawn from this environment even though they are aware of the impact of digital media upon them. In this sense, I believe that my thesis, hence, could contribute to studies of alternative cultures (subcultures) and their relation or - their challenges to culture industry and to publicity.

In the same line, when it comes to distinction and class struggle theories and mainly to Pierre Bourdieu’s concepts, it could be argued that users’ digital media sites/apps - contents consumption could be discussed. In this thesis, I

wished to see this relation referred to Bourdieu's prominent concepts of capital forms and habitus. Regarding interviews' outcome that was found out after analysis, it was revealed that interviewers preferences on whom they follow, how they define and evaluate digital media sites/ apps and others' consumption, why they use them, are all linked to capitals and hence habitus - these patterns provide insights to reach reasonable objective judgements about individuals social positions and hence about distinction in contemporising societies. However, on the other hand, digital media moulds - absorbs users regardless of their capital types and their social positions in society. Let us put it in another way, digital media melts everybody in the same pot. So, for this reason, a part of the argument is that digital media cracks distinction.

Related to distinction and to my argument, it could be denoted that the findings of this thesis can contribute to contemporary class theories and to Bourdieu's readings in today's world. Moreover, this thesis can be a first step for the future research(s) on digital media consumption in the young generation in relation to Bourdieu's readings. Despite the fact that my sample is not enough to measure the large demographic cohort of Generation Z in Turkey, I believe that my dissertation could provide some insights about these contemporary issues related to Turkey.

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