

RESEARCH TITLE

PERCEPTION MANAGEMENT IN SOCIAL MEDIA

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Abstract

Today, social media is a communication system that used by more than half of the world population. It's a system that people spends most of their time doing what they need for communication. Thinking that such a large audience will only be entertainment in the system would be an underestimate of the system. In this system which has about 4.20 billion users, it seems that there is a harmless entertainment and information flow, as well as herd psychology and consciously created perceptions. In this study, the definitions of social media and perception emphasized, the perception were discussed and carried out through social media. Although it was a qualitative study, literature review and studying the case have been made. As a result of the research, it has been concluded that our perception is managed without being aware of social, political or tabloid issues.

Key Words: Social Media, Perception, Perception Management, Reality, Manipulation

INTRODUCTION

When starting the topic of perception management in social media, first of all, “ What is perception? “ it is necessary to clarify the answer to the question. "Perception refers to the reception, interpretation, selection and arrangement of sensory information in psychology and cognitive sciences.” (Schacter, Daniel, 2011). Within this framework, personal perception is acquired according to place of birth, gender, age, religion. But later, the conscious perception of something different enters into perception management. Perception management can be performed in all fields, including political, commercial, military and media fields.

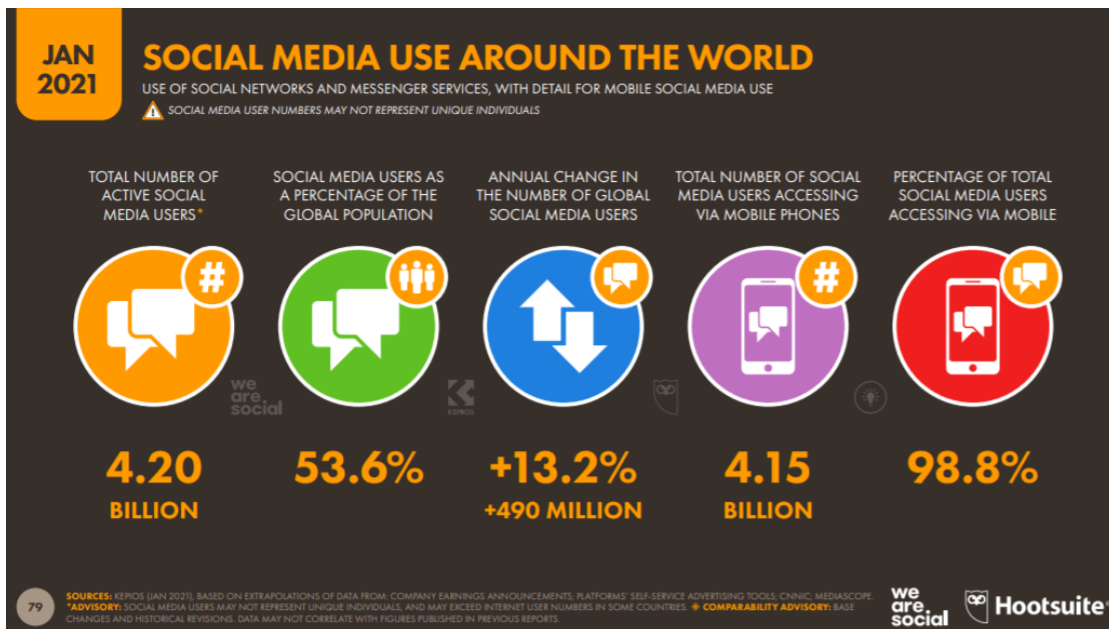
The concept of perception management also brings with it the manipulation of information. Although it is unlikely to find information in its pure form on a platform where billions of people are communicating, information that spreads for short periods of time, such as minutes, is also subject to manipulation.

Social media is a medium that is deliberately and willingly included in it and grows over time. For some of them, it is just a place to share photos, posts and communicate, while for others it is a wide framework in which manipulation or propaganda can be carried out. While aiming to have a pleasant time, it is possible to stay in a perception management without realizing it. In this study, by ensuring the understanding of the word “perception”, various perception management practices in social media are examined.

RESEARCH

In this study, which is a qualitative research, a literature review was conducted in order to examine previous studies and obtain information, and a case study was conducted in order to find perception management practices that can set an example for perception management in social media and facilitate its understanding.

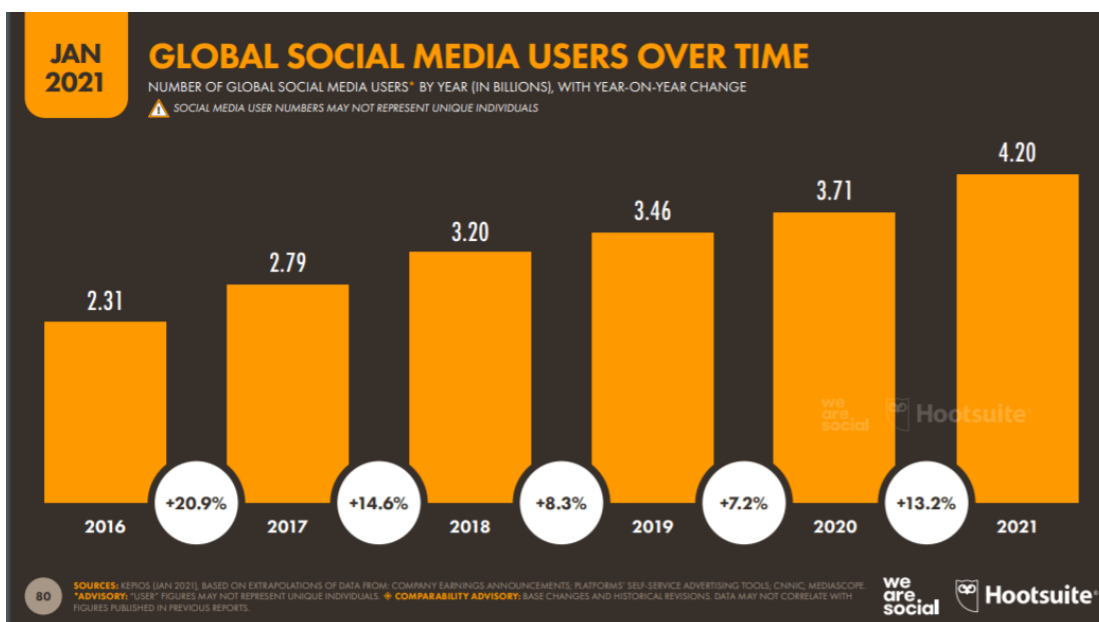
First of all, it is necessary to focus on the concept of social media, which is the scope of all this research. Social media is a media system that allows you to communicate simultaneously with internet technology. It is a platform where users create their content (Arslan, 2011). Within the framework of the research, the 2021 World Internet Usage and Social Media Statistics report published jointly by We Are Social and Hootsuite was examined in order to see the use of social media.



1st image, We Are Social 2021 World Social Media Usage Statistics - General Chart

Source: The Flag (2021).

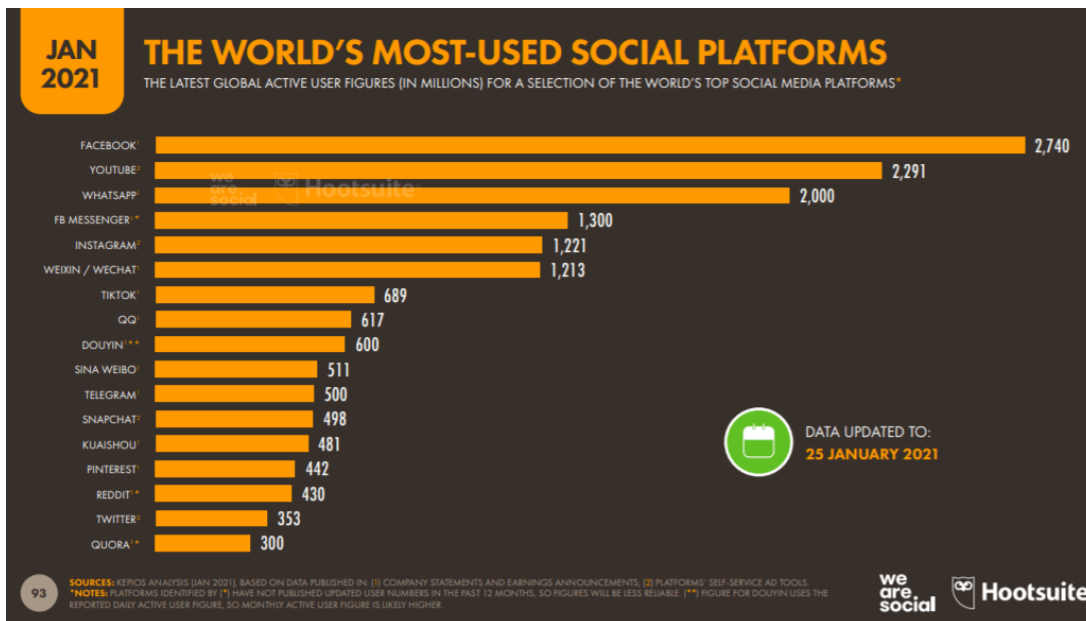
The data found in 1st image shows the total number of active social media users as 4.20 billion, social media users as a percentage of the global population as 53.6%, the annual change in the number of global social media users as an increase of 13.2%, that is, 490 million new participants, the total number of social media users accessing via mobile phones is 4.15 billion, the total number of social media users accessing via mobile is 98.8%. According to these data, the number of social media users today is slightly more than half of the world's population. Almost all social media users log in via mobile. When we look at the annual change in the global context, there is a significant increase in social media users. This shows that social media, which almost all of us are in, is still growing.



2nd image, We Are Social 2021 World Social Media Usage Statistics - Number of Social Media Users by Year

Source: The Flag (2021).

2nd image shows the change in the number of social media users by year. Among the reasons for this change, in addition to the need for entertainment, there are also the use of countries for political purposes, commercial uses, mass propaganda Decrees. For all these purposes, social media users are multiplying, including conscious use.



3rd image, We Are Social 2021 World Social Media Usage Statistics – The Most Used Social Media Platforms

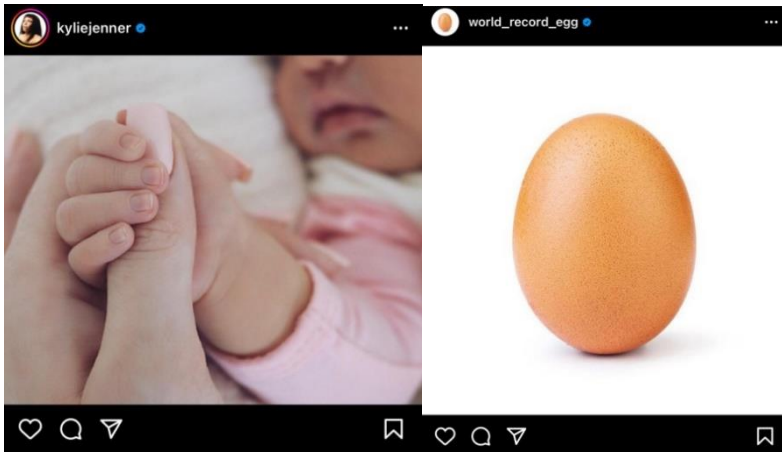
Source: The Flag (2021).

3rd image shows the most widely used social media platforms. Social media platforms are the most effective tool in directing perceptions. In a system with billions of people in it, spreading thoughts happens faster. According to the research, the most used social media tools are Facebook, Youtube and WhatsApp, respectively.

INFORMATIONS

Facebook, which ranks first on the list shown above, experienced a huge perception management data breach with Cambridge Analytica in 2014. Cambridge Analytica is a data analytics. A survey conducted by Professor Aleksandr Kogan of the University of Cambridge aimed to create a psychological profile and asked for permission to access information via Facebook, not only the person's friends, but also the friends of the person who gave permission, were included in this permission. The information contained in 50 million people was sold to Cambridge Analytica. This fraudulent event was used for the correct ad targeting in the election of Donald Trump as president in the United States and in the campaigns of many other presidential candidates. This incident has led to people's private information and opinions being obtained, playing with their personal perceptions and manipulating elections.

There was an unexpected event on Instagram, which ranked fifth in 3rd image, in 2019. Kylie Jenner, who shared the first photo of her daughter, had the most likes on Instagram, receiving 18 million likes. This record, which is difficult to break, was broken with a photo of an egg.



4th image, The Shipment. (2018). [Over the Internet]. Instagram Post by @kyliejenner on February 7th.

Source: Social Media*kyliejenner (2018).

5th image, The Shipment. (2019). [Over the Internet]. Instagram Post @world_record_egg January 4th.

Source: Social Media*world_record_egg (2019).

'This egg will take away Kylie Jenner's record.'he came up with the claim and said, 'Let's all set a world record together and have the most liked post on Instagram.' by an unknown account opened by whom on his call, the egg picture broke the record with 25 million. Currently, the current likes of the share are 56 million. The perception of social media is full of amazing surprises. As seen in this example, perception can also be formed with herd psychology without planning.



6th image, Save ralph short film (2021).

Source: The Humane Society of the United States (2021).

The short film “Save Ralph”, written and directed by Spencer Susser, became the agenda within the scope of the Humane Society International's campaign, reaching the masses soon after it was first shared on Youtube account and then on social media. The rabbit, named Ralph, is blind in one eye and has various wounds on his body. The

animation made against the testing of cosmetic products on animals is a conscious post that has been accessed by all users within a short period of time. This is a good example of the way to manage perception in a positive way. Twitter, which ranks sixteenth in 3rd image, is a platform where there is a lot of talk and interaction about everyday events. News and events spread in a short time with the possibility brought by the Internet and their accuracy is not certain. The rapid spread process also brings disinformation together with us. Even if the news comes out true from the source, it changes and spreads. The pandemic process that we are in worldwide is a great example of this. In this process, fake news, altered facts often come across us, and sometimes it is even scary. In the face of all this disinformation, the World Health Organization (WHO) has used the concept of “infodemic” and published the correct news on its own websites. “The director general of the World Health Organization (WHO), Dr. Along with Tedros' statement made in February 2020, “we are not only fighting a pandemic, but also an infodemy”, “infodemy” has become a concept that has come back on the agenda at the global level during the COVID-19 pandemic. The new concept in question is an expression consisting of the combination of the words epidemic and information, derived from the words “information” and “pandemic” in English” (Gölbaşı, Metintaş, 2020). The false news that comes out plays a negative role in the fight against the epidemic; it misleads the perception on issues such as disease, treatment, vaccination. In addition to all these, a concept that we are facing with the inclusion of the Internet and social media in our lives is the concept of “post-truth”. The concept of Post-Truth means post-truth in Turkish. It is defined as the silencing of objective reality and influencing public opinion by gaining weight of personal feelings and various interests of the masses of people in the face of an objective reality (Özkaya, 2020). “This concept, which has even gained a place in the Oxford dictionary, see how it is explained: Objective facts are less affected by shaping public opinion than by appealing to emotions and personal beliefs” (Baykal, 2017). In other words, with social media, the act of persuasion, not resistance, takes place. In other words, we like what we are convinced of. Thanks to this, trade on social media has increased, influencers have multiplied. If a person with a fan base shows you a product on social media, it leads to liking, convincing that product. In this way, objective facts have been replaced by personal perceptions in today's media. As Franz Kafka said, "It is difficult to tell the truth because, in fact, there is only one truth, but this truth is alive; therefore, its face changes constantly, just like that of a living being.”(Özkaya, 2020) Jean Baudrillard's Simulation Theory can also explain the concept of social media as follows; Baudrillard says that the current era has lost its reality and artificiality has prevailed (Baudrillard, 2010, p.15). This situation, which he bases with the Theory of Simulation, is expressed by turning reality into indicators and codes through simulations. The simulacrum mentioned here is defined as “the appearance that wants to be perceived as a reality” (Baudrillard, 2010, p.7). In other words, the truth has no real value left. He states that simulating is not “pretending” (Baudrillard, 2010, p.16). Exactly like the happy, fair, perfect lives we see on social media right now, the objective perception of reality has been destroyed. Social media is a simulacrum and the share of deception is high. According to Jean Baudrillard's research program Survivor Within the Framework of Simulation Theory, “...The images of fishing, bananas, coconuts and huts displayed in all episodes of Survivor

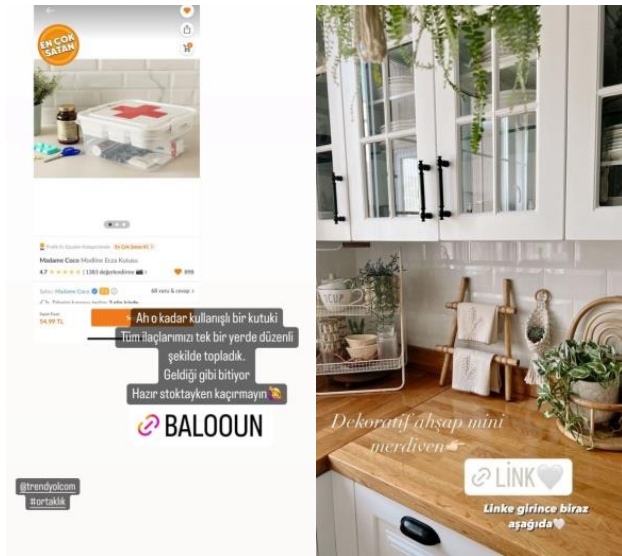
were remembered and associated with reality more than those that were not displayed by most viewers or viewed relatively rarely... The emphasis of reality shows on reality is to cover up the resulting disconnection and create a surreal consciousness...In this context, it can be concluded that the media is one of the factors that directly and indirectly serve hyper-reality.” (Our Fist, 2016)

PERCEPTION MANAGEMENT AND TRADING IN SOCIAL MEDIA

In a communication system in which more than half of the world's population is located, there are many perception management issues in every subject. One of them is e-commerce. According to the TDK, trading means any kind of trading activity carried out for the purpose of profit. E-commerce companies or small businesses that have realized the marketing power of social media have had the opportunity to announce their names with low budgets. This opportunity has enabled small businesses to make themselves heard as well. Just as each concept changes its shape and name as it develops, the concept of “social commerce” has entered our lives with the trade made on social media. “The concept of social commerce, which refers to the intersection of electronic commerce and social media channels, has been frequently encountered in recent years. . This concept was first used by Yahoo in 2005. The foundations were laid in 2008. According to a survey conducted in Turkey, 83% of consumers do research about the product on various social media platforms before buying a product. In October, there is also a 16% section that says that the “buy” button available on these platforms is effective in buying products that they like. The most important point affecting 61% of consumers is the comments made on social media for the product. A large majority says that positive comments made are decisive for shopping preferences. In the world, 51% of purchases in the field of e-commerce are made via mobile. In Turkey, this rate is also at the level of 50%, that is, almost the same. As a result, social media channels used on mobile devices are also effective in purchases within the scope of s-commerce. Research shows that while the s-trade volume in 2015 was \$ 5 billion, it has reached the level of \$ 50 billion in 2016. According to the 2017-2021 report presented by Technavio Global Social Commerce Sunday, the s-commerce market is expected to grow by 34% next year and reach a figure of 166 billion dollars ...” (Markethinkers, 2021)

Since it is a social media-oriented trading system, it is more possible to actively reach users. Comments made, complaints, feedback received by customers in exchange for these are among the opportunities brought by social commerce. The concept of social commerce is a system that is conducive to buying with orientation other than the concept of buying by liking. At this point, the concept of an influencer appears to us. Influencers are people who have a certain audience on social media and make “referrals”. This approach, which is a type of influencer marketing, is a kind of perception orientation. It is the way the person you follow by liking and liking tells you “I use this” or “Buy this”. In this case, individuals do not hesitate to listen to the words of a person they see an idol or love. While they used to do this in a more closed state, they have to use the phrase “cooperation” in accordance with the current rules. This perception management is a perception that we are consciously directed towards. Trendyol, a company that has been mentioned frequently lately, works with many influencers via Instagram. People increase sales by sharing the products they want to

buy or ordered themselves, and as the products they share are purchased, they also win. In this case, individuals are consciously guided for the purpose of material interests.



7th image, The Shipment. (2022). [Over the Internet].

Source: Social Media*Balooun (2022).

8th image, The Shipment. (2022). [Over the Internet].

Source: Social Media*Ecemusludemir (2022).

Usually, as in 7th and 8th images, individuals are given the perception of receiving this through social media. Although this situation is a perception management, it is not a study done secretly.

PANDEMIC PROCESS AND PERCEPTION MANAGEMENT IN SOCIAL MEDIA

According to the statement of Medipol Health Group, a pandemic is a general name given to epidemic diseases that spread over a very wide area in more than one country or continent in the world and show their impact. It is announced by the World Health Organization depending on the speed and process of spread of the emerging virus. The pandemic process we are currently in began with the detection of Covid-19 in one person on March 11, 2020 for Turkey. Minister of Health Fahrettin Koca announced on April 1, 2020 that the cases had spread to the whole of Turkey. At the same speed, the virus seen all over the world became an epidemic. Swine Flu, Typhoid Fever, Cholera and Black Plague have been observed in the world before, such as Covid-19.

The uncertainty brought by the pandemic, fear of death and panic also lead to a communication problem. Nowadays, the dissemination of information takes place in a very fast and uncontrolled system. While going through processes such as learning the news in the past, reaching the source, confirming it, information is being spread within seconds or rather disinformation is being passed on today. Such acceleration of communication in the world adds a communication problem that needs to be fought in a process such as a pandemic. Especially through social media, people read news and manage perception with the guidance of society while spreading the news. However, while this process is taking place, there is a desire to spread information rather than a conscious movement. But because the information does not pass through a filter, a lot

of information pollution occurs. In the face of this information pollution, WHO published the correct information using the infodemic concept on its website, “The COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Risk Communication and Community Participation (RCCE) Action Plan Guide prepared by the World Health Organization is another noteworthy study. This guide is designed to communicate effectively with the public, to develop an effective action plan to interact with communities, local partners and other stakeholders, to plan risk communication to implement and monitor, to support community participation”. (Kırık, Var, Özkoçak, Darıcı, 2020)

In addition to physiological discomfort, psychological and economic problems also arise due to restrictions and newly introduced applications. Without a well-managed communication perception, this state of chaos spreads and becomes as dangerous as a pandemic. The same information pollution in the vaccination issue that occurs during the pandemic process is spreading on social media. With the perception-directing power of social media, people have become grouped by being directed in the form of good vaccine, bad vaccine or those who are against vaccine. Even subjective opinions of people are spreading through social media and there are misdirections.

The Headline of the News	The Claim of the News	The Result of The Analysis	The Wrong Kind of News
The map does not show that the first coronavirus case in Turkey was in Kayseri	The Johns Hopkins map shows that the first coronavirus case in Turkey was observed in Kayseri.	Wrong	Incorrect Association
The text allegedly published by UNICEF about the new coronavirus	The information on Covid-19 on social media belongs to UNICEF.	Wrong	Imitation

9th image, AYDIN, A. F. “Disinformation on Social Media in the Post-Truth Period: Covid-19 (New Coronavirus) Pandemic Process” (Table is abbreviated from the article.)

Source: Aydin (2020).

As given in 9th image, news can be given by distorting the result of false association or imitation. Media literacy is becoming a knowledge that needs to be acquired in this process. It is necessary to gain the ability to find the truth from all the disinformation, filter the information and have the ability to scan good sources. Protecting against misinformed information is just as important as protecting against a pandemic.

CONCLUSION

One of the biggest benefits of technology in the information age we are in is social media. Virtual reality created on social media can affect the masses. This effect is not always as innocent as it seems. It becomes possible to create a negative or positive

perception with a single share. Although it has no reality, negative perception brings out the concept of “manipulation of information” in front of us. Manipulation means directing, influencing. When information is directed in the desired way, it comes out of reality and creates the desired perception. An internet network that is socialized and enjoyed is sometimes a danger in professional hands. The first step of protection from this danger is not accepting the accuracy of every information seen and coming to a conclusion by researching, the second step is social media literacy and education. In this way, political, commercial, etc. within social media. it will be more possible to get rid of perception games.

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