Chapter 13

Social Networks: The New Medium of Advertising – Instagram Case

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ABSTRACT

The development of technology at an incredible speed today and the fact that the internet has become an important area of social life has led to differentiation in the structure of mass communication and content production, too. This differentiation has stimulated advertisers and companies to reach the target audience through social networks with many users and different characteristics. Companies employ different strategies to be effective in these platforms. One of these strategies is collaboration with social media phenomenon. The relationship between the social networks considered as the new medium of advertising, social media phenomenon identified as influencer in these networks, and advertising is examined within the scope of this chapter. In this context, data obtained from interviews with 50 Instagram phenomenon by using semi-structured interview technique, which is a qualitative research method, were analyzed and advertising collaborations with influencers in social networks were evaluated.
INTRODUCTION

It is possible to define advertising as a communication tool that informs individuals forming the target audience of a brand and product and persuades them to purchase those products and services of this brand. The main purpose of the advertising is to stimulate the target audience for a product or service via messages and to ensure that this product and service is purchased (Kocabaş & Elden, 1997, p. 9). The presence of a fierce competition environment of our today’s world has created the necessity of creating more effective marketing areas for brands’ products and services (Gürel & Alem, 2014, p. 5). Brands need new advertising channels and new strategies to make a difference in the message bombardment of numerous products and services and to reach the target audience. Companies that use the advertising strategies intensively to bring their brands and products together with the target audience have focused on social networks in this sense.

The fact that the concept of social media becomes a part of our daily lives by means of developing technologies, widespread use of social networks, and enabling the use of social networks by technological communication tools at any time by eliminating space and time barriers have made these platforms a functional space for advertising. Based on the idea that digital technologies are reshaping relationship and personal experiences with all dimensions in this sense and transforming current lives (McLuhan, 2005, p. 8), it is possible to say that advertising strategies are affected by this change and social networks are used as new platforms for brands and products in terms of marketing. Today, almost all brands take part in social networks through accounts of their brands and products and implement their digital advertising strategies by using different social networks in order to strengthen their brand and corporate image and to increase the reputation of their brand and corporate. In order to reach the target audience that is outside the range of their social media accounts, companies use the people identified as social media phenomenon for their companies’ promotion and advertising works by cooperating with them and benefiting from the target audience of these people who have a certain number of followers in social media and are called as social media celebrity.

This study focuses on Instagram, where advertising and marketing strategies are used extensively and the collaborations of companies with social media phenomenon. In this context, the data obtained from interviews with 50 social media phenomenon were analyzed and the relationship between advertising and phenomenon in social media was evaluated.

Social Media Use and Instagram

Social networks have become an important element of everyday life as a result of widespread use of Internet. It is possible to define social networks as platforms that allow individuals to connect with other individuals and masses. The fact that social network applications eliminate space and time barriers in terms of communication, enable an interactive interaction and have easily accessible features are effective factors in expanding these networks and increasing the number of users each passing day. Social networks that appeared in social life after 2000s have been met with great interest because of their features such as sharing video and photo, making friends and expressing ideas. The fact that content in social networks is generated by users and social networks provide an opportunity to users to meet around their interests, common purposes, common good tastes or common benefits, these factors are other factors in the spread of these networks.