

Perception of social media platforms in Turkey from a generational perspective

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Abstract

Today the use of social media platforms has increased steadily. Different age-groups have turned to different social media platforms which are the most suitable for them. This study is aimed at investigating the perception of the most popular social media platforms among three Turkish generations (X, Y and Z). To highlight the main generational differences in perception of social media platforms in Turkey a qualitative research (in-depth interviews) was conducted. Generation X identifies social media directly with Facebook. Their attitude toward Facebook is more emotional, it is a platform where they can meet old friends from their childhood. Generation Y perceived Facebook as a gossiping platform which does not have any contribution to their professional and personal lives. Generation Z perceived Facebook as an irritating platform and considered as a dead medium. They deactivated their accounts, or they have become inactive users. The general attitude of generation X toward Instagram and Twitter formed with distinguishing thoughts than generations Y and Z. The way of utilization from Instagram and Twitter by generations Y and Z have some similarities besides it shows some slight differences. Instagram is a platform of young generation however older ones try to keep up with their kids and use this platform, too. Instagram is mainly an entertaining platform and users follow celebs, influencers of their hobbies. Generation X's protective attitudes also reflects on their thought about Twitter. Since Twitter is perceived as a political platform by all the three generations. Knowing the image of different generations toward various social media platforms help in the understanding of attitude and behavior towards social media. The results may contribute to firms forming their social media marketing plan based on their target group in a more effective way.

Keywords: multigenerational marketing, perception, social media platforms, Turkey

1. Introduction

Internet has become an integrated part of people’s everyday lives all over the world. In April 2021 60.1% of the global population (4.72 billion active internet users) is connected to the internet. Additionally, more than 7 hours are spent by an average internet user each day. Due to the coronavirus pandemic certainly an average user spends more time than they did last year. Global digital growth shows every day with almost a million new people around the world coming online. This growth is clearly fueling social media use. Currently, 55.1 % of the world’s population (4.33 billion people) are social media users (DIGITAL AROUND THE WORLD, 2021). It’s essential for every firm to adopt social media marketing to advertise its products (ZULQURNAIN et al., 2016).

According to the data released by TURKEY STATISTICAL INSTITUTE in 2021, Turkey's population is 84.69 million people in 2021. 49.4% of the total population is men and 50.6% is women. The median age of the country is 31.7. The majority of Turkish population (~ 70%) is covered by generations X, Y, and Z. According to Turkish researchers, most of the generation's theories that rely on the literature of western countries, i. e. American do not comply with Turkey (ERIN, 2019). In Turkey, generation X is considered a very traumatic generational cohort. The members of generation X have witnessed the economic and political crisis since their childhood. It led them to do a good on crises-management (AYAN, 2019). Currently 22% of the population belong to this age group.

YÜKSEKBİLGİLİ (2015) found that the generation Y in Turkey consists of people born from 1983 to 1995. The age of parenting has risen to 27s through generation Y. They are highly sensitive to the fact that the child can grow up under good conditions, receive a good education and be safe. 15.81% of the Turkish population belongs to this generation.

In Turkey generation Z has the lowest level of acceptance for different appearances and less tolerant of different religious and ethnic groups comparing to generation X and generation Y. The research indicated that generation Z is becoming more conservative than both generations X and Y (TÜRKIYE, 2019). 32% of the population belong to generation Z.

Social media networking and social media marketing play an active and important role to reach customers and build up a strong relationship with them. The number of internet users in Turkey has increased by 3.7 million (+6.0%) between 2020 and 2021. Currently the internet penetration is 77.7%. 70.8 percent of all Turkish people are online on social media platforms. Moreover, Turkey's ratio of the average amount of the time per day spent on social media via any device (2h57min) is higher than the worldwide average. The most popular social media platforms are YouTube, Instagram, WhatsUp, Facebook, Twitter, and Messenger in Turkey (<https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-turkey>).

Companies and brands targeting the three dominant generations (X, Y, Z) need to follow multi-generational marketing strategies, and social media marketing communication in order to promote their products, ensure their continuity, and engage in interactive communication with their customers. Companies and advertising agencies should highly consider also different attitudes and perceptions of generations toward social media platforms to create an effective marketing communication strategy. In this study the authors highlight differences in the perception of the most popular social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) among the three most dominant Turkish generations. In the literature review authors cover the topic of multigenerational marketing and social media reform and the social media usage habits from generational perspective. There are statistics about social media usage habits based on age cohort but there are no studies on the perception of different social media platforms. This paper aims at filling this gap in literature. In order to explore the major differences in the perception of social media platforms a qualitative research, namely in-depth interviewing was conducted.

Inductive analysis was used to analyze interviews and results are interpreted based on themes. In the end the authors give a potential scale measuring the image of social media platforms.

2. Literature review

KOTLER and KELLER (2012: 456) emphasizes that “*marketers often advertise to a cohort by using the icons and images prominent in its experiences. They also try to develop products and services that uniquely meet the particular interests or needs of a generational target*”. Companies that are willing to create a generational marketing strategy first they should identify distinctive generational cohorts and consider each of them as different segments. WILLIAMS et al. (2010) claimed that multi-generational marketing has a crucial role in marketing activities, i. e. in product policy and promotional policy. MCCRINDLE (2014:2) defines the members of each generation share the same major cultural, political, and economic experiences and have similar outlooks and values. Researchers use different dates of births when they analyze generations (MCCRINDLE, 2014; WILLIAMS - PAGE, 2010). Although birth years are an important criterion for classifying generations, it is difficult to say that this is the only factor. According to REEVES and OH (2007), there are three features that more clearly define the nature of a generation than their birth years: (1) perceived membership, (2) common beliefs and behaviors (3) common location in history. Many authors (MCCRINDLE, 2014; WILLIAMS and PAGE, 2011; SOLOMON et al., 2013) characterized each generation in details, considering their common historical events, happenings, values and consumption and shopping behavior or media usage habits and their attitude towards new media. Generation X consider technology as an important tool for changing process in the world. Generation Y was surrounded by modern technologies and consumer society. Their keywords are collaborate, connect, co-create, and control usually with their peers. They prefer online and digital solutions and social media over traditional media (WILLIAM and PAGE, 2011). The members of generation Z have been surrounded by the technology world since the first day. Easily accessible online environments broaden their horizons and create the freedom to choose own interests, join different communities. Members of the generation Z constantly follow each other's social media accounts to see each other's virtual personalities and social lives. Generation Z members can be easily on multiple social media platforms simultaneously. As members of generation X is considered to be digital immigrants, members of generation Y and Z are considered to be digital natives. Media is being transformed by being digitalized in the technological dimension and it conceptualized as new media (WARDROP-FRUIIN - MONTFORT, 2003). Internet, mobile broadband, e-commerce, internet-enabled entertainment, social networking, and others which are called the new media technology are fundamentally altering the way people interact with each other and the world (ROZARIO, 2013). Simultaneous and two-way information flow is provided between communicating parties (SOLMAZ et al., 2013). The literature characterizes new media as (1) *interaction*, (2) *demassification*, and (3) *asynchronous*. These three features intensify the process of interactions between customers and companies and strengthen the communication process that emerges through new media (AKYOL et al., 2014). Social media briefly is a set of platforms that allow the sharing of information, different views/thoughts, and experiences (PELSMACKER et al., 2018). *Conversational media are web-based applications that make it possible to create and easily transmit content in the form of words, pictures, videos, and audios*” (SAFKO - BRAKE, 2009: 6). Users have the ability to collaborate, add, edit, share and tag content of different kinds such as text, video, photo, sounds (PELSMACKER et al., 2018). Regarding users’ intention to experience, users have several types of social media sites with varied features. Furthermore, those sites differ in the way to which advanced tools, for instance, instant messaging, blogging, video/music sharing and games, are provided to the users (ZOLKEPLI - KAMARULZAMAN, 2015). With the growing importance of social media,

companies increasingly rely on social media management tools to analyze social media activities and to professionalize their social media engagement (BENTHAUS et al., 2016). Many researchers started to analyze the role of social media in people’s lives from different point of view like in case of emergency situation (REUTER and SPIELHOFER, 2017), in purchasing decision (ZULQURNAIN et al., 2016) or from a generational perspective (HYSA et al., 2021). FIETKIEWICZ et al. (2016) investigated the differences in social media usage between generations, and determined whether there are gender-dependent inter-generational differences in user behavior. They highlighted that the frequency of usage and motivation is different over generations. The members of generation X and Y are more likely to use business-oriented networking services. Generation X is more likely to use social media for sharing business and political information, news, or research updates with strangers. Generation Y is more likely to use a traditional networking platform, such as Facebook, in order to communicate and share information with friends. Generation Z is moving towards more recently appeared social media platforms and channels, like mobile photo-sharing network Instagram. The frequency of using SM decreases with age (HYSA et al., 2021). Generation Y is addicted to social media. Recently NOVANDA et al. (2021) found that generation X uses social media mainly to maintain existing relationships, generation Y for business and building self-image, generation Z for developing and maintaining connections, building self-image, expressing thoughts and emotions, and seeking entertainment.

All in all, it can be stated that many researches tried to understand social media usage habits from a generational perspective but the image of each platform, how people perceive the most popular platforms was not analyzed in details. The topic is relevant in the era when people are using social media very intensively and the results can be useful for advertisers and brand owners.

3. Empirical research

The aim of the study was to explore the perception of the most popular social media platforms based on generations (X, Y, and Z) in Turkey. To answer the research question, a qualitative approach was used. The authors conducted in-depth interviews with participants to gain a rich understanding of generations’ attitudes toward different social media platforms in January 2020. During the interviews many different techniques were used to find out how much those platforms are included in their life and how each one is perceived by generations. The individual interviews can be advantageous over focus groups when higher potential for insights (e.g. perception and image of social media) is required, which can mean a fundamental basis for future quantitative survey. Finally, in-depth interviews are less bias than focus groups (MALHOTRA, 2017; BURNETTE et al., 2017). The research team consisted of two authors and a bachelor student. The first author is a professor, who guided the whole research project and the second author is a student, who prepared the whole research project for her master’s thesis. She assisted with interviews as interviewer and one bachelor student participated in the conversations as an observer and assisted in note-taking. One interview was approximately 60-70 min in length. The interviews were taped-recorded with the permission of participants so the answers were typed and analyzed.

The interviewer used a semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix A). The initial part of the discussion guide was aimed at understanding the role of media. The second part contained questions about social media, social media platforms and its general impacts on their lives. Projective techniques were used to understand the perception of different social media platforms. The logos of Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn and Snapchat were shown to participants and the aided brand awareness was measured (Appendix B). Participants were asked to describe each platform as if they were humans. This brand

personification part enables the researchers to understand the negative and positive attitudes toward each social media platform based on generations. Word association techniques (spontaneous and aided) were also applied to understand the perception of each platform. In case of aided awareness thirty words were picked up and participants had to choose the ‘fitting’ words to each social media platform. In this study the researchers concentrate on the recognition of Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, the three most dominant social media platforms in Turkey. This study encompassed the interviews conducted with randomly chosen six participants by each generation (X, Y and Z) in total 18 interviews were conducted. Six of the participants were females and the other twelve of them were males. Demographics were not asked in details but only age, nationality, marital status, and occupation were considered. The same questions were asked to each participant to examine participants’ reactions and attitude and analyze the differences in perception between generations. Besides there were some questions which emerged organically and quickly based on the participants’ answers.

All transcripts were reviewed and verified by the authors. Thematic analysis was used to identify themes in the data. The first and second authors read each verified transcript and interview notes carefully. Once reviewed, the first author labelled relevant words, expressions and sentences and created a preliminary list of codes and the second author reviewed the list. Both researchers had ongoing meetings to identify and discuss discrepancies. Differences were minimal and a tertiary researcher was not required. A codebook was developed with the identification of codes and descriptions. The codes were grouped into themes and subthemes thus categories were created. The refining of the list was a collaborative job and redundant themes were removed (BRYMAN, 2016; KVALE – BRINKMANN, 2009).

4. Results

All generation X participants are married and have children. Four of the participants are male, have a bachelor’s degree and they are still working. Two of those participants are government officials and the rest have their own workplaces. The academic degree of the other two participants are high-school, they are house-wives.

Regarding generation Y all participants are single. Four of participants are female. Three of the participants have bachelor academic degree and their vocation are human resources specialist, sales consultant, and finance expert. Three of participants have master academic degree; two of them is working as care managers the other one is a financial expert. Three of participants are still living with their parents and two of them are living alone in flats. The married one is living with his partner apart from their parents.

Participants from generation Z are still students and getting their bachelor’s degree. Two of participants are females. Four of participants are studying engineering while the other two are studying at the faculty of psychology and social sciences. None of them are married and all are living apart from their hometowns and their families. Two of them are living in the campus-dorms and the rest is sharing flats with someone else.

4.1. Usage and credibility of Facebook

Facebook is the most frequently used social media platform by generation X among participants because it is *easy and more comfortable* to use over other platforms. All participants have Facebook application on their mobile phones. Their main motivation to join Facebook and have an account is longing the *nostalgia*. They perceive Facebook as a platform of finding their old friends who they used to know and spend time together in their youth or childhood. According to generation X Facebook *re-bond many distance relationships without any costs*.

“The first social media account I have ever used is Facebook. Because I heard Facebook leads people to find their friends... and only thing we need a name of this person. That sound attracted

me first... I started to communicate with my high school friends even some friends from primary school. So, if I talk based on my experiences, I would say surely Facebook made me know more about my friends also we communicate without any cost. Calling from the mobile phone costly than texting someone via Facebook Messenger.” Participant X2

In a case of posting, they have been sharing their blessed moments and accept congratulations which come from their Facebook friends via comments. They pay attention to comments more than likes. They believe comments are proof of sincerity, but likes are just sort of mandatory reactions. They also care about the content of their posts. Apart from all advantages of Facebook most of the posts bother them. Generation X emphasized the importance of *privacy* and to the sanctity of family life which was damaged by Facebook users by constant sharing. They think people should be careful about what they post, and they should not show their private life to the public. Besides personal sharing, they would like to *share* different content related to local, social and cultural life while they are avoiding sharing any political and religious posts. Their avoidance particularly for posts which makes some negative criticism about the government due to their distrust of the privacy settings on Facebook. Their sharing process is not planned before, usually, it is developing spontaneously.

Generation Y is not active on Facebook because the network site offered to occur virtual neighborhoods among people who have already known each other, and it created limits for generation Y. In the beginning, it seemed *interesting* to them because earlier it was quite popular, and they wanted to keep up with their friends and times. However, later, they experienced Facebook as a *virtual gossiping area*.

“When I joined it, it was very popular, and everyone was using it, and it was interesting to find people who you knew before, and who you are not with you now, to witness their lives. But then it turned out to the gossip platform. It has no contribution to me at all. Also, I cannot go out of my existing environment. It is very limited platform. Other channels offer more communication opportunities. I still have an account, but I even do not remember the last time I check it.” Participant Y1

“It started to come unnecessary to me and I do not think so it engages my generation anymore mostly for older people. The more important thing it does not make me feel safe. It is like a place that people there for only gossiping.” Participant Y3

Although they are not active on Facebook, they still prefer to keep their accounts because of *easy registration to several websites* or new uploaded applications to the smart phone. Another reason is to communicate with their *foreign friends* living far from them. They perceive Facebook as a *global social media platform*.

“At the beginning like all my friends, I also had an account. It because keep up with my peers but later it started to be out of date, and we have had more options. But I won't take my account down because I have a lot of foreign friends there” Participant Y6

Even all member of generation Z has Facebook experiences their usage time is less than even generation Y. Participants assured that they do not remember whether they still have a page or not also do not memorize the last time they checked their account. They interpret Facebook as a *dead media*. Also, the design of Facebook is a disorder and has a relatively weak *design* for generation Z.

“The fundamental thing that irritated me from Facebook is its design. There are a lot of gaps around which force me to scroll the screen down more. Furthermore, since Facebook allows to share a different kind of contents, it creates clutters.” Participant Z6

Considering Facebook the following perception was mentioned by the participants: user friendliness, connection, privacy concerns, credibility, opportunity – information sharing, vividness, design and cost-effectiveness. The analyzed generations perceived Facebook in a different way. Older generation (X) like it more and have more favorable perception than younger ones (Y and Z), who do not really use the platform and perceive as a dead medium.

4.2. Personal traits of Facebook

When the members of generation X were asked to identify Facebook as a person all of them thought that it was a young or middle-aged man. The logo, founder and theme of the network have a significant impact on their decision of the gender of Facebook. The participants perceived Facebook positively and potently. For them, the reason for both its physical and mental strength and its entrepreneurial stance is that Facebook is the pioneer of social media platforms. Facebook is perceived by generation Y mostly as an old person because they do not think it addresses their own generation and they believe their peers are not active users any more. The second most common and frequently mentioned feature is related to its personality. They imagined Facebook as someone who is trying to catch up with the developing and digital world. Four people characterized Facebook as a male. Likewise, generation X, they also brought this out according to its logo feature like shape and color. The rest of participants pictured Facebook as a female because of their experiences with Facebook users. Facebook is perceived as someone old by all participants belonging to generation Z. The four participants indicated Facebook’s gender as a male while the rest see Facebook as female. Moreover, except for two participants shaped Facebook characteristics with negative features like someone annoying, immoral or unhealthy and lonely (Table 1).

Table 1
Personification of Facebook by generations

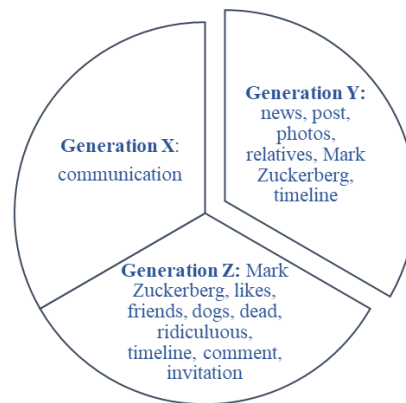
Participants	Facebook
Participant X1	A young entrepreneur man.
Participant X2	A young strong and brave man.
Participant X3	A middle- aged man
Participant X4	A young busy man with smiling face.
Participant X5	A middle-aged rude and tough man.
Participant X6	A middle-aged powerful man.
Participant Y1	The old woman with a smiling face
Participant Y2	The old man is still trying to catch a new world.
Participant Y3	The unreliable, narrow-minded old man.
Participant Y4	The annoying old woman.
Participant Y5	The middle-aged man who is digital immigrant.
Participant Y6	The old man who tries to keep himself update.
Participant Z1	A cute old aunt, usually smiling and expecting some visitors.
Participant Z2	An old man with a belly. The unhealthy and lazy person. He does not have a strong personality.
Participant Z3	Too old or dead man. A strong boss or pioneer leader. It is remembered but it is not preferred anymore.
Participant Z4	The lonely old immoral man.
Participant Z5	The lonely old woman.
Participant Z6	The old annoying man

Source: Qualitative research

All in all, we can say that among personal traits external attributes like gender, age, occupation and positive (cute, busy, strong, powerful) and negative (unreliable, unhealthy, rude, annoying, lonely) internal attributes were mentioned.

In case of word association questions, the word of “Facebook” reminded participants belonging to generation X the word of “communication”. People belonging to generations Y and Z mentioned many other things connected to the functions of the platform like news, posts, photos, timeline and comments. They also mentioned the founder of the platform, Mark Zuckerberg. Members of generation Z were skeptic because they mentioned negative associations like dead and ridiculous (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Word association in case of Facebook



Source: Qualitative research

4.3. Usage and credibility of Instagram

Although all the members of generation X have Instagram accounts, they are not as active as on Facebook. It is because they have the habit to use Facebook, also Instagram has a different *style* for both *content* and *design* perspective, and they find it more for young people. Their motivation to join Instagram is to be aware of their *children* and some *relatives* and *friends* especially who are younger and do not have Facebook account or who are not active on Facebook. Besides their friends and family on Instagram, they are following some pages which are related to their recent *interests* and old interests or *hobbies*. With respect to generation X participants, the *privacy settings* on Instagram is more reliable than on Facebook. That's why they are sharing some family-photos on their page or some spontaneously taken photos on their stories. Instagram let them reach more people *without any cost and effort*. In case of generation Y curiosity and the influence of peers pushed them to attend to Instagram platform. Participants emphasized that Instagram is the social media platform where they are the most active. Their Instagram accounts are checked daily. Checking Instagram main page and watching stories that shared by following ones are becoming one of the generation Y's daily habits. Besides their family members and friends, all participants are following the pages or people who have the same hobbies and interests. Instagram is the trigger point for participants to improve their hobbies or get *inspiration* for new hobbies even when they are not looking new activities, posts that appear on their main pages push them to do new hobbies. While participant Y1 started to take Pilates course because of the videos that appear on her homepage, participant Y3 indicated that the photo artist she followed influenced her to buy a professional camera and take a photography course. Participants Y3, Y5 and Y6 are mainly following travelling pages and posts of their pages motivate them to take a new trip. Sometimes even affect their routes and destinations. Participant Y5 mentioned his own travelling page which was created after the effect of other travelers who he is following. Admired famous singers, actors, actresses are also followed by them to be a witness of their lives which make them feel like those *celebrities* are parts of their lives besides to learn improvements, events or latest news about them from first-hand. All participants of generation Z have Instagram accounts, however they are less likely to check their accounts and they rarely share posts. On the other hand, like generation Y, generation Z prefers to use story feature of Instagram because it requires less effort and time. All participants follow hobby-pages or experts based on their interest to keep themselves update on those fields, e. g. one of the participants is playing electronic guitar, is following guitars page which provides new information to him about brand-new guitars. Participants are also following their favorite celebrities via Instagram to be update about their events, concerts. One participant stated that hearing news from the addressee makes her feel more satisfied.

Participants also pointed out that Instagram is the platform which could be perceived *easier* than other social media platforms because of its *elegant design* and the *visual contents*.

“Instagram is enough for me. I do not need another social network like Facebook or Twitter. I can follow my friends, news, updates also some fun pages. Also, Instagram’s design is not tiring as well as Twitter and Facebook. I recognize the posts easily.” Participant Z6

Considering Instagram the following perception was mentioned by the participants: user friendliness, connection, privacy concerns, credibility, design, cost-effectiveness, content, inspiration, interest and influence. The analyzed generations perceived Instagram in a different way. Older generation (X) is not really familiar with this platform than younger ones (Y and Z) and they use it because they want keep up with youths. However, younger generations like Instagram, especially generation Y, and influencers have a great effect on their purchasing decision.

4.4. Personal traits of Instagram

While participants were asked to identify Instagram features as a human, all members of generation X agree that Instagram has young personality and is good-looking and has fit body and most of them imagined it as a female. Apart from its catchy looking, generation X finds Instagram as unable to think clearly and is rather unintelligent. In case of gender, its logo design and colors mainly make them think Instagram is a female. The fact that the content of the posts is based only on visual cues pushed generation X to think that as a person Instagram is not that smart but someone pretty or catchy. In general, participants belonging to generation Y perceive Instagram as a female or transsexual but not a male. They pictured it as someone who is a catchy with a colorful outfit. They think it is because Instagram gives importance to visual cues and as a human Instagram has to be eye-catching. Instagram is mostly perceived by generation Z as a young lady, there are also ideas which represent Instagram as sexless or as transsexual individuals. Although all participants believe that Instagram has a strong and dynamic personality, they draw it out as an insincere individual. Instagram shaped as a lady who has eye-catching clothes and full of make-up these comments could relate to the Instagram creature which based upon visual cues (Table 2). All in all, we can say that among personal traits external attributes like gender, age, occupation, outlook and positive (open-minded, happy, friendly, intellectual) and negative (empty-headed, unintelligent, dishonest, crazy, easy-going) internal attributes were mentioned.

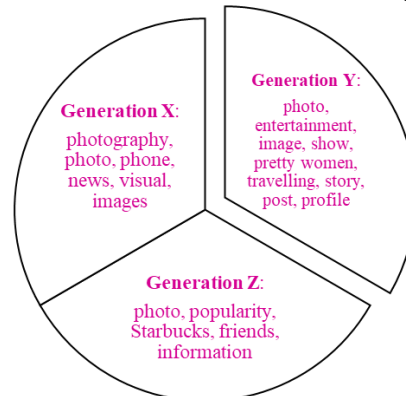
Table 2
Personification of Instagram by generations

Participants	Instagram
Participant X1	A young handsome man.
Participant X2	An empty-headed young woman but with good-looking.
Participant X3	An open-minded young woman.
Participant X4	A dishonest and funny woman who is wearing pink colored clothes.
Participant X5	A young, polite, funny woman with the well-shaped body but not a smart one.
Participant X6	An eye-catching young man.
Participant Y1	A young manipulative, dominant and gorgeous woman (or might be transsexual) who wears catchy and red colored outfits.
Participant Y2	A young, tall, stolid and crazy woman who has colorful clothes on.
Participant Y3	A young, open-minded, sincere women who follows fashion trends constantly.
Participant Y4	A young woman or transsexual one who pretends like happy.
Participant Y5	A young, happy and friendly woman.
Participant Y6	A young physically attractive, and careless and irresponsible woman looks like a model.
Participant Z1	A happy, young woman with self-confident. But she is not a sincere person and she is fond of make-up.
Participant Z2	Young, dynamic, extrovert and transsexual person.
Participant Z3	A self-confident young, makeup and insincere woman.
Participant Z4	A young, two-faced, well-dressed woman. Someone who pretends to be sincere.
Participant Z5	Sexless, insincere, fun, good day friendly.
Participant Z6	Insincere young woman who has travelled a lot, intellectual and easy-going one.

Source: Qualitative research

Generation X associated to photos, visual cues, images when they heard the word of “Instagram”. Generation Y mentioned more words like “photos”, “entertainment” “images”, “shows”, “pretty woman” and “travelling” “story” and “post” “profile” spontaneously. “Photos”, “popularity”, “Starbucks” “friends”, “information” were freely mentioned by the members of generation Z (Figure 2). While generation X perceived the basic function of the platform, the members of generation Y mentioned their interest (travelling) and the followed business sites. However, the participants of generation Z mentioned their favorite brands (Starbucks) and friends.

Figure 2
Word association in case of Instagram



Source: Qualitative research

4.5. Usage and credibility of Twitter

Twitter’s logo is known by two participants belonging to generation X and only one of them has an account but they are not tweeting, only following journalists and politicians. The other one knows because of her children but she is not sure for which purpose it has been using for. All the participants heard about Twitter even though they do not have any experiences before. Twitter looks like more *dangerous* platform according to the other social networks. They think it is popular among *politicians* and people who have interest on political issues. Due to their protectionist styles, member of generation X do not plan to have Twitter account.

All participants belonging to generation Y have Twitter experiences only one of them became disappointed and took the account down. The reason which motivated them to join Twitter is the same as the reasons for having the rest of social accounts: curiosity and the desire of being updated or keep up with their age-group. After experiences their usage purpose has altered. As all participant stated Twitter is a social network which leads them to follow *local and global political, economic, and socio-cultural news*. In addition to follow various news source, they are also following politicians, presidents of some countries, city mayors, professors in certain fields and some celebrities who have remarkable actions to improve society. In addition to profiles which has communal matters, participants are also following some *comics and funny pages*. In Twitter they consider themselves as a reader. They tweet rarely and only in their professional field. They care about the number of followers less than in case of Instagram. Their main purpose of using Twitter is to be informed about the world's agenda instead of informing. In that case, the *trending topic* list helps users to know what is going on outside when they sit down at home and scroll down their mobile phone. Participants indicated that Twitter has a critical role in Turkey; particularly, on building a caring society in sensitive matters by leading people for being united and put the issue which bothers them into words, raise their voice until they have a permanent solution by authorized one. Many users can be easily *provoked and manipulated* by people who do not possess a beneficial intention for a society.

“Twitter is sort of the world agenda supplier for me. After checking out the main page, I am used to look at the trending topic list and click on the issues and read people thoughts which some are surprisingly very interesting while some of them are not acceptable but still good to know what people have on their mind.” Participant Y1

“The feature that distinguishes Twitter from Facebook and Instagram is that Twitter is more realistic and far from showing off... I rarely tweet... and only tweeting if my professions... Also, the platform that can lynch or appreciate people very quickly.” Participant Y5

In case of Twitter, the platform is not as attractive as Instagram for generation Z but also not the unknown one as LinkedIn. Three of the participants possess Twitter account and they indicate that they follow different people than on Instagram. As it was mentioned before, on Instagram, participants follow public and personal accounts which related to their hobbies however they also have a tendency to follow more political and economic news and *updates* through Twitter. This micro-blog has a humorous language which give to users a different perspective to look at things. Besides pages, the opportunity of following the keywords related the certain topics which are called *hashtag* are attractive to them. Non-experienced participants do not have any negative beliefs about Twitter. However, the network looks tiring and in their mind Twitter pages are cluttered with words. Therefore, they have a belief that gaining new information process in Twitter needs more *effort and time* than on Instagram.

Considering Twitter, the following perception was mentioned by the participants: politics, news, entertainment, searching and effort. The analyzed generations perceived Twitter in a different way. Older generation (X) has very little knowledge about this platform and considers it as a political one. Younger audiences (generation Y) have more experience and they do not only read global and local news but follow funny pages because of entertainment. Generation Z are more professional and they use hashtags for searching, but they agree that the platform requires more times and effort from users than other platforms.

4.6. Personal traits of Twitter

Twitter is one of the less popular social networks among generation X participants. That is why while participants were asked to illustrate Twitter as a person only two of them were able to give some adjectives about the platform. Both of respondents believe that the Twitter environment is the most political one than other networks. Twitter was assumed by them as someone who engaged in politics or a political figure which might be both male (*“A soft, kind, cultured man. Politically engaged.”*) or female (*“A political woman above middle age.”*). Twitter is imagined by participants belonging to generation Y mostly a man between thirty to thirty-five with high cultured level or profession. These perceptions of participants’ Y can connect the way they are using Twitter and who they are following. All participants of generation Z agreed that Twitter is a young boy who is in his twenties or less. Generation Z attached Twitter with politic and rights advocate one (Table 3). All in all, we can say that among personal traits external attributes like gender, age, profession, outlook and positive (cool, funny, friendly, defensive, outspoken) and negative (manipulative, unhappy) internal attributes were mentioned.

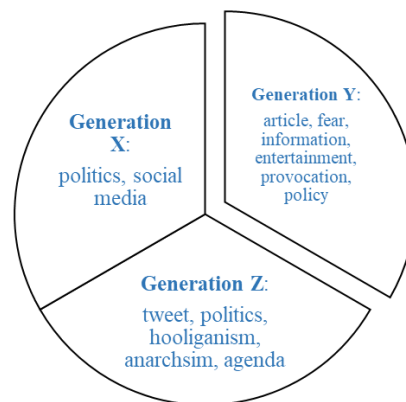
Two of participants belonging to generation X delivered “politics” and “social media” words in word association part. The words that Twitter evoked to the participants' mind gave away their Twitter usage styles or feelings toward Twitter. These words are “article”, “fear”, “information”, “entertainment”, “provocation”, and “policy”. The word of Twitter reminded the participants belonging to generation Z about “tweet”, “politics”, “hooliganism”, “anarchism” and “agenda” (Figure 3). While generation X has very little knowledge about the platform, the members of all generation agree that Twitter is about politics. However generation Y mentioned entertainment, younger generations (Y, Z) have negative attitudes like fear and provocation and hooliganism.

Table 3
Personification of Twitter by generations

Participants	Twitter
Participant Y1	30-35 years old man with glasses. Someone professor.
Participant Y2	30 years old manipulative and bigoted man
Participant Y3	A young, policy-savvy male with high cultural level
Participant Y4	A young cool man
Participant Y5	30-35 years old man with glasses, who claim to he knows everything
Participant Y6	30-35 years old man with glasses who might be professor or historian.
Participant Z1	A funny and unhappy boy in his twenties.
Participant Z2	-
Participant Z3	A very young boy who defends and seeking his rights. Following the world agenda.
Participant Z4	A very young boy or teenager with political view.
Participant Z5	A very young shabby looking boy or teenager with a political view.
Participant Z6	A friendly, outspoken young man.

Source: Qualitative research

Figure 3
Word association in case of Twitter



Source: Qualitative research

5. Conclusion and suggestion

In the globalized world, social media is a common communication and sharing tool among these three generations (X, Y and Z). Facebook has the most negative attitude among generation Z, while it has the most positive perception by generation X. Meanwhile, generation Y could be considered the neutral one or more likely to have a negative manner. Instagram and Twitter are well-known by the youngest generations (Y and Z) however, generation Z is the heavy user of Instagram. The main motivation of generation Y and to possess an Instagram account is the same as in case of Facebook that is keeping up with the majority, and not to be the outsider. This reason could be included in the hedonistic approach. Their final thinking and usage styles have been changing after their experiences. All participants belonging to generations Y and Z have Instagram accounts, and pages which are followed by them are nearly the same, friends, family members and hobby pages or news. Instagram could be considered as a motivation source for a new hobby and lead them to improve themselves in their existing hobbies among generation Y. Conversely, generation Z just focused their existing interests and they are likely to pursue updates from those related-pages or individuals. It is indicated that generation Y has more tendencies to share posts and stories on Instagram than generation Z. In spite of all benefits, Instagram has an insincere and negative profile on their mind. In contrast, generation Y approaches to Instagram more positively. Regarding generation X, they also have started to have Instagram accounts with a fundamental reason which is curiosity on younger family members which shows generation X is adopting collective culture. They have some preventive actions against the possible privacy breach of their lives on Instagram. Generation X hesitates

to join Twitter because of the political instability in Turkey. Twitter is mostly preferred by generation Y. They perceived Twitter as a platform that offers option of freedom of expression and more convenient information immediately and accurately. Generation Y tends to follow world agenda via Twitter particularly hashtag features and trending topics lists assist them to be aware of global or local news. Even generation Z shares this approach with generation Y. On the other hand, due to the type of the network and its design, Twitter is perceived as an eye-tiring area, and requires more time and effort to get news and idea than Instagram. Because of that reason the platform is not preferred by generation Z.

In conclusion, considering all the findings, there are factors which have a direct effect on generations' social media platform perception. As generation X is a digital immigrant that is why they are more anxious while using social media. They are family-oriented that is why they are more careful about the content of their posts. They basically try to avoid posts related to religions and politics not to hurt anyone and for the fear of having trouble for themselves or their family due to the common experiences of the political situation in their young ages. and privacy issues. Their political standing makes them avoid Twitter. On the other hand, generation Y the contributions of social media network in their lives is the most important thing. They categorized platforms according to their purposes of usage and their daily activities. That is why having multiple social media platforms is common among them. The importance of peers' thoughts also the remarkable point in case of choosing social media networks or quitting from any of them. They are more likely to perceive social media platforms optimistically. Generation Z tend to see negative points of social media more. They are future-oriented. They believe that social media platforms damage the upcoming generations namely the children. Type and design of the platforms are the critical points of their choices. Generation Z is unwillingly to consume their time and effort on social media platforms that is why the platform has to be persuasive. Generation Y likes variability (like trying out different platforms). Generation Z would like to have one social media network which has to serve all their needs and wants. Considering all indications, Instagram is the best option for generation Z, however instead of sharing they are mostly there for feeding up.

A scale can be developed to measure social media image. We collected 17 aspects that can be measured on semantic differential scale: connection, content, cost-effectiveness, credibility, design, effort, entertainment, influence, inspiration, interest, news, opportunity – information sharing, politics, privacy concerns, searching, user friendliness and vividness (Table 4). Beyond this aspects human traits like gender (male, female, transsexual), age (adolescent, young, middle-aged, old), profession (primary school, secondary school education, BA degree, MA degree) and occupation can be measured, too. However positive and negative internal attributes measured on semantic differential scale can be applied, too, e. g. cheerful – sad; intelligent-unintelligent, manipulative – straightforward, anarchist – pacifist, etc.

In order to use social media effectively and make attitudes toward social media more affirmative Internet literacy training should be provided for all generations to remove their worries. Educative campaigns should be planned by telecommunication companies or social media owners targeting different generations illustrating the conscious and responsible usage of each platform and also the dark side (dangers, hazards) of social media.

In an intensely competitive environment within a wide range of products and services, in order to reach the generations and convey messages, firstly the right social media channel must be determined by companies. As seen in the research, an important portion of the generation members devotes a great time to the internet and social media. However, each generation perceives different platforms in a different way considering credibility and trustworthiness. The main motivation of being an active member should be understood in order to plan an effective social media campaign. This exploratory research can be extremely useful for advertisers and companies targeting different generations.

Table 4
Proposed scale for measuring social media image

disconnect people	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	connect people
lack of content								full of content
cost-ineffective								cost-effective
low credibility								high credibility
unprofessional design								professional design
unfashionable								fashionable
time-consuming								time-saving
not entertaining								entertaining
not influential								influential
not inspiring								inspiring
boring								interesting
lack of news								full of news
low level of opportunities								high level of opportunities
politically biased								politically unbiased
politically engaged								politically not engaged
mistrustful considering privacy concerns								trustful considering privacy concerns
difficult to search								easy to search
not user friendly								user friendly
dead								vivid

Source: Qualitative research

When considering the limitations of the research it can be stated that the research was carried out on a relatively small sample group even though it was a qualitative research. Participants were not from the same geographical region in Turkey. The data was interpreted subjectively. The study was only an exploratory one since the in-depth interviews were not supported by quantitative methods. Regular discussions and consultations among the authors strengthen the credibility of the findings.

In the future a quantitative analysis on generations' attitude toward social media platforms should be conducted in order to prove statistically significant differences based on generations. A scale measuring social media image should be developed based on the findings. The authors plan to measure the image of the most popular social media platforms and also TikTok which has become so appealing in times of COVID-19 pandemic situation. Based on the result a theoretical model can be developed, which is analyzing the relations between perception, attitude (overall attitude and affective attitude) and behavior (usage habits, purchasing decision) over generations. An intercultural study like comparing Hungarian and Turkish social media users could be interesting, too.

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7. Appendices

Appendix A: Discussion guide

I agree to participate in this work with my own consent: YES / NO

Are you the citizen of the Republic of Turkey? Yes / No

Birth of Year: _____

Gender: _____

- 1) Can you introduce yourself briefly (age, job, education level, hobbies)?
- 2) What comes in your mind when you hear the word of media? What “media” refers for you?
- 3) What do you think about Social Media? Does social media have some advantages or disadvantages?
- 4) Participants are showed the logos of Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Twitter, YouTube and asked them to say the name of social media platform if they know.
- 5) Do have any social media accounts? Which ones?
- 6) Who or what do you follow besides your friends and family on your social media accounts?
- 7) WORD ASSOCIATION PART

Achieve	Challenge	Chat	Comment	Contents	Filter	
Followers	Hashtag	High lighters	Invitation	Like	Main Page	
Message	Notification	Photograph	Post	Profile	Reaction	
Request	Story	Subscribe	Timeline	Trend topic		
- 8) What would _____ be like as if it were a person? What are its physical and personal characteristics? What do you think about each social media platform? Why do use it? or Why you don't?
 - a. Facebook
 - b. Instagram
 - c. LinkedIn
 - d. Pinterest
 - e. Snapchat
 - f. Twitter
 - g. YouTube
- 9) Do you think social media platforms affect your human relationship? In which way?
- 10) Do you pay attention to the quantity of likes, comments or of followers you have? Do you think those factors have an important role in your social media presence?

Appendix B: Awareness of Social Media Platforms' Logos by Generations

Participants	Social Media Platforms						
	Facebook	Instagram	LinkedIn	Pinterest	Snapchat	Twitter	YouTube
Participant X1	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
Participant X2	+	+	-	-	-	+	-
Participant X3	+	+	-	-	-	-	+
Participant X4	+	+	-	-	-	-	+
Participant X5	+	-	-	-	-	-	+
Participant X6	+	+	-	-	-	+	+
Participant Y1	+	+	+	-	+	+	+
Participant Y2	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
Participant Y3	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Participant Y4	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Participant Y5	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Participant Y6	+	+	+	-	+	+	+
Participant Z1	+	+	-	+	+	+	+
Participant Z2	+	+	-	+	+	+	+
Participant Z3	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Participant Z4	+	+	+	-	+	+	+
Participant Z5	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Participant Z6	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

Note: (+; represent known one), (-; represents unknown one)