

A NEW ERA ON THE INTERNET: FACEBOOK.COM TO FACE THE FACEBOOK AS A HUGE SOCIAL PHENOMENON

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ÖZET

Bu çalışmada Facebook, dev bir sosyal fenomen olarak, başlangıç noktası olarak belirlendi. İnternet ve Web 2.0 çalışmaları doğrultusunda Facebook araştırmasına başlandı ki bu, tarihsel ve teknik çerçeveyi oluşturdu. Daha sonra, Facebook'un günlük hayattaki kullanım sürecinde, tüm Facebook kullanıcılarının yakından tanıdığı özellikler ele alındı.

Facebook'un, kullanıcıları üzerindeki yapılanması ve etkileri araştırıldı. Bu doğrultuda, İnternet üzerinden Facebook kullanıcılarına anketler dağıtıldı ve böylece Facebook'un insanların hayatlarını nasıl değiştirdiği, öneminin hangi seviyede olduğu ve Facebook'un diğer sitelerden ayrımı gibi konular üzerinde duruldu. Anketlerin desteğiyle Facebook; 'psikolojik', 'sosyolojik', 'sanal kimliğe karşı gerçek kimlik', 'röntgencilik' ve 'kamusal bir alan olarak Facebook' alt başlıklarıyla incelenerek, derinlemesine bir anlayış ve analize gidildi.

***Anahtar kelimeler:** Facebook, Web 2.0, online cemaatler, online etkileşim*

ABSTRACT

In this study, Facebook is captured as our originating point, to understand this huge phenomenon. We worked on Facebook in the light of the Internet and Web 2.0 studies, where historical and technical part of the study appeared. Then we studied Facebook in terms of its daily usage by the members, where we focused on the well-known features of Facebook.

We tried to highlight Facebook's impacts and its structuring on its users. Within this context, surveys were given to Facebook users through the Internet to discover how Facebook changes people's lives, at which level its importance lie, and what is special about Facebook. With the help of these surveys, we interpreted its different aspects in various ways such as; 'psychological', 'sociological', 'virtual identity versus real identity', 'voyeurism' and 'Facebook as a public space', while trying to come up with a deeper understanding and analysis of this phenomena.

***Key words:** Facebook, Web 2.0, online communities, online interaction*

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I) INTRODUCTION

The aim of this article is to examine Facebook with its every aspect. In our everyday lives, we see many characteristics of Facebook like its connectivity, interactivity, variety, etc. But, to understand the topic and its effects in our everyday lives, we should go deeper by looking at its technical, sociological, psychological facts. We should study Facebook both from outside and inside.

In the basis in its foundation, Facebook has a different and wider usage when compared to other social networking sites. Originally, Facebook was created to provide an online student ID directory (Lashinsky cited in Moulton & Timmer, 2006: 6). Facebook is divided into networks, and for college students at the beginning these networks were their schools. But today Facebook has over 55 million users all over the world. This foundational characteristic made Facebook different from traditional networking sites.

As Acquisti and Gross (2005) points out that “college-oriented social networking sites provide opportunities to combine online and face-to-face interactions within an ostensibly bounded domain”. And Sege strengthens this characteristic, for him they are communities based “on a shared real space” (Sege cited in Acquisti & Gross, 2005: 4). Another important point worth studying is that, unlike all other sites how Facebook combines a new technology with the oldstyle. What is the magic of Facebook? Why Facebook is one of the ten most viewed sites on the web? (Warren cited in Andon, 2007: 2).

Turkey has 2,1 million Facebook users.¹ This data makes our study more valuable, where the sum of the users of three European countries is less than the half of our user number. France has 370 thousand, Finland has 195 thousand and Germany has only 180 thousand users; and generally their percentage of Internet usage is more than ours in Turkey.²

II) METHODOLOGY

For this research, surveys were given to 150 people between the ages of 15-35. That age range gave us the chance to explore by getting broader range of answers and to study the issue in a varied way to get healthier results. At the beginning we prepared classical survey questions which asked their gender, age, etc. You can examine the pie charts of these questions in Appendix A.

¹ facebookhaber.com (17 December, 2007)

² <http://www.adsl.com.tr/Default.aspx?haber=145> (28 May, 2008)

Survey is divided into two different parts. In the first part, we asked multiple choice questions using 5 point Likert scale. There are typical 5 level Likert items such as Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree. Then, we asked them to incorporate their own feelings about Facebook, about their relationships and also tried to touch the privacy issue with questions such as “Information about Facebook makes me confident of how other people will react and behave”, “Information on Facebook helps me accurately predict other people’s feelings and emotions”, and “Information on Facebook helps me get to know other people well”.

In the second part of the survey, open ended questions were asked where the participants could mark one or more choices; here they were also given the chance to write their own answers by selecting ‘other’. By doing that, we could better understand the nature of their relationship with Facebook as users. They were asked to answer questions such as “How Facebook changed your usage of the Internet?”, “What are your daily activities on Facebook”, and “Who is the ideal person you can meet through Facebook?”. In Appendix B, The sample of the survey could be found.

III) ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

a) RELATED LITERATURE

Facebook is one of the most important social networking sites, where it is used in the basis of Web 2.0. When we look at the literature, we firstly should understand how this system in Web 2.0 works, because Web 2.0 applications and communities are up-to-the minute technologies. The main lines of the review appear around Internet and Web 2.0 studies.

Looking at the Internet studies is necessary, where the Internet is the beginning of the whole story. Internet as an incredible phenomenon came to our lives and touched just about everything in our social lives. Putman, with his displacement theory, also specializes in a new form of communication and refers that “spending time on the Internet takes away from the time individuals might spend in their communities, since individuals have only a limited amount of time” (Nie and Erbring cited in Bergman, 2005: 89).

Paul Miller in his work “Coming Together around Library 2.0” successfully gives us the principles of Web 2.0. He (2006)³ asserts that; “Web 2.0 is participative, it permits the building of virtual applications, it is about sharing, its applications

³ <http://www.dlib.org/dlib/april06/miller/04miller.html> (15 December, 2007)

work for the user, its applications are modular, it is about communication and facilitating community, it is about remix, it is smart and it is built upon trust”.

Web 2.0 is the end of the read-only and the beginning of the read/write system. What do I mean by that? In simple words we can say that the jump from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 is a transformation from a stable life to a platform which allows participation and collaboration. For Web 2.0 one can write pages, but the best light would be its founder’s words. To sum up the story Tim O’Reilly makes a definition for Web 2.0; “Web 2.0 is the network as platform, spanning all connected devices; Web 2.0 applications are those that make the most of the intrinsic advantages of that platform: delivering software as a continually-updated service that gets better the more people use it, consuming and remixing data from multiple sources, including individual users, while providing their own data and services in a form that allows remixing by others, creating network effects through an ‘architecture of participation’, and going beyond the page metaphor of Web 1.0 to deliver rich user experiences” (Miller, 2005).⁴

Web 2.0 is an interactive, user-centered, multi-media application. Now let’s see how we use it in our everyday lives. To see it’s daily usage more clearly, we can add a schema from Mustafa Alkan’s work “What is Web 2.0?”;

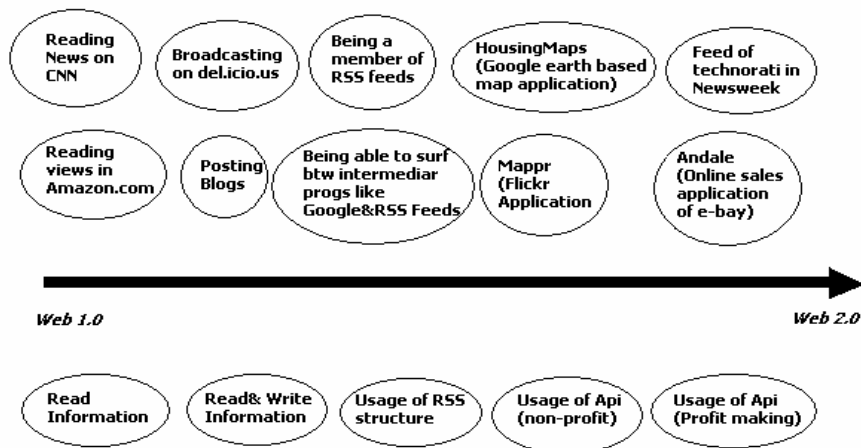


Figure 1. The daily usage of Web 2.0⁵

b) FACEBOOK AS AN ONLINE COMMUNITY

⁴ <http://www.ariadne.ac.uk/issue45/miller/> (20 December, 2007)

⁵ <http://www.csharpnedit.com/makalegoster.asp?Mid=570>, translated by me (15 December, 2007)

In the review of literature you've seen how Web 2.0 works technically and how it appears in daily life. In our everyday lives we spend a considerable amount of time using social network sites, which are one of the important parts of Web 2.0. Facebook also works with Web 2.0, because in social network sites, users create personal webpages freely and easily, where they can also add on them anything they want. According to the results of a Pew report (2005); "more than half of young Internet users in the US had created some kind of online content, be it a blog, personal webpage or sharing original content in the form of artwork, photographs, music and videos" (Selwyn, 2007:6).

If we look at Facebook, we'll see that Facebook achieved all of these goals. In Facebook, users can visit all of their friends in the same network, they can send short text messages, they can send gifts to each other, they can download applications in different categories, they can join groups and so on. In other words, Facebook, as a Web 2.0 application, allows users "to participate directly in the creation, refinement and distribution of shared content" (Selwyn, 2007: 1).

In Facebook, the interactions are built in a user-centered basis, where they can behave dynamically. Here, users create content, they can add or remove things if they wish, they have their own profile pages, which are created by the users themselves. On the other hand, Web 2.0 is innovative. There are user-created groups on particular themes or topics. You can join a group, you can create a group, you can tag on the group or you can share whatever you want. 'Groups' are important, where you can get, share and utilize information. One can create a group possessing an organizational structure. Just like in 'groups', in 'events' people get organized. So you can attend, you can advise or announce an event.

Web 2.0 provides a multi-media experience, where it contains video and audio components. In Facebook you can't share videos, but by the mediation of 'i-Tunes' you can share music. You can also share photos, which is the most common and favourite application of Facebook. Most of it's users share their photos in Facebook.

Beyond all, Facebook becomes an important source of inspiration for the creation of new communities. As Selwyn mentions about the existence of specific social networking sites; there are "the child-oriented Bebo space or mobile phone-based Twitter" (Selwyn, 2007: 2). Nationally focused sites such as "the Korean Cyworld or the Brazilian Orkut" (Selwyn, 2007:2), networking sites like Dogbook, Catbook and even Hatebook.

c) FACEBOOK AND INDIVIDUALIZATION

Individualization in cyberspace is one of its most important features, which entered our lives with the usage of Web 2.0 and inevitably became the beginning of the 'age of the individual'. This is a new individual-based life, which is structured on the individual, including individual friendship networks, individual content, freedom and privacy. Facebook is one of the popular friendship networks, which operates on the individual basis.

Facebook users have the opportunity to create their own profile pages in the desired order and interest. It's a community, in which everyone has their own friends in their lists of interests. It's the beginning of an individual sovereignty and interactivity, where Facebook provides you to shout your own voice just like in blogs. On the one hand, your profile is your place, and you are able to customize it the way you want it. On the other hand, there are groups created before you in which you can join and let your voice heard.

Paul Hodkinson (2007) gives an example from a user of Live Journal, where he points out to the concept of individual ownership; "It's very different etiquette because when you are posting to a mailing list, you're very much aware that it's like a group in sense of what the rules are and what's acceptable and what's not, but with LiveJournal it's your space so you decide what the rules are".

Facebook also provides an individual ownership similar to LiveJournal. In the groups, there are moderators, who are authorized to accept or reject the people who would like to join; which in most cases anyone can actually join their group of preference. This principle allows anyone to form a group based on their interests and choices. In this respect, we can talk about an individual freedom, as in Facebook, every user has the opportunity to discuss matters and express their ideas and opinions on specific subjects within these groups, which means other users will acknowledge and respect them.

Moreover, this type of communication allows the appearance of individual content. Users can write or post whatever they want, from their own experience or observation; they can comment on other's photos or on the attached objects of other's walls. There are applications that show other users which events you are planning to attend during the coming week and applications where you can follow others schedules of planned events too. With these features, Facebook enables the user to maximize the contents that can be used in their screen.

d) DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF FACEBOOK

da) Psychological Part

Internet would not be what it is now without the people using it and contributing to it, changing it, creating it and reacting to it, therefore it would be helpful to look at the science of psychology, and their interpretations on the subject. Internet studies started appearing in 1990s for the first time as an interesting area in the literature of psychology. There were some important indicators such as the ceaseless Internet usage, the anxiety by the limitations of the Internet usage even though it brings on an asocialisation and a harm on the academic career, etc., which made Internet studies more inviting. (Öztürk et al, 2007: 36).

Odabaşoğlu (2007) successfully points out that, in the Internet addiction; patients also show other psychiatric failures; mainly social fobia, decrease in attention, hiperactivity and depression. Those mentioned incidents and thesis are of course not enough to make a generalization and we can not claim directly that we will see the similar negative effects on Facebook users, but those studies are important to understand the world of the Internet and to throw light on many issues to see how Internet alters people's psychology, and that is why scientists keep working on this important subject. With the recent developments on technology, the time spent in the Internet increases day-by-day and it has many psychological and problematic consequences and Facebook is not an exception.

Our survey shows that all of the different age groups use Facebook as a communication tool. It is important to see that approximately 12,75% of the respondents which fall in between the ages 21 and 30 say that, they are spending more time in the Internet after becoming a Facebook user. Most of the respondents claim that Facebook has become an everyday activity. Below, you can examine the table of the total results from the survey question 'How did Facebook changed your usage of the Internet?', which is sorted according to the age groups. Here, respondents could mark one or more choices or write their own answers by selecting 'other'. Out of 150, only 8 people selected the choice of 'other', which indicates that, they don't believe Facebook changed their lives in a significant way.

Table 1. How did Facebook change your usage of Internet

	15-20	21-25	26-30	31-35	35+
It has become an everyday activity	40.00%	38.75%	30.61%	25.00%	0.00%
I use it as a tool for organizing with groups	0.00%	10.00%	12.24%	0.00%	0.00%
I began to spend more time on the Internet	0.00%	11.25%	14.29%	0.00%	0.00%
In Facebook, I am able to do most of the things I do on in the Internet	40.00%	0.00%	4.08%	0.00%	0.00%
I use it as a communication tool	80.00%	62.50%	73.47%	75.00%	100.00%
Internet has become much more enjoyable	0.00%	1.25%	4.08%	0.00%	0.00%
Other	0.00%	10.00%	6.12%	0.00%	0.00%

Another psychological perspective we can use to interpret Facebook is the Freudian perspective. In her book ‘Visual and Other Pleasures’, Laura Mulvey (1989) quotes Freud with his ‘scopophilia’ concept (pleasure in looking), where she points out that; “There are circumstances in which looking itself is a source of pleasure, just as, in the reverse formation, there is pleasure in being looked at”. And she (1989) continues; “Curiosity and the wish to look intermingle with a fascination with likeness and recognition: the human face, the human body, the relationship between the human form and its surroundings, the visible presence of the person in the world”.

In this part of her book, she builds a triangle of cinema, looking and being looked. We can build the same triangle with Facebook, using the concepts of ‘looking’ and ‘being looked’. In Facebook, members develop a ‘pleasure in looking’, where the site itself is based on visuality. In the 27th. question of our survey, 64,7% of all respondents claim that photos in Facebook is a must for them, equally 50,67% of them say they like looking at other peoples profiles, therefore, our results are in line with Mulvey’s thesis.

db) Sociological Part

The change in time and space is a huge phenomenon and many discussions around the issue take place. David Harvey is a main figure, who talks about time-space distanciation; he presents the local consequences of global acts. In the same way, Anthony Giddens talks about the ‘separation of time and space’. Harvey holds place in ‘Introducing Cultural Studies’, in which he talks about new technologies and the world of today. He points out to “the speedier flows of good and faster communication” (Harvey cited in Baldwin et al, 1999: 159).

Facebook is a good example for faster communication. In Facebook, you can see all of these interaction and communication models in a compressed form. If we refer to the results of our survey, we will also see this point of view. 4% of our

respondents 'strongly agree' that relationships in Facebook are faster compared to face-to-face interactions, where with 50%, a high percentage of 'agree' respondents think in the same way. It's very interesting to see 35% of the people, who answered this question 'strongly disagree', spend between 10-30 minutes in Facebook. And 20% of the 'strongly disagree' users spend between 30-60 minutes in Facebook.

The types of representation also structure an abstract view by the creation of interaction. Below, you can examine the table from 'Introducing Cultural Studies', in which the pictorial representation modes in different types of societies were given.

Table 2. Types of Society, Modes of Pictorial Representation and Their Associated Positions

Traditional Society	Authographic (handmade) images	Worshippers
Modernity	Photographic Images	Viewers
Postmodernity	Electronic Images	Interactive Users

(Baldwin et al, 1999: 416)

As defined herein, it's obvious that Facebook is the product of the postmodern society, and the picture-based system in Facebook matters for its members. Although in the 12th. question 'Information in Facebook makes me confident of how other people will react and behave', the respondents couldn't choose a side. 5% of them 'strongly agree' and 'strongly disagree', where 33% of them 'agree' and 27% of them 'disagree'.

In the 18th. question compared to the 12th. question, a high percentage of 50,67% Facebook users have a positive attitude about checking the profiles of other Facebook users. Here, 28.67% of the respondents have chosen 'neither agree or disagree'. According to our survey, I can say that profiles are significant, which are the presentation arenas of Facebook users. The 27th. question will also strengthen this point of view, where we asked the indispensable characteristic of Facebook. Total results show us that, 64,7% of the respondents mark the 'photos'. It is a great percentage, which also supports the importance of visibility.

dc) Virtual Identity vs. Real Identity

The notion of reality in the Internet, in other words, reality in the virtual space, has been discussed many times by academics from diverse fields. It's a well-known, wide area, which includes the whole life within the borders of computers. Facebook provides us an opportunity to be ourselves. In Facebook, one can't be an active Facebook member by concealing his/her real identity. There are some field studies, which can be an example for this argument. The results of 'Trust and privacy concern within social networking sites' show that, 100% of the Facebook members reveal their real name (Dwyer et al, 2007). Equally in 'Information revelation and privacy in online social networks', the results taken from a sample of 100 people indicates that 89 of them choose to use their real names (Acquisti & Gross, 2005). Our survey results are confirming these results where all of the respondents appear with their real names in Facebook.

Manuel Castells focuses on the culture of real virtuality, where he cross-examines the situation of the reality in virtual communities. He (2000) successfully explains the situation; "They are communities, but not physical ones, and they do not follow the same patterns of communication and interaction as physical communities do". Here, I want to give a little break, because Facebook gets off course. Somehow, Facebook provides us the same patterns of communication and interaction. In Facebook, you can send gifts or flowers to your friends, you can play cards or you can invite a friend to the 'rakı sofrası'.

It is interesting to see that Facebook does not only bring the real and the virtual life together, but it also involves cultural and local components such as the 'rakı sofrası'. In 'Fantasy, realism and the other in recent video games', Schwartz (2006) points out to the effects of cultural elements in video games on the players, which are highly close to the world of Facebook in their characteristics; "... the setting is a fantasy world that strives for realism through a detailed and layered portrayal of imaginary cultures. The fantasy cultures are portrayed through clothing, food, architecture, music, dialogue and story events. This level of detail in the presentation seemed to impress the fans of the game". In Facebook, every little detail is considered carefully and presented to the use of its members, and this structure has a power to impress the users when compared to other networking sites. This is one of the main features of Facebook, a feature that plays a very big role in creating Facebook's magic.

If we go back to Castells (2000), he will continue with the reality of virtual communities this time; "...But they are not 'unreal', they work in a different plane of reality. They are interpersonal social networks, most of them based on weak ties, highly diversified and specialized, still able to generate reciprocity and support by the dynamics of sustained interaction". On one hand, Facebook accommodates to the second part of this disclosure. On the other hand, it is obvious that Facebook is not one of the weak-tied networks.

dd) Voyeurism

Voyeurism, with its classical definition, "is the sexual interest in spying on people engaged in intimate behaviors, such as undressing, sexual activity, or urinating".⁶ The word comes from the French verb 'voir', which means 'to see', and with the suffix '-er' in English, it would then be a 'seer' or an 'observer'. With Laure Mulvey's (1989) words, where she points out a considerable feature of this observation, which involves "an unknowing and unwilling victim".

This is exactly the difference of Facebook when compared with the classical voyeurism. In Facebook, we talk about a voluntary participation, in which users present themselves. In Facebook, one becomes a user, so he/she exposes all of his/her personal information to be viewed by others. We can talk about a mutual relationship, in which we witness the law of 'supply and demand', where both sides are self-satisfied.

Newsfeeds and minifeeds are the right places to look at, where users just log in and encounter with Newsfeed in their homepages. Here, one can view all their friends' lives in the world of Facebook. Newsfeed is like a display or something that sort; you can check out what others posted, accept others as friends, see who commented on whose wall or who joined which group and so on. In the same way, our sample of respondents claim that they like looking at other people's profiles. In the related pie charts, you can see the results more clearly. Users log in and make changes in their profiles on daily basis. 12,67% of the respondents accept that they make changes in their profiles everyday.

⁶ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voyeurism> (31 May, 2008)

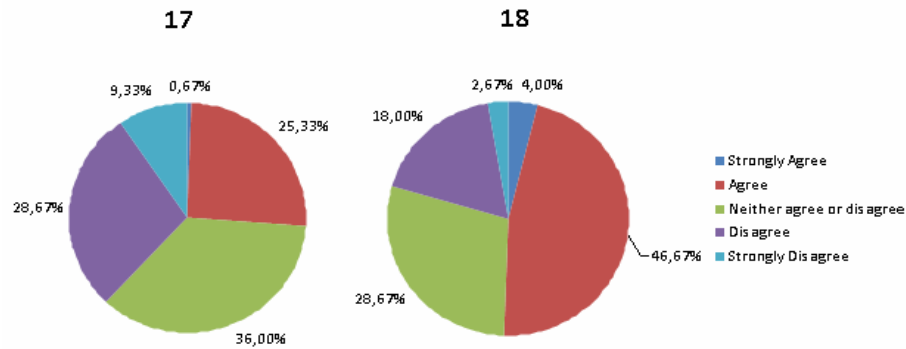


Chart 1. Pie chart of the 17th question; I like when people visit and check out my profile

Chart 2. Pie chart of the 18th question; I like visiting and checking out other people's profile

It's also important to examine the conditions that helped make this cultural feature so popular. Why Turkey has over 2 million Facebook users or why we like to spend so much time on watching other's lives. To understand that, we should make a little trip in history, and go back to 1980s. It was a breaking point in Turkey, where many things changed drastically in the lives of people, socially, economically and culturally. Nurdan Gürbilek (2007) in her article 'Living in a Display Case', points out to the sudden expansion of words, images and representation in 1980s, and sees them as a result of the oppressive atmosphere in Turkey. This argument helps explain the results of the oppressive environment experienced in Turkey during the 80s and the desire to open up, where people were faced with new markets, life styles, products and notions.

Surely 'private life' is one of them, being highly related with our subject, where it created a new point of view, an 'open' one. Gürbilek (2007) focuses on those changes, where private life became more visible in public space; "Private lives have become new sources for the newspapers and magazines. They had to create these sources by surrounding private lives, creating new expectations and fantasies, provoking new pleasures and finally by interfering; only then they were successful to transform those private lives into an interesting piece of news. The way people use Facebook in Turkey is the product of the acquisitiveness of the 1980s, just like in the 80s they create new jargons, images and new products.

Gürbilek refers to two different subjects, which strenghten the cultural conditions of these days. One of them are the movies, which gave an opportunity to peek into people's homes, the private relationships, etc. (Gürbilek, 2007: 66). The second industry is the advertisement, which was a relatively new one in those days. Here we can match Facebook life with the advertising industry. In both we can talk about introducing a subject, but most importantly there is a construction of an image and making that image real. In Gürbilek's (2007) words, a new relationship is built, between "the display case and the spectator".

de) As a Public Space

Facebook, as a huge social phenomenon, has many things to show us as a public space. Here, I want to focus on the fusion of private life and public life, where the survivals of this fusion will take us to the usage of Facebook. As I mentioned above, 1980s was a transformation from an oppressive life to an independent one. After instabilities in political life, people found themselves in a new, an independent and an individualized life. This possibility of running away from a corporate authority was the beginning of a new public space.

Nurdan Gürbilek (2007) in her article 'Deprivation', succesfully describes the situation after September 12th. and its consequences, where she finds the process as a crash in private life; "Politics can only rise on the tensions between what is private, public and the personal. When this can't be achieved and the politics fails, there remains a big gap. The big boom of the interest in other people's private lives has filled that big gap in the 80s" (translated by me).

Another subject, which is highly related to the patterns of life in 1980s and today, is the coming out of the family life and sexuality. Although Gürbilek thinks that private life is nationalized and sexuality become an easy spoken phenomenon after the birth of private televisions, it seems safe to say that Turkle's point of view on the subject proves better. She concludes that; "the notion of the real fights back. People who live parallel lives on the screen are nevertheless bound by the desires, pain and mortality of their physical selves. Virtual communities offer a dramatic new context in which to think about human identity in the age of the Internet (Turkle cited in Castells, 2000: 387).

Actually, Facebook again wedged in between the real and the virtual. Even though it opens us the doors of our everyday lives with different characteristics, Facebook fails within the limits of the screen. Facebook users prefer not to break down taboos such as sexuality or the family. The results of our survey support Turkle, where the boundaries of physical selves slow down the expansion of Facebook. When asked about their uncomfortabilities in sharing in Facebook, women were especially unwilling to sacrifice their traditional values and taboos.

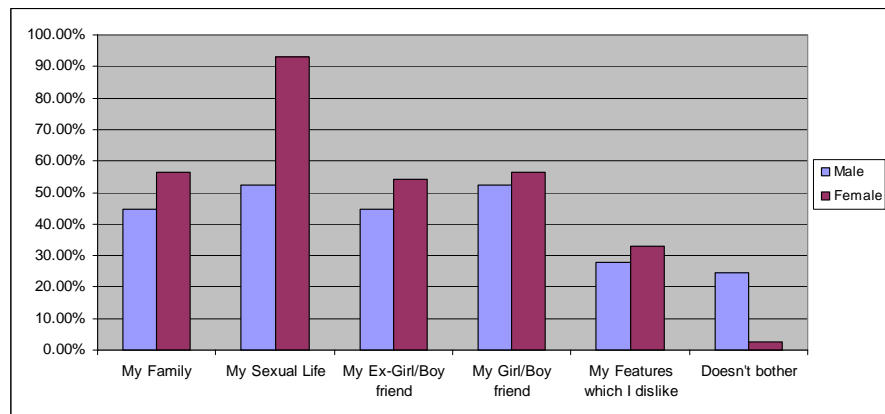


Chart 3. What kind of information would make you feel uncomfortable when shared in Facebook?

IV) CONCLUSION

In this research, I worked on a huge social phenomenon, I tried to study Facebook within a deeper view with all of its different characteristics. The Web 2.0 application and the Internet were accepted to be a part of public space during this research. We should bear in mind that the research history of Internet studies is a fairly young and a dynamic field. The same feature applies to Facebook, where it is the product of the evolving technologies and it provides its users with many possibilities.

Facebook has been declared as 'the product' of today, where it fits today's perception of time. Castells (2000) successfully points out to the perception of time, where it is seen as a new phenomenon; "Time is compressed and ultimately denied in culture, as a primitive replica of the fast turnover in production, consumption,

ideology, and politics on which our society is based. A speed only made possible because of new communication technologies”. Facebook is one of these new communication technologies, which is also supported by our respondents as mentioned before, where they agree that in Facebook the interaction is more speedier than face-to-face interactions.

Another important result is the change we experience on our everyday lives after we discovered Facebook. Many of our respondents claim that, they communicate with their friends through Facebook and they are more aware of what’s been happening in the lives of their friends or acquaintances. Castells (2000) also refers to this issue and sees online communities as an alternative to both, group and personal interaction models, as offline and online. It could be argued that Facebook enables us to bring together the offline and online characteristics of personal and group interactions; it manages to do that by giving the opportunity of feeling as an individual while being a part of a group, both in real and virtual lives; so it throws a bridge between the reality and the virtuality.

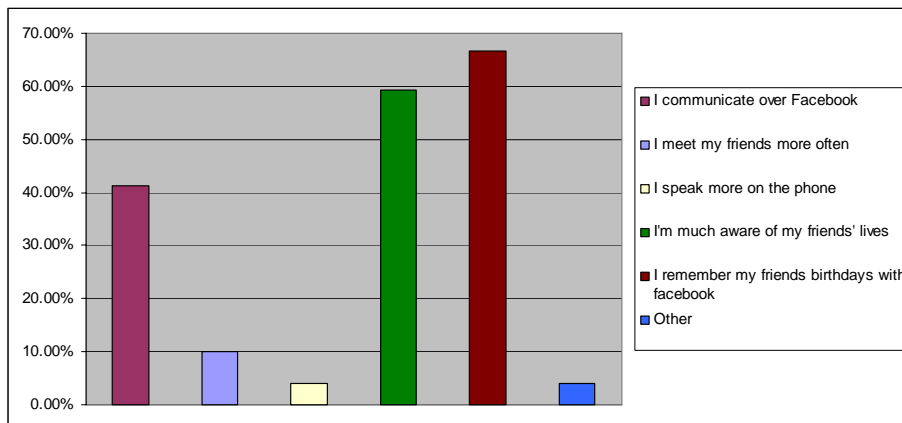


Chart 4. How did Facebook change the way you catch up with your friends' latest news

It will also be important to mention about three notions before I close the conclusion part of this article, which would be complementary in the basis of Facebook as a social phenomenon. First one is the display feature of Facebook, which we mentioned before. 1980s was the break point of the relationships and the

interaction models in Turkey. We live in an era of display, and anything gets its value as much as it is exhibited, this is the key of its visibility. Nurdan Gürbilek (2007) affirms that we live in a display quite for a long time. I assume that, actual importance is realizing where this display exists, and today the displays are not the streets or the screen of our televisions, it is the screens of our computers through the social networking sites.

The second notion is safety, with which I adduce Facebook as a safe place to live and the streets as dangerous. Some people believe that we can't live outside of our homes in harmony anymore, therefore we should turn inside and try to create a life which carry many characteristics from the outside world. Today, in the Internet we have the opportunity to carry out many of our daily jobs such as banking operations, ordering food, paying the bills, etc. Facebook provides us with the opportunity to perform the social part of this belief, so that while sitting in our homes we can safely communicate with our friends, send them gifts, play online games –whether alone or with friends-, share our interests, etc.

Gürbilek (2007) also supports this belief of being safe inside and gives the example of television news; “The best news television gives to its audience is the bad news. The main point here is that, it constantly reminds the audience how safe they are indoors while evil things are happening outside. The private life of the individual will always be safer than this outer sphere where death, danger, suicide, terror and accidents take place” (translated by me).

The third and the last notion is the ‘ritual’ of James Carey (1992), which is discussed in his book ‘Communication as Culture’. Within a ritual view of communication, he tries to explain this notion by using some features such as ‘sharing’, ‘participation’, ‘association’, ‘fellowship’ and ‘possession of a common faith’. We could see Facebook as a ritual phenomenon, which corresponds to the characteristics of the newspaper example of Carey (1992); “A ritual view of communication will focus on a different range of problems in examining a newspaper. It will, for example, view reading a newspaper less as sending or gaining information and more as attending a mass, a situation in which nothing new is learned but in which a particular view of the world is portrayed and confirmed”. It could be argued that, many of the users of online communities perform a ritual without being aware of it. Our sample group shows interesting results in this topic. Although most of them don't feel like a part of the Facebook community and are ambivalent when asked if they would be sorry if Facebook shuts down, a high

percentage of the respondents claim that Facebook is a part of their everyday activity and it has become part of their daily routine.

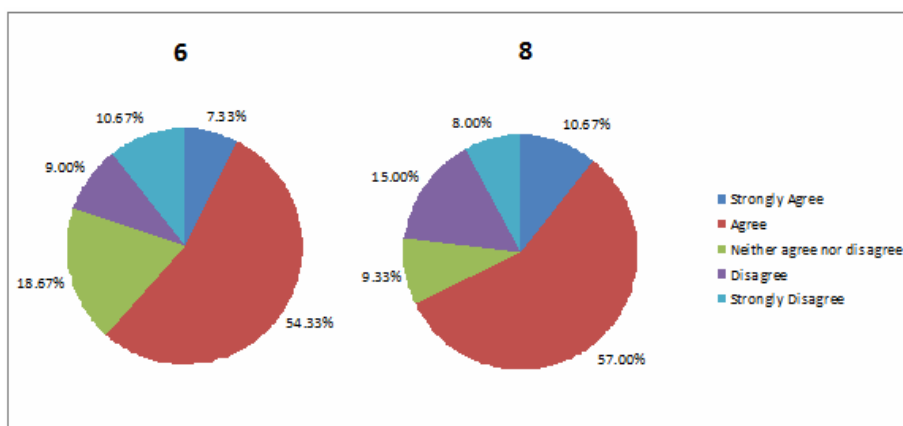


Chart 5. Pie chart of 6th question; Facebook is part of my everyday activity

Chart 6. Pie chart of 8th question; Facebook has become part of my daily routine

Although there are thousands of such communities all over the world, Facebook has a different charm, which has us all addicted and has become a daily 'must do' activity. Although the cultural effects of such a new form of socialization are still unclear, we are the first Facebook volunteers and it seems that we will keep being so until Facebook becomes outdated; but today we live the 'New Era on the Internet: Facebook.com'.

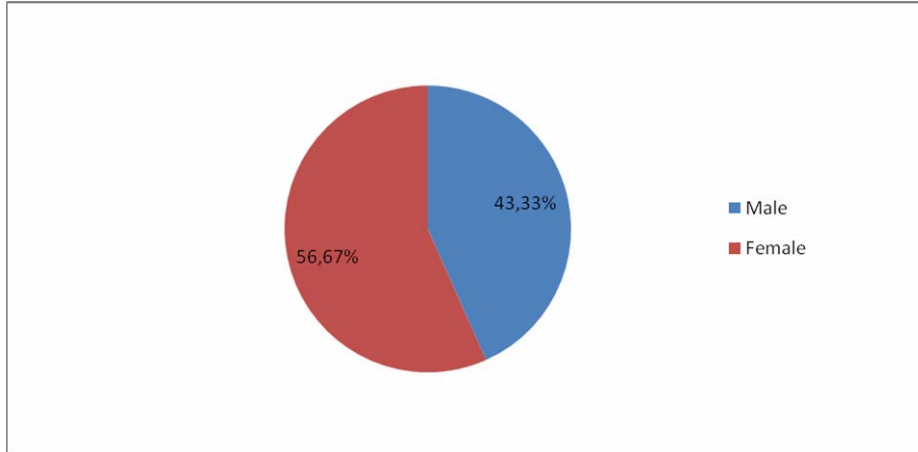
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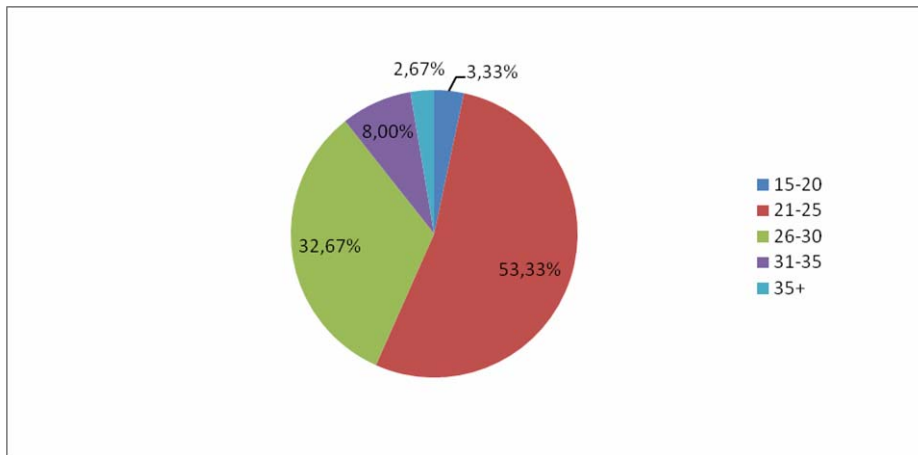
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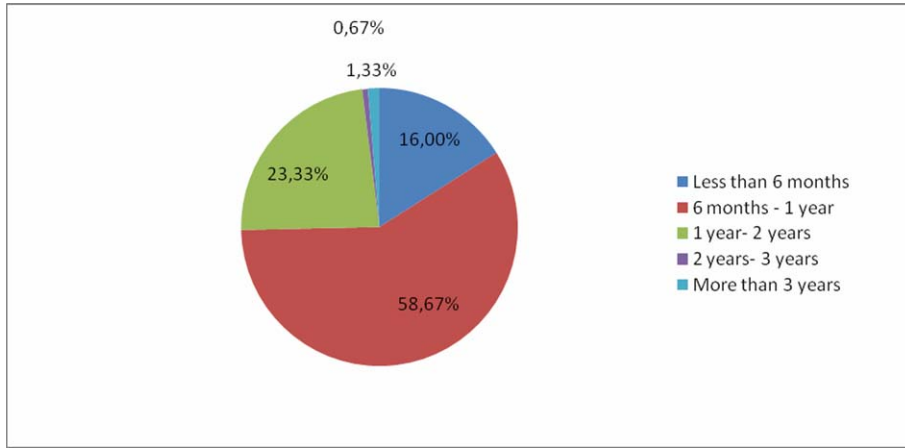
APPENDIX A



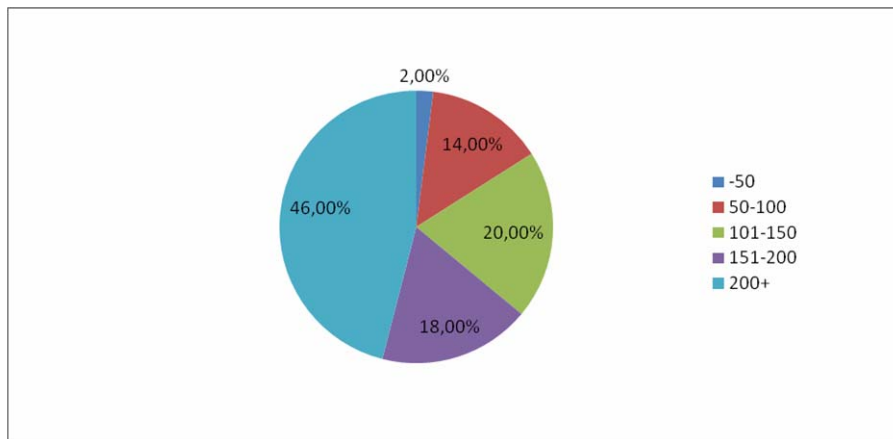
Gender Groups



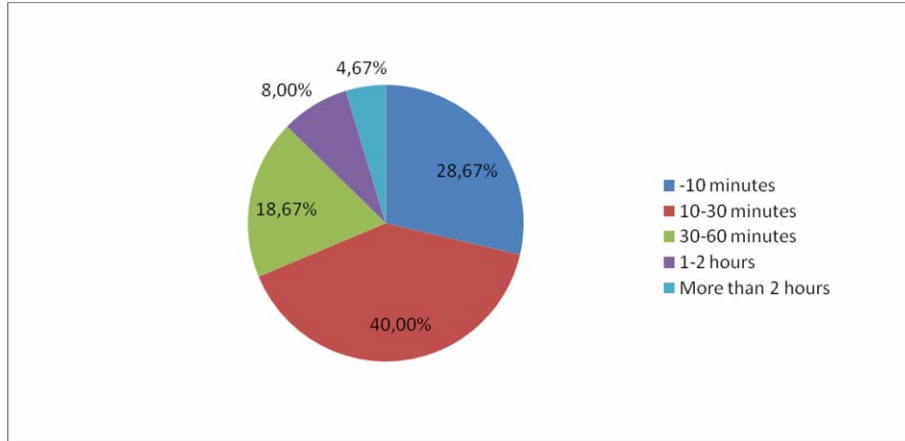
Age Groups



Membership Durations



Numbers of Friends in Facebook



The Time Spent on Facebook