# EXPLORING THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON BUYER DECISION PROCESS IN CONTEXT OF INSTA-MOMS

## ECE İPEKOĞLU

Ph.D. Thesis

Graduate School

Izmir University of Economics

Izmir

2021

# EXPLORING THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON BUYER DECISION PROCESS IN CONTEXT OF INSTA-MOMS

ECE İPEKOĞLU

A Thesis Submitted to

The Graduate School of Izmir University of Economics

Ph.D. Program in Business Administration

Izmir

2021

# ABSTRACT


EXPLORING THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON BUYER
DECISION PROCESS IN CONTEXT OF INSTA-MOMS


İpekoğlu, Ece


Ph.D. Program in Business Administration


Advisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. Nilgün Gürkaynak


August, 2021

Social media usage is an essential part of peoples' everyday life, leading marketing from traditional marketing towards a more digital marketing strategy. As an effective digital strategy, influencer marketing use "influencers", new opinion leaders, on social media with their potential to deliver the ideas to masses. These people on social media are very attractive for consumers when making decisions. Prior research has emphasized how the influencer marketing is used for ordinary consumers. This research makes its theoretical contribution by combining marketing and the motherhood as a social construct as an instinctive process, in social media. Within this context, mother influencers, referred as Instamoms, have impact on their followers by imposing them to "ideal motherhood" and affecting their buyer decision process. In the light of these two impacts, the primary purpose of this thesis is to understand the representation of motherhood in the context of Instamoms, and the impact of Instamoms on the buyer decision of their followers. With a consumer centric approach, 30 in-depth interviews, 5 expert interviews, and qualitative content

analysis on Instamoms'pages were conducted, aiming to gaining a deeper understanding of the feelings, thoughts, and perceptions of the mothers. In the light of the findings, Instamoms have an undeniable impact the representation of motherhood and the buyer decision process on the follower mothers, which contribute to various fields of consumer culture. With regard to the critiques on previous literature, an alternative model for buyer decision process is presented, and marketing and societal implications are explored.

Keywords: Motherhood, Consumption, Buyer Decision Process, Influencer Marketing.

# ÖZET

## INSTAGRAM ANNELERİ BAĞLAMINDA SOSYAL MEDYA FENOMENLERİNİN TÜKETİCİ KARAR ALMA SÜRECİNE ETKİLERİ ÜZERİNE İNCELEME

İpekoğlu, Ece

İşletme Doktora Programı

Tez Danışmanı: Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Nilgün Gürkaynak

Ağustos, 2021

Sosyal medya kullanımı, insanların günlük yaşamının önemli bir parçasıdır ve pazarlamayı geleneksel pazarlamadan daha dijital bir pazarlama stratejisine yönlendirmektedir. Etkili bir dijital strateji olarak, influencer pazarlama, fikirleri kitlelere ulaştırma potansiyeli ile sosyal medyada yeni kanaat önderleri olan "influencerları" kullanır. Sosyal medyadaki bu kişiler, karar verirken tüketiciler için oldukça çekicidir. Önceki araştırmalar, etkileyici pazarlamanın sıradan tüketiciler için nasıl kullanıldığını vurgulamıştı. Bu araştırma teorik katkısını, sosyal bir kurgu olarak içgüdüsel bir süreç olarak pazarlama ve anneliği sosyal medyada bir araya getirerek yapmaktadır. Bu bağlamda Instamom olarak adlandırılan anne influencerlar, takipçilerine "ideal annelik"i empoze ederek ve satın alma karar sürecini etkileyerek etki sahibi olmaktadırlar. Bu iki etki ışığında, bu tezin temel amacı, Instamoms bağlamında anneliğin temsilini ve Instamoms'un takipçilerinin satın alma kararı üzerindeki etkisini anlamaktır. Annelerin duygu, düşünce ve

algılarının daha derinlemesine anlaşılmasını amaçlayarak, tüketici odaklı bir yaklaşımla, 30 derinlemesine görüşme, 5 uzman görüşmesi ve Instamoms sayfalarında nitel içerik analizi yapılmıştır. Elde edilen bulgular ışığında, tüketici kültürünün çeşitli alanlarına katkı sağlayan Instamoms, anneliğin temsili ve satın alma karar sürecinde takipçi anneler üzerinde yadsınamaz bir etkiye sahiptir. Önceki literatürdeki eleştirilerle ilgili olarak, alıcı karar süreci için alternatif bir model sunulmakta ve pazarlama ve toplumsal çıkarımlar araştırılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Annelik, Tüketim, Alıcı Karar Süreci, Etkileyici Pazarlama.

*Anneliğin kelime anlamını iliklerime kadar hissetiren tek insan,*

*Annem, Bahar Çam'a*

*To my mom*

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe my deepest gratitude to my thesis advisor Nilgün Gürkaynak, whose enthusiasm and guidance encouraged me. She believed in me; without her support I would not manage those hard times. During the whole process, I felt privileged to work with her.

I am also thankful to the members of my thesis committee Prof. Dr. Şükrü Özen and Prof. Dr. Aylin Göztaş for their support and valuable comments. I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Şükrü Özen for his acceptance to my thesis advisory, and for showing me different angles. My deepest thanks are for Prof. Dr. Aylin Göztaş for creating time for me in her busy schedules to give me invaluable guidance.

Many thanks are to my director İdil Akbaba, for supporting me both in my personal life and at work throughout this long and difficult journey; and for opening her heart to me unconditionally at the hardest time of my life. I am very lucky to be part of such a team. We are like a four leaf clover with Tuğba Özel and Gülben Pekcan.

Looking at the PhD journey, I can state that these were the most challenging times of my life. However, there some people who always support and encourage me. I am grateful to their support Prof. Dr. Deniz Atik, Dr. Murad Canbulut, Dr. Mert Günergin, Dr. Ceren Tatarlar, Duygugül Gülcan and Dr. Damla Aktan.

Finally, my deepest gratitude is to the most important people in my life, my family; my father, my aunt and my grandparents. Without their love, support and encouragement I would have never written this thesis. I really am lucky to have such a family. During this period, my family grew further: Deniz, Pınar, Gülben, and Zeynep who are my sisters now. They have a very special place in my life, thanks to their deepest sisterhood, love and support.

And…Cem, my new home, who came to me as love of my life, brought stars above me, forced me to study when I was about to give up. Now, we have a new period of our lives as a wife and a husband. We will success many things together until forever.

Final part belongs to one person who wanted to see this day the most until the end of her life: Bahar Çam, my mom. This thesis is dedicated for her, I was really lucky to be raised as her child. Now, she is not with me with her body, but I know she is with me in every step I take. I wish she was here to celebrate this special moment with me.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# LIST OF TABLES

# LIST OF FIGURES

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*"All marketing decisions are based on assumptions and knowledge of consumer behaviour."* (Hawkins, Mothersbaugh and Best, 2007)

Due to widespread network of internet and the evolution of social media, compared to the previous generation of women, the new generation of women born in post 1990s increasingly become socialized more through digital environments. Digital platforms are not divided into public or private, so women share a virtual space in this environment. In the case of Instagram page of Instamoms, usually, a new mom starts launching an Instagram page in order to get over the isolation of new motherhood (Pembecioğlu, 2016). With respect to the content and posts of the page, personal posts of the daily life of that mother become subject to followers. The followers highly intensified digital interaction connecting Instamoms to distant geographies through Instagram. Instagram distinguishes comparing other Social Networking Sites (SNS) since it is the fastest growing SNS nowadays (Garifova, 2016). Having an Instagram account makes ordinary people believe to have gained the chance to be in the public eye.

From the marketing point of view, consumers' engagement with brands and companies are changing with regards to technological developments. Since 1960s, marketing academia and practitioners apply the traditional marketing mix, 4P's of marketing for identifying the marketing activities (Gröngross, 1994). These four elements are categorized as: product, price, promotion, and place (McCarthy, 1964). They are a group of variables which a firm can use to influence the consumers purchase behavior. However, marketing mix has been evolving as a result of changes in consumer and also organizational stances. Developing technologies help marketers interacting with consumers (Letheren et al., 2019). Moreover, new technology enables every stages of the marketing process involving 4P's to affect consumer engagement with brands (Hollebeek, Glynn and Brodie, 2014).

While marketing mix elements are evolving, promotion tools are changing as well. With the proliferation of social media, these tools and strategies for interacting with consumers have shifted significantly to this platform (Blackshaw and Nazzaro,

2004). Although, marketers sent their messages through traditional ways on the stage of promotion, consumers witness extensive social-media based messages today. Social media enables personal communication about a product or a company. This makes consumer-to consumer communication enhance in the marketplace.

Furthermore, the promotion-related role of social media is very powerful. This causes also the evolution of traditional word of mouth communication, the more digitalized technology brings the more usage of social media and actors of social media as an element of promotional mix (Mangold and Fauld, 2009).

Using influencers, described above, on social media is one of the effective digitalized strategies (Lyons and Henderson, 2005). With regards to focusing on pushing out a marketing message to an audience (Keller and Berry, 2003), it is taking noteworthy scholarly attention for both consumers' digital presence and the power of these influential individuals are increasing on social media platforms (Weinswig, 2016). This strategy is named as "Influencer Marketing", which is also a growing industry. It is expected to have a direct influence on the buyer decision process, regarding the market transactions before, during, and after the purchase of a good or service (Kotler, 2011). Therefore, it is important to understand the effects of influencers on the decision-making processes both for marketers and consumers, since they are delivering their certain messages through social media platforms (Hanna, Rohm and Crittenden, 2011).

In this thesis, popular and influential mothers on Instagram, who is frequently referred to as "Instamoms" is used as a context, since; they become persuasive and effectual influencer among mothers on Instagram. Knowing that there are many reference groups who influence people's way of living, thinking and consuming practices, there is a shift in the motherhood roles from the traditional sense of motherhood.

Bringing "the extended self" theory of Belk (1988), he states that our possessions are knowingly or unknowingly, intentionally or unintentionally regarded as a part of ourselves. These should not be material possessions, ideas, experiences, emotions which we feel attach are all the parts of extended self (Belk, 1988). When the social

networks are proliferated, the distinction between the physical world and the virtual world is distinctively not existing (Lehdonvirta, 2012). Therefore, the extended self in the realm of digital was formulated (Belk, 2013). Besides digital possessions as music archives, individuals' social network accounts, posts, blogs and digital contents are considered as part of their extended self-online (Belk, 2013). Facebook is stated as a self- presentation online area managing identity and reputation (Zimmer and Hoffman, 2011). Instagram indeed has the same motivation. The content and Instagram pages of Instamoms are part of their extended self for motherhood practices in the digital world. They manage their identity on the eyes of their followers through their pages.

From the followers' perspective, the digitalization of motherhood on Instagram may change the role of mother in the traditional sense. In traditional motherhood, mothers are the main opinion leaders in the family. However, today, many mothers are following these Instamoms, as opinion leaders, influencers in their life. Instamoms represent the motherhood in a digital way.  These influential women have their own audience. Their audience follow them, visit their profile, in which Instamom post every day, see their posts and photos, like them and write comments under these posts. The followers they can connect is enormous, therefore these mothers as "Instamoms" can reach and influence masses. It could be stated that roles have been changing regarding reference groups in the motherhood context. As their pages are part of extended selves of Instamoms, these sharing on their pages are similarly part of extended self of followers with feeling of being there with others (mothers in this case).

Instamoms become a role model for their followers and they accordingly act as an ideal mother. For instance, a photo in which an Instamom plays with her little child while wearing luxury clothes may affect the buyer behavior of a mother who follows that Instamom. Followers may perceive influencer mothers living a very fulfilling happy life. Therefore, she may create expectations regarding the ideal motherhood, so that follower may try to satisfy or criticize these expectations on Instagram. Instamoms may create reference points for comparing the self for other mothers (their followers) through "motherhood". Finally, all of these practices become the digital extended self of those mothers/followers.

Instagram is a platform where the contents of users especially influencers are highly shaped by digital metrics. Followers do not have any profit, whereas their "likes" and "comments, indirectly bring an income to influencers, in this thesis, to Instamoms. Instamoms achieve financial earnings from sharing sponsored content. Influencer mothers are usually from the upper echalons of social strata; receive financial earnings through their followers' interaction.

Instagram becomes a platform for consumption due to promoted posts that appear in user's timeline either directly by brands or through influencers. Followers as customers become a subject of Instagram consumption in both material consumption and the image of consumption. This operation is explained as documenting the self to be consumed by others (Schwarz, 2010). Actually, this consumption is a desired situation for an Instamom, which in return gives fame and possible income to her. An Instamom, represents a kind of self-brand which is responsive to the needs and interests of target audiences (Khamis, Ang and Welling, 2016).

These self-brands have an impact on their followers, women consumers. It has some effects in consumer decision making process. In normal conditions, literature states that buyer decision process starts with "Need Recognition" step, however, this step looks transforms in the context of Instamoms. How this transformation is realized with the effects of Instamoms is not investigated before. Therefore, this thesis was investigated this topic.

In social sciences, especially the followers of Frankfurt School have mentioned market's domination on consumer desires. Consumers are passive agents according to this school (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1944). However, in consumer research side, there are many other analyses as consumer and producer interests are embedded in one another. Considering both views, the idea of this thesis was inspired by new consumers as followers and new producers as Instamoms.

### 1.1. The Objectives of the Study

Social media usage is an essential part of everyday lives of people (Miller et al., 2016), because daily lives are not spent merely in physical places any longer.

Instagram is a widely-used online social networking site (SNS), in which people sign in and upload their photos and videos while seeing others' photos and videos. Additionally, Instagram also allows users to interact with others by "following" each other's account and "liking" or commenting on each other's s. As a result of this online interaction features, Instagram becomes as an extension of the daily lives routine of people.

It is a platform where people can shape and realize the identities that they perform. Performance is knownas activities of individuals in a specific occasion to influence other participants in any way (Goffman, 1959). While performing, considering the impression of others is always the case for human beings. People always act accordingly thought frames, to give a certain previously thought out impression (Turkle, 1997). Having an account on SNSs, in this case Instagram, this situation has turned to new format. Before when people were concerned about their impression upon meeting their acquaintances during face-to-face interactions, now Instagram has extended this time and space not only for our performances but also the performance of others. The audience is more crowded now.

Before the emergence of SNSs, people who had regular lives watched the celebrities in the traditional sense; singers, actors, sport players, top models, etc., while, the border of the concept "celebrity" has enlarged. It includes popular people in the social media which are called influencers or micro-celebrities (Senft, 2008). Online influencers are intermediaries between celebrities and friends, and also show cultural performances of noticed accessibility (Hess, 2017). As a result, influencers in SNSs give others a sense of closeness or accessibility. They haven't reputation and fame because of their occupation or profession; so, the audience likely feel more connected to them and at the end, compare herself with the influencer on Instagram.

This study seeks to provide insights into how Instamoms, mother influencers on Instagram, are affecting the decision process of other mothers and how motherhood is represented by and through them on Instagram. I aim to investigate to what extend Instamoms as influencers have an impact on the overall buyer decision making process of other mothers, especially on what stage they are more effective, and to

find answers to the question of the effects of Instamoms on the representations of motherhood concept.

As a concept, motherhood is an almost new theme on Instagram, compared to other topics as fashion and beauty. This necessitates a multidisciplinary approach in investigating whether Instamoms have an impact on their followers' decision process, through the dynamics of motherhood, which may be the identity, social construction as well as being part of personal experience (Rich, 1976). This approach will also be in line with Pansari and Kumar (2017) idea support that if a relationship is satisfactory and include sensitive affiliation, it turns engagement stage.

The study investigates the factors that would promote the hypothesized mother influencers' (Instamom) impact through social networking site, Instagram, which I believe is critical on buyer (consumer/ follower) decision process developing over the concept of "motherhood" that would lead to the formation of buyers' (consumers'/followers') mind. While the model of "buyer decision process" is generally studied in marketing, this thesis has an aim to analyze this model with two new agents in consumer behavior (followersand Instamoms) through the concept of "motherhood". The specific research objectives are provided in chapter three of the thesis.

### 1.2. General Aims and Significance of the Topic

This study seeks to contribute to the academic body of knowledge through combining of marketing, communication and sociological concepts in a multi-disciplinary perspective.

In this framework, socialization of women on motherhood work cross over social media. Thus, with respect to motherhood, the emergence and rise of influencers as "Instamoms" may be expected to have an influence over follower mothers regarding their buyer decision making. Social media touched and changed many areas effective in people's lives. The motivations behind decision making may be reshaped according to social media and especially the influencers on Instagram.

For that reason, the aim of this thesis is to understand how the mothers, who follow the influencer mothers on Instagram, are affected from them while making their buying decisions. This in turn contributes to the dynamics of "motherhood" concept and also the literature of "Influencer Marketing".

I focused on the Instamom accounts of Turkey as a digital platform of Instagram. I seek to understand the underlying realities, different mothers' perspectives interacting with the accounts of Instamoms. In this context, I will define "Instamoms" both as an influencer in social media, and as the "perfect and ideal mother" for decision making process of their followers.

The key area to be investigated in this thesis is approaching Instamoms from the consumer behavior and influencer marketing perspective, namely working on buyer decision process for followers (consumers) and for influencer marketing effectiveness. By adopting this objective, I sense the "meaning" of this concept "motherhood", not only as what really means, but also as its reflections on Instagram, its effectiveness in fulfilling its potential from influencer perspective and proving the influencer marketing understood as new golden age (Newman, 2015). This understanding was indicative of the concept importance in recent years in the eyes of marketers and consumer behaviorists. In this thesis, the title may be adopted in the eyes of changing, and growing context of mother influencers from Instagram with their lifestyles and social status as a mother. The former understanding may be rephrased as the "New Golden Instamom," to mention the power of their image; a powerful image gained through their followers.

The term "follower" will be of crucial importance in this thesis, as I understand the perceptions and reactions of followers following Instagram accounts of Instamoms and their expectations related to their decision process from those accounts.

The research concentrates on factors how decision process of mother followers can be shaped, affected, and harmonized toward the content of the Instamoms' posts, in terms of influence that constitute the reference power, motherhood concept and all other remaining factors that determine the buyer decision process. A better influence would reflect a harmony between various contents that are posted by a mother

influencer, an increased identification with her and her followers. All these signs are parallel to the social media influencer concept in consumer behavior terminology. The study tries to find answers to the following questions:

- What is the representation of motherhood in the context of InstaMoms?
    - Does the representation of motherhood vary according to the profile of the follower mothers who follow the phenomenon mothers?
    - What are the social profiles of the followers of InstaMoms?
    - Do the profiles of the followed InstaMoms and follower mothers overlap?
- Do InstaMoms have an impact on the buying behavior of follower mothers?
    - What are the attitudes of the follower mothers towards InstaMoms as their value systems and source of information?
    - At which level of buying behavior are followers affected more by InstaMoms?
    - Do the effects on the buying behavior of followers differ by product group?
    - Which product groups are featured by InstaMoms?
- Do InstaMom have the dark sides (non-obvious purposes: increasing the website interaction of the promoted product, strengthening the credibility of the promoted brand, increasing their own visibility, using their followers in terms of interaction, using follower feedback, increasing the sales of the product they recommend)?

## 1.3. The Intended Contributions to Marketing Knowledge

The research aims to contribute to the academic marketing knowledge through its selection of a multidisciplinary perspective. An analysis of the thesis data base of Turkish Council of Higher Education (Yüksek Ögrenim Kurumu) for the period 2000 - 2014 indicates that the concept "Influencer" was used under the key words of 16 thesiss, Table 1 below shows the disciplines of these theses. There is no specific PhD thesis on marketing combining the sociological concept as the motherhood and marketing concept as influencer topics together and observing the impact on buyer decision process. The last thesis on the table is also using topic of Instamoms, but this thesis remains on the descriptive side. It shows who Instamoms are and what

they are doing on Instagram. There is no connection with marketing concepts. This may be an indicator of the uniqueness of the topic on doctoral level with respect to marketing discipline in Turkey. The history of this topic could be explored in different countries, particularly European countries such as the U.K, Italy and France. Social media influencers are popular in European countries; however their culture is different to Turkey, so it may provide different viewpoints and opinions for marketing and consumer behavior knowledge in Turkish academia.

Table 1. Disciplines of theses containing the key word "influencer" (Source: Yüksek Öğrenim Kurumu, 2019).

| Yıl | Tez Adı (Orijinal/Çeviri) | Tez Türü | Konu |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2000..2014 =2( | Filtrele | Filtrele | Filtrele |
| 2019 | The impact of trust on social media's influencers and the effect of influencer's discount codes on the consumer purchase involvment<br>*Sosyal medya influencer'larına güvenin etkileri ve influencer indirim kodlarının tüketici satın alma sürecine dahil olma üzerindeki etkisi* | Yüksek Lisans | İşletme = Business Administration |
| 2019 | The effects of social media influencers on the customer-brand relationship<br>*Sosyal medya etkileyicilerinin müşteri-marka ilişkisi üzerine etkileri* | Yüksek Lisans | İşletme = Business Administration |
| 2019 | Personal branding on instagram: The effect of influencers on consumer decision-making process<br>*Instagram'da kişisel markalaşma: Etkileşenlerin tüketici karar verme sürecine etkisi* | Yüksek Lisans | İşletme = Business Administration |
| 2019 | The effects of influencer marketing activities on Y generation's purchase intentions<br>*Etkili kişi (influencer) pazarlaması aktivitelerinin Y jenerasyonu'nun satın alma eğilimlerine etkisi* | Yüksek Lisans | İşletme = Business Administration |
| 2014 | The influencers of prescription decision and the relationship between doctors ethnocentric tendencies and prescription decision<br>*Reçete kararını etkileyen faktörler ve doktorların etnosentrik eğilimlerinin reçete kararına etkisi* | Yüksek Lisans | İşletme = Business Administration |
| 2019 | Sosyal medya fenomenlerinin tüketicilerin marka tercihine etkisi: Kozmetik markaları üzerine bir araştırma<br>*The effect of social media influencers on consumers' brand preference: A study on cosmetic brands* | Yüksek Lisans | Halkla İlişkiler = Public Relations |
| 2019 | Sosyal medyada sanal kimlikler; Sosyal medya fenomenlerinin benlik sunumları üzerine bir araştırma<br>*Virtual identities in social media; A research on self presentations of social media influencers* | Yüksek Lisans | İletişim Bilimleri = Communication Sciences |
| 2018 | Marka, ajans ve youtuber üçgeninde nüfuz pazarlamasının belirleyici unsurları<br>*Defining influencer marketing through the brand, the agency and the youtuber triad* | Yüksek Lisans | Reklamcılık = Advertising |
| 2018 | Instagram'da nüfuz pazarlaması (Influencer marketing) ve doğal reklamlar üzerine betimleyici bir araştırma<br>*A descriptive research of influencer marketing and native advertising on instagram* | Yüksek Lisans | Reklamcılık = Advertising |
| 2018 | Sosyal etki pazarlaması bağlamında youtuberların iletişim stratejileri üzerine niteliksel bir araştırma<br>*A qualitative research on the communication strategies of youtubers in the context of influencer marketing* | Yüksek Lisans | Halkla İlişkiler = Public Relations |
| 2018 | Nüfuz pazarlamasında (Influencer marketing) kullanılan mesaj stratejilerine yönelik bir içerik analizi<br>*A content analysis on the message strategies used in influencer marketing* | Yüksek Lisans | Reklamcılık = Advertising |
| 2017 | Influencers on instagram Turkey: performing the 'iconic mother' and the 'iconic woman'<br>*Instagram Türkiye'de 'influencer'lar: 'ikonik kadını' ve 'ikonik anneyi' sergilemek* | Yüksek Lisans | Sosyoloji = Sociology |

In consumer research field in marketing, a strong emphasis is given to consumers; latest studies are opening a way for researches on the perspectives on institutional agents which shape the marketplace and consumer as a social category. The focus on influential social and institutional forces is higher in other social science fields since there is less emphasis on the sovereign individual on consumer behavior. This thesis uses a number of marketing and consumer behavior concepts. A detailed part of these concepts and their contextual descriptions are mentioned in Chapter 3 of the thesis. Within the influencer marketing, buyer decision making and the social media contexts, a number of marketing and consumer behavior concepts and theories are adopted in this research. These are:

- Influencer marketing

- Social Media Influencer
- The Digital Extended Self
- Content
- Involvement Level
- Source Credibility
- Buyer decision process
- Motherhood

Beside the key concepts, methodology is selected according to on the research questions (Allwood, 2012). Social media influencers have been researched applying many quantitative methods and a few qualitative methods, although in different contexts. The buyer decision process has previously been studied as well, whereas, no qualitative research has combined these two concepts and attempted to understand them in a deeper sense, especially from a consumer behavior and marketing perspective.

This thesis therefore applied a qualitative research method so that the consumers' perceptions of the influence of social media influencer during the different stages of the buyer decision process, could be explored and understood in a more deeply manner. As the perceptions and experiences of consumers on the research topic are not clearly stated, conducting a qualitative research is appropriate as it reaches for an understanding of a phenomenon in the social world that cannot be generalized such as in quantitative studies (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The detailed explanation of the proposed model and methodology are provided in Chapter 6.

This thesis seeks to adapt a set of concepts, frameworks, and constructs to make a contribution to the broad literature and to formulate new and fresh research on the consumer behavior field, through the investigation of the influences of Instamoms on their followers' buyer decision process. It has also managerial implications as to explore the role that influencers have impact on consumers' purchase decisions (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2009).

## *1.4. Design of the Thesis*

This thesis is composed of eight chapters. *The Introductory Chapter* presents an overview of the objectives, mentions the significance of the topic and explains its potential contributions to the marketing knowledge and the consumer behavior field.

*The Second Chapter* presents the importance of social media and the rise of Instagram in this context. I specifically focus on the communication and consumer behavior on social media platforms, by presenting "Influencer Marketing". Since this thesis focuses on the impacts of social media influencers, I delve into the social media influencers in Turkey and conclude the chapter with the Influencer marketing in Turkey.

Afterwards, in *Chapter Three*, the relevance the buyer decision process is examined in the literature. Moreover, final part serves a new understanding of the buyer process on the context of social media platforms.

*The Fourth Chapter* explores the emergence of Instamoms, who are mother social media influencers on Instagram, and their followers. First, the concept of motherhood is observed. Then, I stated the mother bloggers and their evolution to Instagram plaforms. With this chapter, the aim is to describe to the reader, the concept of motherhood and Instamoms.

*The Fifth Chapter* includes research objectives and the conceptual model adopted, and methodology incorporated and developed for the study. Also, the contextual projections related to social media and consumer behavior of the marketing concepts to be addressed are stated in this chapter.

*The Sixth Chapter* includes the research finding. Then, *Chapter Seven* covers some additional analyses based on the findings from the Content Analysis and the In-Depth Interviews and the discussion part. Finally, *The Eighth Chapter* brings the academic and practical implications of the study with the conclusion.

# CHAPTER 2: SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE RISE OF INSTAGRAM

This chapter offers a conceptual framework for the social media, Instagram and Influencers.

## 2.1. Social Media

The introduction of social media and engagement can be discovered at the beginning of 2007. According to Tapscott and Williams (2008), social media is involved sharing something, socialization, collaboration, and composing new things in a very connected people with each other. It can be thought as Internet–based applications that provide consumer–generated content including archives with content. These are created by experienced consumers that are shared online for others (followers) to easily access (Blackshaw, 2006). Similarly, social media can be stated as digital social network area in which online communities are, collaborative information are produced and shared, and user-generated contents are composed, shared and consumed (Fuchs and Sevignani, 2013).

Social media contains several online-based platforms which allow consumers to interact with other users about anything and everything with other users on a daily basis (Alves, Fernandes and Raposo, 2016). Moreover, the rise of social media has not only empowered consumers to interact with other users online, but also gave the ability for individuals to allow every user express their own opinions (Heinonen, 2011).

As a result of the growth of social media, consumers can access to huge amounts of information online at all times (Abidin, 2016). Previous research has shown that these tremendous amounts of content shared on social media, have had an expressing impact on the behavior and the buyer decision of consumers (Alves, Fernandes and Raposo, 2016). To interact with other users online has precisely had an important impact as well, because consumers can have a direct contact with the users behind the created content by this way (Alves, Fernandes and Raposo, 2016). It is the way through new kind of communication.

## 2.1.1. Communication and Influence

In communication literature, the sender receiver mode as the first major conceptual model for communication, introduced by Shannon and Weaver (1949) is still broadly cited among the academia (Krotz, 2009; Sender and Decherny, 2016) as the basic communication. This model explains communication in a message from sender A to receiver B. In order to understand this message clearly, sender and receiver must use the same coding or decoding. On the other hand, communication problems are occurred. It means that if the sender and receiver understand something else less than one term, it would be a problem (Krotz, 2009; Sender and Decherny, 2016).
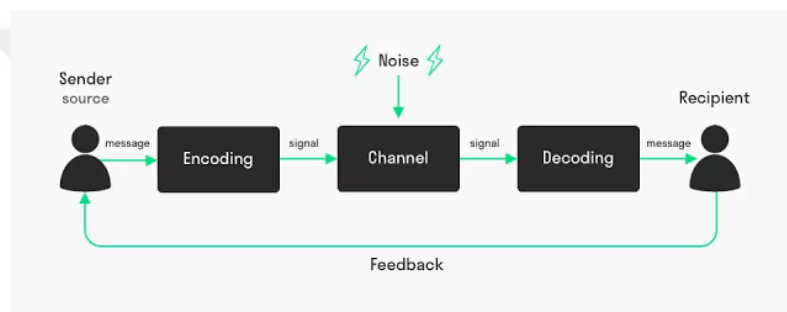


Figure 1. Shannon-Weaver's model of communication (Source: Toolshero, 2015)

After Shannon-Weaver (1949), David Berlo developed this model as the Sender-Message-Channel-Receiver (SMCR) Model of Communication (Schulz and Cobley, 2013). He described factors influencing the individual elements in the communication process to make communication more effective. Berlo's model further concentrates on encoding and decoding that occur before the sender sends and the receiver receives the message. His model defines four elements to explain the communication process: the sender, message, channel and receiver. The model is shown below in the Figure 2.
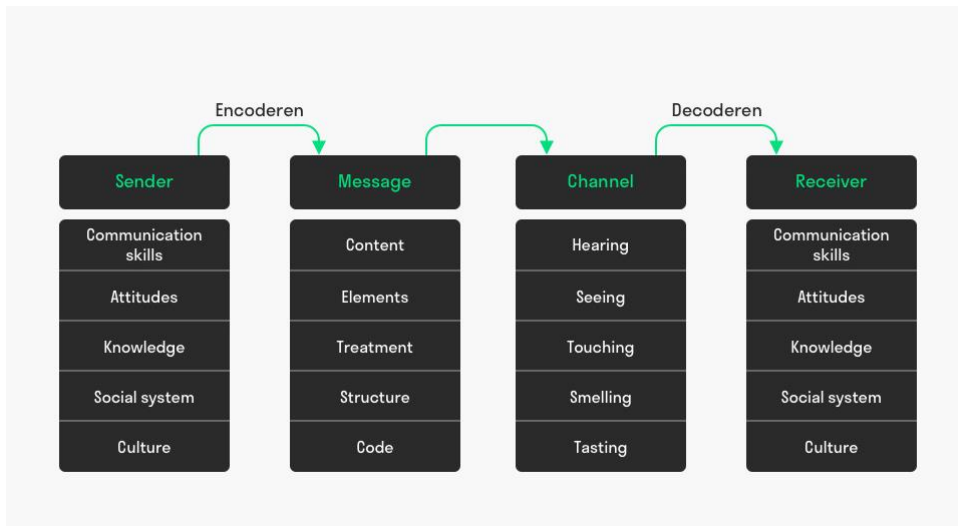
Figure 2. Berlo's SMCR model of communication (Source: Toolshero, 2015)

These basic models have some weaknesses as the lack of noise and feedback. Therefore, Barnlund (1970) offered a transactional model of communication. Accordingly, individuals are engaging in the sending and receiving of messages at the same time. Although the model expanded the previous ones, it is very complex and based on the assumption that both the sender and the receiver understand the codes send out by the other in a similar code book.
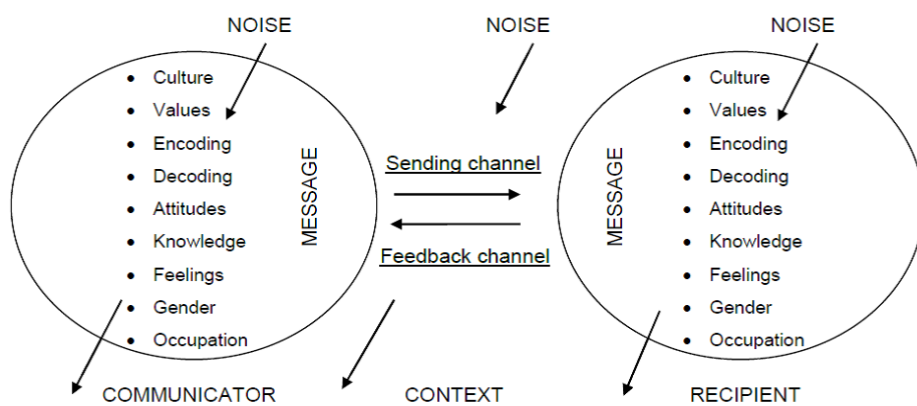


Figure 3. Barnlund's model of communication (Source: Thinkling, 2020)

Communication network modela play an important role in the dissertation. Most communication scholars in the area of online communications state that social-network platforms refer themselves as a network of social relationships including

several actors, connected to each other through emotional connections (Karlsen, 2015). In these relationships and connections, some actors have a stronger influence than others as opinion leaders (Kratz and Lazarsfeld, 1955; Watts and Dodds, 2007).

The idea on Opinion Leaders playing a decisive role in communication was first stated in the scope of the popular choice study of Lazarsfeld, Barelson and Gaudet (1944). The study investigated the influence of the mass media on voting behavior during the presidential election. It was discovered that the opinions of voters were not influenced by the mass media as much as the expected, whereas the personal transmission of individuals, the Opinion Leaders, were more effective. Opinion Leaders are individuals thathave a more influence on another person in their social environment (Watts and Dodds, 2007).

Considering these findings, the two-step flow model was developed (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955). In a different view than previous models, the "two-step flow" concept supposed a movement of information and ideas from the media to "opinion leaders," and then, from them to other people in their social network (Lowery and DeFleur, 1995).

In short, Katz and Lazarsfeld theorized that Opinion leaders gets the message from the mass media and transmits the information to other recipients in a personal conversation. By this way, mass media messages affect people's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors by the effect of the Opinion Leader.

Over the years, the theory started to be mentioned as intermedia process (Cathcart and Gumpert, 1986), and many researchers use this concept in their researches (e.g., Boekeloo et al., 1993; Wanta and Elliott, 1995; Singhal, Sood and Rogers, 1996; Valente, Pope and Merritt, 1996; Rogers et al., 1997).

Intermedia theory argues that the individual opinions, beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors seeking to modify by media campaigns are held in primary groups (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955). A primary group is composed of interpersonal relations among friends, family, neighbors, and the like who has regular interactions. It is

argued that interacting individuals have a tendency to create and keep common ideas and behavior patterns (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955).

Intermedia theory has a several key points on the reasons why people's attitudes, behaviors and decisions are influenced by their primary groups. First one is that individuals want to share opinions with and take advice from other people to whom they desire to be identified. Secondly, primary groups create people's social reality. Daily life is open to many interpretations, so individuals want other people to help them make sense of things (Weick, 1979).

In line with this, Hawthorne studies was the first leading empirical study to state the influence of close interpersonal relationships on individuals' attitudes, values, and behaviors (Rothlisberger and Dickson, 1939). There are four general conclusions drawn from Hawthorne studies. One of them shows the effect of group influence: informal organization influences productivity. The Hawthorne researchers found a group life among the workers. Moreover, the relations developed between supervisors and workers influenced the manner in which the workers implement directives. It is related to intermedia theory explaining why an individual's attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors are influenced by the primary group that s/he is a member of (Franke and Kaul, 1978).

Furthermore, in order to understand the behavioral change after the influence part, Bandura's social learning theory explores that we learn from our interactions with others in a social context. Observing the behaviors of others, people perform similar behaviors. After observing stage, people imitate that behavior, especially if those observational experiences are positive. According to Bandura, imitation includes the certain reproduction of observed motor activities (Bandura, 1971).

This theory explains how people react in social situations and the social learning system, new patterns of behavior can be acquired through direct experience or by observing the behaviors of others (Bandura, 1971). However, direct reinforcement could not account for all types of learning. As a result of this idea, in his theory, he included a social element, as that people can learn new information and behaviors by

watching other people. This theory involves three general principles for learning from each other: observation, imitation, and modeling.

This observation can help scholars to understand why influencers are so "influential." In parallel with Bandura (1971), on the basis of informative feedback, consumers produces thoughts or hypotheses about the types of behavior most likely to succeed. These hypotheses then serve as guides for future actions. Rewardingly, people learn from what they see as an example.

### 2.1.2. Communication in Times of Social Media

The significance of digital marketing is concentrated more in the marketing research today, since today's world is the era of digitalization. The digital revolution has taken place fast, so the rise of social media is pushed forward. A huge body of literature is already studied on social media. Marketing and consumer behavior research will be highly influenced by the interactions reflected in digital platforms (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011; Mangold and Faulds, 2009; Sago, 2017). Moreover, the users can communicate through posts and comments as well as actively interact and participate in the media content on the social media. This opened the way for user-generated content, which precisely differentiates social media from traditional mass media. Owing to the nature of social media, individuals become a producer themselves. They can participate in the design of contents.

Social Media affects to traditional marketing and traditional ways of communication. Accordingly, Zanger (2014) states that the traditional view on the roles of the sender and the receiver are no longer relevant. The former business to consumer message conveyance has been replaced by multilevel/ multidirectional communication (Consumer to Business and Consumer to Consumer). After this explanation, this process is as electronic word of mouth, which will be mentioned in following chapter.

New community types as virtual and online, exchanging communication content and maintaining social relationships were appeared through this process (Zanger, 2014). In this context, members of the communities can be both parts of the company and

the consumer side. The interaction between the members has the important role, aiming to shape content and decisions as co-creation.

In the sense of co-creation, the consumer gives very significant insights in the marketing communication field (Kotler and Keller, 2018). Subsequently, it is found that are social media is an important component of the communication which strengthen individual communication with the consumer (Nikunen et al., 2017). It reduces the gap between companies (Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan, 2017).

This evolution introduced a new consumer profile as the online consumer (Racolta-Paina and Luca, 2010). This online consumer has different communication style and buying behaviors. Therefore, this leads marketing people to consider online consumers' needs, behaviors, and decisions.

After discussing the vitality of social media for marketing communication, it is essential to consider how Electronic Word of Mouth and Online Reviews are effective in digital world.

### 2.1.3. Electronic Word of Mouth and Online Reviews

Dichter (1966) first defined word of mouth (WOM) in two ways; to confirm a purchase already made or to help deciding to a potential purchase. Along with the growth of the internet and social media, the concept transformed to online or electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) (Silverman 2011). E-WOM is a crucial part of new communication processes on social media since it is all about the passing of information online to other users (Yusuf, Che Hussin and Busalim, 2018).

E-WOM is described as any positive or negative statement made by customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people on the internet (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). In earlier times, consumers used WOM among primary groups as friends and family when they make buyer decisions (Richins and Root-Shaffer, 1988). With the help of social media, people have a chance to reach to 3.196 billion other users to source reviews and opinion (Kemp, 2018). For instance,

social media influencers, who are the key actors of this thesis, are one of the main contributors of e-WOM sources.

In relation to this study's focus on the relation between Instamoms and buyer decision process, the topic of online reviews, which have the power to positively impact their purchase intentions, should also be mentioned in the context of e-WOM. Online customer reviews are overwhelmingly more effective than corporate press releases in influencing shopper decisions (Tang, 2017). Buying decision is created according to both the level of a consumers' product knowledge and e-WOM (Lee et al., 2014). Nielson's (2015) research of trust in advertising explored that online opinions were the third most credible source of advertising according to consumers in 60 different countries. Understanding how online reviews are one of the main reasons why social media influencers have grew fast help to find reasons to capture the relations between online reviews and Influencers logic on Instagram. Influencers are ordinary individuals who considered as more trustworthy than other advertising sources (Shan, 2016).

The relation of source credibility and word of mouth was not very inresteing for researchers before social media came to our life. After social media exploded, the influence of recommendation in consumer behavior with the use of source credibility, the influence of reviews in the Internet sales, the conceptualization of WOM within the online communities were researched (Feickand and Higie, 1992; Sobczak and Bowers, 1993; Brown and Broderich and Lee, 2007).

Tkaczyk (2016) stated that sources with the specific knowledge and reliability are increasingly more effective than other sources having less knowledge or less reliability. WOM is the process that the discussion is held under and during this process, recommendations could come out. Most consumers, who are searching the best available offer for a product or service, are looking for opinions of other people and their past experiences. Source credibility in the process of word-of mouth could rely on its characteristics - similarities and professionalism (Wangenheim and Bayon, 2003). Especially, a consumer is looking for a particular product category will tend to more likely to use the expert's opinion (Tkaczyk, 2016).

Therefore, online reviews are important for businesses. As a result, they started to combine these two concepts (online reviews and the Influencers) under single roof which is known as Influencer Marketing (Banjerjee, Bhattacharyya and Bose, 2017). Before understanding this concept, the main social media platforms should be mentioned, in where Influencers are playing a part.

### 2.1.4. Importance of Social Media for Consumer Behavior

Web 2.0 brings a new face to the expansion of the Internet in a marketing area. Previous studies support that young consumers have already embraced social media as a deep-rooted part of their life (Garcia, 2009). Moreover, online consumers have recognized Web 2.0 applications as a source of empowerment, in the shape of content sourcing and communities of dialogue, also as one of confrontation of producers considering their commercial, ethical and social responsibilities.

Traditional communication in marketing has been seriously devalued since the engagement concept has become center to marketing (Mangold and Faulds, 2009; Muñiz and Schau, 2007). Previous researches recognize the significance of social media to build and convey an image for the brands, and so to make sales. Moreover, social media have become a platform for both engaging and communicating with consumers and a mode of generating revenues (Wang and Zhang, 2012; Barnes, 2014). Almost 40% of social media users had purchased a product after somone shared it on social media sites. The increasing existance of brands on social media sites demonstrated that these sites are increasingly creating social media industry (Pelet and Papadopolou, 2013; Liang et al., 2011). For instance, Shadkam and O'Hara (2013) state that Instagram accounts are examples of selling to consumers from SM platforms. Therefore, social media has become also a digital industry in which the consumer is more participative than ever (Liang et al., 2011). Furthermore, social media may be regarded as a group of collaborative tools connecting consumers and making marketing developed (Quinton, 2013).

To conclude, these changes brought a new consumer profile designating as the online consumer (Racolta-Paina and Luca, 2010). Online consumer has an essential role in the social platforms and different buying habits than conventional consumers.

Therefore, online consumers' needs, behaviors, lifestyles and purchase intentions should be considered by consumer behavior and marketing side in order to satisfy them in a highly dynamic and competitive market.

### 2.1.5. Main Social Media Platforms

Social Media is a communication platform which has Internet–based applications sustaining consumer–generated contents shared online for others to easily access (Blackshaw, 2006). Kaur (2016) defined social media as any type of website that enables users to share their community building, interactions, opinions and views. It has different platforms that enable consumers to post, tag or blog on the Internet.

It is hard to classify social media platforms, since all of them differ from each other depending on their content and functions that they offer their users. Mayfield (2008) classified as social networks (Myspace, Facebook), blogs, wikis (Wikipedia), podcasts (Apple iTunes), forums, content communities (Flickr, YouTube), microblogs (Twitter). Similarly, Tuten (2008), Constantinides and Fountain (2008) used the same classification only with addition of social news and content gathering sites (iGoogle, My Yahoo). After 2009, the classifications of researches have expanded; virtual places social commerce sites and social content sharing platforms have been added (Zarella, 2010; Kahraman, 2013; Safko, 2012; Van Dijck, 2012; Tuten and Solomon, 2018).

In general, it can be argued that social media platforms can be categorized as blogs, microblogs, social networking sites, and media sharing sites, wikis, podcasts, social bookmarking sites and forums (Satı and Kazançoğlu, 2020).

Through the study conducted by Kallas (2017), the most popular social networks global as follows: Facebook, with 1.94 billion monthly active users; YouTube: 1 billion; Instagram: 700 million; Twitter: 313 million; Reddit: 250 million; Vine: 200 million; Pinterest: 150 million; Ask.fm: 160 million; Tumblr: 115 million; Flickr: 112 million; Google+: 111 million; LinkedIn: 106 million and VK with 90 million monthly active users.
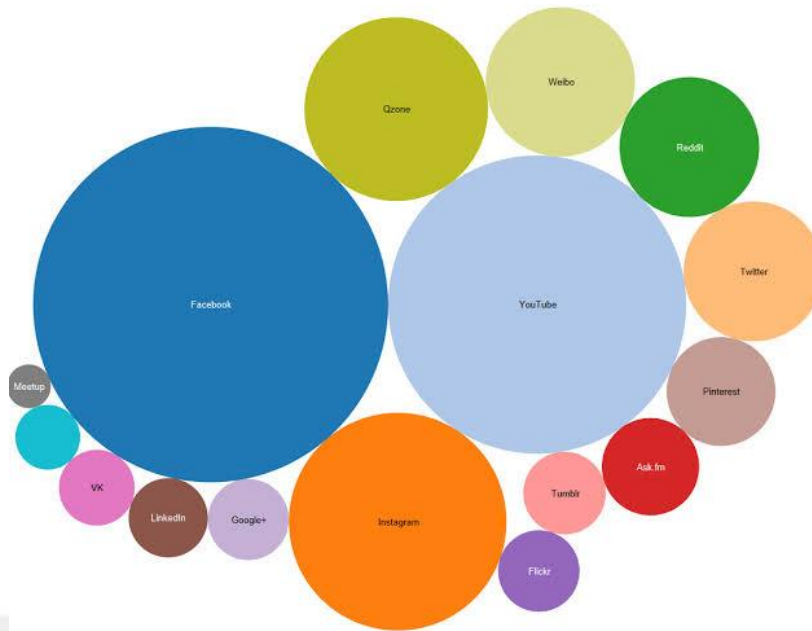
Figure 4. Top 15 social media platforms visual comparison (Source: Dreamgrow, 2019)

Moreover, the top social networking applications currently are: Facebook and WhatsApp, both with 1.2 billion monthly active users; QQ Chat: 899 million; WeChat: 806 million; Instagram: 700 million; QZone: 652 million; Viber: 249 million; LINE: 218 million; Snapchat: 200 million and YY with 122 million monthly active users (Kallas, 2017).

Focusing on Instagram on this research, videos on Instagram have 2 times the engagement of any other social media platform (Aslam, 2017). Furthermore, there are currently 700 million individual accounts on this platform, among which 400 million actively log on every day. Considering users' profile, 59% of Instagram users are between 18 and 29 years old, 33% between 30 and 49; followed by 18% are between 50 and 64; and the remaining 8% are over 65 years old (Sprout Social, 2017).

Instagram reached 600 million monthly active users all around the world at the end of January 2017. Moreover, 68% of them are female users (We are Social, 2017). If it is tried to scale the interest for Instagram throughout the whole social media users, 20% of these people have Instagram accounts (Omnicore Agency, 2017). It means that the popularity of Instagram boosts each year. Especially, teenagers have

considered Instagram as the most important social media site since 2012; this reached to 17% in 2017 January (Omnicore Agency, 2017). This argument is supported by a study which states that 53% of Instagram's daily users are between the ages of 18 and 29 (Brand Watch, 2019). In the next part of this first chapter, Instagram will mention in detail.

## 2.2. The Emergence of Instagram

Instagram was launched in 2010 as a social media application, reached to more than 600 million monthly active members in six years. Instagram achieved an incredible penetration among the social networking sites (SNSs). As a result, the platform was purchased by Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook in 2012.

Flicker was a popular web-based photo sharing platform before Instagram, whereas Instagram became more popular due to its ease of use on the mobile devices. Therefore, it became one of the leading SNS applications in terms of allowing photo sharing. Since its foundation, Instagram became a platform where users share more than 40 billion photo and video (Cooper, 2018a).

Instagram platform works with a "follow" and "connect" principle; users follow other users in order to connect with them. Its systematic is asymmetrical; it means that if a user follows someone, that person is not obliged to follow him or her. When users want to post on Instagram, they upload an image. They can open their account for everyone, or can make their account secret and select who can follow their account (Neher, 2014). Initially, users were allowed to only post a photo, but after 2013, they can upload also videos and live streaming. Users can use many photo filters on Instagram (Neher, 2014). They can apply many visual filters to enhance their image quality.

Users can combine verbal and visual content under their posts. They are allowed to write whatever they want, use emojis and hashtag some of the words of choice. Hashtag means space-less word or word groups with the sign of "#". Instagram users put hashtag (#) before generic or key words in order to make them clickable. If the users click on a hash-tagged word, posts about that hashtag appear from non-private

accounts. The aim is to make posts more popular and easier to find, and also bring users who have similar interest. These hashtags also enable to find statistics. For example, there were almost 283 million selfies which are posted with #selfie hashtag as of the end of 2016 (Moon et al., 2016).

Instagram works with follow principle. Each account has its followers and followings. In the same way, the user can see the photos of his/her followings. Considering its follower principle, it works different from other social platforms. For instance, for Facebook, the relationship between followers and followings are reciprocal. People send friend requests to each other and if a user accepts, they become friends on Facebook. However, on Instagram, there is only a follow request. It means that your followers should not be your followings at the same time. User accounts on Instagram can be private or public. Thus, if accounts are private, a filter of acceptance is needed. If the account is public, they can just follow. As the platform is not reciprocal, the followed users do not have to choose following back their followers.

Users can like or leave comments under posts on public accounts without being a follower of that related account. On the other hand, if the account is a private one, they should be an approved to follow for liking or making any comment. In order to like a post, the users click the white heart shaped under the posts and after clicking, it turns to red. Additionally, for leaving a comment, they touch the bubble shape, and are able to write their words under the posts. Having written their comments, their usernames are shown on comments section under the posts. Users can see the number of likes and comments under each post.

Besides comments, another way for communicating with other users has been launched since 2013, which named as a direct message (DM) through Instagram. Direct message is like classical message services in cell phones only between the sender and the receiver. The motive of DM is that people do not want to share their comments or questions publicly under a post in many cases; so, they leave a comment only as "please check your DM" and then send a direct message. Instagram has also developed direct messaging by allowing sending posted photos or videos directly to another user. Furthermore, direct messaging does not have to be between

two people. Instagram also enables to create messaging groups with more than two users.

The social media technology of has also penetrated Turkey quickly and effectively. In this thesis, I only concentrated on Instagram among social media platforms believing that the interest in Instagram by people from Turkey is boosting day by day. In the next section, Instagram usage in Turkey will be mentioned.

### 2.3. Instagram Usage in Turkey

According to a recent study (We are social, 2019), monthly active users in SNSs is 60% of Turkey's population. 52% of them use their mobile devices to log in. This percentage of population spends 3 hours per day on average on the Internet through mobile device. The graphs taken from "we are social reports" show the statistics of Turkey on digital growth and the social media usage.

The communication between the follower and the followed can be researched globally, but it is crucial for this research to investigate the topic in the context of Turkey since Turkey is a fund of a huge proportion of Instagram activity.
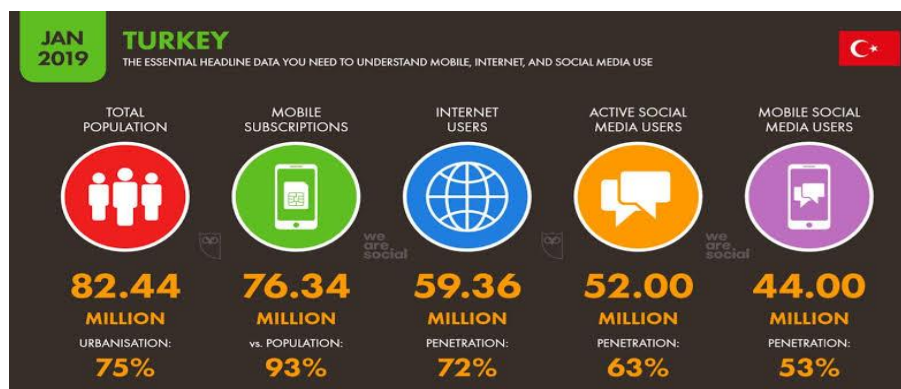


Figure 5. Digital data of Turkish people, 2019 (Source: Hotsuit, 2019)

The figure above shows that Turkish people use internet and social media very actively. There are 52 million active social media users in Turkey today; it is nearly half of the population. The most popular social media platforms are Youtube and Instagram as figure below indicates. These numbers were not the same in the

previous years. Youtube was the first place in 2017 and 2018 too; however, Facebook came after Youtube instead Instagram. Therefore, Instagram usage is increasing constantly year to year.
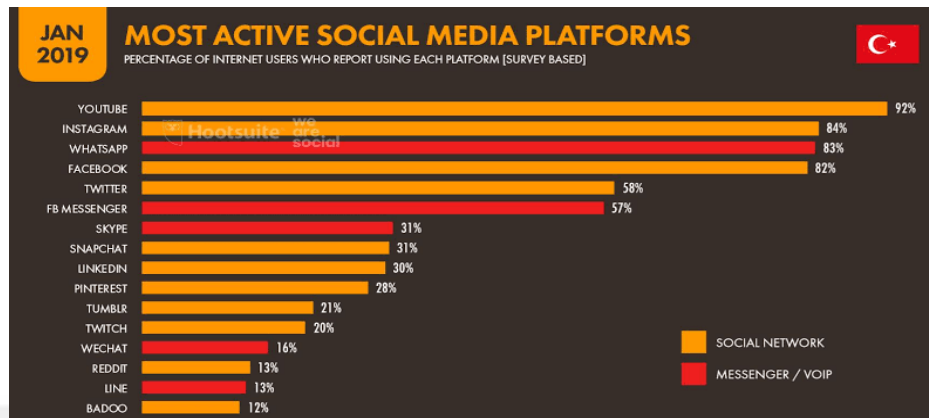


Figure 6. Most active social media platforms in Turkey (Source: Hotsuit, 2019)

Comparing other countries, Turkey has fourth position in the share of traffic list on Instagram after respectively, United States, Russia and Brazil (Statista, 2018). However, looking at Facebook usage rates, Turkey stands in tenth place in 2016, and moreover, it is not in the top ten for Twitter. Instagram has nearly 600 million people, and more than 22 million of those people are from Turkey. Moreover, between 2016 and 2017, the attention for Facebook and Twitter has been fallen but Instagram's usage rate has boosted in Turkey. Considering statistics, it may clearly suggest that Instagram in Turkey should be investigated as the context of this research.

In this study, I only concentrate on Instagram among all social media platforms, since the context of the research is Instamoms, whose are women performing their motherhood practices on Instagram. Additionally, it is hard to conduct the research on all social networking sides, for this reason I limited the platform with Instagram. It is a visual dominant platform, in which these women share many things about their ownings. The buyer decision process may be affected mainly from this motive as in the case of luxury or conspicuous consumption. Costa (2016) observed in her ethnographic research in Southeast Turkey that people prefer to possess a luxurious automobile over a self-owned home. It is a sign that how people are seen in other's

eyes is very important for them, despite their financial difficulties. Instagram is perfectly matching up with the idea of representing yourself to others through visuals.

Images and visuals have powerful effects on individuals. Instagram offers the chance to explain the things only with an image instead of many sentences. This very easy and simple way of communication is reciprocal; because the sender can explain him/herself without an effort and receivers can get the information easily, just looking posts.

It can be also thought that there is a similarity between Instagram and television in Turkey. The television is also image-oriented and this may be the cause of Instagram popularity in Turkey. Additionally, newspapers with colorful images are more preferred in Turkey (Ergül, Gökalp and Cangöz, 2012). People find easy to observe images than reading. It is in parallel to Kevin Systrom's conclusion as the success of popularity of Instagram is because of focusing on images.

Instagram is the most effective platform for these motives. With the ongoing growth of Instagram users with image-oriented motives, social media influencers have started to gain ground (Carlson, 2017). This created a new marketing ground as "Influencer Marketing" which will be explained in the next section in details.

### 2.4. Influencer Marketing

Social media usage is an essential part of peoples' everyday life, leading marketing from traditional marketing towards a more digital marketing strategy. From the marketers' point of view, the effectiveness of traditional marketing is being questioned causing to use new digital strategies such as influencer marketing to create strong brand awareness. Therefore, they are delivering their certain messages through social media platforms (Hanna, Rohm and Crittenden, 2011).

Especially, Instagram as the most popular social media platform is very available place for this new marketing tool. Therefore, Influencer marketing has become to be a crucial in response to consumers huge presence on social media platforms

especially Instagram, Facebook and YouTube (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). This new technique (Influencer Marketing) is actually a sort of Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM) which is one of the central marketing techniques to create higher trustworthiness to consumers (Solis, 2017).

The rise of e-WOM, social media and finally influencer marketing has let the term social media influencer to be created (De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders, 2017). Brands have realized that engaging their brands with social media influencers and influencer marketing can offer benefits such as a high-reaching impact and growth potential in social media among their potential consumers (De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders, 2017).

As a relatively new concept, influencer marketing has nevertheless been given several definitions in just the last few years. According to Sammis, Lincoln and Pomponi (2016) influencer marketing can be said as the art and science of bringing people together with who are influential online to colloborate brands sponsored content. Sigala and Gretzel (2017) explain influencer marketing as a practice that identifies individuals having influence over potential customers.

Sudha and Sheena (2017) more specifically define influencer marketing as an activity to identify and activate people having an influence over a specific target audience or medium, in order to be part of a brand's campaign towards increased reach, sales, or engagement. Furthermore, some researchers regarded Influencer Marketing as a form of stealth marketing.

The concept is also considered as a continuation of the word of mouth marketing as a new form (Sudha and Sheena, 2017). In 2016, Instagram was the most escalating and usable platform for influencer advertorials (Abidin, 2015). Advertorial, which is a combination of advertisement and editorial, is an appealing concept. These are personalized promotions of products (or services), posted by an influencer. These posts are considered as spontaneously experienced by these influencers, whereas, they are granted (Abidin, 2016). They look like a personal story and embody Influencers' perspectives of having experienced the product or service themselves

(Abidin, 2016). This can be also linked to WOM, which was discussed further in 2.1.3.

Influencer marketing can be also thought as a manner of constructing relationships that has the possibility of helping brands that are in the process of generating a greater scope, concerning their audiences (Sudha and Sheena, 2017). Moreover, this shows shifting those audiences into becoming consumers that are loyal by authenticity and trust (Sudha and Sheena, 2017). This displays the various ways influencer marketing can be applied.

Endorsement and image can be effective for brands to stimulate influencers to endorse their products and this way build up their image among influencers' often huge base of followers, a practice that is called influencer marketing (De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders, 2017). Regarding this point, influencer marketing often has two categories: earned and paid. Earned means that the activity is not paid; he/she promotes the product or service to boost his/her personal acceleration (Sudha and Sheena, 2017). The paid one is like communicating messages of testimonial essence, sponsorships or through an aspect of advertising that can be labelled by the authors as pre-roll (Sudha and Sheena, 2017).

As Evans et al. (2017) stated influencer marketing is a fast-growing area because of the fact that it has cost advantage than traditional advertising. At the same time, it directly targets specific audience more engaged.

### 2.4.1. Identifying Influencers

As it is stated introduction part, influencers play a very important role today's marketing practices; at the same time their reputation is increasingly growing (Scoble and Israel, 2006). According to Influencer Benchmark Report (2020), Influencer Marketing Industry will approximately grow $9.7B in 2020. It is estimated that about 380 new influencer marketing- focused agencies and platforms were created in 2019 (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2020). It is huge growing industry today with average media value per $5.78 spent (last year, it was only $ 1). 55% of these media agencies

have a strong standalone content marketing budget and others are planning to allocate in 2020.

The influencers composes a special part in the virtual community, since they spread information by various social media channels, such as blogs and social networks like Instagram; they share stories and photographs ; they tell their experiences; they state various opinions about numerous topics, services and products; they are basically influencing the consumers (Alsulaiman et al., 2015). Actually, Instagram is mainly using for influencer marketing today according to Influencer Marketing Benchmark Report (Geyser, 2020). More than 90% of all influencer campaigns have Instagram as part of the marketing mix.

Comparing influencers to the celebrities as public figures with vast number of followers and fans, they are creating and producing posts or advertorials on social media or on blogs. Influencers have an audience that is interested in specific topics, so the popularity of these people could not unrecognized by the marketers. The most popular field that influencers stand is Fashion and Beauty (24%), followed by Travel and Lifestyle (13%), Health and Fitness (12%), Gaming (7%), Sports (5%), and Family, Parenting and Home (5%). (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2020) Today, nearly 77% of all internet users read blogs (McGrail, 2013). Accordingly, marketers have begun to use influencers as endorsers, as they are regarded as more credible than celebrities (Mendoza, 2010).

Influencers are trusting on their ability to give the consumers with the feeling of people like them (Solis, 2016) which is the highest form of influence by the consumers themselves (Nielsen, 2015). It means that brands have to be more careful when they search influencers who create real interest. Therefore, these influencers are absolutely different from the traditional celebrities and traditional paid endorsements.

In the previous research, these people are tried to be identified as people who are able to influence opinions (Stewart, 1964; Watts and Dodds, 2007; Weimann, 1994), and they were called opinion leaders by engaging social network analysis as it was mentioned in Chapter 2. However, social media influencers today represent a new

type of independent, third-party endorsers who influence and affect an audience's attitudes through blogs, tweets, posts and the use of other social media channels (Fred, 2015).

On social networking sites like Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook, social media influencers share contents creating by themselves and promoting certain brands in order to obtain a following and brand recognition. The success of social media influencers is very important to brands; therefore, technology has been improved to identify and follow influencers' fitness to a brand. New technology can impart the number of hits on a blog; times a blog is shared likes and comments, and followers. All of these points are important for a social media influencer's success (Fred, 2015).

On the other hand, consumers and other social contexts influence each other and it interests to modern marketers (Shalev and Morwitz, 2012). Consumers must feel a connection between a brand and the perceptions they have of themselves before an attraction towards the brand can be made. Consumers today accept to be influenced from a source which they identify themselves with (Berger and Heath, 2008; Escalas and Bettman, 2003; Ferraro, Bettman and Chartrand, 2009; White and Dahl, 2006).

Depending on whether the communication is with a close friend or relative for instance, can be considered as a strong tie (Granovetter, 1973). Consumers are different individuals and belong to different groups which they compare themselves with, which acts as a reference group (Khan and Khan, 2005). These people can be either similar or close to the consumer, for example, colleagues, friends and family.

In modern society, these comparisons become relevant online. When consumers compare themselves to others on the social networks, it can create a relationship or a bond between them. Opinions by other people online will affect a consumer's willingness to purchase and next step experience (Luo, 2005). Furthermore, Evans et al. (2017) point out for a deep connection between the relationship with influencers and its followers as it is tremendously important when using influencer marketing.

In this research, all of these will be investigated on the context of motherhood. Considering research questions of the study, mother influencers on Instagram may have an effect on other mothers following them about the representation of motherhood. In order to deeply delve with their effect on buyer decision process and the concept of motherhood, next chapter will offer insights for mother influencers, naming as Instamoms in the study.

### 2.4.2. Social Media Influencers

Forbes (2016) states that a social media influencer (SMI) has influence on attitudes, opinions, actions, and the purchase decisions of his/her followers. This can be explained that it is because of their influential power and ability to shape conversations and create interactions with their followers. SMIs have ability to create the e-WoM, which can be said to have a great impact on the purchase decisions of consumers (Freberg et al., 2010; Li, Lee and Lien, 2014; Nejad, Sherrell and Babakus, 2014).

The reason is that the e-WoM created by a SMI is thought to be more powerful and convincing than the e-WoM coming from companies themselves (Uzunoğlu and Kip, 2014). Previous studies have indicated several factors claimed to be reason why consumers see SMIs as very influential individuals. These factors can be specified as content, expertise, attractiveness, social identity and trust.

### 2.4.2.1. Content

Different from traditional media channels, SMIs create their content by customizing, so the content becomes more desirable for their followers by this way (Song and Yoo, 2016). They create and spread good content on their social media platforms (Li, Lee and Lien, 2014). By this way, they give recommendations; images and other content that make a consumer encourage buying a certain product (Forbes, 2016). This is known as user-generated content from SMIs which are more favorable and trustworthy comparing to the marketer-generated content (Valck et al., 2013). Valck et al. (2013) also state that these contents are thought as more useful, since it makes

easier to search for additional information about products. Moreover, it makes followers feel to make a better choice of product (Valck et al., 2013).

When SMIs make the content personalized (Li, Lee and Lien, 2014), followers can have an insight of the personal lives of the SMIs (Forbes, 2016). The personalized content is actually a kind of persuader for followers who will adopt the information behind the content, because they in turn believe that their interests, attitude and opinions are similar to the SMI's (Kapitan and Silvera, 2015). Furthermore, the content by SMIs is more personally composed than the contents from companies, therefore followers feel that the content is directed to them personally (Park, Lee and Han, 2007; Uzunoğlu and Kip, 2014). By this way, a stronger trust towards the SMI is created, because followers think that the content shared by SMIs is not advertisement. Therefore, it is more desirable (Hsu, Lin and Chiang, 2013).

### 2.4.2.2. Expertise

Another factor is which is very important for followers are expertise, since they decide if they believe the content from SMIs or not (Valck et al., 2013). It means that expertise is considered as the follower's perception of the SMI's ability of distributing true and trustable content because of the relationship between the SMI and the followers from the beginning (Nejad, Sherrell and Babakus, 2014). If a follower sees an SMI as an expert in his or her area of content, it is probably that that follower will follow the content shared by the SMI (Valck et al., 2013).

Kapitan and Silvera (2015) state that SMIs usually have specific knowledge and are expert in several product categories like make-up, fashion, sport, gastronomy or motherhood. This expertise actually makes them more credible because they believed that if s/he are talking about or recommending a product, they have certain knowledge about that product (Kapitan and Silvera, 2015).

Furthermore, the level of expertise has an effect on the level of a follower's attachment to the information from the SMI, since credibility affects the follower's interpretation of the information in the content. The level of expertise and trustworthiness of an SMI also have an impact on the attractiveness, meaning that if

the SMI is more likable, the follower is more willing to follow the information given by them (Li, Lee and Lien, 2014).

### 2.4.2.3. Trust

Trust is the important factor that affects the degree of influence between a follower and an SMI (Liu et al., 2015). Trust determines the perception of how many the followers believes in the content of the SMI (Nejad, Sherrell and Babakus, 2014).

Al-Oufi, Kim and Saddik (2012) state trust as the positive idea to opinions, shared information and actions made by another individual. Trustworthiness is one of the main components of credibility (the other one is expertise). Trustworthiness points out the perceptions of honesty, integrity, and believability of an endorser (Erdogan, 1999).

With regards to SMIs, previous studies are mainly related to the electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) indicating that the endorsers' credibility is very important for the effectiveness of e-WOM on consumers' product attitudes and purchase intentions (Reichelt, Sievert and Jacob, 2014; Erkan and Evans, 2016). Chapple and Cownie (2017), Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) state that the SMIs' credibility have a critical role for affecting purchase behavior. It means that if a SMI is trusted, s/he can influence followers more easily, and make them accept the recommendations about a product (Liu et al., 2015).

SMIs generally share user-oriented product reviews, personal recommendations, and experiences in their contents. It is also known that some of these contents are company-sponsored to persuade followers. However, many SMIs create their contents with honest opinions (Evans et al., 2017). On the contrary, followers know that celebrities gain from these recommendations (Friestad and Wright, 1994); this increases the trust to SMIs.

Furthermore, SMIs authentically recommend products in real-life environment. These could all affect the trustworthiness perception. Uzunoğlu and Kip (2014) stress that bloggers look trustworthy since, when they share content about certain brands,

they show to have been tried the products by themselves at the same time. It is the same for celebrities, if a celebrity endorses a product in a real-life setting; it is perceived more trustworthy (Russell and Rasolofoarison, 2017). Therefore, authentic contents and real-life settings are important for trustworthiness, and SMIs are more credible regarding these conditions.

Last but not least, a distinctive factor of SMIs' success is to build a career on a specific domain of interest and to establish their own professional area (Balog, Rijke and Weerkamp 2008; Erz and Christensen, 2018). This self-approved expertise may bring them more trustworthiness by being perceived as knowledgeable on products and services in their area of expertise. These two components are actually main necessary parts of the source credibility model which will be used in the research model of the study.

### 2.4.2.3.1. Source Credibility Model

Source Credibility Model has both the components of trustworthiness and expertise (Sternthal, Phillips and Dholakia, 1978); and it determines the extent to which the follower believes the SMI's advice. If a source is credible source, it has those components as trustworthiness, expertness, and attractiveness (Dholakia and Sternthal, 1977; Harmon and Coney, 1982). As a theory, it argues that followers like organic contents from SMIs, comparing contents which attempt to persuade them (Van Reijmersdal, Neijens and Smit, 2005). Credibility affects the buyer decision behavior (Jaffari and Hunjra, 2017) and a credible source has greater impact over the attitudes of consumers (followers in this age) (Hovland, Irving and Harold, 1953).

In relation to the dimensions of Source Credibility and endorsement are also interrelated, since there is a discussion between the importance of trustworthiness and expertise on the endorsement issue. If SMIs have two qualifications, it would probably affect buyer decision and attitudes in a positive way (Liu and Teo, 2007). Jain and Posavac (2001) stated if an advertising message is sent by a credible endorser, consumers approach to the message in a less skeptical way. Therefore, the message would be more effective.

## 2.4.2.4. Attractiveness

A follower's connection and perception towards a social media influencer (SMI) is probably the most powerful factor which may have an effect on the follower's attitude towards an SMI (Li, Lee and Lien, 2014). A pleasant connection between a follower and the SMI, and also between the SMI and the promoted product or category, is likely to catch the attention of the follower. By this way, the awareness of the product or category could be increased and result in purchasing (Li, Lee and Lien, 2014).

A follower can see a post about a product or category on his/her social media feeds and the attractiveness of the SMI in the post may change the follower feelings about the product or category. It means that he or she may wonder if s/he can have the same look as that SMI when buying the same product. This can also happen even if the follower does not need to that product from the beginning. As a result, the attention of the follower may be shaped according to that product which might result to consider buying or purchasing through the decision-making process due to the SMI (Kapitan and Silvera, 2015). Additionally, a famous SMI as more attractive and trustworthy has a greater impact on the product choices of consumers (Uzunoğlu and Kip, 2014; Abidin, 2016; Forbes, 2016).

The attractiveness stage is actually one of the main components of Celebrity Endorsement Model which could be considered as the very beginning of the idea of influencers.

## 2.4.2.4.1. Celebrity Endorsement Model

The term "celebrity" defines an individual known into the public such as an actor, a sports figure, a model and so on, and, his or her projects in the related areas (Friedman and Friedman, 1979). Celebrity endorser is an individual who has public recognition and who benefits this recognition for a products or services by placing in an advertisement (marcoms). When a celebrity is appeared in marcoms, s/he transfers her/his own culturally related meanings with her/his promotional role (McCracken, 1989). Kotler and Keller (2006) defines celebrity endorsement as a particular

strategy used by marketers to advertise a product from such a platform through which consumers can associate themselves with the brand value from the perspective of the celebrity.

Celebrity endorsement boosts the attention given to an ad (Buttle, Raymond and Danziger, 2000). Since, celebrities are usually attractive; this situation helps persuasion if consumers are worried about social acceptance and others' opinions (DeBono and Harnish, 1988) especially for attractiveness-related products (Kahle and Homer, 1985; Kamins, 1990). Celebrities are usually considered as credible sources especially if they are seen expert in a particular area, like an athlete recommending shoes (Ratneshwar and Chiaken, 1991).

Many academic studies have proved that celebrity endorsements significantly make effectiveness of the advertisement grow (Atkin and Block, 1983; Erdogan, 1999; Amos, Holmes and Strutton, 2008; Bergkvist and Zhou, 2016). Nevertheless, in addition to using 'traditional' celebrities, marketing people increasingly start to use social media influencers to endorse their brands (Marwick, 2015). Unlike traditional celebrities who have public recognition due to their professional life, the fame of social media influencers come from their ability to brand themselves as credible experts on social media (Khamis, Ang and Welling, 2016).

The effectiveness of traditional celebrity endorsement has been extensively studied (Bergkvist and Zhou, 2016); however, the impact of influencer endorsement is relatively investigated. There is a recent qualitative research which studied that influencers have a stronger impact on brand attitudes and purchase behaviors of young consumers (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017) compared to celebrities. However, there is not much specific study on mother social media influencers and their effects on mothers' decision-making process directly.

Existing research on endorsement model has clarified two major processes which mention the effect of brand endorsement on advertising effectiveness: identification with the endorser and credibility (Ohanian, 1991). These two points are actually two of influential factors; the credibility was mentioned in the previous part. Following section will be dealt with the identification issue.

### 2.4.2.5. Followers' Social Identity

The social identity of a follower can be matched with a group of which the follower is a member or want to be a member (Nejad, Sherrell and Babakus, 2014). A follower usually considers the opinions and behavior existing in this group, and then s/he can accordingly form a proper self-image to look like the group members (Kapitan and Silvera, 2015). The group which the follower wants to be a member or feels like a member is usually named as the aspirational group. This will give the impression to the follower for new lifestyles, trends and behaviors. Finally, the follower will be influenced and start to imitate these things as a result (Kembau and Mekel, 2014).

This influence in turn may affect how followers decide to purchase products, since consumers mainly buy products symbolizing their ideal self and making them similar to the person they want to be like, such as an SMI (Nejad, Sherrell and Babakus, 2014; Kapitan and Silvera, 2015).

A SMI has an impact as an idol of consumption because they symbolize what an ideal life as an SMI can look for followers (Hearn and Schoenhoff, 2015). When a SMI interact with followers by sharing insights to their private lives (Hearn and Schoenhoff, 2015), followers may feel that they are more related to the lives of SMIs (Forbes, 2016). After a follower feel connected to a SMI, s/he will more probably adopt the view that the SMI recommends (Cheung, Xiao and Liu, 2014). Moreover, a follower feels identical to and inspired by an SMI, this situation may trigger his/her motivation to imitate the SMI. Therefore, s/he can be persuaded to buy a certain product that the SMI recommends or imitate the same behavior that the SMI has (Xiang et al., 2016).

This relation that a follower feels connected with an SMI is known as parasocial interaction showing how followers define themselves with social media profiles which has high social status (Liu et al., 2015; Xiang et al., 2016). Xiang et al. (2016) indicates that although a follower does not have a direct contact with the SMI as a face to face communication, s/he can still want to imitate the SMI, such as buying the

product that the SMI recommends. Followers often see SMIs as role models (Forbes, 2016).

Believing to have similar interests, values, or characteristics with an endorser, followers highly adopt the endorser's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Cialdini, 1993; Kelman, 2006). Identification comes from both actual and perceived similarity. It can be defined as the degree to perceive to have similar things with another person (Hoffner and Buchanan, 2005). In celebrity endorsement case, identification is expected to derive from wishful identification, meaning to desire to be alike the celebrity (Kamins et al., 2013).

On the contrary, identification with a SMI is usually coming from perceived similarity (Gräve, 2017). Unlike celebrities, influencers are regarded as more accessible as a long-distance friend (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017). SMIs are likely to target their followers in their posts in a direct way. This creates a direct closeness, and make followers feel as peers (Erz and Christensen, 2018; Gannon and Prothero, 2018). Being able to comment on SMIs' posts and to have the possibility to interact could make the feeling that the influencer is similar to oneself stronger (Schmidt, 2007).

Considering all factors, there is one issue remaining which is involvement level of followers. All of them could affect followers' decision process, but it can also alter according to their involvement level which will be explained in the next section (Wang and Scheinbaum, 2018).

### 2.4.2.6. Involvement Level

Involvement plays an important role in a series of behavioral decisions (Zaichkowsky, 1986). There are three involvement models, which are the ''involvement conceptual and methodological perspectives model'' by Houston and Rothschild (1978), the ''involvement conceptualizing model'' by Zaichkowsky (1986), and the ''involvement conceptualizing and measuring model'' by Andrews, Durvasula and Akhter (1990). All of them try to capture how involvement concepts help to interpret the consumer behavior.

Starting with, Houston and Rothschild (1978) categorized involvement as the situation involvement, the enduring involvement, and the response involvement. Briefly, situation involvement points out how consumers pay attention to things under specific situations by concentrating on non-personal factors. Enduring involvement explains that consumers notice objects for approximately longer periods, mentioning personal characteristics. At last, response involvement is a situation that a consumer makes decision-making accordingly both complex cognitive and behavioral processes mixing situation and enduring involvement.

Furthermore, Zaichkowsky (1986) classified three antecedents of involvement. First one is personal factors implying inner values as needs and interest that could affect one's specific experiences, and then have an impact on the involvement with the object. Secondly, the physical characteristic of communication media (TV, radio, print) may impact the involvement; different alternatives of communication would influence involvement. Thirdly, there are situational factors related to use, purchase, and occasion. Besides these factors, Zaichkowsky (1986) also categorized involvement into three domains: product involvement, ad involvement, and purchase involvement according to consumers' behavioral responses to different situations.

Finally, Andrews, Durvasula and Akhter (1990) pursue several research streams and offered proposed a structure for the conceptualizing and measuring to an involvement construct. In this structure, the involvement construct's antecedents, properties, measures, potential problems, and consequences were analyzed. It is stated that involvement possesses have three major features: intensity, direction, and persistence (Andrews, Durvasula and Akhter, 1990). They all determine how individuals react to external stimuli.

To explaining each component, involvement intensity can be defined as arousal degree of the taget consumer with respect to the target product (Andrews, Durvasula and Akhter, 1990). Depending on product type, situation or individual condition, intensity level changes. Secondly, involvement direction concerns to the target object causing the stimulus. Finally, involvement persistence shows the duration of involvement intensity. Consumers could be in different involvement level according to the product type, purchase moment, sales direction, and persistence related to

periods. All factors may lead to the involvement level differently. Moreover, search behavior, information processing, and persuasion of consumers would also differ.

Three theories briefly explained above are the major original concepts of the involvement construct. Therefore, many researches apply one of these theories as a main concept of involvement. For instance, Drichoutis, Kazarudus and Nayga (2007), applied to Andrews, Durvasula and Akhter (1990), using individual characteristics, situational and attitudinal factors, product knowledge, and information search to determine the points influencing food product class involvement. Wang, Pallister and Foxall (2006) used Zaichkowsky's involvement model (1986) and explained the purchase decision involvement considering specific Internet shopping behaviors.

Additional these three theories, in order to understand product involvement, Lastovicka and Gardner's (1979) work should be mentioned. In these and other studies, product involvement has been explained in various ways. While developing an involvement scale, the first critical decision that a researcher faces is whether the measure should be applicable to several products or to a single product. As part of their work on the dimensionality of a product involvement, Lastovicka and Gardner (1979) devised a scale able to tap individual differences in involvement for any product class. The benefits of their measure's generalizability appear to be balanced. Therefore, in this research their items as familiarity, commitment, and normative importance will be used when analyzing the content. Using Lastovicka and Gardner's (1979) involvement items, the present study will examine two product categories as mom specific and child specific.

# CHAPTER 3: THE RELATIONS BETWEEN INFLUENCER CONCEPT AND BUYER DECISION PROCESS

This part of the literature review focuses on main theories and gaps in the field of buyer behavior. One of the important issues in consumer behavior is that how consumers develop, adapt and apply decision-making strategies (Moon, 2004). For that reason, a framework of each step of the decision-making process will be explained and evaluated after the buyer decision process concept will be explained in this part. Different concepts and points of view will be presented by the scholars of the XX and XXI centuries.

## 3.1. Buyer Decision Process Concept

To start with, consumer behavior involves a very wide variety of personal and situational variables. It is essential to define the term "consumer buying behavior". According to Business Dictionary (2013), for selecting a product, individuals search, select, purchase, use, and dispose of goods and services to satisfy their needs and wants as a consumer buying behavior. The term consumer behavior is composed of consumers experience starting with making purchases, and then it includes factors influencing their decision. For consumers, buying decisions are the consequence of a long and comprehensive process including a broad information search, brands comparison, and evaluation. It is important to understand consumer behavior to influence buying behavior. It is needed to know the detailed needs of customers and the reasons how they turn these needs into buying attributes. How consumers gather information about different alternatives and use this information to select among competing brands is also necessary to know (Belch and Belch, 2009).

Accordingly, many models try to analyze or anticipate decision-making process and resulting actions. They are trying to explain an abstract representation of the consumer decision process and clarify the description of complex consumer behavior.

In 1950s, the uncertainty for the future and costs in getting information in the present makes people's rational decisions limited. Therefore, their decisions can be taken

with the bounded rationality (Tozlu, 2016). After 1950s, various models were developed. Some of these models are called grand models of consumer behavior attempting to comprehensively explain all aspects of the buying behavior. These are respectively: Nicosia model (1966), Engel- Kollat-Blackwell model (1968), and Howard–Sheth model (1969) and but there are also other models as in the table above. They all provide profound insights into the nature of consumer buying and consuming which the human mind, otherwise cannot grasp the immense complexities of this phenomenon. Even though the explanation of the consumer buying decision process differs among these models, many of them are composed of five similar decision process stages (Mitchell and Boustani, 1993).

In this study, however, the modified version of these five steps buying decision process model will be used. The context of the study, Instamom as influencers for mothers, brings new understanding of the buyer decision process since the traditional steps does not exactly fit on Instagram platform. For this reason, the research lays out the buyer decision process in a different way. In the following sections, the five steps buyer decision process is examined as the core model of buyer behavior in marketing. After this section, the changing buyer decision model and the relations with influencers concept is stated before offering the conceptual model in the methodology.

Table 2. Decision-making models

| Name of the Model | Authors, Year | Short description |
|---|---|---|
| Simon model | Simon H., 1960 | ➢ The decision-making process in three stages of activities: intelligence activity, design activity, and choice activity. |
| Nicosia model | Nicosia F.M., 1966 | ➢ Focuses on the communication process between a brand and a consumer. <br> ➢ Works with a flow of events through different stages identified as fields. |
| Engel, Kollat and Blackwell model | Engel J.F., Kollat D.T. and Blackwell R.D., 1968 | ➢ Components of this decision process model are: input, information processing, decision process, and variables influencing the decision process. <br> ➢ The decision process has five stages. |

Table 3. (continued) Decision-making models

| Theory of buyer behavior | Sheth J. and Howard J.A., 1969 | ➢ Conceptualize the buyer behavior of individuals over a period. E.g: the brand choice behavior of the buyer. ➢ Offer three levels of consumer decision making: extensive problem solving, limited problem solving, and habitual response behavior. |
|---|---|---|
| An alternative conceptualization for consumer behavior and product performance | Narayana C.L. and Markin R.J., 1975 | ➢ Explain consumer behavior identifying the term "evoked set" by including and classifying all the brands that may be in the consumer's "awareness set", inert, and inept set. |
| Mintzberg model (The Structure of "Unstructured" Decision Processes | Mintzberg H., Raisinghani D. and Theoret A., 1976 | ➢ The key premise is that a basic structure underlies "unstructured" processes. |
| Keeney's four stage decision making model | Keeney R.L., 1982 | ➢ A staged approach: structure the decision problem, assess possible impacts of each alternative, determine preferences of decision makers, and evaluate and compare alternatives. |
| Rassuli and Harrell model | Rassuli K.M. and Harrell G.D., 1990 | ➢ The choice and purchase are inputs into a process, not only the end of consumer decision-making efforts. |
| Sheth, Newman and Gross model | Sheth J.N., Newman B.I. and Gross B.L., 1991 | ➢ Indicate five consumption values influencing consumer choice behavior: functional, social, conditional, emotional, and epistemic values. |
| Smith and Rupp's model | Smith A. and Rupp W., 2003 | ➢ An Internet based model considering external influences of website marketing, the socio-cultural environment, and psychological issues on online consumer behavior followed by to a purchase and post-purchase behavior. |
| The Marketing Spiral | Armano D., 2007 | ➢ Consider consumer behavior as a spiral starting with an interaction as opposed to communication. ➢ The spiral deepens as the consumer increases engagement. |
| McKinsey's dynamic model of the consumer decision journey | Court D., Elzinga D., Mulder S. and Vetnik O.J., 2009 | ➢ Define four primary phases: initial consideration, active evaluation, moment of purchase, post-purchase experience. |

### 3.1.1. The Five-Stage Buying Decision Process Model

The five-stage buying decision process model, the traditional model of decision-making, is widely used by marketing specialists to have a better understanding of their customers and their behavior (Kotler and Keller, 2006). The basic premise of the model is that the buying action is a forward- moving process starting with buying a product. It actually starts long before the actual buying and continuing also after the buying stage is completed. The name of the model describes itself well: five different stages in the process respectively: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post purchase behavior. In order to understand each of these stages in the consumer buying process, all of them will be reviewed one by one.



Figure 7. Five stage buying decision process

### 3.1.1.1. Need Recognition

The buying process starts with need recognition. In this step, the buyer understands a difference between their actual state and a state they desire. This sense could be either prompted by an internal or external stimulus (Kotler and Armstrong, 2005). To explain with an example; the buyer buys a water because s/he is thirsty (internal stimuli) or s/he sees a drink advertisement and feel thirsty (external stimuli). Moreover, there is other factors influencing need recognition as demographic factors, like age, sex, income, race, education, household size, and marital status (Kinnear and Bernheart, 1986).

Furthermore, there are also other influences which cannot be directly observable factors, such as psychological factors. Motivation is the ground of all consumer behavior in these psychological factors (Kinnear and Bernheart, 1986). Motivational needs are segmented as physiological and psychological needs (Kinnear and Bernheart, 1986). The physiological needs are our basic needs as food and shelter. The psychological ones are formed by one's social environment.

Perception is other psychological factor showing the way of the customers sees themselves and their surroundings. It affects both the need recognition phase and also, other phases too (Kinnear and Bernheart, 1986). Need recognition can be in different forms according to the consumer's needs and perceptions. Beside buying something totally new or replacing an outdated or broken product, consumers may buy a product that satisfies their needs exactly with another. This concept is known variety seeking (Dubois, 2000). It means that consumers change the brand not because of her/him is dissatisfied with that one, but because of the brand variety on the market. This behavior is also affected by the involvement level. Consumers act in this way if s/he is on low-involvement level.

### 3.1.1.2. Information Search

Information search is the second stage of the buyer decision process. In this stage, the consumer tries to collect information about the product that s/he wants to buy via different channels. There are two levels of arousal during the information search phase: the heightened attention and active information search state (Kotler and Armstrong, 2005). In the first state, heightened attention, the consumer only starts to realize different products suitable for him/her. S/he is just alert to advertisements and comments about the product. In the active information search state, the consumer starts to concentrate these comments and searches for information about different brands or types in a more active way.

Consumers can search and collect information from variety of sources. Bruner (1988) explained and classified the information sources as personal- marketer dominated (e.g: sales person), non-personal marketer dominated (e.g: TV advertising), personal non-marketer dominated (e.g: friends, family), non-personal

non marketer dominated members (e.g: newspaper articles without influencing about the product). In a similar way, Kotler and Armstrong (2005) categorize the sources as personal sources, commercial sources, public sources, and experimental sources. To explain briefly, personal sources are usually family and friends. Commercial sources are regarded as advertising and salespersons. Public sources are mass media and consumer-rating organizations. Finally, experimental sources involve checking and using/ trying the product. Among these sources, commercial sources are the mostly applied ones (Kotler and Armstrong, 2005). On the contrary, according to Dubois (2000), personal sources are the most effective ones.

Expertise level is an important factor regarding information search stage, since information search differs with regards to different levels of expertise. More efficient search could be done by experts and so they know the product better (Alba and Hutchinson, 1987). Expert makes fewer searches since they have existed information about the products in their mind. This is the product class knowledge which negatively relate with the searching effort. It means that those with less knowledge of the product search more information (Beatty and Smith, 1987).

Today, online environment is more dominant for information search. Therefore, there is a difference between being expert about the product and about the information search process. Due to the expert who has good knowledge about the product, the number of information search may decrease. In the same way, having excellent knowledge on the online search methods could make the search procedure more efficient. It is good to have good knowledge about the product to increase the quality of the examination. By this way, the search time would decrease and more efficient search would be done.

Furthermore, uncertainty, or the perceived risk, involved with the purchase is another factor affecting the information search stage. According to Urbany, Dickson and Wilkie (1989), uncertainty classifies into two categories as knowledge uncertainty and choice uncertainty. First one means uncertainty about information of alternatives. The latter includes uncertainty for which alternative to select. Choice uncertainty causes to more searching, whereas, knowledge uncertainty needs lower searching (Urbany, Dickson and Wilkie, 1989). This view is averse to the opinion of

Alba and Hutchingson (1987). To sum up, there is a need for a sufficient amount of information about the product in order to have active information searching.

While searching information, there would be many possible products or brands that would satisfy consumers' needs, or take the consumer's attention. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2005), there are four sets of alternatives; the final purchase decision will be decided from them. Firstly, the total set has all the possible brands for the consumer. Following that, awareness set is derived from the total set, and involves the brands the consumer is about to know. Mainly, brands purchased are chosen from the awareness set and then, the consideration set is formed. After the collection of information about the products from the consideration set, they are considered. Finally, the purchase decision will be done from the choice set as the last step explaining in the last part of the chapter.

Similarly, the brands in the product class are classified as familiar and unknown brands by Peter and Olson (1990) as such process. Unknown brands are unintentionally discovered through intentional search for the choice set. On the other hand, familiar brands are in the memory, and these are in the evoke set and remembered for the choice set. There also some brands which are known before, but lost in the memory, but they are still familiar to the consumer. Brands of the evoked set which are attached and considered more ideal to the product class incline to appear in the choice set.

The awareness set is examined more by Narayana and Markin (1999) which includes three different subgroups. The evoked set is defined as a group of products that the consumer positively thinks and is close to purchase. The consumer has negative or positive opinion for the product; those products are from inert set. The consumer could know those products, but not have an idea about them, because s/he does not have knowledge about those products. Finally, the inept set involves the products that the consumer thinks negatively, so purchase action will not realize.

Finally, although these sets are offered, rising of the online environment enables a vast of different tools for information search to compose these sets. Different ways are used such as recommendation agents, interactive tools or just the Internet

browsers to search information (Haubl and Trifts, 2001). These also decrease time and also alternatives to search, especially browsing from the Internet.

### 3.1.1.3. Evaluation of Alternatives

The third stage of the buyer decision process is the evaluation of alternatives in which the consumer evaluates all options available. Consumers are inclined to attribute particular qualifications for the products in their choice set. An alternative should have at least acceptable levels features for being regarded as the final purchase. It is stated that two points exist for consumers cut-offs: one is that if the information comes from a reliable source, cut- offs are for the attribute is more severe, whereas if it is low, the cut-offs for the attribute are lower (Huber and Klein, 1991).

In general, price, brand name and country of origin are the most important criteria to influence the consumer decision making. These three have more impact on the consumer product choice, which is defined as salience (Engel, Blackwell and Kollat, 1968). If there is a positive relation between two features such as low price and a luxury brand watch, the cut-offs on those specifications would be more serious than the case negative or equal relation.

Among these features, with regards to price, the cut-offs could depend on online and offline environment. According to Bhatnagar and Ghose (2004), price was not that much important for consumers making online shopping while evaluating alternatives. The reason of this may be that consumers usually tend to consider the online prices similar or lower than offline prices. As a result, they are not alert to prices of products.

After consumers lessen the alternatives to the choice set, they firstly gather information about the products, then contrast and evaluate them. The resources are limited for consumers for searching information, so there should be a point to finish the evaluation process and to realize the actual purchase decision. When consumers hardly find extra information about the product exceeding the value of this

information itself, the stage of information search and evaluation end (Hauser, Urban and Weinberg, 1993).

The information about different brands is not enough for consumers to decide, the easiness to convert the information about the brand is also very important. If the consumer remembers a brand easily by its physical characteristics, it is perpetually fluent. On the other hand, if a brand is recognized easily, it is conceptually fluent. Accoring to Lee and Labroo's (2004) experiment, when the consumer are synchronously subjected to the product and target product, the brand comes to be more conceptually fluent. Moreover, high conceptual fluency conditions are better for the brand evaluation to make more supportive. Last but not least, conceptual fluency could shape negative affiliations, then, its results would be negative. For instance, if the consumer does not like hamburger, and see ads of hamburger before the ads of French fries, s/he could evaluate the ads of French fries negatively.

Furthermore, in the online environment, the different advertisements could stray into consumer's page according to their searches or purchases. This is the new customization technology which is advantageous. In online environment, companies can make record of purchases and also personal information. By this way, they can directly target to each individual consumer, therefore, they are able to take the advantage of the concept of conceptual fluency.

Finally, product categories, situational factors as location convenience, motivations or consumer involvement may have an effect on consumer evaluation process besides price, brand name, and country of origin (Dickson, 1982; Corfman, 1991; Rotschild, 1979).

### 3.1.1.4. Purchase Decision

The consumer completes the evaluation stage, randomly aligns the alternatives in the choice set. Considering the evaluation and purchase decision stages, two factors occurred between them. First one is the attitudes of others. The consumer changes his/her mind according to friends, family or community influence although s/he has just ranked for a brand and decided to buy that brand. Second one is that

unpredictable situational factors may influence the purchase decision. For instance, the need for other product may urgently emerge, the price of the product may decrease, or location of the store may change for that time. These factors usually lessen when purchase is making on online environment, since it is more private area. For example, influence of other people would not be the case when the consumer makes online shopping. Sometimes, nevertheless the consumer has made up his/her mind for the product to purchase, different sub-decisions could emerge as price range, sales outlet, time of purchase, amount, and payment methods (cash or credit card) (Dubois, 2000).

The purchase decision stage as a main basis for the purchase itself has three categories differing from need recognition, information search, and evaluation stage (Engel, Black and Miniard, 1993). These categories are respectively fully planned purchase, partially planned purchase and impulse purchase. To explain these categories, in fully planned purchase, the consumer chooses the product and brand before visiting the outlet. In partially planned purchase, the product to be purchased is certain, but the brand of it changes in the store. Final category is called the impulse purchase in which none of the steps of buyer decision making is applied, since the product and the brand are concurrently chosen in the store. In this phenomenon, the consumer buys the product solely according to his/her impulses and emotions. Some impulses are really irresistible, which are usually physiological, so escaping them is not possible, even though the purchase is not necessary so much (Baumeister, 2002).

According to Baumeister (2002), there are three characteristics for consumer to self-control. Why these are important is that if one of them is not realized, impulsive shopping could highly occur. The first one is the standards for which the consumer appoints. When the consumer knows his/her goals, standards, and norms, and also ensures what s/he really wants, impulsive buying is rarely occurred. This type of consumer decreases the vulnerability to external influences such as sales personnel and advertisers.

Another characteristic for self-control is monitoring. If the consumer follows his/her consistent behavior very well, s/he may not lose their self-control to make impulse shopping. At last, the consumer's capacity to change is third characteristic.

Sometimes, the first two characteristics exist inside the consumer, but s/he still abandons the decision and buys different product that his/her impulses triggers (Sojka and Giese, 2003).

### 3.1.1.5. Post Purchase Behavior

The final stage of the consumer decision process is the post-purchase behavior which takes place after the purchase is realized. It shows that the buyer decision process does not end with making decision and purchasing; it endures even after purchasing. This stage is as important as the purchase stage, since the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the consumer about the purchase affect his/her decision process for similar purchases especially regarding need recognition and information search stage in the future. It is also very crucial to understand consumer behavior for marketers after purchase in order to continue their sales at the same conditions.

There are two sub-divisions for post-purchase behavior: post purchase satisfaction and post purchase actions. The consumer's satisfaction is the proximity between the consumer expectation from the product and the perceived performance of the product (Kotler and Keller, 2006). If these two matches, the consumer feel satisfied, but if not, dissatisfaction occurs. Why it is important is that the consumer would talk about the product positively or negatively.

There is one situation more when the consumer chooses among alternatives, this decision has some advantageous and disadvantageous. It is stated in the literature that the consumer more tends to see disadvantageous parts in post purchase period (Vashisht, 2005). This situation is called the post purchase dissonance or cognitive dissonance. Post purchase dissonance occurs especially when the price of the product is high, there is a real similarity between the chosen and rejected product, and the importance of the purchase decision is very crucial. If the gap between the expectations of the consumer is not met, dissatisfaction appears.

Turning to post purchase satisfaction, it is also related with the loyalty since the situation affects the consumer loyalty of the product or the brand. According to, Mittal and Kamakura (2001), each consumer have different characteristics so as

different thresholds about loyalty towards the store even if they are not satisfied with the product. Loyalty concept is directly related to post purchase action (Oliver, 1999). Loyal customers are usually satisfied with their purchase, whereas satisfaction does not always bring loyalty (Oliver, 1999). On the other hand, there are other scholars who states in the consumer research literature that satisfaction directly produce loyalty (Auh and Johnson, 2005; Ball, Coelho and Macha, 2004).

Satisfaction is as much important as in an online environment like in the offline environment. The important factor affecting the satisfaction in online environment is shopping convenience (Evanschitzky et al., 2004; Szymanski and Hise, 2000). Online environment is more advantageous than offline world with regards to shopping convenience.

In normal conditions, if the customer does not like product, s/he has a chance to complain about it in both online and offline environment, because s/he is dissatisfied. However, there can be differences between traditional (offline) and electronic (online) commerce, so there are also differences about complaining threshold and the dissatisfaction level (Cho et al., 2002).

As discussed above, satisfaction level of the consumer determines his/her next behavior. Purchasing product again, choosing same brand for the next purchase, or speaking about the product to others are important issues which are named as post purchase actions. Satisfaction and loyalty affect these actions (Hellier et al., 2003).

To conclude, satisfaction would positively influence the loyalty, and loyalty would have a positive effect on brand preference. In turn, if the brand preference is powerful, it has a positive effect on repurchase intentions. For the online environment, it would be the same regarding the main importance of satisfaction according to the assumptions mentioned above by Evanschitzky et al. (2004).

### 3.2. The Buyer Decision Process under New Perspective on Social Media Context

Considering the buyer decision process, consumers do not always decide by evaluating all available alternatives between different products or services to choose

the best one. According to the theory of bounded rationality (Simon, 1982), there are two reasons for this action. First one is that there is not enough information available for making evaluation. Second one is the limited ability of individuals for considering and evaluating this available information. However, with the rising of social media, the process has changed. Today, consumers can access any information, take or make recommendations from everywhere. Even, they have the chance to write and read recommendations for future purchases through social networks (Merwe and Heerden, 2009).

Furthermore, social media creates new reviewers whose opinions are regarded credible by the community, and who have significant influence on the buying behavior of consumers (Forbes and Vespoli, 2013). These people are new opinion leaders as influencers stated in the literature part. These people act on social media platforms. Previous research show that Facebook and Twitter influence consumers' purchase decision (Pietro and Pantano, 2012). Instagram platform is newer than other social network platform, but it has very effective area about the influence on consumers with its reach visual contents (Miles, 2013). Similarly, Mangolds and Faulds (2009) mention the influence of social media on consumer buying behavior from information acquisition to post-purchase behavior in the era of internet-based marketing communication. Therefore, the link between influencers and social networks is very effective for the buying behavior (Weimann, 1991).

As explained in the previous part, consumers pass through a five-step process when the buying decision is made. It begins with the recognition of the need for the product or service and ends with post-purchase behavior as satisfaction or dissatisfaction. However, in the context of Instagram influencers, these steps may not be realized in the traditional way. For instance, even there is no need for a product or service, consumers (namely followers) see a post about that product and want to buy it. The need recognition step is realized without any actual need. Many studies observed the social media influences on purchase decision; however, there is a need for examining how this influence is shaped across different stages and if five step process is valid on the context of Instagram influencers. Reaching more information and advice through influencers may decrease the effect of bounded rationality for consumers, since consumers can have more information in this context. If it is true,

the evaluation of alternatives step could be affected, since consumer evaluated all alternatives with more information. This step may transform with the community effect on social media as feedback from the community stage. This effect may be work as a motivator to purchase a product for followers. Finally, post purchase step may evole as reaction stage because followers write their comments and share their experience on pages of influencers.

When passing other chapter, it should be stated that it is important for all marketing people and scholars to understand consumers need and buying process to analyze buying behavior efficiently and build effective strategies. This study is conducted in order to understand mother consumers in the age of influencers and understand the buyer behavior stages on this context. For this aim, it serves a new model for the buyer behavior in the conceptual model part. In the next section, the concept of motherhood and the new phenomenon, Instamoms, will take place, and then methodology part is stated.

# CHAPTER 4: THE CONCEPT OF MOTHERHOOD AND THE EMERGENCE OF INSTAMOMS

The concept of motherhood has a particular place in every culture with its highly idealized representations. It constructs meanings, experience, and identities. With highly uprising of digital platforms, regarding to the previous generation of women, women born in 1990s mainly socialize in digital environments. Today, it is very usual that new mom opens an Instagram page in order to show her new motherhood. These women are called Instamoms who are experiencing all practices of motherhood with their followers. In this chapter, these new mothers will be represented, but first the concept of motherhood will be offered as it is stated in the literature.

## 4.1. The Concept of Motherhood

Becoming a mother is a different life event, and achieving motherhood is also critical. It makes the woman to assume new, complex and demanding roles, a result of these new roles, she may have to leave other important roles or at least adjust them. In society, motherhood is looked for causing momentous changes in the social behavior of the mother, and also against others relating with her (Bacon, 1974). Motherhood is experienced with different feelings as realizing, drained, aloneness, happiness or loneliness depending on women (Barclay et al., 1997). The concept involves all these kinds of feelings and epitomizes the process of change lived through by women.

The concept of motherhood has been sporadically studied in rapidly expanding body of literature under various disciplines as psychology, sociology, mythology, leisure study, and marketing mostly discussing the role of motherhood in women life. In many works, there are two predominant streams in the literature: theorizing of mothering and motherhood and the mothering experience (Arendell, 2004). In this study, the concept motherhood will be instead analysed from mothers' experiences in Instagram mother blogs from their own comments and perspectives.

Historically, representations of motherhood are complicating, debating, and paradoxical in cultural studies. Knowledge and narratives on motherhood are written through a different social institutions, cultural ideologies, and media platforms (Hall, 1998; Woodward, 2003). Existing concept of the natural mother is essentially fulfilled, and also biologically defined. Furthermore, the social, economic, and cultural construction(s) of motherhood and its relations with the concepts of patriarchy, class, gender, and ethnicity is examined.

Throughout history, nearly in all continents, many societies in Europe, America, or Africa, motherhood has been defined as more than reproduction, and considered as built on social construction which is also a part of personal experience (Rich, 1976). Moreover, the concept is not only corresponded to breeding and taking care of a child but also a range of belief and systems affiliated with mothering. Due to the fact that mothering is seen universally as a duty of women, it is identified with women (Arendell, 2004).

Regarding this patriarchal view, in feminist studies, motherhood is regarded as the result of predominant gender system in society which divides public and private spheres considering the fundamental role definitions for men and women (O'Reilly, 2010). For instance, maternal activists and feminists try to stress the distinction between motherhood as an institution and motherhood as an experience. Moreover, they examine the force enforced on women for being mother and search theories of maternal empowerment (Borghei et al., 2017). Additionally, there is increasing attention to race and ethnic diversity issues and practices about the concept.

In society, considering personality, women are thought to be sensitive, emotional, and vulnerable and so on (Okdie et al., 2011). These feelings are also attached to the motherhood. In gender studies, this situation has been explained as society wants a woman to carry these characteristics if she wants to be a successful mother (Bayraktar, 2011). The message of this expectation is that when a woman becomes a mother, she should give her priority on motherhood identity leaving other womanhood identities. It is expected from her to fully engage with her baby and making them to the centre of her life (Parmaksız, 2012). This is a big self-devotion

for a woman. She feels that she should devote herself to the baby for his/her needs. Therefore, the motherhood would become long term and intensive work.

From institutional perspective, the motherhood is an institution patriarchally constructed in which power imposes over women as mothers. At this point, power means too much expectation to be a good mother which is an idealized notion in a specific social environment (Aksu, 2001). As a result, the concept of motherhood as an ideology and as an institution create what mother should do or should not to do in the society. In sociological and economical literature, the gap between fathers and mother has been mentioned regarding there is an unequivocal relationship considering parenthood. Expectations from mother are more than fathers when it comes to care a child (Folbre, 1987). Furthermore, the concept of "motherhood" actually guides being a mother:

> *"[...] motherhood should not be reduced only to the actual experience of reproduction, to its gynecological dimension; it includes the whole life of a woman."* (Russo, 2004, p. 7)

In psychology literature, it is stated that motherhood transcends the physical dimension of being a mother; it needs bonds (Burmese, 2007). This relationship needs being open to new life and accepting it. From biological perspective, there is exactly close communication between a mother and her child even when she is just pregnant. The relationship is not only limited to physiological dimension. A mental and spiritual connection is found in this relationship which is mentioned in parapsychology studies (Morris, 2006). Moreover, feelings to become a mother does not come with the baby, it starts much earlier than pregnancy when woman wants to be a mother. This yearning begins to shape the connection between a mother and her future child. It is a distinct biological link between the mother and the child even which it exceeds the biological connection. It actually becomes an integral part of identity of a mother and her unborn child (Bornstein, Suwalsky and Breakstone, 2012).

Last but not least, popular culture has influenced the concept of motherhood which is central to many disciplines, by mythologizing and mediating the concept

(Woodward, 2003). Especially, the myth of the natural mother comes as a multimedia phenomenon (Hall, 1998). Moreover, patterns of motherhood are normalized, and reduce to socially acceptable roles incorporating to the lived experiences of women (Green, 2012).

In mainstream cultural discourse, there are two issues presented; hypernatalism (Douglas and Michaels, 2005) and the new momism (Hays, 1998). The meanings or expectation from the role of mother is not much different from the other definitions. The concept of motherhood involves caregiving, and a child-centred and idealized view of women (Douglas and Michaels, 2005). Moreover, intensive mothering is the central idea to new momism. This is very demanding notion which stresses that mothers should spend a huge time, energy, and money to raise their children (Hays, 1998). According to this view too, mothers should again prioritize their children's needs and desires above their own (Lee, 1997).

Lastly, contemporary discourses of motherhood are as complicated as before. Due to digital technologies, there are many new areas flourishing for the experiences of motherhood and mothering. Digital platforms are new environments on which mothering narratives, identities, and experiences are transformed and competed. The best example of mothering practices in digital environment Mom blogs. Mom blogs are described as online journals in which mothers produce contents about the experiences of motherhood (Lopez, 2009). Additionally, feminist scholars identify these blogs as alternative platform of resistance (Keller, 2012).

After this digital transformation, narratives of the motherhood have passed to Mom blogs and the idea of bad and good mothers are started to be discussed in the framework of motherhood. This makes researcher rethink the prevailing cultural constructions. The motherhood in this context has contradictory messages which bring particular aspects of the representation of motherhood (Buxton, 1998). The digital transformation may invite some contradictory themes as a double bind (Bateson, 1972). Double binds have an impact on mothers, especially in social media by undermining confidence and bringing feelings of guilt and inadequacy. Motherhood roles and representations are transformed in this context with the impact

of double binds on mothers. Most research in the communication literature used the themes of double binds to women (Wood and Conrad, 1983).

In the following section, how the ideal or good motherhood on digital environment (Instagram is chosen) is shaped will be explained according to these criterias; mom blogs on Instagram and Instamoms as mothers having blogs on Instagram will be represented.

## 4.2. The Motherhood on Blogsphere and Mom Bloggers

With the proliferation of Web 2.0, a mother, who writes blogs, participates to the construction of blogs as cultural and democratizing contents (Jenkins, 2006). After the broadcasting of mom blogs, representations of motherhood are begun to show in new diverse sphere named as the mamasphere (Friedman, 2013). Mom bloggers are usually the similar demographic with regards to social class, lifestyle and age, although they also have different voice on the similar topics (O'Reilly, 2010). They record their personal life and their children's life. These sites are very interactive with mother followers which are very important for web blogs.

Mothers on Internet share their contents for many reasons as writing an online diary about their baby, showing their motherhood to family and friends, not feeling lonely, and sharing the excitement of motherhood. Furthermore, personal identity, community attendance, taking psychological support, and making online relations to other mothers are the other motivations for mother to write blogs (Webb and Lee, 2011). By this way, they have the platform to share their feelings and hard times of motherhood by communicating with other mothers without space and time limitation. Thereafter, they become a member of online community which has been gradually transferred to the Instagram platform.

On account of mom blogs, the cultural construction of the identity of mother started to be rethought. Moreover, conventional representations of motherhood are being disputed (Lopez, 2009). Mothers are sharing their family life and their experiences of motherhood, telling daily events about their lives, so all of these could be reasons to cause redefining the understandings of the identity of mother (Friedman, 2013).

As stated in the previous section, motherhood is regarded as part of both the private or public sphere. The public sphere previously defined that an area that men occupy and women want to be part of including professional life, politics, economics, the law and mainstream discourse (Motiejunaite, 2005). As regards, mothers want to appear in blogsphere which is part of public sphere by writing blogs. They desire to be involved in the public sphere as men do. However, mom bloggers did not attach to these conventional definitions even though the traditional motherhood is usually considered as to be part of the private sphere. Therefore, many mom bloggers are disapproved for their stance on the social media.

Scholars have acclaimed mom blogging since it is a resistant practice and radical act because mom bloggers have shaped a new style of motherhood against new momism which nobody has seen before in the traditional media (Powell, 2010; Bradley, 2005).

Blogging activity creates area for mothers to find new subjectivities against the discourses of good and bad mother (Powell, 2010). Writing blogs is a kind of liberating activity from dedicated identities and practices to a mother. Traditional mother figure imposes self-giving and experienced mother, whereas mom bloggers also show different sides such as a tired mother due to the demand of a child, a novice mother who wants advice about children's sicknesses, or a mother having a depression due to her uncontrollable women hormones. Although they are found strange by many people, they have huge fans that follow, like and support them.

Mom bloggers usually create their blogs to share something about their children. Many of them write about their pregnancy period, the problems during this phase, postpartum depression, losing weight after pregnancy and so on. Moreover, topics can be diverse as children nutrition, child reading activities, or something rather than motherhood or child. For instance, they write about gastronomy, fashion, relationship between wife and husband, travel, make- up… There are no limitations for them to share. They use informal and witty language when they share contents to enjoy their followers. Followers feel very connected and loyal to mom bloggers as they are close friend.

To sum up, digital communication networks technologies have given a chance to mothers to present their own lives to other mothers on the blogsphere, with its mom specific name mamasphere. This kind of presentation and sharing of motherhood experiences would not be possible before in the public sphere (Lopez, 2009). Today, mothers can find many platforms to talk over with other mothers to share their daily practices in a large network. Especially, after social networking sites came to our lives, especially Instagram platform, it serves as medium to broadcast of women's voices and create a community who supports that voice.

In the following section, mom bloggers on Instagram will be represented as Instamoms. It is relatively new concept; therefore, there is a little literature solely on InstaMoms. For that reason, in this section, mom bloggers have been examined in detailed, because the underlying motives of being an Instamom and a mom blogger could be the same. The only difference is the platform that they manifest themselves. Researchers could do with paying much more attention to mothers on Instagram.

### 4.3. The Proliferation of Instagram and InstaMoms

The study will give information about the mom bloggers (or influencers) on Instagram as Instamoms. Academically, there is little research that formally examines this topic. To begin with, to whom the study indicating as Instamoms, Instamoms are mothers on Instagram sharing posts with their followers and influence them as mom bloggers on blogsphere. It can be said that Instamoms are the mother bloggers who write on their Instagram page.

At this point, another phenomenon which explained in previous chapter, the term influencer is used for mom bloggers. In Instagram network, instead of blogger, these people are called as influencers (Abidin, 2014). There are also some other terms for a popular and effective Instagram user, for instance the influencer. Influencers are ordinary people who have large followers on blogs or Instagram pages with their content sharing. This definition of influencers is fitted for mothers that this study has examined as Instamoms. With the proliferation of Instagram as an image and content-oriented platform, mom bloggers start to open an Instagram page and many of them show up on Instagram. They share about many different categories not only

children but also family, budget, cooking, consumption, shopping quality, time, and so on.

It is crucial to understand reasons why Instamoms has gained popularity and influence over their followers. Firstly, language that Instamoms are using is informal and hearthy, and they write affectional stories connecting them to their followers (Friedman, 2013; Ward, 2012). For instance, Merve İpek Öztürk, who is an Instamom with her page on Instagram use this kind of language and shares her personal experiences to mothers (followers).

Secondly, Instamoms present themselves as experts or professionals on motherhood issues (Petersen, 2014). However, there are rare cases in which an Instamom lies to her followers as in socialmom case. Socialmomm is an Instamom who made known herself as a psychologist, and she consulted for young mothers for a fee. At that time, there were very harsh comments under her photos.

Final reason is that the connection between an Instamom and her followers is very strong through contents and comments (Friedman, 2013). With these three points, they are also distinguishing from experts, since experts usually speak scientifically and overlook the difficulty of moms' everyday lives (Ehrenreich and Deirdre, 2005). However, Instamoms produce posts on the social media including photographs, videos but also giving information on subjects like child development or education. Therefore, mothers following them get information from them via social media (Brosch, 2016). They also share the problems with other mothers and support each another in child or women related areas. Moreover, following Instamom's Instagram page, mothers ask questions under the posts about many subjects.

As explained in the concept of motherhood section, there is a stress on the ideal representation of woman with marriage or motherhood in almost all cultures. Writing content and sharing something, individuals (Instamoms) acually construct the 'modern individual self' (Lopez, 2009). By sharing their own subjectivity about their own life, these mothers present to build a bounded identity, which means a sense of belonging connected to an extensive and dominant collective entity (Mizrachi and Zawdu, 2010), in this case, the motherhood identity. It is expected that they write

about their children and the motherhood experiences according to the concept, mom influencers. However, the self and the character appeared from Instagram page show some conflicting features. They are mom influencers but they do not share only things about the motherhood and children as their names offered us. They share many contents as it is stated like fashion, health, travel, and so on.

The reason is that, they get paid to post contents with the brand names. Many of them start to their page with the hope of monetizing from their posts. While they gain visibility on Instagram, their popularity increases among the target audiences, other mothers for Instamoms. Advertisers realize them after this stage. This process overlaps the definition of the concept of influencers too:

> *"...ordinary Internet users who accumulate a relatively large following on blogs and social media through the textual and visual narration of their personal lives and lifestyles, engage with their following in digital and physical spaces, and monetize their following by integrating "advertorials" into their blog or social media posts"* (Abidin, 2014)

Being realized by brands or advertisers, Instamoms start to put advertorials into their posts. Today, social media influencers gain considerable money per sponsored post, so do Instamoms. As other influencers who get paid to put photos about the related brand or issue, Instamoms started to be also known "enterprising moms" (Bahler, 2009) who build a new career out of sharing brands, products, or services. The examples from Instamoms Instagram pages will be indicated in research chapter by content analysis.

What is more, the statement "Instamom" itself has a marketing value now (Chen, 2013). A new concept of mumpreneur is stated in the literature for mom influencers. It is defined as:

> *"an individual who discovers and exploits new business opportunities within a social and geographical context that seeks to integrate the demands of motherhood and business ownership"* (Ekinsmyth, 2011, p.105)

This concept has cause to debate the intensive mothering discourse which is to align women according to Duberley and Carrigan (2012). If it is the case, it should be waited for this discourse to support conventional and sacrificing understandings of motherhood which would be parallel to the motherhood definition. Actually, monetization of Instamoms' post may weaken the traditional definition of the motherhood concept. This monetization may also lessen the potential of the being a larger mom community, since follower mothers see these Instagram pages as commercial pages which sometimes caused backlash against these pages (Lopez, 2009). In some cases, sponsored contents by brands can incline to the loss of authenticity too (Hunter, 2016).

However, there are still huge mass of followers who are the fans of Instamoms and closely follow them even though pages are commercialized. At this time, mothers' community may not be formed as in the original definition of community, but they become only followers (audiences) watching. To clarify, as Instagram pages become more commercialized, visitors can be interpreted more as audience members who are witnessing acts of desirable motherhood (Hunter, 2016). Instamoms become a role model or icon for their followers, so their suggestions are very important for them. They have a kind of impact on their buying behavior. For that reason, this study will focus on the impact of Instamoms on the buyer decision process of their mother followers.

This research is motivated to fill in the gaps and improve the existing knowledge of Instamoms on the decision-making process by analyzing the posts of selected Instamoms and comments under those posts, interviewing with their followers and some of selected Instamoms. Detailed explanation will be given in the research methodology part.

# CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter has the research objectives, the research model and methodology which is used to realize these objectives. The model includes several marketing concepts. It is aimed to use them into the buyer decision process in context of social media influencers, specifically Insta-Moms in this research. The study investigates the influence of Insta-Moms on their followers with regards to representation of motherhood, product category with their involvement level and the source credibility with the endorsement effect. Moreover, it aims to bring a new insight on buyer decision process by offering a conceptual model for the context of Instamom (the context of Instagram influencers).

## 5.1. The Research Objectives

This study aims to give deeper insights to how Insta-moms, mother influencers on Instagram influence the decision process of other mothers and how motherhood are represented by and through them on Instagram. I want to investigate whether Insta-moms as influencers have an impact on the overall buyer decision making process of other mothers, on what stage they are more effective by considering the involvement level and the source credibility, and to have a deeper understanding of the effects of Insta-moms on the representations of motherhood concept depending on their profile, also catch the dark sides of these womens as a practice if there is any. Specifically, research objectives are as below:

**R.ob.1:** to identify the representations of motherhood in the context of Insta-moms, with further investigation of the profile of followers and the profile match between two parties.

**R.ob.2:** to find product categories which are promoted by Insta-moms.

**R.ob.3:** to understand reasons of how the contents from Insta-moms of Instagram affect the followers' buyer decision processs and the stages of the buyer decision process is/are the most affected by Instamoms' contents.

In addition to these three main objectives: I attempt to understand the dark sides of Insta-moms for the consumer behavior side (dark sides meaning non-obvious purposes as to increase the website interaction of the promoted product, to strengthen the reliability of the promoted brand, to increase its own visibility, to benefit from its followers in terms of interaction, to use follower feedback, to increase the sales of the proposed product)

In general, my aim in this research is not to analyze cause and effect relationships, or measuring, quantifying variables, and confirming hypothesis. It is aimed to explore the social dynamics behind the representation of motherhood and decision making of mothers in the Instagram context through interpretations. Moreover, I hope reaching a general understanding on the phenomena of Instamoms. Therefore, in line with the arguments of the interpretive approach, I try to understand the nature of the issue at hand, not trying to find static cause and effect relationships.

## 5.2. The Conceptual Model and Revisited the Research Questions

Considering the limited marketing literature on the motherhood on Instagram platform discussed in the previous chapters, there is a need for further explanation on social media influencers on the concept of motherhood and how exposure to Instamoms affects the process of buyer decision. The literature has a gap regarding the analysis developed for the deeper understanding of representation of motherhood by these women and influence of them on their followers when posting their Instagram page. Moreover, traditional five step buyer decision process could be better to be revisited regarding changing consumer behavior on social networking sites, because it has been evolving in the context of Instamom.

Regarding follower's behavior and attitudes towards Instamoms, five step buyer decision making model seems to transform in this context. Additionally, need recognition stage is more than recognizing "need" but creation of "desire". Information search and evaluation of alternatives stages seems to combine which are named as "getting opinion" stage.

Previous research often considers opinion leaders and influencers in general; however, there is not much attention of mom influencers. This study will specifically concentrate on mom influencers, as Instamoms on the buyer decision process in this context, not in a traditional way. This research contextually projected with a number of marketing concepts as product category regarding involvement level and the source credibility regarding the celebrity endorsement which was explained in the literature part.

Taking into consideration the subject, this study aims at constructing an extensive analysis of social media influencers on the motherhood subject and attempts to explain their influence on the buyer decision process of mother followers by explaining new perspective in the conceptual model. Moreover, it criticizes the representations of motherhood in the context of Instamoms. Finally, it points out the dark sides of Instamoms if there is any.

The study has no exact conceptual model because the philosophical approach of the study is interpretative (hermeneutic) phenomenology which is explained in detail in the following parts. According to this approach, research design is what the researcher is curious about and wants to find the answer to. The conceptual framework is investigated by helping to explain the concepts and terms belonging to the desired subject, analysis to support the results and to relate to these results, to explain the dimensions of the subject written beforehand or during the research process (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2016; Kleiman, 2004). The foreseeing conceptual model is shown in Figure 8.
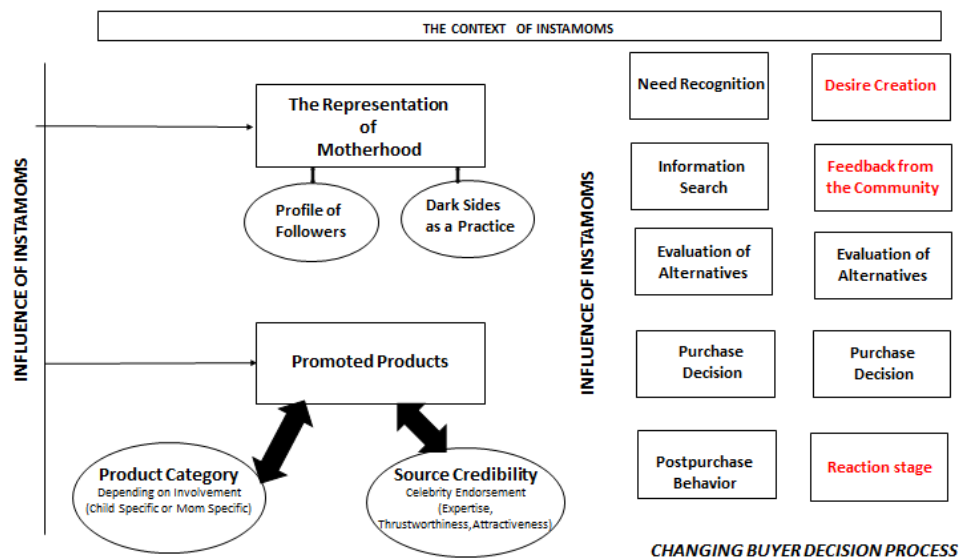
Figure 8. Predicting conceptual model

The important issue here is qualitative approach within the scope of the principle of circularity (progressive and iterative development). Conceptual model is targeted to be reached during or at the end of the research. It can be updated. This flexibility strengthens the researcher in the research process.

I this research, the representation of mother may show different characteristics in the context of Instamoms, especially regarding their followers' profiles. Besides this, dark side of Instamoms could appear in practice with these new characteristics. With this regard, the representation of motherhood is investigated through the following inquiries:

- What is the representation of motherhood in the context of InstaMoms?
- Does the representation of motherhood vary according to the profile of the follower mothers who follow the phenomenon mothers?
- What are the social profiles of the followers of InstaMoms?
- Do the profiles of the followed InstaMoms and follower mothers overlap?

Afterwards, the study attempts to explain the influence of Instamoms on the buyer decision process of mother followers in a new perspective. The conceptual model foresees that depending on product category with involvement level and source

69

credibility as considering celebrity endorsement components, the effects of influence or exposure to the buyer decision process of mother followers could change. Within the scope of this research, influence of Instamoms to their followers on the buyer decision process is explored different from the five-stage buyer decision process through the following inquiries:

- Do InstaMoms have an impact on the buying behavior of follower mothers?
- What are the attitudes of the follower mothers towards InstaMoms as their value systems and source of information?
- At which level of buying behavior are followers affected more by InstaMoms?
- Do the effects on the buying behavior of followers differ by product group?
- Which product groups are featured by InstaMoms?
- Do InstaMom have the dark sides (non-obvious purposes: increasing the website interaction of the promoted product, strengthening the credibility of the promoted brand, increasing their own visibility, using their followers in terms of interaction, using follower feedback, increasing the sales of the product they recommend)?

Aiming at contributing to the literature by providing answers to above questions, the study also embarks to raise concerns on the impressions of social media influencers on society, particularly on mothers. Importantly, the research intends to bring new model of buyer decision process offering "Changing Steps of Buyer Decision on the Context of Instamom" as a conceptual model of the study. Social media have a strong influence on the contemporary society, so this research seeks to affirm the responsibility of scholars and professionals for contributing the more reliable society.

Methodology part is presented in the following section in which the research approach of the study is explained.

### 5.3. Methodology

After addressing the research questions by explaining with the underlying ideas the issue above, it indicates that the required methodology to fulfill and explain the concept should be a method with a deeper investigation of human feelings, desires,

fantasies, and experiences. While trying to find the right strategy, I searched and read many approaches including grounded theory, semiotics, critical theory, and discourse analysis. When I tried to understand many approaches, I aimed at attaining a substantial perspective for this research to investigate the feelings and thoughts of mothers and their decisions about Instamoms while they are exposing to Instamoms' social media practices. To take into consideration that I am not a mother, this research has been managed with the help and experiences of other mothers in order to eliminate my biases.

The construction of this thesis and the research inquires presented requires an interpretive approach and qualitative data collection techniques to have deeper insights. To reach sensitive information from Instamoms and their followers, the study is better to focus on complex details about phenomena such as feelings, emotions and thought processes. Therefore, their dynamics could not be accessed through quantitative techniques (Arnould and Thomson, 2005). Moreover, As Mason (2002) stated that the research strategy is better to be shaped with regards to research questions.

Research questions of the study are basically on human behavior; it needs relativist ontology that touch upon individuals, not the fact itself, since information or moral values could alter depending on historical conditions, societies, cultures and people (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). If the research question was about facts or theory testing, positivist approach would be more suitable. However, in this research, interpretivism fits the study which concentrates on people rather than facts.

Strategies in marketing research have changed in time, because marketing is begun to be regarded as socially constructed institution (Hirshman, 1986). Accordingly, research showed tendency to apply socially constructed phenomena which need interpretive approach. Due to the fact that positivism requires objectivist assumptions (the facts are facts), interpretivism enables subjectivist assumptions which are created by both researcher and informants (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

In line with this perspective, I believe that an interpretive approach is more suitable for my study. As Hirshman (1986) states, this research includes the socially

constructed subjective interpretations of me; so, the study is not discovered but constructed. My objective in this thesis is to investigate social, psychological, and economical dynamics behind mother followers in the context of Instamoms through interpretations. Finally, I aim to attain and present an accepted understanding on the phenomena.

### 5.4. My Background and Position as Researcher

Besides my PhD work on the theoretical knowledge on social media and influencers, my professional career supports these subjects due to my ten-year work experience on social media. When I began this study, one of the biggest reasons I chose this subject was both the PhD courses and my professional working life. I started to search the literature; I realized that this topic really attracted me. Therefore, the general topic was decided. There was one issue remaining which I had to determine the context of the study. While I was reading the literature and trying to find the theme to incorporate to the research, I lost my mom. This was the turning point for this study; the context was decided as "motherhood" with the help of my adviser, Nilgün Gürkaynak. As the quotation above states, mothers are our first guidance for all periods of our lives. My mother is the inspiration of this research, so the context is the motherhood.

After completing literature part and forming research questions, I chose the research approach for the study as qualitative approach. I always remind myself that be aware of own biases and increase self-consciousness about socially constructed pre-understanding. While the research process continues, the changes in the perspective toward the subject are shaped and different interpretations and evaluations occur.

McCracken (1988) stresses that the researcher should reconsider his/her personal experiences since pre-understanding of the researcher have an impact on the interpretation of the text. It is very hard for the researchers to break this pre-understanding, however, using techniques as taking notes about biases, make other scholars reading your notes, listening different approaches during the research could help as Lincoln and Guba (1985) offers for the research process.

As a researcher, I try to observe human behavior and experience in the context by having rich insights through interpreting and re-interpreting the information. Although positivist stance argues that there is a truth which can be found with the right method, humanistic and naturalistic approaches (relativist stance) support the no objective truth idea (Arnould and Fischer, 1994). My stance towards the nature of reality is in aligning with the interpretivism which argues there is no single truth or objective understanding or interpretation of a source (Hirshman, 1986). Accordingly, I do not try to reach an ultimate truth in this study but aim at presenting deeper understanding of the Instamom context. Considering all these reasons, it is undeniable for me to adapt interpretive approach and use qualitative techniques in this thesis.

Last but not least, it is important to give efforts to free from self-biases, because it is hard for anyone to remove the existing socially constructed pre-understanding during the research process. I always keep in mind this reality, and while I try to make interpretations and investigate meanings from the text, I tried to realize my own biases. Therefore, during this process, I always reminded myself to increase self-consciousness on my meaning creation. I applied never ending triangulations between my biases and the texts in order to be able to capture the effects of my biases on my interpretations. Actually, while I was in the research process, my own perspective was changed towards the topic which made my understanding reach different and deeper interpretations. These are all in parallel to my approach towards the nature of reality. I believe that there is no one single or objective understanding or interpretation of a text. It is difficult to reach for an ultimate understanding, since there are always multiple interpretations not only depending on different perspectives of the interpreters but also different interpretations of the same interpreter in different times.

### 5.5. Research Method and Data Collection

*"The best stories are those which stir people's minds, hearts, and soulsand by so doing give them new insights into themselves, their problemsand their human condition. The challenge is to develop a human sciencethat can more*

*fully serve this aim. The question, then, is not "Is storytelling science?" but "Can science learn to tell good stories?"* (Reason, 1981, p.50)

Researchers adopting an interpretive approach are predominantly conducting with qualitative research designs, qualitative approach helps researchers inspecting and understanding meanings (Creswell, 2015). This study investigates the Instagram experiences of a diverse group of mothers from different social and economic backgrounds, with different beliefs, ages, and life standards. With regards to the subject of the study and the philosophical stance of me, as a researcher, qualitative research, particularly interpretative (hermeneutic) phenomenological approach, is suitable for the study.

Interpretative (hermeneutic) phenomenological approach enables researchers to understand the deepest consideration of the 'lived experiences' of individuals (Abayomi, 2017). The interpretive phenomenology regards the world from the lens of experiences of individuals rather than looking at purely descriptive categories of the real (Smith, 1987). Qualitative research, which includes the phenomenology approach, provides an in-depth understanding of human phenomena and events without breaking their context (Biklen, 1997).

The typical approach used by the interpretive phenomenology is to gather data from semi-structured interviews, since it is more loose way (Smith, 2007). With regards to research approach, qualitative content analysis and semi-structured individual in-depth interviews, which allows respondents to express their thoughts and feelings freely (Berg, 2008), are the most convenient methods for this thesis. As the subject of the study, Instagram mothers (phenomena) and followers follow the Instagram pages and the main context of the research is the Instagram pages, the research methods included semi-structured in-depth interviews as well as content analysis of the selected posts on the pages. In addition to in-depth interviews, the reason for using content analysis method is that Instagram as a social network creates a rhetorical space for its users to be examined visually and textually. Finally, the interview and content data (netnografhic data) were enriched with observations during the interviews. Making content analysis enabled me to make observation about these mothers Instagram page too. Moreover, I took field notes during and after interviews

to remember myself the research setting, my experiences, and the participants' reactions. I also took notes about the shared contents while I was making content analysis.

Beside the content analysis and netnografy, semi-structural in-depth interviews, observation, and expert opinions were applied. Experts were from the disciplines of sociology, gender studies, child medical field and communication.

Combining these three techniques made triangulation, which is the method using to increase the credibility, validity and trustworthiness of research findings, ensured (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). It is clearly defined as;

> *"Triangulation is a process carried out with respect to data-a datum or item of information derived from one source (or by one method or by one investigator) should be checked against other sources (or by other methods or investigators)."* (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.315)

Denzin (1978) stated that four different modes of triangulation could be used: the use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories. In this research, triangulation of different methods and sources were applied by using different data collection modes.

This study was conducted in İzmir, Turkey, during the 2018–2020. It was built on 30 semi-structured interviews, which were accomplished with a diverse group of 25 mothers and 5 mother influencers (Instamoms). For content analysis, 10 Instamoms were used and I added another Instamom from conservative side "busranurcalar" (with 108k followers) in order to create diversity for analyzing profiles of followers. Content analysis and experts opinions' are secondary research techniques in order to realize triangulation for the trustworthiness of the research. This empirical study involved nearly 35 hours of recorded data, 650 pages of transcript, and 120 pages of Instagram content as an output. The next sections of this chapter give more information about the using these techniques.

For data analysis, analysis started when the collection of contents were started, and continued with the interviews. After the data collection stopped, transcription and then the analysis was begun. The analysis was conducted by following the guidelines in the literature (Silverman, 2005; Spiggle, 1994; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). All texts were analyzed according to the main themes, and categorized according to the main categories stated in the literature (Carson et al., 2001). To construct a better clarification of the main categories, selective coding was used to integrate and relate these categories with the research (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Accordingly, four contradictory criteria which are known as maternal double binds (Johnston and Swanson, 2006) were used for the representation of motherhood part, which are parallel to the main themes according to answers of respondents too. For the profile part of the research, AOI (activities, interests, and opinion) items (Peter and Olson, 1990) from the literature were used for the analysis of lifestyle of participants.

Any possible bias during the interpretations was avoided. Therefore, constant triangulations between personal biases, the data, and the theory were conducted. Furthermore, listening personal experiences and stories of the participants, the triangulation across participants' stories were realized (Hopkinson and Hogg, 2005).

### 5.5.1. Semi-structured In-depth Interviews

An interview protocol is the first step of the research because it is the basic tool of conversation (Patton, 2015). As a result, I firstly prepared two interview protocols, one for mother influencers (Instamoms) and one for mother followers, before starting to conduct interviews. While I was preparing the interview guideline, I utilized content analysis data and refer to the related theories explained in the literature part.

Interview protocol helped to mention important topics for conversation, pass smoothly between topics, refer key questions, and probe when it was necessary. The interview protocols in Appendix 1 give an idea on the questions that directed the conversation during the interviews. However, I should admit that the orders of the questions are sometimes changed regarding each interviewee's responses and each conversation due to the flow.

Montoya (2016) suggests that a researcher can categorize the questions for mapping the interview. The process of categorizing can help the researcher see if there are any gaps about the questions. It is recommended that the researcher ideally asks the question most connected to the study's topic in the middle of the interview (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). Accordingly, I started to the interviews with warm-up questions. These questions did not directly relate to the research questions but they made respondents feel comfortable. The aim was to make the rest of interview flow more smoothly. It is important that the interview questions should be prepared with everyday language (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015). The questions should be understandable and accessible considering all participants, so I avoided using theoretical language.

During the interviews, I asked questions one by one and listened carefully by trying not to interrupt participants when they were speaking. I tried to show that I was listening to them through nodding or other gestures, and make them feel my gratitude (Rubin and Rubin, 2012).

As recommended by Patton (2015) a researcher knows which interview questions are most likely to address which research questions, and be able to address them in the interview protocol to ask during the interview. According to this suggestion, I carefully checked research questions and interview questions whether the interview questions were directly related to the research questions. It gave the chance for covering the gaps if there is necessary inquiry.

All of them are female and mother. 25 follower mothers, among 5 selected Instamoms' followers were being interviewed to understand their motivations behind the following of Instamoms and the impact of Instamoms on their buyer behavior. Five Instamoms mothers were being interviewed to deeply understand the context. The participants were between the ages of 20 and 50. To clarify, in-depth interviews involve an interview protocol, and there are several critical questions which help to explore the subjects related to the study. This technique enables the interviewer to have deeper understanding of an idea or response in more detail (Britten, 1999). Acquiring the experiences of the participants with their insights is offering the

original information from them is advantageous sides of in-depth interviews (Creswell, 2015).

Ensuring trust is essential for the reluctant group of people to join the formal research. Therefore, before interviews, I made all participants read the documents explaining the purpose of the research and permission letter to sign. This process is recommended by Creswell (1998) too. It was assured that all information would be confidential and anonymous; so, all the interviewees could feel trust to share private information. Accordingly, the data was collected and kept anonymously. There were no direct signs in this thesis which can relate the data specific to the participants.

Interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes. I conducted interviewees by two ways: face-to-face meetings in places such as homes, offices, or coffee shops. It is important for me to make them feel comfortable. I also had video or audio call through Zoom and Whatsapp for interviews with respondents from other cities and also because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Exclusively, Instamom side of the interviewees was reached through a creative agency, Pickle, and many of them brought up their busy schedules. Therefore, I offered to make the interview by email.

It is crucial that the data reach saturation; therefore I continue to collect data until the data stops addressing new themes, and concepts. Saturation and referring the research questions (Mason, 2002) is more important than the sample size for me during the research.

In terms of the interviewer side, an interviewer should be neutral and not have personal biases if possible. If these conditions are not procured, the interviewee may give the answers according to the interviewer are prone to. As a result, the interview could tend to the interviewer's thoughts (Zaltman, 2003). To eliminate this kind of problems, I tried not to use unnecessary probes and not to manipulate interviewees' answers. I spoke less and listen more to catch what interviewees were attempting to say. In order to encourage them to talk comfortable, I allow them to keep their own pace, pause whenever they want, and also make jokes and use forthright language.

By this way, I was able to understand different nuances of meaning and probe to catch better these nuances. Moreover, I did not use "why" questions, since I do not want to prevent respondents showing their natural feelings. I wanted to let them show their personal consideration of their perception, thoughts, and emotions (Kvale, 1996).

As recommended for the in-depth interviews, they were recorded by a recorder with the consent of the interviewee (Mason, 2002). By this way, I ensured that no information was missed during the interview. All recorded data were manually transcribed by me. While transcribing, I checked and revise the interview questions if necessary (Kvale, 1996). All interviews were realized in Turkish, quotations were translated into English with the help of a Turkish translator and interpreter for preventing semantic shift.

Before conducting the semi-structured interviews, I knew that Instagram as the social networking site is the main context. Therefore, applying a content analysis using Netnography is crucial to support the findings and to gain deeper understanding how mothers react on Instamoms' posts on two subjects: promoted products and the motherhoods. Bryman and Bell (2015) stated that various forms of data could be analyzed through the qualitative content analysis such as textual or visual. This study conducted qualitative textual and visual content analysis with regards to the nature of the Instagram platform.

### 5.5.2. Qualitative Content Analysis and Netnography

Qualitative content analysis is frequently used for analyzing qualitative data. Schreier (2012) spoke of using qualitative content analysis as one of the several qualitative methods for analyzing data and interpreting its meaning, aligned with the context of this research. For this research, it is the supportive method to the semi-structured interviews in order to represent a systematic and objective means of describing phenomena (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992). Therefore, before starting interviews, I completed the content analysis on Instagram to describe the research phenomenon (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005) by creating categories and concepts (Elo and Kyngäs,

2008). This method gave me chance to form a kind of conceptual model or conceptual map.

Qualitative content analysis is employed through three main phases: preparation, organization, and reporting of results. For the first phase as preparation phase, I collected the data from the Instagram pages of selected Instamoms for content analysis. I tried to make sense of the data, and select the unit of analysis. Then, the organization phase is composed of open coding, creating categories, and abstraction (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). The content (messages) of the mothers in this area was divided into categories. These categories were categorized according to the subject of the message, the direction of the communication (positive / negative / neutral), the processed values, the source of the message, the target people / audiences to which the communication is directed, and the time the messages were shared (Berelson, 1952).

Then, I organized the categories, whereby all the data were reviewed for content and coded for correspondence to identified categories in the organization phase (Polit and Beck, 2012). The categories can be considered as valid only if the categories sufficiently present the main concepts (Schreier, 2012). Therefore, I checked all categories in a detailed way.

Content analysis was made discursively for the posts shared by Instamoms by determining the product category. The content (messages) of the mothers in this area was divided into categories as it is suggested. These categories were categorized according to the subject of the message, the direction of the communication (positive / negative / neutral), the values processed, the source of the message, the target people / audiences to which the communication is directed, and the time the messages are shared (Berelson, 1952).

The contents were separated according to the product category as child specific or mom specific. The content under Instamoms' posts were read and coded on the Excel sheet with regards to their groups. Groups were accordingly composed of the motherhood subjects and the changing buyer decision process stages (Desire creation, getting opinion, purchase decision, and post purchase behavior).

Contents have a key role for the study, since, today; it is known that followers on social media are more than content receivers. They have an active role in content creation too (Skalski, Neuendorf and Cajigas, 2017). According to the contents, the representation of motherhood and in which step Instamoms are more effective are trying to be investigated. Below, Table 1 shows information of Instamoms that I scrutinize for the study.

While analyzing the content of the messages, the number of interactions, likes and comments, which are among the basic social media communication criteria, were also be taken into account. Finally, findings were described by the content of the categories describing the phenomenon in the reporting phase.

As of December 1, 2019, there were 400 posts under the page of selected Instamoms on Instagram.I followed these pages from my personal account, recorded textual content in a word document for each Instamom seperately. I also collected images of tese content on an excel sheet. For the content analysis of Instamoms's posts, I use posts from a specific time ranges.

- Contents of 10 Instamoms were selected from a certain time period as the week before New Year: 23-31 December, because 2019 is the New Year period,
- March 2-8, 2020 was chosen as the normal (i.e: not corresponding to a special day) time interval,
- April 13-19, 2020 was examined as a time range after March 10, when the first case was announced, considering the pandemic period and contributes to the research.
- November 22-26, 2020 was chosen as the second pandemic area of the year.

I chose these time ranges since I was interested in the effects of these posts on the buyer behavior process. The buyer decision depends on time as the theory supposes (Solomon, 2006). For that reason, using both a special period of the year and ordinary week as a time range made the research strong to investigate the buyer behavior in different conditions. Covid-19 pandemic period was added during the study because it was important turning point of all of us. Therefore, the sharing during this period could be beneficial for the sake of the research.

I did content analysis by manual for the textual part in this study which traditionally focuses on text itself as a composition of meaning (Rosenberg, Cross and Funabiki, 2011) to make better inferences how words were used and connected to the context. Compare to the manual content analysis, computer-based methods have some disadvantages and limitations as different types of reliability problems (Matthes and Kohring, 2008). Moreover, this research was conducted in Turkish language and most computer programs have not the ability to making analysis in natural language of tis research. Also for smaller samples, manual methods are addressed as more efficient and effective than computer-based methods (Matthes and Kohring, 2008).

Beside qualitative content analysis, netnography was used as a supplement to content analysis data, because it is stated that it enables the researcher to gain thoughtful insights about the phenomena in an aloof environment (Langer and Beckman, 2005). With netnography, visual and textual content analysis, through Instagram, become more effective, since it helps to perceive the context in its natural environment and form data in an organic way (Galica and Chou, 2014). Kozinetz (2014) directly stated that the output of a netnography through grounded interpretations can provide a detailed representation of the lived online experience of cultural members. For the context of this research, these methods gave me chance to gain insights about perceptions and concerns of mothers and Instamoms beside semi-structured, in-depth interviews.

Finally, Instagram gives us all visual and textual imagery for the research. For this research, visual data includes images posted on Instagram between the selected dates by selected Instamoms beside textual qualitative analysis. Posts that I made content analysis were selected as the starting point for this particular study to allow for a better understanding of the context before starting the interviews.

Visual images were collected to capture the underlying perception of Instamoms from the eyes of follower mothers. According to Barthes (1977), there is a direct relationship between images and the content. Furthermore, he states that two types of messages for the photography: denoted (objective) and connoted (subjective) messages. First one is what the photograph represents, and the latter one is about the

perspective of a viewer. Accordingly, this study used visual images as the data too to understand the context in a profound way.

During visual data was gathered beside the textual data, these visuals were analyzed at the same time. I added the visual data into organized categories too. It is stated in Chandler (2005) that these visuals are important to gain full understanding how my respondents interpret "the motherhood" context on Instagram posts. By this way, textual and visual analyses would be ensured in categories and support the main themes. Considered that the main research question of this study was investigated to understand the reactions of follower mothers regarding buyer behavior against post of Instamoms, Instagram is the best place as a context, because it serves both visual and textual mediums. In the findings chapter, examples from visual data will be presented.

By employing content analysis and netnografy, this study collects content, photography and comment from posts of Instamoms from online platform, Instagram to gain a detailed insight. Analyzing the content made me gain the rich understanding on the practices and experiences of the social group as Instamoms and mother followers. In line with Krippendorf (1969), content analysis is a valid method in which a researcher can make specific inferences from text and it is a widely used qualitative research technique (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). Since the context of study is Instamoms, who share contents on Instagram, a social media platform, it is important to scan and analyze this interactive media content.

When the research is conducted, expert opinions, field notes and projective techniques are also applied. Since this study also employs netnographic research techniques to collect data, I also made semi-participant observations online in accordance with the nature of netnography (Kozinets, 2015). I followed selected Instamoms pages and their posts and stories every day. I read most of comments that followers made under these posts. These shaped my understanding of the context of Instamoms and give a chance to collect significant insights and describe the existing situation while experiencing it from both the Instamoms' and flower mothers' points of view.

I am not a mother myself yet, but all my friends have children. Therefore, this gave me the chance to observe their daily routines, relations with their children, motherhood style, social media usage and buying behaviors. By this way, I become more familiar with the motherhood context. This step is also very beneficial for the research since observation enables a written photograph of the situation about the research (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Finally, expert opinions also enriched my perception during the research. Following Porter et al. (2011), the expert-opinion technique argues that experts have more knowledge than others about a certain topic; so collecting this knowledge from experts made me enrich my findings and made them more credible. Affirming previous research, applying expert opinions for the motherhood and social media not only allowed me to observe different views from different disciplines firsthand and become more familiar with the research topic but also provided the opportunity to meet and interview professionals from different disciplines. A thorough list of the experts that I interviewed during this research is presented in Table 6.

### 5.6. The Research Context and Sampling

Completing the selection of my research method part, the next step is explaining the population and the sample. This study investigates the context of Instamoms in Turkey. Before passing to this stage, I first want to briefly elucidate the research context.

Mothers always trust the experiences of other mothers for advice on the motherhood or product recommendations about mothers or children. With regards to the digital shift in the world, mothers make up has changed as all other individuals and communities. This world is brave new world, which is mainly experienced in the social networks. Most of the mothers are captivated the social media increasing the degree to their presence publicly in these platforms, mainly on Instagram. Global Influencer Survey (2016) states that 80% of influencers prefer to post their original content on Instagram. Instagram is the main platform that mothers prefer too, with other words, Instagram is their playground. By this way, their voices are amplified beyond their home.

This new phenomenon affects purchases of other mothers heavily influenced by social media channels, and creates the pressure to 'have-it-all-and-show-it' influences on them. According to survey of the Influence Center Survey (2020), mom bloggers (influencers) are line up third to influence purchase decision after friends, families and food bloggers on Instagram. In Turkish context, there is not specific research on this topic, for this reason, this study will also serve valuable insights to the context of Instamoms on Instagram in Turkey.

As the study examines this context, the sample should be composed of this specific group of moms and their followers on Instagram platform. Beside this, participants are usually based on personal ties in almost all qualitative research (Johnson, 2015). Therefore, I determined interviewees through purposive sampling considering all factors. Purposive sampling is the technique of selecting individuals related to the phenomenon of interest (Cresswell and Plano, 2011). It is a key informant technique which is a form of non-probability sampling based on the researcher's own judgment when determining members of the population to participate in their study (Bernard, 2002). For this research, this method is applied for Turkish Instamoms whose followers' are above 200.000 in numbers. I chose 5 Instamoms for interviewing among 10 Instamoms selected for the study, presented in Table 3. These 5 Instamoms were chosen based on their willingness to participate in the study because some of them did not want to join as an interviewee. The ability to communicate experiences and opinions expressively and reflectively is an important criterion (Bernard, 2002; Spradley, 1979), so willingness is very crucial issue for being the interviewee.

After interviewing the Instamoms, I employed convenience sampling, which is defined as a method where the researching subjects of the population who are easily accessed (Lisa, 2008). Interviewee subjects were selected among the followers of selected Instamoms, and again with regards to their willingness to join the research (Bernard, 2002). First interviewees were from my social network, and then they offered one or two participants who follow these Instamoms and each new referral was evaluated until the research became saturated (Vogt, 1999).

The purposive and convenience samplings allowed me to reach the target population. Table 4 provides information about the Instamoms participants and Table 5 summarizes the profile and the background information of the follower mother participants.

Table 4. The list of top 10 Instamoms in Turkey

| Number | Name of Instamom | Number of Followers |
|--------|------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | İmren Gürsoy | 517k |
| 2 | Pınar Dönmez | 429k |
| 3 | Gizem Zor | 422k |
| 4 | Merve İpek Öztürk | 373k |
| 5 | Melek İçmeli | 349k |
| 6 | Melek Hayta | 345k |
| 7 | Yonca Kunacav | 237k |
| 8 | Gül Kütevin | 227k |
| 9 | Cansu Efe | 221k |
| 10 | Bohe Mother | 209k |

Table 5. Details about participants as an Instamoms

| Name of Instamom | Age | Education | Working Status |
|---|---|---|---|
| Instamom 1 | 38 | University Child Development | Managing a hotel with her husband |
| Instamom 2 | 34 | University Literature Teacher | Not Working |
| Instamom 3 | 34 | University | Not Working |
| Instamom 4 | 41 | University | Not Working |
| Instamom 5 | Not specified. | Not Specified | Not Working |

Table 6. Details about participants as a follower mother

| Number | Participants | Age | Education | Working Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | P1 | 33 | MA | Working / Group Leader |
| 2 | P2 | 36 | University | Working/ Specialist |
| 3 | P3 | 35 | MA | Working/ Architect |
| 4 | P4 | 30 | University | Working/ Employee |
| 5 | P5 | 35 | University | Working/ Executive |
| 6 | P6 | 45 | MA | Working/ Director |
| 7 | P7 | 35 | University | Working on her own job |
| 8 | P8. | 31 | MA | Working on her own job |
| 9 | P9 | 33 | University | Not Working |
| 10 | P10 | 35 | University | Not Working |
| 11 | P11 | 36 | University | Working as Specialist |
| 12 | P12 | 34 | MA | Working on her own job |
| 13 | P13 | 32 | University | Working as Specialist |
| 14 | P14 | 35 | University | Not Working |
| 15 | P15 | 33 | University | Not Working |
| 16 | P16 | 35 | University | Having own fashion brand |
| 17 | P17 | 34 | University | Not Working |
| 18 | P18 | 42 | University | Working at Bank |
| 19 | P19 | 29 | University | Working at Bank |
| 20 | P20 | 35 | High School | Not Working |
| 21 | P21 | 37 | University | Photographer |
| 22 | P22 | 21 | High School | Working/ Cleaner |
| 23 | P23 | 35 | University | Not Working |
| 24 | P24 | 34 | PhD | Working |
| 25 | P25 | 40 | MA | Working/Consular Official |

Regarding purposive and convenience sampling, the trustworthiness and generalizability of the data may be a concern as participant selection bias (Van

Meter, 1990). This potential problem was solved by having a large sample size. Furthermore supporting the interview data with content analysis, netnografy, and expert opinions eliminated the sampling bias. As it was mentioned in the research method section, employing triangulation, as multiple data collecting techniques, is efficient to answer the research questions and minimize sampling bias (Tashakkor and Teddli, 1998). This study applied the triangulation of data collecting techniques, including in-depth interviews, content analysis from social media posts, and expert opinions.

To sum up, this study investigates 10 Turkish Instamoms' Instagram pages, which are shown in the Table 3 above, and contents, during 2019-2020 period. Instamoms were chosen with regards to their number of followers, above 200.000 followers. The research was conducted through qualitative content analysis of 400 posts and 30 semi-structured in-depth interviews, which were performed with a mix group of 25 followers and 5 Instamoms. Additionally, to understand the relationship between contents of posts and photography through content analysis, the study is applied to netnography as a methodology too. Visual and textual content analysis, through Instagram, served as an additional source of semi-structural in-depth interviews as its nature (Galica and Chou, 2014). Since this study tries to examine the influence of "Instamoms" on the buyer decision process of their followers, Instagram, was selected as the netnographic context to make content analysis through posts and comments. Finally, all these techniques were enriched the expert opinions. The names and the professions of the experts are stated on Table 6 below.

Table 7. Details about the experts

| Number | Name of Participant | Education | Working Status |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Olca Sürgevil Dalkılıç | Phd | Assoc. Prof. / Business Administration |
| 2 | Itır Bağdadi | PhD | Academician/ Gender Studies |
| 3 | Betül Özkul Cura | MA | Academician/ Child Development |
| 4 | T.P | MA | Child Nutrition Specialist |
| 5 | C.İ | AM | Child Art Therapist |

# CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS

In this chapter of the thesis, the results of the qualitative analysis are presented. This section of the thesis is based on the qualitative study, conducted in the form of qualitative content analysis via netnografy, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and expert views – shown and summarized in Tables 4, 5, and 6. Kindly remark that the codes included in the labels of the verbatim references denote the descriptions of the categories from Instagram contents stated in Table 7 and 8.

In the first part, the categories of representation of motherhood by Instamoms are identified, different from the ones that are stated in the literature, based on the ideas and experiences of other mothers who follow them. The representation of motherhood is in constant flux depending on socio-cultural context (Porter and Kelso, 2006). In this thesis, the representation of motherhood is evaluated according to four contradictory criteria which are known as maternal double binds (Johnston and Swanson, 2006):

- Selfish/ Selfless
- Independence/ Dependence
- Success/ Failure
- Natural/ Unnatural

The study continues in revealing the profile match between Instamom and follower mothers regarding the concept of lifestyle. It is the second wave of psychographics which puts together 'psychology', and 'demographics' (Demby, 1974). Firstly, the personality concept used for psychographic research, but then, it is replaced with the concept of lifestyle (Lazer, 1963).  Lifestyle is defined as the ways how people live and spend their time and money (Kaynak and Kara, 2001). People have their own patterns of action that distinguish people from one another (Chaney, 1996), so it helps to understand people's actions, their reasons and meanings. The concept of lifestyle is very crucial, for psychographic research, even that thepersonality concept is currently equated with lifestyle research (Kahle and Chiagouris, 1997).

Lifestyle was investigated using AIO items which are *activities, interests* and *opinion* (Peter and Olson, 1990). To explain each item, activities are are like work, hobbies, social events, vacation, entertainment, clubs, community, shopping, and sports and so on. Interest is some events or topics such as family, home, job, community, recreation, fashion, food, media, and achievements. Lastly, opinions are described with descriptive beliefs as social issues, politics, business, economics, education, and products, future, culture (Plummer, 1974). The profile match between Instamoms and their followers are examined through AOI items.

After completing these parts, I discuss the effects or influence of Instamoms on follower mothers' buyer decision process by focusing on the promoted products in the second part of findings chapter. Then, the study ends in understanding the dark sides of Instamoms, strategies of Instamoms regarding promoted products, through the lens of their follower mothers.

## 6.1. Feelings Associated with the Representation of Motherhood

The motherhood is subject to strongly challenged and usually highly idealized representations (Woodward, 2003). Motherhood is observable and attributable through the discursive and symbolic regimes generating meanings about the experience and identities (Woodward, 2003). The experience of the participants and contents from Instamoms' Instagram pages related to the motherhood reveal the various representations that mothers face in social media.

Furthermore, as this thesis has demonstrated in the literature review, the representation of "motherhood" has contradictions between the themes of selfish versus selfless, independence versus dependence, success versus failure, and natural versus unnatural. Based on the social media experiences of a diverse group of women and the selected contents from Instamoms' pages, this part of the findings explores categories of the representation, such as good mother, good wife, mother-child relationship, motivation for success, mother roles. In doing so, this first part of the findings contributes to the literature by discovering the representation categories on Instagram in the context of Instamoms.

### 6.1.1. Selfish/ Selfless

The selfish/selfless theme is determined by two factors: self-motivation and self-identity. Self-motivation reflects a belief, attitude, or behavior is to be a good mother and to be good to family. Respondents cited a number of feelings associated with self-motivation as being a mother. Among those are being self-sacrificed mothers; independent self-dependent mothers, being a good wife; being good to herself, having sophisticated mother identity, having modern or traditional mother identity, and in the context of digital age, being a part of an online community.

Traditional Turkish mothers are usually considered as self-sacrificed mothers. Even today, mothers connect themselves to this feeling.

> *I always thought that I didn't want to be like my mother, because she did everything for her children. Now I know that to be like my mother is the greatest thing that could ever happen to me.* (P1, 33)

Each participant mothers in this research had her personal stories to tell the feeling of "being a good mother like her mother" due to the good mom motivations. For some, such as Deniz (33) or Duygu (36), this was the desire to fit into her motherhood to society's definition of "motherhood" due to be included the society.

> *The concept of family is always at the forefront for me. That's how I saw it in my family. We are very fond of each other. The relationship between my father and my mother has always been like this. We are continuing it. I'm trying to live the same.* (P2, 36)

From social media, Instagram, and influencers, today's mainstream (social) media have a significant influence on how mothers understand and represent motherhood. Furthermore, mothers are influenced to feel that their motherhood should be perfect, because of the dominant representation style in social media, such as Instamoms' motherhood representation which are primarily produced for follower mothers. Participants highlighted that to represent the ideal motherhood; they had to be able to be both care themselves, their husbands and their children too. Otherwise they feel

cringed at their motherhood; they felt "incapable," not only because of their relations with their children, but because of the prevalent idea that they would be the ideal mothers if only they are perfect. However, the question is that is this possible for today's modern life? Some participants believe that it is very hard.

> *If they have a life like Instagram, I really want to congratulate them. Some pretend they don't have caregivers. They give the impression of raising a child alone. Their children are taken care of. Even changing Demir's clothes is like a war, we are in a crisis, but they change the child's clothes 5-6 times on Instagram. In the evening, the table is being prepared for her husband. She says she took care. The only care I have done since Demir was born is nail filing. This situation really creates a bit of morale upset in people.* (P3, 35)

Considering that representing the motherhood goes hand in hand with changing what "being a mother" means through Instamoms, it is indisputable how affecting the representation of motherhood is for mothers such as Ezgi. Due to the influence of Instamoms in representation aspects of motherhood, other mothers receive powerful messages that being a good mother depend deeply on fitting into the standard understanding of Instamoms' motherhood. It is not only being a good mother but also doing all the things at the same time, such as childcaring and being attractive. Many Instamoms share photos with make-up even in the bedtime. For instance, İmren Gürsoy, who is full time influencer as an Instamom, share a photo with her son in which she looks great. (Figure 9)



Figure 9. İmren Gürsoy's Instagram post with her son in the bed-time

The absence of mothers which is natural and as mothers in the real life in social media creates a one-way representation of motherhood, which promotes selfless and perfect mothers over real-life mothers (Johnston and Swanson, 2003) and tells mothers that they should be selfless and perfect.

Similar influence actually applies to other Instamoms, who are also following other Instamoms, such as Tuğba Parıltı, who has a popular Instagram page among mothers. She is a new mother with a three-month baby.

> *Even I'm trying to show some good sides. For example, they send messages, it's nice that you spend time on social media, it means that your child does not have any gas problems, our child is sleeping, he never stops, I can't even comb my hair. I always answer privately so that they don't feel bad. My child has the same problems. There are days when I hardly get out of bed and walk around in the same pajamas all day, but I cannot share this on social media.* (P8, 31)

It is like a competition for influencer jobs in the social media/ Instagram against their mother counterparts, each Instamoms must perform higher levels of idealized motherhood (Henderson, 2005). According to the data, half of the selected Instamoms are selfish, and half of them are selfless mothers (Table 8 shows the distribution).

### 6.1.2. Independence/ Dependence

The independent/dependent theme was related to the style of the mother–child relationship as independent or dependent. The mother–child interactions evaluated as normative caretaking, mother–child independence, mother–child dependence, or an exaggerated need for mother–child connection (Johnston and Swanson, 2003). Normative caretaking shows mothers providing basic needs like food, clothing, education, health care, or affection to children. Instamoms share many contents about this stage, although many contents are sponsored ones. For instance, Cansu Efe shared a post with her son. In the photo, she shows her baby caring with the brand on the photo. (Figure 10)

Figure 10. Cansu Efe's post with tagging baby diaper

In the similar way, Instamom, Pınar Dönmez talks about baby health care in her post. (Figure 10)



Figure 11. Pınar Dönmez's post on baby healthcare

> *There isn't much time left, except for Lila, because I dedicate almost all of my time to her, but when she's sleeping, she sleeps for three hours at 11 am, and I can spare 10-15 minutes for myself during these three hours. Apart from that, Lila has food. She sleeps at 9 pm. She goes to bed at 9, but look, she hasn't slept today.* (P4, 30)

> *My lifestyle is on top of that right now. I spend special time with family. I love doing activities with them. Eating together is very important to me. It is very*

*important and valuable for us that the three of us play games together in the evenings after my wife takes time for herself. It is also very important for the development of the child when we spend quality time.* (P5, 35)

The quotations above emphasize how mothers in real life spend their times for normative caring for their children. Similar to Instamoms, follower mothers emphasize spending time with their children too. Some participants underline that mothers need more time for their self-caring. What they need is time for their own selves to their individual lives.

*I spend it in the office from half past 8 in the morning to 7 at night. In the rest of the time, that is, after 7 pm, I am somewhat comfortable in that sense, since we have a boarding assistant at home. I play games with them, I feed them, I wash them during bathing hours, I make them sleep. At about half past 10 it's all over. I take the rest of my time to myself. This is also an important time period for me because you are busy at work, when I come home, there is a time period that I devote to my own interests only after 10:30 with the children.* (P6, 45)

Mother–child independence was explained with a good message on Parents magazine as when mothers indulge their fears more, they will probably be more (The Parents Magazine, 1998). Therefore, some mothers prefer being more independent from their children.

*Stand on your own feet. Not my slave. I don't want him to be a person to shoot my triples. I don't want him to grow up with my whim, my fears. That's why, those who think very pink like that, oh my dear, I don't know yes dear I love the same thing, but at some point, my own love should not be his fear, rather than raising him in this world with my own love in order to be free.* (P7, 35)

Besides participants, being independent from children is a situation for discourse of some Instamoms not by verbally but through visuals. Even if is in the form of visuals, some Instamoms mention the importance of children's independent activities

such as Merve İpek Öztürk (41) and shared the individual contents from their children free times. (Figure 12)



Figure 12. Post from Merve İpek Öztürk on the individual activity

On the other hand, mother– child dependence could be elaborated with the feelings of too strong attachment. For our culture, intensive mothering is very ordinary, therefore most participants that are asked "What comes to your mind when I ask about the motherhood?" answered this question in a same way: deeply feels love her child/children.

> *Motherhood is crazy to me. You have to love a being that you gave birth to much more than yourself. Your whole lifestyle is shaped by it. You are doing this willingly. It's an amazing feeling.* (P5, 35)

> *A family is very important to me. I feel safe. Having a child also satisfied my hunger for love. I love animals. I had a lot of cats. Peace, trust, warmth are always my first priority when I have a family.* (P8, 31)

> *You forget to be tired, to be sick. You realize how strong you are physically. You spend the day sleeping very little. The happiness it gives is truly indescribable.* (P9, 33)

> *It's very important to me. I was separated with my one and a half son. That's why career, freedom, goals etc. are not even in the 2nd or 3rd plan for me, the*

*most important thing for me right now is family. It is very important to have peace in the family and to be together, so it is sad that even one person in the family is missing.* (P2, 36)

The quotation above clearly illustrates how a mother feels deeply the connection with her child. It is very common see the same theme in the pages of Instamoms. (Figure 13, Figure 14)



Figure 13. Post from Gül Kütevin on the mother– child dependence



Figure 14. Post from Merve İpek Öztürk on the mother– child dependence

Finally, an exaggerated need for connection is that a mother wants to do her own job, but a child demands her interest more. This is very common for working mothers. As in the case of P6 (45), due to the absence of mother in the day, child wants more care and demand more in the evening which causes pressure on mothers. For Instamoms side, there is half distribution for this category.

*6.1.3. Success/ Failure*

The success/failure double bind was mentioned through: competence in domestic and public spheres, motivation for success in public and domestic spheres, and acknowledgment of work/family tension (Johnston and Swanson, 2003). The representation of motherhood was investigated with competence or incompetence in the domestic sphere, public sphere, or both. Public sphere in this research could be accepted as social media, which is a new public sphere for today.

From daily life to social media, we live in a society where the motherhood images are heavily edited, which dictates to mothers on social media how they should treat their children and also how they should look. As representing motherhood with perfection became more pronounced and remarkable in social media, mother followers began to raise controversial reactions over photo manipulations, especially among working mothers.

Mothers such as P11 (36) indicate the damaging effects of not depicting "real mothers" in social media on mothers' self-esteem. Mothers want to be accepted their so-called imperfections, and not to be aspired for what Instamoms expose as perfection. However, there are some participants who like this tendency and not to realize that these actions on social media are like showing off. For that reason, there is incompetence between their domestic and public, namely social media sphere.

> *I mean, there are a few names I follow about motherhood. For example, there is a mother, I buy the toys she promotes. There is another mother that I have received a lot of inspiration from, whom I like and follow with this regard.* (P4, 31)

> *There is bohemother with 3 sons. I know that. There is a Melek İçmeli. I look at people I find natural. I also look at some popular ones so as not to stay off the agenda. They give a link, I see, obviously. It's not surprising. We're all looking.* (P10, 35)

Competence in the domestic sphere was frequently exemplified in the Instamoms' pages. Examples of incompetence in the domestic sphere included images about

physical appearance, being a perfect wife, doing everything at the same time and so on. A number of posts on losing weight are also mentioned as reasons for looking good as a mother. Some Instamoms, such as Pınar Dönmez, mentions the ease of going of a diet, preparing healthy food and doing exercises all result in perceptions of a perfect body for mothers. Melek İçmeli, an Instamom, also shared post about her diet before summer.



Figure 15. Post of Pınar Dönmez on losing weight



Figure 16. Post of Melek İçmeli on losing weight

Competence in the public sphere included representations of mothers in the workforce. However, there is a little mention on working mothers in Instamoms' Instagram pages although working mothers represents quite majority. For instance Melike (35) stressed the point that she likes Instamoms who really work.

> *There are real workers. I also know this from Müge. For example, the bohemother is a really working woman. She works seriously. There is outside of that. There's a girl about makeup. She has a team. For example, Merve Ozkaynak, she has been there long ago. For example, I look up to Rachel a lot. She doesn't grin either because she's born into it. They seem more sincere and logical to me.* (P10, 35*)*

As a result, being an Instamom is a full time job; however, they do not mention anything about this part. Therefore, follower mothers feel more on the failure side for themselves. Only four of selected Instamoms touch on failure themes, but it is very rare. There are very few references to tension between work and family life for mothers.

### *6.1.4. Natural/Unnatural*

The natural/unnatural bind involved the role of mother and the flow of information between public and private spheres. The representation of motherhood is presented as naturally qualified to fulfill the mother role or in need of expert help.

> *I divide the expectant mothers into two. The first group is those who are ready to be mothers from birth and those who want to be mothers. In the second group, mothers who do not want. I am in the second group. Before Demir was born, I didn't feel like I had a child, before I kissed and smelled him. Things changed after he was born. Therefore, when I think of motherhood, apart from good feelings, I also think of anxiety and uneasiness.* (P3, 35)

On the other hand, my interviewees from Instamoms, such as Gül Kütevin (30), consider the motherhood as coming from nature; she means that when she learnt that she was pregnant, she thought that she was always a mother. Therefore, she did not

need any expert help. In other words, all these aforementioned traits are considered natural. However, the statements or images of Instamoms shared in social media create an imaginary and impossible ideal motherhood that makes mothers such as Deniz (33) feel inadequate and non-unique, because being in need of help considered as a defect.

> *Most of them are single-child mothers, their first child; I have the same books they shared. If I have 30,000 followers, I can produce similar content. Everyone shares similar things. They pass each other. After all, no one is born from the womb of their mother knowing motherhood. Everyone is influenced by each other. Most of them hide that they have a caregiver. Is it possible?* (P1, 33)

A professional from child development department from İzmir Economy University, Betül Özkul Cura as a child development expert mentioned that the attitudes of Instamoms as an ideal image affect mothers in some way, negative or positive, but they have an impact. Althought there are some Instamoms who keep their baby sitters as a secret, there are some who do not lie about taking help and advice, but they do not share anything about this issue. According to Olca Sürgevil as an expert of business administration, expert advices are important for mothers and they should not be seen as a defect. Giving tips for mothers in basic care as examples of the public-to-domestic information flow. Similar themes are seen in some mother magazines and books.

Natural/ unnatural dilemma has become common, not only in child caring area, but also about physical appearance on social media such as Instagram, with selfies alone. To define this term, the selfie, is a photograph that one has taken of oneself, with a smartphone or webcam and shared via social media (The Oxford Dictionaries, 2013). Examples of selfies from some Instamoms accounts are shown in Figure 16 and 17.

Figure 17. Selfie of İmren Gürsoy

While technologies of social media develop, Instagram offers photo filters that allow Instagram users to edit their photos to adjust the imperfections. Since selfie sharing enables influencers to present their selective selfies with filters, this causes maintaining positive and perfect self-view. The filtering and selfies are very common among Instamoms, so follower mothers are affected these postings.



Figure 18. Filtered Selfie of Yonca Kunacav

The feelings associated with the representation of motherhood, in terms of contradictions between the themes of selfish versus selfless, independence versus dependence, success versus failure, and natural versus unnatural representing key components of the core themes are summarized in Table 7.

Table 8. Key Components of the core themes on the representation of motherhood

| Core Themes | The Feelings Associated Representation of Motherhood |
|---|---|
| **Selfish** | Self-Motivation<br>Self Identity |
| **Selfless** | Self Sacrifice |
| **Independence** | Normative Caretaking |
| **Dependence** | Exaggerated Need for Mother |
| **Success** | Competence with Public Sphere |
| **Failure** | Incompetence with Public Sphere |
| **Natural** | To fullfill the mother role |
| **Unnatural** | Need for Expert Views |

Besides, it is the time to learn about how follower mothers view the representation of motherhood as per their following Instamoms. Table 8 was created by analyzing the content of Instamoms' pages and interpreting the respondents' answers given to the questions about Instamoms. According to the data, the distribution between categories are tried to match the selected Instamoms.

Table 9. The representation of motherhood of Instamoms

| | | Core Themes of the Representation of Motherhood | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Selfish | Selfless | Independence | Dependence | Success | Failure | Natural | Unnatural |
| **Name of Instamom** | İmren Gürsoy | x | | x | | x | | x | |
| | Pınar Dönmez | | x | | x | | | x | |
| | Gizem Zor | x | | x | | | x | | x |
| | Merve İpek Öztürk | | x | | x | x | | | |
| | Melek İçmeli | | x | | x | | x | x | |
| | Melek Hayta | | | | | | | | |
| | Yonca Kunacav | x | | x | | | x | | x |
| | Gül Kütevin | | x | | x | x | | | |
| | Cansu Efe | x | | x | | | x | | x |
| | Bohe Mother | x | | x | | x | | x | |

## 6.2. Instamoms and Followers: Understanding the Profiles

During data collection, different demographic characteristics such as education level, age, number of children, marital status and background culture were collected. The analysis showed that these demographics affect the social profile of followers. Rather than making the categorization solely on demographics, I aim to present the profile match between two parties. Therefore, interview protocol includes some questions to deeply understand the lifestyle of participants.

To start with, a portrayal of social profile of follower mothers is presented to have a better and deeper understanding on the profile match between two parties and its effects on the representation of motherhood. Then, the findings will continue to indicate the profile match part.

### 6.2.1. Social Profiles of Follower Mothers and the Representation of Motherhood

Through observing profiles, the research aims to answer Research question 2 and 3. Saying "the profile", the research investigates the social profile of follower mothers based on their lifestyle concept which is examined with AIO items (Peter and Olson, 1994):

- Activities
- Interests
- Opinion

According to the findings of the research, one of the most prominent factors for their preference of followings is their lifestyle, which is related to their social profiles. Besides the demographic characteristics, their activities, interests and opinions affect the social profile deeply. For instance, family life brings giving priority to the expenses of the family activities, which is directly related to income of family. One's own interest will be directly affected for income too. All of these factors create the social profile of followers.

> *When I get some money, I spend it on the my own expenses, since my husband make all expenditure for our house and child. Normally you buy things for yourself when you are single,but when you got married, you spend on the needs of the family. However I was lucky to reach all of my desires.* (P12, 34)

> *We really show respects for our personal interests. I still pay for my own activities like going to the reformer or anything aout myself. Actually, I noticed that it changes a little bit after my daughter.Now, I prefer to doing different activities with her. I know that it is a very lucky thing to be able to do whatever you want to do with your childre. Income is important for this.* (P4, 33)

Some of the participants state that, after getting married, they've increased the amount of money they spend on clothing, make-up or self-care products. These participants are mainly working mothers, but their husbands' incomes are also very high. There are also some participants who state that they prefer to spend their money on the needs of the family instead of their personal expenses after getting married and having a child.

*This new life, I mean having a child, brings in new expenses to our life. Therefore, we need to cut our personal expenses from our activities and interests. We have to make tradeoff between the family's needs and our social life needs.* (P13, 32)

As already mention at the beginning of this section, lifestyle is a factor determining social profiles. When mother participants are asked about their activities and interests, most of them answered that they prefer doing activities with her children. Activities include playing in play groups, sports, reading books. Most of these participant have little child, so actitivies are limited to pre-school activities.

*I walk with Defne and Leyla every weekend in İzmir International Fair. It is a good thing to do many things with your child.* (P14, 35)

*İzim goes playing group every Tuesday and Thursday. For summer, I organize the similar group in Çeşme, because we will be in our summer house. It is good for me too, since when childrens are playing, we as mothers drink coffee and speak to each other.* (P15, 33)

The analysis showed that opinion factor affects the social profile in a meaningful way. The difference is observed between having more modern lifestyle mothers and more conservative ones. Actually, on social media, there are emerging Instamoms from conservative side. They are usually very rich and show their oriental lifestyles and opinions such as Hülya Aslan (with 561k followers) and Büşra Nur Söylemez (1.1 mn followers). However, these people were not in the sample of this thesis, it is the limitation of the research. Therefore, except for the selected Instamoms, no detailed analysis was made for the others.
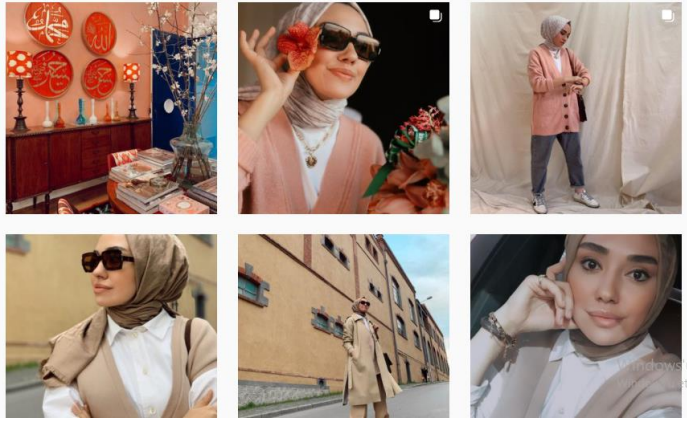
Figure 19. Page view of Hülya Aslan
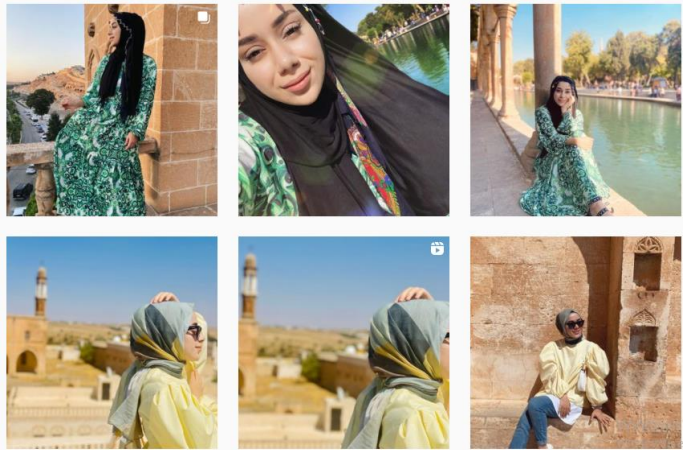


Figure 20. Page view of Büşra Nur Söylemez

### 6.2.2. The Representation of Motherhood Through Social Profiles and the Extended Self

The participants reveal that opinion is very determinant factor considering their lifestyle. This affects their view of the representation of motherhood. Opinion factor is also related the concept of extended self, since extended self refers to how people feel attached to possessions as part of themselves as ideas, opinions, and people (Belk, 1988). In the context of Instagram, mothers looks like extending themselves with opinion and life style as an integral part of the representation motherhood. According to 78% participants' statement, the lifestyle factors seem to important reasons of their motherhood style. Most of them did not state clearly but it can be understood that the representation of motherhood varies according to profile of

follower mothers. Mothers regard Instamoms and their community to express status and lifestyles in online contexts (Zhao and Russell, 2009). In the representation of the motherhood, mothers may combine their personal characteristics with an idealized self (idealized mothers with ideal lifestyle), that is, how they would like to be or live.

When they were probed about the representation of motherhood, the responses revealed that the presence of the concept of lifestyle is clear. The verbatim reference shown below provides a good summary of responses as well:

*"I think that my motherhood is in the conventional sense like my mom. I am modern person like her. It is a strong feeling coming from your inner personality."* (P16, 35*)*

*"My first wish is to ensure that my daughter has a good life in the future. For me, her future is more important than everything. I want to make sure that she has a good education like mine. You'll see that life is built on her when you have a child".* (P5, 35)

*"What matters is my children's future. I'll do everything I can to ensure that they are not alienated from the rest of the society. That's the reason of my motherhood for my children."* (P17, 34)

Even follower mothers do not have much income for spending on reaching their own desires; most of the participants prefer to spend those resources on their children's expenses. These mothers are selfless mothers.

All participants have similar motivations for making sure that they give their children a good life and protect them from alienation, stress or disappointment among their friends. For instance, P18 (42) stated that they live in a rich district; however their family income is not enough for luxury brands like their neighbors. Therefore, her children feel themselves ineligible. It is inevitable that physical similarities and differences take young children's attention (Brooks and Lewis, 1976). It is the same for clothing too. Most participants want to look others in terms of clothing

standardts. By this way they prevent social isolation of their children due to their clothes or other social opportunities.

### *6.2.3. The Profile Match Between Instamom and Follower Mothers*

This part of the findings reveals the prominent themes regarding the profile match between Instamoms and follower mothers. The social profile match denotes the expected similarities between the lifestyle of Instamoms and follower mothers. The similarities of lifestyle between an Instamom and her followers define the profil match derived. Lifestyle similarities also signals about the life vision in terms of health, beauty, male/female identities, work/money/time considerations, and the use of leisure, partner relations, family relations, friends, culture, politics, and economics (Vyncke, 2002). Through, profile match investigations, the research aim to answer Research question 4.

Now, it is the time to learn about which Instamoms the follower mothers prefer to follow.

The answers of the respondents for following Instamoms include social (activities and interests), economic, and cultural (opinions) factors. Majority of the respondents cite the lifestyle of Instamoms as the primary factor. Almost unanimously, they state that they follow an Instamom if they think she is natural. Being similar to the real mothers affects their following preferences. The activities for children are perceived to affect their preferences as well. Moreover, the credibility issue is very important for respondent, they follow if they believe that an Instamom is a competent about all issues covered by motherhood. Finally, respondents usually mention that Instamoms try to impose wealthy lifestyle. It is interesting that they stress that they do not like this trend, but they still continue to follow.

> *I am very fond of following child psychologists; I think they become an Instamom or influencer too for many mothers. They are broadcasting live. There are some other food blog pages. It gives you an idea of what to cook for dinner for your children. I follow one just because I don't like it. As I watch, I get established, but I continue to follow to watch how far a person can go. Her*

*name is Ece Zaim. She appeals to the very wealthy. It seems to me that Ece Zaim is sharing by showing her life and saying that's how I live. (P2, 36)*

*I also have my own account on Instagram. I follow these accounts. One of the accounts that I love and care about is the nanny of tevhidedadı, akademisyenanne, gulkütevin and bohemother. Apart from that, I used to follow Şermin Yaşar's account; she starts to share more general posts now so I do not follow her anymore. (P5, 35)*

*I also follow Instamoms. I think some of them use their children for just this purpose. For example, I see people sharing diapers with a child who is 5 years old. It sounds silly at a certain point, but it's actually very useful when you have a child and don't have time to research. I take care to follow people who share in a more natural way, not just for making money, and whose words can be taken into account. (P3, 35)*

Despite this fact, according to some respondents, Instamoms who has more flashy life are better profiles; since they bring their life joy through social media. These respondents expect to see idealized images.

*Motherhood is discussed a lot on Instagram. I usually find it funny and beautiful. People talk about their own experiences. I love it because you feel that you are not alone. You can get inspiration from there. I generally like it. There are also platforms that show the funny side of motherhood. I laugh at them too. (P6, 45)*

*I mean, there are a few names I follow about motherhood. I even follow a few moms who have solid food moms to eat. For example, there is a mother. That's the phenomenon. For example, I buy the toys he gives. In other words, there is a mother that I get a lot of inspiration from, I like and follow. (P4, 30)*

The food preparation/meal idea is also another frequently mentioned dimension in preferences for Instamom issue. Using not artificial but organic elements, giving different meal ideas for children is very important for many respondents, especially in early baby period.

*There is a girl named Bohemother. I've looked at her recipes a lot in supplementary food processes, or she shares what tools she uses. At the same time, there are too many links to share. Another is melekhayta. She graduated from our school. Frankly, I felt close to her. She has a child, he is 1 year old. I guess he doesn't make a meaty recipe for the baby because she has a vegan diet. That's why I follow her because she even makes veggie pies out of beautiful veggies.* (P19, 29)

All respondents mentioned that they follow at least one Instamom. Reasons for following Instamoms are mainly due to find similarities about lifestyle or a desire to be like her or admire her as an idol.

*Other mothers, mothers on social media are very influential, especially if you feel them close. She always paints a good mother portrait. This is something that relaxes people. You can improve yourself. You're not alone. (P3, 35)*

*I follow people who look like me. When I say similar, for example, I can learn something; it will add something to me. So I'm looking at her lifestyle.* (P9, 34)

*The activities he does with his child, the education he receives are all important. That's why I follow people from our community. So I come from a more conservative family. I don't much prefer sweat people to this because there is not much I can do even if I can buy from them.* (P20, 35)

*People become friends with people close to them. It's the same. I follow people with the same way of thinking.* (P13, 32)

Taking into consideration the evaluation through the profile match between followers and Instamoms, "lifestyle concept" is prevailing for followers' preferences to follow an Instamom.  In the study, participants use the word "lifestyle" several times to refer having similar characteristics of social, economic and educational life.

### 6.3. The General Impact of Instamoms on Follower Mothers

The findings of this study reveal that Instamoms have an impact on mothers who follow them. The research predicts that there are three main areas being affected by

these women: discourses on the representation of motherhood, the buying behavior and the dark side of marketing through social media advertisements. These areas have an active role in shaping perceptions of follower mothers as mothers and consumers on the basis of the motherhood and buying behavior. In the first part of the findings chapter, the representation of motherhood issue was examined. Now, the research passes through the marketing and consumer behavior more. In this section, it is presented that how follower mothers' buying behavior is shaped by the social media and Instamoms regarding buying behavior steps, product category, value system and source of information. The impact of these women on dark side of marketing will be explored in the final section.

### 6.3.1. The Effects of Instamoms' Social Media Activities on Buying Behavior of Follower Mothers

Even though stating that most follower mothers give their priorities (in material sense) to their children, the data reveals that regardless of all demographic characteristics, they expose social media and want to reach those standards even if it is fake or real. The research shows that consumption behavior of mothers is affected from the effects of the consumer culture agents on social media as the influencers, specifically Instamoms. Mothers as a consumer have become more aware and attracted material things from social media, namely Instagram. For some objects, they cannot afford particularly middle class (Entwistle, 2000). In this research, all follower mothers stated that they are from middle- or high-income class.

Exposing Instagram and Instamoms, the data shows that follower mothers have different types of conspicuous and hedonic consumption behavior which they state in their discourses. It apparently reveals that the consumer culture deeply affects each of them regardless of our demographic, cultural or personal differences.

As part of this research, follower mothers were asked about their social media habits, specifically Instagram influencers. As also suggested in the previous literature, a majority of the participants are following at least one influencer constantly. Majority of the mothers in this study defined "Instagram" as an imaginary world with luxury. Although luxury goods, which are also called "Veblen goods," are really expensive

considering medium Turkish family standards, they receive greater influencer attention on Instagram. As Instamoms use a product and announce this, it increases the preferences of that product. It is due to the fact that follower mothers feel themselves having a same position with these influencers through material culture and status (Crane and Bovone, 2006).

> *I don't know; they are like us. I feel close to them when I buy something that they suggest. I really like following some of them. I enter Instagram and follow what they do even while I am working for example. I like Gül Kütevin most. I think she is a nice person. She shows products if she believes, I know. Therefore, I want to buy, I believe her.* (P21, 37)

> *I enjoy and spend a lot time in the "fantasy" world. I describe it as a fantasy. I know that they do not pay all the products that they show, but still I want to buy knowing that my budget does not agree with this.* (P11, 36)

Brands put more efforts for Instagram to increase awareness and they use influencers too much with social media advertisements. They make agreements and put discounts under the cooperation with influencers. Five Instamoms were interviewed during the data collection. All of them state that they make brand cooperation.

> *I work in a corporate company. I'm only currently collaborating as a raked link. I work as a commission through sales, but otherwise I cannot accept collaborations because I work in a corporate company. Maybe in the future. There are maybe 40 collaborations that I turned down.* (T.P., 31)

> *I earn money through brand collaborations. This is a profession now, no one should deny it.* (C. E., 35)

Follower mothers like these cooperation. P22 (21) states that she usually benefits from discounts when she sees them on an Instamom page in order to reach cheaper products such as a baby highchair or cosmetics; she buys for more than half price off. Even though some of follower mothers like this discount issue, there are still some of them who prefer to buy luxury goods. One of the followers of G.Z., P23 (35) is a good example of this.

*I like her luxury life. She gives her children a very good life. I also like her relations and posts about her husband. She uses very good brands, I like them and I buy many of them. I am not a rich person to buy cheaper products.* (P23, 35)

This phenomenon actually related to material culture and status (Leibenstein, 1950) which is known as the Veblen effect (Bagwell and Bernheim, 1996). These kinds of consumers are motivated to do conspicuous consumption, which is the practice of acquiring luxury goods to show off economic power and enhance one's prestige (Veblen, 1899). Some Instamoms show this kind of life to their followers. Although some participants think that those Instamoms associate their sharings with luxury which is not accessible for an everyday woman, there are still some such as P23 (35) like those ones. Both views are stated below.

*In my opinion, some Instamoms don't represent everyday women. They live high exclusive life or they pretend to have. An everyday woman who has children, works, takes care of home or runs to the grocery store can't relate to and afford those products and standarts.* (P3, 35)

*I pay attention to my personal care, so I like to see beauty products on their pages. I buy skincare products when I see İmren Gürsoy's Instagram page. I've never bought any before, since I think that they are very expensive. However, I see her smooth skin, she looks younger. I buy since then.* (P24, 34)

While interpreting the data, I realize that mothers describe their buying behavior in similar ways. Their experiences with Instamoms create a kind of desires for commodities to reach the ideal beauty (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Thompson and Haytko, 1997), ideal life, ideal motherhood and so on. They want to have "the ideal" that they see on social media. There are some mothers among participants who are aware of this fake world, but there are many who want to reach that world through buying the products presenting by Instamoms.

*I like those kinds of things a lot. Who doesn't?  I have many friends who are also mothers. They are also like shopping … I pay a lot of attention to look good. Matching my shoes or my bag with my clothes is very important. I pay*

*attention to those things for my son too. I look at Melek İçmeli's Instagram, I admire her. I look at what she and her son wears. I usually buy things with her links.* (P12, 33)

*Bohemother shares Defacto brand with her children. Before I see from her, I have never preferred Defacto, because I thought that it was not very good brand. I bought a few things after then.* (P25, 40)

During data collection, follower mothers were asked when they start to follow an Instamom and if their buying behavior changed after the pregnancy. More than half of the mothers (14 persons) state that they began to follow at least a one Instamom after they became pregnant. Moreover, their buying behavior and consumption trends have changed.

*Of course it has increased and changed. When I am pregnant, I always searched what should I buy my child? Then I started to follow Gul Kutevin and Merve İpek Öztürk. I followed their many advises."* (P9, 33)

*I can say that my motherhood increased and changed my consumption in every sense. I gave up all skincare products because of chemical content; I did not dye my hair. I know that most of the pregnant women do the same. I watch many live videos on Instagram from Instamoms, they usually told about their pregnancies. All of them dis the same when they are pregnant.* (P6, 45)

Evaluating ideas of the participating mothers about their buying behavior, mothers mostly talk about clothing, cleaning products and eating (nutrition).

*"...my eating habits have changed, because I took too much weight after Nil. Therefore, I searched how I can lose weight. I found Melek İçmeli on Instagram. I followed her and bought many healthy products. I started to lose weight then. Additionally, I am more careful with household cleaning products I take it, I try to avoid the chemical."* (P25, 40)

*"I bought homemade things now. I watch Instagram videos of healthy food breaks. She prepares many things both for her and her son. I try those recipes.*

*I buy equipment for preparing. For instance, WFM brand mixer, I saw on her page, and then I bought."* (P19, 29)

Based on all these expressions, the effects of Instamoms on buying behavior can be said to have an effect. Mothers are mostly influenced clothing shopping and baby products. When the statements of the participants are examined, there is also some obligatory change such as food shopping habits too. Transitioning to a new role requires interaction with other parties when getting used to the new role (Hogg et al., 2004). It is stated that this change is accompanied by following an Instamom that will facilitate buying behavior, and this change also increases consumption.

### 6.3.2. Follower Mothers and Instamoms Regarding Value Systems and Source of Information

Another important issue for the research is to understand the attitude of follower mothers to towards Instamoms to identify the credibility dimensions. This section was deemed instrumental in addressing Research Question 6. Zak and Hasprova's survey (2019) collected data about the influencers in general, and research has indicated that consumers emphasize more on the skills and expertise of the influencers which bring credibility to the source of information.

As it is stated from the beginning, Instagram influencers, namely Instamoms, are followed addictively by a majority of mothers, a credibility issue emerges. How these women believe what they see on Instagram page in order to be alike their favorite ones? Eventhough the mass media (today social media) shows representations of the desirable lives (O'Guinn and Shrum, 1997), most of the followers belive these lives which are predicted to affect their objectifications of desire deeply (Yurdakul-Sahin, 2013).

Some of the participants state that they are not following only one or two Instamoms but more than three. They follow and watch Instamoms's lives every day. Considering that these women usually put a photo and share more than one story every day, following them every minute means that followers spend all their time on Instagram. As revealed by the participants, main motivations for this addictive

following behavior can be classified as identification with theirselves (celebrity endorsement) and their value system (involvement level), and finding credible as a source of information.

During interviews, after receiving the opinions of the participants about the representation of motherhood, questions about the different aspects of motherhood encountered in social media were asked to the interviewees.People use Instagram to keep relationships with their friends and acquaintances and they do not want to lose any developments (Finland, 2017). It is the same for follower mothers, they regard Instamoms as a friend and they want to belong belonging this group (Chung and Cho, 2017). By this way, they could relate themselves to the Intamoms (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017). High identification is clearly stated by some follower mothers.

> *"... There is a lot of social media influence. Instamoms are not celebrities. They are one of us. I feel close to the ones that I follow. "*(P29, 40)

> *"I like Melek Hayta, I sent message to her once, and she answered. I think she is best. I liken to her to myself, she is not very rich, and she is very warm. This is the reason I follow her. "* (P11, 36)

> *"...there are certain classes of motherhood nowadays, for example, I mostly look at the internet and social media. I think of actresses, doctors, specialists, current academic mothers. And I believe grouping names are mostly produced under the influence of social media. In fact, that person is a mother like us. "*(P5, 35)

> *"You enter the internet once, social media accounts always start with some kind of mothers. I try to be organic, I try to do everything for my daughter, I try to be an actress, I try to play games with her etc. Instamoms are like me. I feel closer to Instamoms."* (P22, 21)

There is also another group who find them as exaggerated social media phenomenon. The data reveals that these mothers are especially open to be affected by the messages of Instamoms in a negative sense.

*"... there are many mother types on social media, there are groups, there are blogs. There are organic mothers, we envy, but they do not happen, some of them are normative mothers, some of them are overprotective. However, most of them are the idealistic, not very real. Everyone has an ideal point and nowadays people like to exhibit it through social media or something, so they can do it. But for example, I envy most of them, but I can't…"* (P25, 40)

*"… There are many on social media.. bohemother, academician mother, blogger mother, traveler mother who is taking her child around the country oh… What a beautiful life!"* (P11, 36)

*"...well sure, especially as I see it on the internet, there are many different things being prepared for children, meals are prepared, some are very self-confident, they do everything at home, there are mothers who make all their bread at home, for example, I hardly believe them when I see them. "(P7, 35)*

As revealed by the quotes, Instamoms, as social media phenomenons, are affecting their followers in a positive or native sense considering trust issue and desire to acquire (Lipovetsky, 1987). Therefore, the role of source credibility on trust is critical. In accordance with Abidin and Thompson (2012), follower mothers mostly state that the trustworthiness from an influencer's recommendation has strong influence than from traditional advertising. As it is sated in the literature review part, it is parallel to the two-step flow of communication by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955): recommendations from an opinion leader are stronger than traditional advertising. This opinion was mentioned during the interviews as trust toward an Instamom is higher, since they use the product, and they show it. This behavior creates a natural feeling that it is not an advertisement. Büşra (35) mentioned that when an Instamom recommend a product, her trust increases. As Luo (2005) states that consumers believe information that someone share similarities or have something in common with.

Beside information source, value system as beliefs and personalities reflect is also important for followers. When both parts have the same understandings, the trust towards the product is increasing (Uzunoglu and Misci Kip, 2014). However, there

are some followers (8 mothers over 30) who think that Instamoms are the product of modern consumption society which try to standardize people.

> *In my opinion, they try to classify mothers on the basis of income, life standards, and social opportunities. I do not know that they are expert in the product or service that they promote. I feel that they target a specific group of mothers. I prefer to read from experts on the related subjects.* (P6, 45)

> *Instamoms does not look for solutions for individual problems, assuming all mothers have the same standards. However, not all of them have the same opportunities. Ignoring these differences, they are representing monotype individuals.* (P21, 37)

Moreover, the findings show that a vast majority of participant mothers expressed that their attitudes would change if Instamoms repeat promoting the same product or brand too much. They negatively change the attitude due to the feeling of irritation.

> *I really liked healthyfood break until she started to show the same brand. This brand is too expensive though. I quit the follow her.* (P7, 35)

Under the influence of Instamoms, follower mothers choose either believe or not believe the influencer effect. Talking with marketing terms, each follower mother forms a significant market at the same time. They are an important customer group not only themselves but also with their children. As today's marketing element, they can influence people in two ways: first by sharing (or looks like sharing) the same values and second creating a trustable source of information.

Before closing this part of this chapter, some content of related posts from Instamoms are presented to better understand the practices of Instamom on Instagram, for the source of information and value system. For instance, first post (6 March, 2021) from Cansu Efe calls her followers to use technological application. It is sponsored by Migros. In this content, she speaks very confident as a technology expert.

*Greetings, I'm here with a campaign just for you that I think you will love. Create your own campaign with the Migros application... It's very easy to use the application and create a campaign... First, you download the application to your phone. Then, after choosing the category you want to shop and your shopping amount, you earn gift money. Earn Money as a gift... This campaign will not be missed @migros_tr #migros #alışveriş* (Cansu Efe, 6 March, 2021*)*

Furthermore, visual content has a complementary with textual content for creating an online trust on social media (Ellison, Heino and Gibbs, 2006). Therefore, photos of Instamoms are more effective than textual content. Therefore, it is important to support texts with visuals. It creates more credible image for Instamoms. Looking to Bohe Mother's posts on 26 December, 2019, she uses her sons because the post is about children product.



Figure 21. Bohemothers' sons

*We are waiting for you all to play Slime tomorrow at 14:00 at Nezih Stationery at NişantaşıCitys AVM.    Doesn't playing with Slime entertain us as much as the children? Most importantly, @elmersproducts, which came to Turkey for the first time, has been tested many times and does not contain solvents. It's both fun and healthy. We also have a gift for 3 people @elmersproducts Slime set, which does not stick to clothes and comes out easily with water All you have to do is follow @elmersproducts and @bohemother accounts and leave an emoji or comment under this post. Good luck. (*Bohemother, 26 December, 2019)

In the same way, İmren Gürsoy explains a beauty product as a make-up artist. The content of the post are stated below:

> *"In Story, I shared my adventure of finding my perfect angle with you. The most distinctive feature that makes Flormar Precious Curl one of my favourites: my eyelashes looked more voluminous and curved thanks to its angled bristle brush. Which of the above frames do you like more? Follow @flormarturkiye page! Leave a comment on the post where you saw me! Become one of the 10 winners of the Precious Curl special pack! #HerAçıdanMükemmel #preciouscurl #flormartürkiye"* (İmren Gürsoy, 2021)

Beside source of information, giving lifetime examples makes Instamoms more credible and closer to their followers. Gizem Zor stated in her interview that her followers want her to share her private life more. She thinks that when she shares her life even it is too luxurious, her followers like more her posts. She says that it is due to warm relationship and shared values between her and her followers. The content above is an example for this situation:

> *"I wanted to share our own story while watching #bambakhikayeler on @aksigorta's page* 🤗 *You too can watch these different stories and get courage for your dreams. Some of you know our story, some of you have just come among us    Whether it's in the most luxurious place or at the top of the mountain.. When we got married, our home was our hotel; Our story started by sleeping on a small sofa without saying hot or cold at night, without leaving our work for a minute, not by the hand of an architect, not by the hand of an architect, not by the hand of the cook, but by the hand of love to every breakfast* 🙏 *We were brave in new beginnings* 🎇 *I hope this story will inspire you, too. You follow your dreams #family #bizimhikayemiz"* (Gizem Zor, 2019)

Research has found that the formation of relationships and credibility increases when follower mothers feel their identity close to Instamoms (Ren, Kraut and Kiesler, 2007). The construction of credibility and having a same value system considering identity subject are prominent motivation for followers.

Next section will describe the buyer decision steps and the influence of Instamoms during these stages

### 6.3.3. Buying Behavior Steps and the Influence of Instamoms

Today, as one of the important tools shaping social life, the social media influencers can also affect mothers' buyer behavior and product preferences. Based on the statements of the participants, social media, especially Instamoms, have an important function in the representation of motherhood, as seen in the previous chapter. In this context, mothers can access a lot of information about products and services for themselves and their children over the social media, and they also question their own experiences through this information.

> *"…motherhood is harder nowadays really. I don't know if this is due to social media, or everyone's enthusiasm to know everything, but there is a pressure that I can't solve… we are surprised what we will reach, everyone shares what they buy, you feel bad when you see it on social media"* (P12, 34)

Consumers in general show many attitude patterns during buying process of goods, services, ideas or experiences. They like looking for products or services that they want for fulfilling their needs. By analyzing the responses of participants per each of the five levels of answer, the data can indicate the tendency on which stage of buying behavior Instamoms have more impact.

### 6.3.3.1. Need Recognition

As clarified in literature review, need recognition is the first stage of the consumer buyer decision process. In this stage, consumers understand the needs to the product that would be able to satisfy their needs. To understand the impact of Instamoms on buyer decision steps, the participants were asked if they desire to want to acquire the product when an Instamom shows it on Instagram and if they think that they need that product. Many follower mothers asked these two questions as "Yes" during the interview.

*I did buy many things even if I need or not at first times. You don't know what you will need in the early stages of pregnancy. It gets a little clearer after you have a baby, obviously, but still I sometimes want to buy when I see something nice.* (P19, 29)

*If I'm going to buy something, I ask myself if I need it. I am especially careful about things related to children. There are all kinds of good things for kids. In any case, the child is at home right now, not going to school. She's wearing sweatpants or something; that's why I ask if I need it. However, I still buy if she does not need. I am trying to find something that might interest her. For example, I bought a Barbie that she did not need. She has to play with the toy so that she is not interested in the phone.* (P9, 33)

*I'll try to save some money. I try not to shop frequently. However, I cannot limit it. When I see something especially for children on social media, I want to buy.* (P7, 35)

According to 85% of the participants, social media triggers desire towards some products, and sometimes it causes debt for them to buy unnecessary branded products, clothing, and toys. Even though some of the participants state that they try to stay away from buying those kinds of things, a majority of the participants buy to reach the desired product. In this case, the research may argue that Instamoms change the nature of the buyer behavior from need recognition to desire creation for almost half of the participants.

*For example, the mother shares something about her child, but you see that child's room in the background and you go into a shopping frenzy saying, "Oh look, there's this, there's this, how nice it is... mothers started to show what they bought to the people's eyes, as the shares increased, awareness increased, and other mothers started to buy them too. I'm throwing away a toy when I didn't know about it.* (P5, 35)

*... Firstly, consumption increased because there is such a thing as social media, people also follow social media, they are knowledgeable in more fields,*

*your own neighborhood used to be so much of your own city, now even a person in Hakkari knows about New York from Istanbul.* (P6, 45)

*For example, the mother shares something about her child, but you see that child's room in the background and you go into a shopping frenzy saying, "Oh look, there's this, there's this, how nice it is... mothers started to show what they bought to the people's eyes, as the shares increased, awareness increased, and other mothers started to buy them too. For examples, I bought a toy many times when I didn't know about it.* (P24, 34)

As described by the participants, Instamoms on social media is a major way for realizing the desired object even though they are not aware of that product before seeing. Remembering that the desire is the driving force for the consumers in the marketplace (Wilk, 1997), mothers may prefer to attain those products in order to satisfy themselves. It is already known that the products not yet acquired are thought to have the happiness in them (Belk, Ger and Askegaard, 2003), so social media influencers, Instamoms benefit this unstoppable feeling.

### 6.3.3.2. Information Search

After elaborating the need recognition step, second step is the information search in which consumers look for information about the product. Usually, consumers search information by talking to others, reading, visiting stores, or other media, but today social media and internet are a head of all of them. To understand whether Instamoms has an impact on this stage for respondents, they were asked either they collect information from external sources about a product that an Instamom shares.

Overall, the answers for the step of information search in the buyer decision process are "Yes". Participants are affected by Instamoms at some level and they look for further information about the product they have seen. Some follower mothers respondents remark Instamoms as a source of inspiration in their information search. They mainly apply Google search, Trendyol and some other shopping websites like Hepsi burada to read user comments about the products. They also look for cheaper price.

*I'll Google it for the price ranges. For example, if the price is high at Trendyol, I look elsewhere for a storage container, or if the difference is small, I buy it from Trendyol because the shipping is free. There is a foreign book series. Kids love it. It was 130 lira in Trendyol. Then I looked on Google. It was selling for 90 liras on the same seller's site.* (P19, 29)

*I usually do. I read the comments. I'll look at other sites.* (P11, 36)

*I also check Trendyol and the store's own website. I also look for clothing on Pinterest.* (P10, 35)

*Instamoms are everywhere. I definitely look for their page for shopping. I also read reviews on shopping sites.* (P4, 30)

### 6.3.3.3. Evaluation of Alternatives

This is the third step of the buyer decision process as it is in more detail explained in the literature review. Consumers evaluate the options for all similar products and brands on this stage, since evaluating may bring more benefits. To deeper understand the impact of Instamoms towards the evaluation of alternatives stage, related question was asked to them: When they decided to buy a product that you see on the page of Instamom, do you evaluate the alternative products?

It is discovered that all of the participants including Instamoms (35 mothers) search for a similar product shared by an Instamom to evaluate it. User comments are also very effective for this stage. Most participants stressed that they really read comments about the product.

*Yes, I will compare. So, especially if it's such a large amount of money, I'll definitely compare it.* (P24, 34)

*I usually look at Instagram. I always do price research. I compare Trendyol and the like.* (P10, 35)

*I compare. I'll do a price comparison. I prefer the cheap ones, not necessarily the brand.*(P11, 36)

*I compare. I search all over the web. If I can't find it there, I'll look for hashtags on Instagram.* (P6, 45)

*Yes. For example, I bought sunscreen. If it's recommended, I'll definitely consider it. There was a stain for a while. I looked at what everyone suggested. I often compare brands.* (P9, 34)

*I'm definitely writing on the internet again. I write what works. For example, I had an acne problem. I'm definitely looking for users.* (P2, 36)

### 6.3.3.4. Purchase Decision

This stage is directly the moment in which buying the product is realized. During the interview, follower mothers were asked whether they made a purchase with the effect of Instamoms. Considering the participants' discourses, it may argue that Instamoms are a source of purchase decision at least once in a lifetime for all follower mothers. According to the analysis, following different Instamoms will increase the level of exposure to posts about different product or services. Having Instagram following different people who have different lifestyles cause to be exposed to more marketing messages and word-of-mouth communication about the sponsored posts.

*There is. For example, I just bought material from outside. They made flowers with pom-poms for her room. It hangs on the wall. For example, sometimes I don't have a blanket or I buy quality clothes by looking at the suggestions.* (P10, 35)

*There are many times that I said I'd buy it right away, but I don't know if I got it. It was a kitchen appliance, but not so much.* (P4, 30)

*It is happening. I'm sure I'll be impressed and buy something right away. I do, but I always read the comments. For example, I bought a scooter last month and looked at the reviews. Despite the negative reviews, I bought it. It didn't matter to me. The scooter was functional. I was impressed by Çiseren and bought a children's bed. I have never regretted anything I bought.* (P9, 34)

*We do a lot of online shopping during the pandemic. That's why I use Trendyol a lot. Sometimes there are things that I go in and buy by looking at the price performance and comments. There are products that I swipe up and save on Instagram. I don't buy a lot of clothes for myself with the suggestion of influencer.* (P19, 29)

*I am affected by Instamoms' pages. Especially pandemic period, I bought many things online when I saw there. I mainly bought child specific products.* (P5, 35)

*It happened. I bought for my nephew before I had a child. It turned out very nice. Nice Puzzle, big like that. I bought a Puzzle about the earth and the planet. It turned out very nice.* (P7, 35)

Many respondents shared the opinion that they buy products when they see Instamoms' pages. As a conclusion, it may state that all participant mothers are getting exposed to the messages of the Instamoms about products or any services, and these messages have a more intense affect in the case of purchase decision.

### 6.3.3.5. Post Purchase Behavior

This stage indicates how the consumer regards the buying experience and the product or service itself. Later, it is a determinant factor if they will purchase again or not with the same advices in Instamoms context. Therefore, questions related to post purchase experience are asked to the follower mothers to evaluate if there is an impact between Instamoms and post-purchase behavior step of the buyer decision process.

*If I don't like it, I comment. However, up to now, there is no product that I did not like if I bought it from recommendation.* (P10, 35)

*Recently, there is such a thing as the local food industry, I bought rice. I bought tahini from the given Instagram page. She turned out beautiful. I will continue to take it.* (P24, 34)

*Something like this came to my mind. Sometimes there were different tools for baby or child care. For example, what nonsense I said, but I bought it. There is a different type of mug so that water does not get into the eyes while washing the child. There really isn't any need for it. It's all over now.* (P25, 40)

*I bought a crown so I could wear it while taking pictures at the hospital, but I came too late and it didn't come as I expected. I could not communicate with the seller. I did not comment. I unfollowed. The product is not bad, it turned out to be a little simpler than I expected. The flowers have fallen.* (P19, 29)

Even though post purchase step is the last stage of buying behavior process, in the context of Instamoms, it is not very active one. The semi-structured interviews include questions regarding this stage, but a majority of the participants did not mention about anything on the importance of this stage in shaping the impact buying behavior. They gave more moderate answers to these questions. Their answers are only about making user comment.

After stating all stages of the buyer decision process, the product type that Instamoms present on their Instagram pages will be analyzed in the next section.

### 6.3.4. Product Groups Recommended by Instamoms

Product category is another dimension of the conceptual model of this research in the part of buying behavior steps. Besides the stages, it should be investigated if the product categort affects the influence of Instamoms on the buying behavior. Product category is directly related with the involvement level which was stated in the literature part.

In the context of follower mothers on Instagram, items as familiarity, commitment, normative importance are important when analyzing the content of Instamoms (Lastovicka and Gardner, 1979). Lying on Lastovicka and Gardner's (1979) involvement level items, the present study will examine two product categories as mom specific and child specific regarding their three items.

To understand the product category importance or effectiveness, visual and textual content on Instamoms' pages are the primary material (Ellison et al., 2006). Research has found that the formation of relationships between the impact of Instamoms and product category increases when follower mothers are familiar to the product, having a commitment to any brand, and connection with individual values (normative importance). In addition, which product group is promoted by Instamoms is also examined during the textual analysis.

Firstly, to specify product categories that are promoted by Instamoms, selected Instamoms' posts between selected time ranges (400 posts) were analyzed. Using netnography, the types of picture posted by them are observed according to product categories and follower mothers reactions in terms of effectiveness with the posts about promoted products.

Table 10. Product categories promoting by Instamoms

|  | Number of Products | |
|---|---|---|
|  | Child Specific | Mom Specific |
| İmren Gürsoy | 19 | 29 |
| Pınar Dönmez | 15 | 16 |
| Gizem Zor | 10 | 25 |
| Merve İpek Öztürk | 20 | 15 |
| Melek İçmeli | 19 | 20 |
| Melek Hayta | 24 | 16 |
| Yonca Kunacav | 23 | 28 |
| Gül Kütevin | 14 | 22 |
| Cansu Efe | 19 | 19 |
| Bohe Mother | 17 | 30 |

The findings suggested that Instamoms use more mom specific product when they compose their contents. Total number of child specific products is 180, but mom specifics are 220 in selected time ranges. By the way not all Instamoms share more mom specific products; some of them are on the child specific side such as Melek Hayta.

In order to make visual analysis beside texts all images from Instamoms' pages were gathered via taking screenshots and put on the excel sheet for each Instamom to gain a better sense of the digital data. Then, an open-coding process to identify product

categories was conducted. The visual analysis phase only include individually checking all 400 images and noting all groups, by manually tagging descriptions to the pictures to have a deeper understanding for visual and text together as a content.

After tagging codes to the visuals and realizing the frequency for both categories (Creswell, 2012), main themes are emerged in the database. Table 8 presents the main themes of two categories emerging from the visual content analysis.

Table 11. Main themes of product categories

| | Child Specific | Mom Specific |
|---|---|---|
| **Main Themes** | Fashion | Cosmetic Products |
| | Pharmaceutical Product | Fashion |
| | Nutrition for Children | Nutrition/ Healthy Eating Habits |
| | Technological Applications | Household Goods/ Decoration |
| | Shopping Centers | Shopping Centers |
| | Books | Technological Applications |
| | Toys | Hotels/Travel |
| | Textile for Children Room | Cleaning Products |
| | | Personal Care Products |

The variety of product categories are changing from more traditional themes of fashion as clothing, shoes to bags. Beside traditional categories, technological applications, places, hotels and shopping center are promoted as products in the comprehensive perspective of Instamoms' wide effects in everyday consumption. Child specific group has eight main themes; and mom specific groups include nine main themes. To indicate main themes more, examples from posts of Instamoms from each category are provided below.

**Child Specific Group**



Figure 22. Content example of fashion product



Figure 23. Content example of pharmaceutical product



Figure 24. Content example of nutrition for children

130

Figure 25. Content example of technological applications



Figure 26. Content example of shopping center



Figure 27. Content example of books

Figure 28. Content example of toys



Figure 29. Content example of textile for children room

**Mom Specific Group**



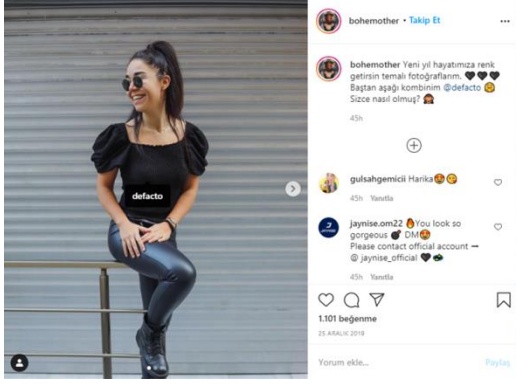Figure 30. Content example of cosmeticand personal care products

Figure 31. Content example of fashion



Figure 32. Content example of nutrition/healthy eating habits



Figure 33. Content example of household goods/ decoration

Figure 34. Content example of shopping centers



Figure 35. Content example of technological applications



Figure 36. Content example of hotels/ travel

Figure 37. Content example of cleaning products



Figure 38. Content example of eventand organization companies

After examining the product groups, their effects on the buying behavior are investigated. Product groups affect follower mothers to search for information about promoted products and their intention to interact with Instamoms accounts. Follower mothers' reactions toward an Instamoms' posts differ based whether they are highly or lowly involved with the promoted product.

> *We have just moved. It's all about the house. However, still, it can be food; it can be for a child. I can buy many things.* (P24, 34)

> *If they say something about child health development as the suggestions, then if someone had a problem with diapers, if something happened, if I lived with them, I do something. Something about the outfit doesn't appeal to me much. There are a lot of clothes, it's not about him, but it's about the health of the*

135

*child in general, or as I said throwing board games, I don't know what… Things related to the development of the child interest me so I'll check it out. For example, what is it? If, let's say, a character that the child likes is shared, I mean, if I can't find it, I look at it.* (P7, 35)

*They share so much that they share children's clothes, yogurt maker when I switch to solid food, car seat, baby carriage. They kept saying park bed, then I regretted not buying a park bed. For example, the highchair… They talk about so many different things that there is a highchair for 1000 liras or a highchair for 150 liras. The mother I mentioned suggested a 150 lira highchair so much that when everything was easy and practical, I went and bought another highchair from her. Then I stopped and thought; The girl was telling the truth. It's so heavy that it doesn't go anywhere. However, he was telling me that he is very light, I can take them anywhere easily. In these matters, I was following more phenomenal mothers that I liked. I removed most of them because they are now advertising. When they advertise, they are trying to market a product of course. All mothers follow me as well. But when they advertise like this, they share every product as soon as it happens, I get bored. I follow the correct posts.* (P4, 30)

*There must be cosmetics or something. Everyone shares it, sometimes I have to buy hair products or something. I think I bought a mask or something in the early stages of the Pandemic last year.* (P19, 29)

Supporting the two themes and sub categories (see Table 8) and visuals gathered around two themes, participants answers revolves around these two themes. Interesting a category depends on mothers' involvement level at that time. For instance, Esra (30) directs attention on posts about highchairs, since she has a little baby now.

In the context of Instamoms, influencer marketing elements can influence participants by creating desires and imposing needs on them through product categories. Instamoms trigger the consumption often considering the involvement level of their followers. Last quotations are from selected Instamoms' interviews about the product selection.

*Recently, I have also started to review requests. They wanted me to look at new products. There are a lot of food engineering students following me. There are also educated people. There is someone who is interested in food trends abroad. I create my posts for such topics. There is also the descriptive part of the job. They are very curious about what I eat. I shared a cookie the other day. My neighbor did. They said can you share the urgent cookie recipe. I don't care that much about what anyone else is eating. (G. K., 35)*

*From the mothers, her child is 3 months old and mine is 3 months old. I wonder how much he weighs, how much is mine, how much is his height, or he is breastfeeding, I am giving formula, you have lost 10 kilograms after giving birth and I have lost 5 kilograms. You can't believe it. (C. E., 35)*

*Recently, there has been a serious demand for household appliances, cosmetics and clothing. They want me to share what you use, the material of the ceiling in your kitchen, the brand. They think that he has studied this material. Of course, I also think about the economic conditions in our country in my posts. I've had it a few times. A product I bought when it was more affordable at the time is now at a very cheap price. I shared it. I didn't even give links back then. I got lynched. (G. Z., 35)*

### 6.4. Dark Side of Instamoms as a Marketing Figure

This part now looks at the dark side of marketing in the context of Instamoms. In the case of follower mothers, Instamoms as marketing actors may influence them negatively, ignoring their real needs, endorsing luxury products, showing off a different lifestyle, and representing a perfect motherhood.

Modern consumption society regards all individuals as the potential consumers, since the main aim of the marketers is to consume more. Baker, Gentry and Rittenburg (2005) make a list of some factors affecting the feeling and experience of being consumers. Social media is a new tool for marketers to affect the feelings and experience of consumers.

There are some factors which are affecting consumers in this way (Baker, James and Terri, 2005) as: biophysical factors (e.g: age and appearance); psychosocial factors (e.g: socioeconomic status); individual factors (e.g: motivation, and goals). All these factors are related to the context of Instamoms and their followers. For example; the socioeconomic status appears to have an important role for the match between follower mothers and Instamoms. Therefore, this factor is used by marketers to choose an influencer for their marketing campaign, and this is usually enough for being a follower. Actually, influencer marketing, as an important element of modern marketing system, is constructed on these strategies. On the basis of the strategies, companies produce, provide services, and promote mostly for social media influencers.

Mothers need to interact with other mothers to share the motherhood practices. Moreover, they need to use cosmetic products or to wear brand clothes to feel beautiful and special as a woman in the society. They want to have this kind of life. To sum, influencer marketing, as a new brand marketing tactic sells and promotes this kind of life through sponsored products/services by Instamoms. Follower mothers sometimes realize these facts but sometimes they constrain within the social media system.

To operationalize the definition, this research defines dark side as inconspicuous purposes: increasing web traffic/impression of presented products, make the sponsored brand more popular, make herself more visible, take advantages of having followers for impression, make use of followers' comments, increase the sales of sponsored products. To understand the follower mothers' vision on this issue, the question "Did you find Instamoms' posts suspicious?" was asked.

> *Yes, it does because they advertise so many different brands. Insta mom, who advertises every brand, doesn't give me confidence.* (P6, 45)

> *Firstly, some share it, they say that I bought something but they didn't actually buy it, it was given to them as a gift or they say I tried them; there is always a question mark as to how you tried them all at the same time and shared. So it doesn't seem very realistic to me.* (P4, 35)

*Yes, it does. They recommend it so much that it's actually a very good thing. For example, I have acne. A girl says use a product for 30 days or I have used it before and it has this effect. That person likes it, but they traded everything too much. One does not know whether it is real or not. For example, there is cocobolinho. He recommends a lot. How can you use everything? That's why I take it my way. I haven't bought 2nd of anything that works. Same with my child. (P11., 36)*

*Sometimes I find it insincere when I share it over and over. It advertises a lot. It pushes people out of sight. (P8, 31)*

*These are breastfeeding teas. Food is a very important thing. My child is allergic. We had a very difficult 3 month period. I don't like when they suggest things like breastfeeding tea, carminative syrup. I wouldn't even look at these for any suggestions. (P9, 33)*

*Of course it does. It doesn't give me any confidence that they recommend products they have not experienced, just to advertise, because they are made for advertising purposes. For example, Doğa Rutkay is a reliable woman, but she has a cloth called Turco, she is advertising her. How much did you experience that diaper already came out yesterday. It also lowers the image of women. It's not interesting to me. (P5, 35)*

However, they also have freedom to choose within what offered to them. Some follower mothers do not have any suspicion because they know that they can follow or not.

*Not much actually. She shares the most clothes. If you want you get it, if you don't you don't. (P10, 35)*

*There was nothing that I doubted or worried about. I just unfollow when I get too many ads. loses its credibility. And this is because it is truly a vast ocean. I have never faced a situation where I would be suspicious as long as I was reasonable. Maybe it's because of the mothers I follow because I follow 5-6 mothers, not too many, and I follow them all for different topics. (P16, 36)*

*Instagram has released something new, called a commissioned link. They used to write names for those they had really collaborated with, not when they were satisfied. Now they put name tags on everything. I don't follow the advertisers much. For example, there are those who receive a gift and are not satisfied and share it. I'm not following them.* (P19, 29)

The quotations above highlight how follower mothers can isolate themselves in this system. They are not that much more vulnerable to the social media, since they have right to choose. However, these mothers are few in number. Awareness to the system is still limited. In some cases, most of the mothers are ignorant to the dark sides. They do not want to realize about Instamoms' relations with brand and they want to believe Instamoms' posts. In this time especially, certain product categories with social visibility bring emulation and the desire to consume those products. The data suggests that the effects of Instamoms on the certain product categories consumption are more prominent. These products are believed to bring social likability, conformity, desirability, and the perceived quality since Instamoms are using them. However, credibility is still on the agenda, they believe Instamoms if they think that she is expert in that product categories.

*The only thing that interests me is that the board games there explain the content of the books and show them like this, and I trust his child because I see this visually. I mean, it's because he shows it himself, but when he comes and puts on some make-up product or something, I say there, "acts that smell of advertisements" and I do not even look. Because what that page gives me confidence is that I love it because it plays those games on your child. For example, Doğa Rutkay also shares a lot.* (P7, 35)

According to the analysis, having different life spheres will affect the level of exposure to Instamoms' post. Following different Instamoms who have different lifestyles and being exposed to more marketing messages from these people lead to an inclination for using promoted products. In addition, new mothers are found to be more inclined to the desire for promoted products.

*I first started with expectant mothers. Here's what they do, how they take pictures, what I need to do or there are people who use it so correctly that there are people who share what they eat and drink at work. So I even follow them. Of course, you are careful not to go out of the doctor's orders. That's how it started first.* (P4, 30)

*I'm sure I'll be impressed and buy something from there. I do, but I always read the comments. For example, I bought a scooter last month and looked at the reviews. Despite the negative reviews, I bought it. It didn't matter to me. The scooter was functional. I was impressed by Yonca Kunacav and bought a children's bed. I have never regretted anything I bought.* (P9, 34)

While influencer marketing and Instamoms have some negative impact as this research stated as dark sides for follower mothers, it can also help to increase awareness on the motherhood issues and put effort for their well-being (Kotler et al., 2002). In the last years, marketing as an institution start to show the problems such as environmental pollution, poverty, obesity, drought, unhealthy products, and women rights. Regarding the negative results of these big problems, influencer marketing, and specifically Instamoms also need to contribute to the well-beings of the mothers.

With these efforts, women right, for instance, could be taken into consideration by the marketing actors more.

*I try to create awareness for harassment on women. Many mothers are suffering violence at home and at work. We cannot solve these problems by ignoring them. We as an Instamoms or whatever we are should point these issues too. For example, I cooperate wth Ford Otosan for 8 March. It could be a step to increase awareness of people.* (Bohemother)
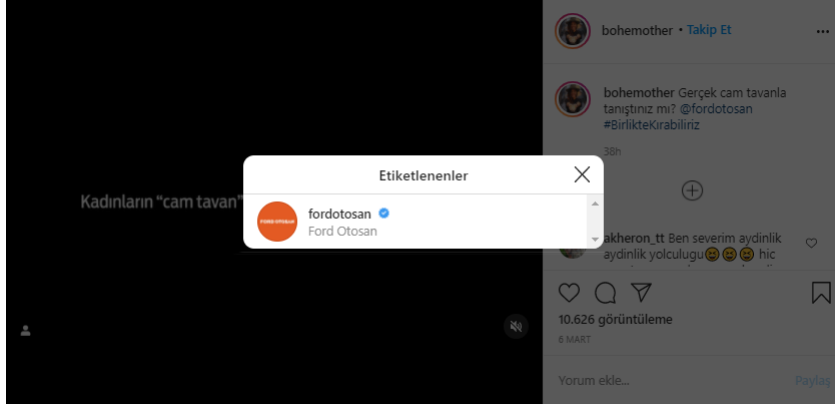
Figure 39. March post of Bohemother

The quotation above belongs to an Instamom, Bohemother. Some firms conducts social projects for women. Pointing at different dimensions of discrimination to women, the cooperation between firm and Instamom is successful in creating awareness among all the stakeholders. Shifting the sponsorship with brands to the social projects can be remarkable to take attention in society.

> *I worked with Vava Cars on 8 March. This is my first work on women project. I have more than 200 thousand followers, and as I became a part of this project, I reached more. My followers gave positive feedbacks. In contrast to other Instamoms, I did a different work attending a social project, so I think that I create a distinction* (Merve İpek Öztürk).



Figure 40. Post of Merve İpek Öztürk

142

The quotation and the visual of post above belongs to another Instamom, Merve İpek Öztürk. After the interview, she sent me that posts on the project. There were number of pageviews under the post. This is actually using an Instamom as an efficient way. The more Instamoms join this kind of the projects, the more the projects influence people. By this way they will not be mentioned with dark sides but also with social responsible projects.

# CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION

As presented in the previous chapters, this thesis investigates the impact of mother social media influencers, Instamoms, on their mother followers in two ways: the representation of motherhood and the buying behavior. These two areas are shaped and directed by Instamoms in the social media marketing context. From a broader perspective, the focal constructs, the motherhood and the buying behavior, are studied in consideration of the larger social media perspectives that affect follower mothers. Consequently, the contributions of the research to the social media and marketing literature are not limited to the debates on buying behavior, but it also sheds light on macro level discussions regarding the representation roles on the motherhood and the societal implications of the phenomena.

## 7.1. The Stories Instamoms Tell: Impact on the Representations of Motherhood and the Buyer Decision Process

*Every man invents a story for himself – which he often, and with great cost to himself – takes to be his life.* (Max Frisch, 1972)

In recent years, researchers have given more attention to a consumer-centric approach, collecting personal stories to catch valuable explanation and insights as a research methodology. The stories on social media grow in importance when new media brings a lot of change on people's life (Lister et al., 2009; Dewing, 2012). Conducting qualitative research in both traditional and digital way, listening to the stories of both follower mothers and Instamoms have provided valuable data.  All participants' own narratives were analyzed and compared. There are similarities and differences among them, which create motherhood narratives.

Concentrating on the feelings and experiences of follower mothers about motherhood, social media, Instagram and Instamoms, the findings highlight that the mothers experience the motherhood with a dilemma through social media: they are toing and froing on being perfect mother. Becoming pregnant is the initial stage of motherhood experience. When they give birth to their babies, almost every mother feels helpless at one point of their motherhood. At this point, the mother is looking

for mother with similar experience, and social media is the best place to find. They sometimes feel imprisoned especially when babies are very little. Under the pressure of the baby caring, on one hand, the mothers like watching for similar figures for themselves, and on the other hand, they do not like these figures since they show everything perfect.

According to the motherhood narratives, some participants are really influenced from Instamoms, and they fanatically follow their all activities. Applying their motherhood style, buying products that Instamoms use and performing in similar ways to them, follower mothers move towards another stage, in which they feel unqualified. Buying the same products, the mothers may feel equivalent with Instamoms in some contexts, but this is not enough for all time.

Furthermore, some mothers have no opportunity to meet the standards of Instamoms, and they do not have the financial possibility to reach those lives performing on social media. Actually, those mothers feel satisfied with their lives in normal conditions. However, with the influence of Instamoms, they sometimes feel lacking with their appearances, motherhood, social and financial possibilities even though they focus on their other qualifications. This is kind of social media impact which can be labeled as "Samsara". Samsara means the cycle of death and rebirth to which life in the material world is bound; it is endless circle like this vicious circle on social media. Mothers who are at this stage are bored for this system.

For experts that I made interview for expert opinions, Instamoms are on the scene nearly for 10 years. Their existence is actually advantageous since they reveal the all sides of motherhood. Especially conceptualization of motherhood as sacralization can turn to equalization between mother and father under favor of egalitarian Instamoms. Egalitarian parenthood understanding becomes widespread through their practices. Those individuals are source of inspiration for follower mothers, through social media success and various achievements. However, only a limited number of Instamom could behave like that because they gain money from their Instagram accounts, and this kind of posts do not take much interest from popular brands. Brands want more of product display.

Follower mothers social media journey starts from following an Instamom who they feel close to themselves or see as an idol. Only a few follower mothers realize both positive and negative sides of following behavior. Many of them continue to live in the Samsara level.

Taking into consideration the findings and the social media narratives, Figure 41 presents the factors influencing the motherhood experience and the buying decision process of mothers.
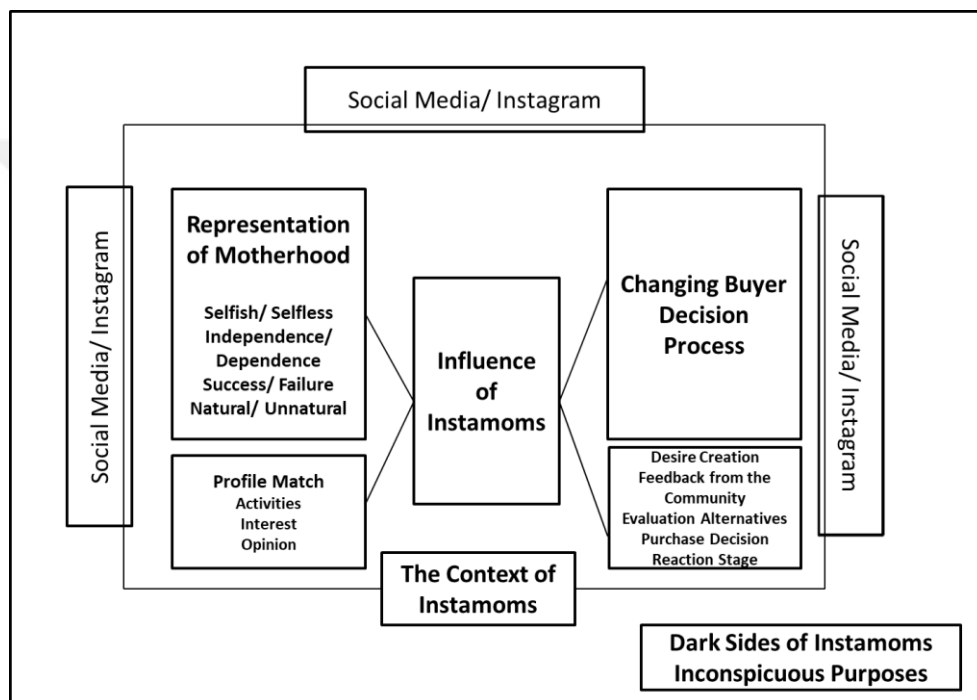


Figure 41. Representing mothers on Instagram: An influence of Instamoms on representation of motherhood and buying decision process, The conceptual model

This figure demonstrates where the influence of Instamoms effective and what their dark sides are. They establish themselves in the social media platform, Instagram and transform buyer decision process for follower mothers into new steps. In other words, they influence their followers in two fragments: The representation of motherhood and the buyer decision process. They grow their visibility, and be recognized by mothers as role models even if they have dark sides. Consequently, the follower mothers who could not or do not want to get out of the loop transforms into either lover or hater but still follower.

## 7.2. Theoretical Contributions

The contributions of this thesis are not limited to marketing literature, but suggest sociological and communicative implications. Focusing on the motherhood representation, experiences, and perceptions of follower mothers, it highlights how the social media is effective on the mothers' behaviors as mothers. These contributions come from the discussions on the roles of social media influencers on the representation of motherhood as it was stated, another major contribution especially to the consumer research literature comes from the findings about the impact of buying decision process of mothers in the social media and Instamom context, which is a prominent gap except for a few studies (Daniel, 1999; Dedeoğlu, 2010; Gram and Pedersen, 2014). Taking into consideration these subjects, this thesis makes several theoretical contributions.

### 7.2.1. The Representation of Motherhood

The ideals of motherhood, expectations from motherhood, and the conditions of good motherhood change based on periods and conditions, but the motherhood role has changed little in its essence. In every period of history, some women become mothers at some point in their lives and undertake relatively most of the basic responsibilities of raising children. This historical aspect and depth of motherhood shows the fact that mothers produce it through generations (Chodorow, 1978).

This study goes beyond the investigations on the individual level and extends the discussions to the family and communal level on social media. For instance, with a feminist perspective, it indicates the objectification of motherhood and also womanhood by Instamoms in order to gain money through social media. For the societal level, the findings indicate that profiles of Instamoms and their followers affect the following behavior and the impact on the motherhood representations.

While some of the participants criticize the representations by Instamoms on social media (motherhood representations such as the selfless or dependent), others do not disturb for being imposed to show off a perfect motherhood. On the other hand, most

participants think that they have important impact on the buying decision process. Some of them find this impact as a problem, but others do not bother this impact.

Today, it is possible to state that the mother is primarily responsible for the development of the child, the child's personality is directly associated with the mother, it is expected to have knowledge in various fields of expertise, and all other pressures drag mothers into a syndrome of perfection or perfection (Miller, 2010; Furedi, 2013). The assumptions that are placed on the basis of the arguments regarding the importance of motherhood may cause problems that are almost irreversible, shape the ideal and "good mother" structuring. For example, the intellectual development of the child who is malnourished will be negatively affected; the child's need for organic nutrition, quality and healthy dressing, and so on. In today's conditions, it is observed that most of these and similar examples are supported by the discourse of "expert" and spread by many platforms as Instamoms and Instagram case. In these circumstances, a woman is subjected to pressure as if she had to devote herself exclusively to her child in order to avoid possible social condemnation.

The idealized mother on social media today can both meet the multi-faceted expectations of modern times and continue her life in every aspect, as before she became a mother, without the need for any help. The mother is now more combative than in the past, and she spends her energy mostly in reaching the ideologies that form the patterns of the "good mother".

### 7.2.2. Changing Buyer Decision Process

The mother is expected to fulfill her responsibilities to guarantee the happiness of the child. It is widely accepted that the means of fulfilling this expectation in the current conditions is through consumption products and services. Especially, the changing approaches with capitalism offered working or non-working mothers the opportunity to test and prove their motherhood through consumption. Consumption, which has become a tool for mothers to test their motherhood, is intertwined with motherhood and child rearing (Zengingönül, 2012).

Today, consumption assets and the processes of defining motherhood through these assets have become interconnected trough social media (Gram and Pedersen, 2014). Consumption is now seen as an important tool for being one of the basic actions of the mother. Therefore, the requirements of the motherhood phenomenon and the ideal of a good mother have changed more than ever before and are almost surrounded by consumption actors. Therefore, Instamoms have a direct impact on buying behavior of follower mothers and change the buyer decision process.

A major contribution of this thesis is creating alternative steps to buyer decision process. In the current period, consumer goods and services are so attractive, with so many alternatives and so "alluring"; Surrounded by the emotional atmosphere of motherhood, a woman rarely asks, "Does this really work?" can ask the question. Especially if other mothers close to them have bought these products or services and are very satisfied, and if many experts share the positive aspects of these products and services through various platforms, the probability of the mother being hesitant about acquiring this product or service is very low. The mother shapes her consumption behavior as a result of rational choices. At this point, especially the effect of social media is undeniable.

Mothers consume products and services in many categories within the scope of their motherhood roles. This consumption, which starts with pregnancy, takes place under the influence of experiences Instamoms on social media. Examining these variables, which are thought to contribute to deepening the study, is important in terms of analyzing the course of consumption behaviors exhibited by mothers in terms of buyer decision process steps. In traditional model, the first step is "need recognition" but the findings suggest that the first step is related to desire, since mothers can buy anything that they do not need. Therefore, it is more like "desire creation.

When the buyer decision process is discussed, the physical appearance point should be also mentioned. People themselves cannot determine how individual bodies are presented, but society, social situations, and other forces are the decision makers on the presentation (Bourdieu, 1990). In the context of Instamoms, the decision makers or norm setters are Instamoms for mothers.

Physical appearance is directly related to enjoyments, sensations, and tastes in the consumer culture; it must be kept or made better with diets, surgery, or cosmetic products (Goffman, 1959). Instamoms direct mothers to use different products to construct more beautiful appearance as mothers on the media representations (Featherstone, 2010). Being exposed to ideal beauty images by these women, follower mothers want to buy beauty products or make surgeries to have similar beautiful appearance.

Taking into consideration the literature, Figure 42 highlights the new steps for the new model "Changing Buyer Decision Process".
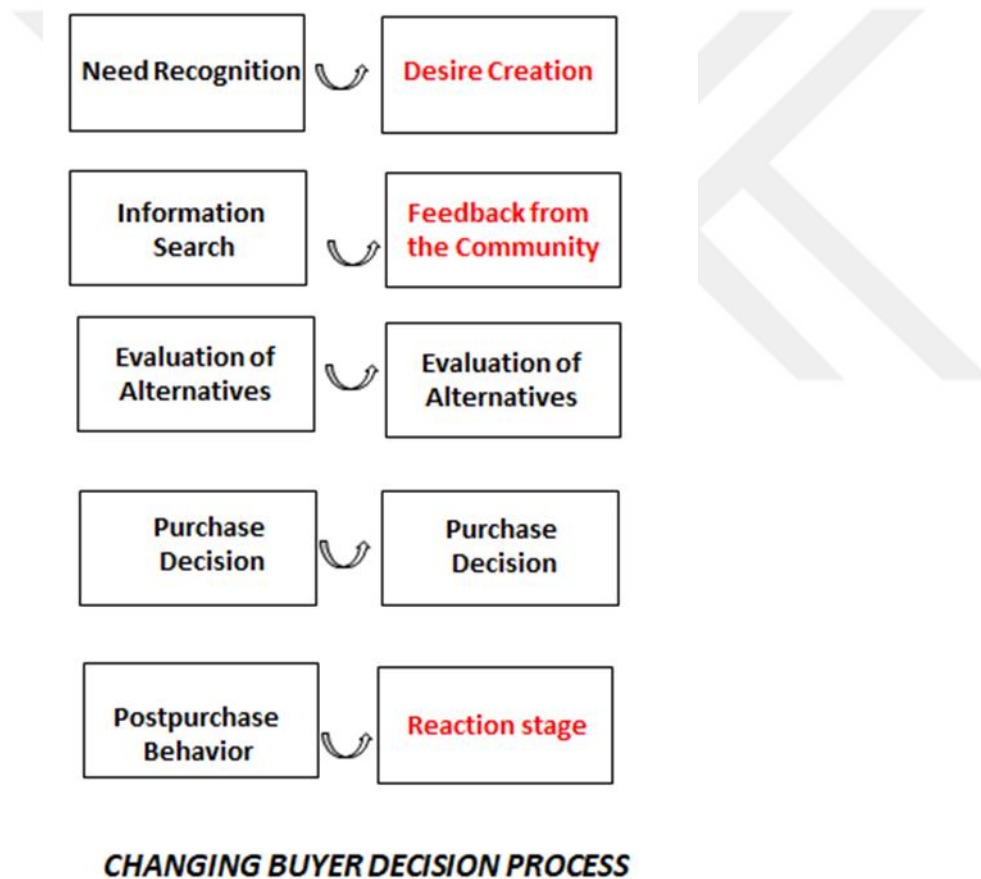


Figure 42. Changing buyer decision process

In contrary to the traditional buyer decision process model, the findings reveal that first two steps are context dependent. The consumers' experiences and perceptions may change on the social media context; the traditional steps may be transformed.

150

Being subjected to Instamoms posts, buying decision process first step transform through desires. Desire is the driving force behind the marketing activities and guarantees the continuity of consumption in the capitalist system (Slater, 1997; Yurdakul and Atik, 2013). The new model suggests that buyer decision process' steps may change with the impact of social media in the context of Instamoms for follower mothers.

Focusing on the new model it attempts to adapt need recognition, information search and post purchase behavior steps in the new media period. The new model, at the individual level, shows people realizes their desires, and at the communal level on social media, creates awareness to new phenomena. The traditional model states needs when deciding to buy something and it do not give place for user comments, since social media is new for traditional model. Information search step is still valuable but it is identifying more to feedback from community on social media. Lastly, post purchase behavior may be modified as reaction stage since behavior may alter on social media from post purchase to reaction. In sum, traditional model has basics steps buyer decision process. On the other hand, the new model may be said as taking a more digital and postmodern approach.

# CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

In this final chapter, I summarize the summary of the research and the conceptual model which highlights the primary findings. In addition to summary, managerial and societal implications of this research and the limitations of the study, together with recommendations for future research will be presented.

## 8.1. Summary

Considering the limited studies on the motherhood on social media in marketing literature, I aimed to discuss the experiences and feelings of the mothers in the presence of Instamoms through two subjects: the representations of motherhood and their buying decision process. Beside these two areas, the inconspicuous purposes of Instamoms named as "dark sides" was tried to be investigated and understood.

While choosing the subject of the study, the first step was to observe that the practices of buying behavior for follower mothers and the representations of motherhood by Instamoms, which were carried out in the axis of motherhood and child, became widespread in social media. It was noticed in the social media that these topics, which were shared through Instagram, also contributed to the formation of the new system as influencer marketing. Within this awareness, the literature was examined the studies in terms of motherhood, feminist ideology, gender-based division of labor, social content, contribution to identity construction, and gender issues. During the research, it has been noticed that there are no studies that directly address the relationship between motherhood and consumption on social media.

Marketing is an important force (Pavia, 2014), therefore discussing the motherhood and consumption, through representations and buying decision behavior on social media is important for marketing literature. Considering this, the findings indicate two sides of marketing as the representations with bright sides and dark side of the influencer sector. Triggering consumption of follower mothers, Instamoms change their buying decision process by creating desires and normalizing the excessive consumption. Furhermore, they are one of the actors who set the norms for mothers

in the motherhood representations. They show and promote perfect motherhood, but is this real?

Based on the findings, this stage is motherhood double binds stage, in which the mothers feel alienated and insufficient. Therefore, the research aimed at penetrating into the factors that would promoting the hypothesized mother influencers' (Instamom) impact through social networking site, Instagram. The buyer decision process develops over the concept of "motherhood" that would lead to the formation of mothers'mind. The model of "buyer decision process" was analyzes and reshaped with two new agents in consumer behavior (followers and Instamoms) through the concept of "motherhood".

The summary highlights the main aims of the thesis. Taking into consideration the findings, this thesis makes some theoretical contributions. One of them is to investigating motherhood representations in social media context with highly influencial women, Instamoms; and, the second one is to re-examine the buyer decision process in the influencer context.

For the first contribution, it can be stated that Instagram mothers' society defines the motherhood as "the golden age of women". Therefore, the representations of motherhood take new forms in this context. The perfechood I promoted although the motherhood is also subjective concept. By retouching the representations based on the Instagram narratives of what is "perfect," Instamoms build an online identity for themselves which in turns affect their followers and general discourses. However, reality contradicts what they build as perfect, since the real life is not perfect enough, and Instamoms have some dark sides. The statement "dark sides" refers to their promotional activities, increasing the web traffic of promoted products, promoting products that they never use in their real life and so on. It is very misleading behavior because they are thousands of moms who follow them. Therefore this thesis additionally tries to understand this part of these iconic women.

A major contribution of this thesis is constructing an alternative model of traditional buyer decision process on the social media. Taking into consideration the literature,

new model tried to highlight the new steps for the new model "Changing Buyer Decision Process".

## 8.2. Managerial and Societal Implications

As presented in the previous chapters, this thesis is composed and investigates two main areas: the representation of motherhood and the buyer decision process of follower mothers which are shaped by new consumer culture on Instagram in the Instamoms context. From a broader perspective, studying two concepts in consideration of the societal forces that reshape the motherhood practices; this thesis brings new perspectives to both managerial and social area. The contributions of the study are not limited to the motherhood practices, but it also opens on macro level discussions regarding the social media roles on consumers (mothers in this context) and the societal implications of the practices of Instamoms.

By promoting ideal images on Instagram and triggering buying behavior, the Instamoms have a key role in the follower mothers' buyer decision process. Giving ideal motherhood representations, Instamoms, as a marketing figure today, create desires for follower mothers in social media. These women are an example of Instagram marketing icons for mothers. They market roles and expectation their followers to follow their "perfectly" life and behaviors.

Motherhood is an experience which represents under the influence of different actors. Mothers experience the representations on social media in today's digital world. Most mothers, not regarding their education or income levels, feel depressed to try to reach Instamoms' standards. Some of them do not have the same social and financial possibilities, and under the influence of social media discourses, stories, and perfect representations, they may feel themselves insufficient. Financial possibilities create the initial barriers to reach Instamoms's standards.

On the other hand, some mothers use Instamoms to enjoy, socialize, and participate in the social media community among mothers. On the marketing side, considering the needs and desires of mothers, Instamoms may focus on accompanying mothers as consumers. The findings reveal that mothers sometimes feel helpless to participate in

consumption practices, especially in their early motherhood. For marketers and Instamoms, composing a commutiy as tribal marketing approach can be beneficial for follower mothers and bring out bright side of marketing on social media. Since, a tribe includes people having different gender, age, and attitudes, but uniting around a collective identification, shared experiences, (Cova and Shankar, 2012), Instamoms can achieve this kind of mission.

According to follower mothers' discourses, social media is one of the major institutions which affect their consumption behavior and create the desire onto products, which are promoted by Instamoms. Even though some of the participants are not affected by this influence, many of them are shaped their desires and envied from "this perfect life". In a majority of the interviews, follower mothers criticize Instamoms for showing their possessions and engaging luxury consumption, however they are still following and affecting. Moreover, their statements show that they also want and try to be like them through buying products promoted by them.

Social media is one of the major actors with an influence on follower mothers. More than 10 years ago, Instamoms came to the scene and made an attempt to increase representation for motherhood in a positive and negative way. According to Instagram's latest regulation, all influencers including Instamoms should remark the sponsorship without exception. It is a successful step; at least all followers can understand which one is advertisement and which one is real user comments. Furthermore, some Instamoms start to mention social issues about women and mothers such as gender equality, women health and discrimination against women.

As revealed clearly, social media today involves in the constitution of the market system. This has a huge effect and responsibility on consumers. As all consumers, mothers' vulnerability increase further. Therefore, social media marketers and Instamoms that are responsible for the formation of contents should act more responsible.

Besides marketing professional, academia needs to take action. Most researchers can explain the real need for research on the motherhood and consumption practices. It can increase awareness in academia and society to be the voice of mothers' real

problems on social media. Marketers using Instamoms for their campaigns should acknowledge that motherhood is not just a trend. It is not just about consumption and setting the perfect motherhood criterias. It has differences in age, physical abilities and social and financial opportunities. The homogeneity of the Instamoms offers similar types for follower mothers. With this thesis, the aim is to show the right direction by presenting all sides of influencer marketing in the context of Instamoms and being a voice for follower mothers for their consumption practices too.

## 8.3. Limitations and Future Research

Considering the limited studies on the motherhood and consumption practices on social media in marketing literature, I aimed to discuss the experiences and feelings of follower mothers leading to some limitations and future research suggestions. For future studies, these suggestions would be useful on the methodological issues. Actually, the data collected for this study include 30 in-depth interviews, 5 expert views and content from Instagram posts during the 12 months data collection process. The triangulation of resources through collecting data in different settings is believed to be achieved. Even though a certain degree of triangulation is achieved, participants from different age groups and from different country may provide valuable insights on this topic. Especially single mother could be added to enlarge the findings of the research.

Moreover, my position as a researcher is more like non-participant observer, since I am not a mother now. I only tried to make observations through spending a lot of time with mothers and follow all selected Instamoms' pages for 2 years. Researchers may adopt a full-participant role in future studies to reach a deeper understanding of the phenomena.

Another point which needs further attention is the research on mothers with different social problems such as from minorities, disabled mother, mothers living under the bottom of the pyramid and so on. I strongly believe that really different results can be developed only through the vulnerable's eyes. Moreover, there are also conservative mothers among the Instamoms. This thesis did not include them to the research part. This is one of the limitations of the research, so it can be offered as

further research. Moreover, the concept of "sharenting" could be investigated besides motherhood. Instafamiles could be investigated as an extended research.

Last but not least, this research surely has real-life implications, so future research may be focus on potential strategies and solutions for putting these strategies into practice. Future studies should focus on investigating Insta Dads on Instagram who are newer community than Instamoms. Investigating the paternal consumption will also bring the new perspective for the marketing literature.

# REFERENCES

Abayomi, A. (2017) *The interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA): A guide to a good qualitative research approach*, International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies, Vol. 5(2), pp. 9-19.

Abidin, C. (2014) *#In$Taglam: Instagram as A Repository of Taste, A Brimming Marketplace, A War of Eyeballs*, in M. Berry and M. Schleser, ed., *Mobile Media Making In The Age of Smartphones*, London: Palgrave Pivot, pp. 119–128.

Abidin, C. (2015) *Communicative intimacies: Influencers and perceived interconnectedness,* Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology, (8).

Abidin, C. (2016) *Aren't these just young, rich women doing vain things online? Influencer selfies as subversive frivolity*, Social Media + Society, Vol. 2(2), pp. 1–17.

Abidin, C. and Thompson, E.C. (2012) *Buymylife.com: Cyber-femininities and commercial intimacy in blogshops,* Women's Studies International Forum, Vol. 35(6), pp. 467-477.

Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. (1944) *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Stanford University Press.

Aksu, B. (2001) *Türk Modernleşme Sürecinde Annelik Kimliğinin Dönüşümü*, in İlyasoğlu, A. and Akgökçe, N., ed., *Yerli Bir Feminizme Doğru.* 1st Edition. Ankara: Sel Yayıncılık, pp. 77-105.

Alba, J. and Hutchinson, J. (1987) *Dimensions of consumer expertise*, Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 13(4), pp. 411–454.

Alsulaiman, K., Forbes, S., Dean, D. and Cohen, D. (2015). *Relationships between perceived product values and three word of mouth variables*. Journal of Customer Behaviour, Vol. 14, pp. 277-294.

Andrews, J., Durvasula, S. and Akhter, S. (1990) *A framework for conceptualizing and measuring involvement construct in advertising research*, Journal of Advertising, Vol. 19(4), pp. 27-40.

Arendell, T. (2004) *Conceiving and investigating motherhood: The decade's scholarship*, Journal of Marriage and Family, Vol. 62(4), pp. 1192-1207.

Arnoud, E.J. and Thompson, C. (2005) *Consumer culture theory (CCT): Twenty years of research*, Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 31(4), pp. 868-882.

Arnould, S.J. and Fisher, E. (1994) *Hermeneutics and consumer research*, Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 21(1), pp. 55-70.

Aslam, S. (2017) *Instagram by the Numbers: Stats, Demographics, and Fun Facts* [Online]. Available at: https://www.omnicoreagency.com/instagram-statistics/ (Accessed: 8 February 2019).

Atkin, C. and Block, M. (1983) *Effectiveness of celebrity endorsers*, Journal of Advertising Research, Vol. 23(1), pp. 57-61.

Auh, S. and Johnson, M. (2005) *Compatibility effects in evaluations of satisfaction and loyalty,* Journal of Economic Psychology, Vol. 26(1), pp. 35–37.

Bacon, L. (1974) *Early motherhood, accelarated role transition and social pathologies,* Social Forces, Vol. 52(3), pp. 333-341.

Bagwell, L.S. and Bernheim, B.D. (1996) *Veblen effects in a theory of conspicuous consumption*, American Economic Review, Vol. 86(3), pp. 349-73.

Bahler, K. (2019) *'Life In Those Squares Is Not Actually Real.' Instagram Moms Are On A Quest For Wealth and Fame — But At What Cost? Everyday Money* [Online]. Available at: https://money.com/instagram-mom-influencers-money-paid/ (Accessed: 25 May 2020).

Baker, S., James W.G. and Terri L.R. (2005) *Building understanding of the domain of consumer vulnerability,* Journal of Macromarketing, Vol. 25(2), pp. 128-139.

Ball, D., Coelho, P. and Macha, ´S.A. (2004) *The role of communication and trust in explaining customer loyalty,* European Journal of Marketing, Vol. 38(9/10), pp. 1272–1293.

Balog, K., Rijke, M.D. and Weerkamp, W. (2008) *Bloggers as Experts: Feed Distillation Using Expert Retrieving Models,* in Syung H.M., Douglas W.O., Fabrizio S., Tat-Seng C. and Mun-Kew L., ed., *Proceedings of The 31st Annual International ACM SIGIR Conference On Research and Development In Information Retrieval*, New York: ACM, pp. 753–754.

Bandura, A. (1971) *Social Learning Theory*. General Learning Corporation.

Banerjee, S., Bhattacharyya, S. and Bose, I. (2017) *Whose online reviews to trust? Understanding reviewer trustworthiness and its impact on business*, Decision Support Systems, Vol. 96, pp. 17-26.

Barclay, L., Everitt, L., Rogan, F., Schmied, V. and Wyllie, A. (1997) *Becoming a mother — an analysis of women's experience of early motherhood,* Journal of Advanced Nursing, Vol. 25(4), pp. 719-728.

Barnes, N. (2014) *Social Commerce Emerges as Big Brands Position Themselves To Turn 'Follows' 'Likes' and 'Pins' Into Sales*. Marketing Management Association Annual Spring Conference Proceedings. Chicago, IL, March 26-28, 2014, pp. 8-13.

Barnlund, D.C. (2008) *A Transactional Model of Communication*, in. C.D. Mortensen, ed., *Communication Theory*. 2nd Ed. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction, pp. 47-57.

Barthes, R. (1977) *Image, Music, Text*. Derleyen S. Heath. Fontana Press.

Bateson, G. (1972) *Steps to An Ecology of Mind Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology*. London: Jason Aronson Inc.

Baumeister, R.F. (2002) *Yielding to temptation: self-control failure, impulsive purchasing, and consumer behavior*, The Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 28(4), pp. 670-676.

Bayraktar, S. (2011) *Makbul Anneler Müstakbel Vatandaşlar*. Ankara: Ayizi Yayınları.

Beatty, S. and Smith, S. (1987) *External search effort: An investigation across several product categories,* Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 14(1), pp. 83.

Belch, G. and Belch, M. (2009) *Advertising and Promotion: An Integrated Marketing Communications Perspective*. 8th Ed. Homewood: Irwin.

Belk, R. (2013) *Extended self in a digital world*, Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 40(3), pp. 477–500.

Belk, R.W. (1988) *Possessions and the extended self*, Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 15(2), pp. 139–168.

Belk, R.W., Ger, G. and Askegaard, S. (2003) *The fire of desire: a multisited inquiry into consumer passion,* Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 30(3), pp. 26-51.

Berelson, B. (1952) *Content Analysis in Communication Research*. 1st Edition. Michigan: Free Press.

Berger, J. and Heath, C. (2008) *Where consumers diverge from others: Identity signaling and product domains,* Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 34(2), pp. 121-134.

Bergkvist, L. and Zhou, K. (2016) *Celebrity endorsements: A literature review and research agenda,* The Review of Marketing Communication, Vol. 35(4), pp. 642-663.

Bernard, H.R. (2002) *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods*. 3rd Edition. California: Altamira Press.

Bhatnagar, A. and Ghose, S. (2004) *Segmenting consumers based on the benefits and risks of ınternet shopping*, Journal of Business Research, Vol. 57(12), pp. 1352-1360.

Biklen, D. (1997) *Science, disability, and voice: A response to danforth*, Mental Retardation, Vol. 35(5), pp. 383-387.

Blackshaw, P. (2006) *The Consumer-Generated Surveillance Culture* [Online]. Available at: http://www.clickz.com/showpage.html?Page=3576076 (Accessed: 20 August 2017).

Blackshaw, P. and Nazzaro, M. (2004) *Consumer-Generated Media (CGM) 101: Word-of-Mouth in the Age of the Webfortified Consumer* [Online]. Available at: http://www.Nielsenbuzzmetrics.Com/Whitepapers (Accessed: 25 July 2008).

Boekeloo, B., Schiavo, L., Rabin, D., Jordan, C. and Mathews, J.R. (1993) *Sexual risk behaviors of STD clinic patients before and after earvin "Magic" Johnson's HIV infection announcement: Maryland, 1991-1992,* Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, Vol. 42(3), pp. 46-48.

Borghei, N., Taghipour, A., Latifnejad, R. and Jabbari, N. (2017) *Investigating the determinants of maternal empowerment during pregnancy: A strategy for prenatal healthcare promotion,* Midwifery and Reproductive Health, Vol. 5(3), pp. 988-997.

Bornstein, M.H., Suwalsky, J.T.D. and Breakstone, D.A. (2012) *Emotional relationships between mothers and infants: Knowns, unknowns, and unknown unknowns,* Dev Psychopathol, Vol. 24(1), pp. 113-123.

Bourdieu, P. (1990) *In Other Words: Essays Towards A Reflexive Sociology*. Stanford University Press.

Bradley, A. (2005) *Blogher, Blogme* [Online]. Available at: http://finslippy.typepad.com/finslippy/2005/08/blogher_blogme.htm (Accessed: 12 September 2019).

Brand Watch. (2019) *50 Incredible Instagram Statistics* [Online]. Available at: https://www.brandwatch.com/blog/ınstagram-stats/ (Accessed: 23 June 2019).

Britten, N. (1999) *Qualitative Interviews in Healthcare*, in Pope, C. and Mays, N., (eds.) *Qualitative Research in Health Care*. 2nd Edition. London: BMJ Books. pp. 11-19.

Brooks, J. and Lewis, M. (1976) *Infants' responses to strangers: Midget, adult, and child,* Child Development, Vol. 47(2), pp. 323-332.

Brosch, A. (2016) *When the child is born into the internet: Sharenting as a growing trend among parents on facebook,* The New Educational Review, Vol. 40(1), pp. 225-234.

Brown, J., Broderich, A. and Lee, N. (2007)  *Word of mouth communication within online communities: Conceptualizing the online social network*, Journal of Interactive Marketing, Vol. 21(3), pp. 2 – 20.

Bruner, G. (1988). *The marketing mix: Time for reconceptualization*, Journal of Marketing Education, Vol. 11(2), pp. 72-77.

Bryman, A. and Bell, E. (2015) *Business Research Method*. 4th Edition. Oxford University Press.

Burmese, B.S. (2007) *Women and Unwanted Pregnancy:'I Thought My Blood Was Stuck Inside Me',* in Liamputtong P., ed., *Reproduction, Childbearing and Motherhood: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*. New York: Nova, pp. 47–62.

Business Dictionary. (2013) *What Is Consumer Buying Behavior? Definition and Meaning* [Online]. Available at: http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/consumer-buying-behavior.html (Accessed: 7 Octater 2017).

Buttle, H., Jane, E.R. and Shai, D. (2000)  *Do famous faces capture attention?,* Advances in Consumer Research, Vol. 27, pp. 245.

Carlson, K. (2017) *Experticity* [Online]. Available at: https://business.experticity.com/the-growth-of-social-ınfluencer-marketing/ (Accessed: 5 October 2019).

Carson, D., Gilmore, A., Perry, C. and Gronhaug, K. (2001) *Qualitative Market Research.* Sage Publications Ltd.

Chaney, D. (1996) *Book reviews*, Sociology Journal, Vol. 30(3), pp. 626-627.

Chapple, C. and F. Cownie. (2017) *An investigation into viewers' trust in and response towards disclosed paid-for-endorsements by youtube lifestyle vloggers,* Journal of Promotional Communications, Vol. 5(2), pp. 110–36.

Chen, G.M. (2013) *Don't call me that: A techno-feminist critique of the term mommy blogger,* Mass Communication and Society, Vol. 16(4), pp. 510–532.

Cheung, C.M., Xiao, B.S. and Liu, I.L. (2014) *Do actions speak louder than voices? The signaling role of social information cues in influencing consumer purchase decisions,* Decision Support Systems, Vol. 65, pp. 50-58.

Cho, Y., Im, I., Hiltz, R. and Fjermestad, J. (2002) *The effects of post-purchase evaluation factors on online vs offline customer complaining behavior: Implications for customer loyalty,* Advances In Consumer Research, Vol. 29(1), pp. 318–326.

Chodorow, N. (1978) *The Reproduction of Mothering Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender.* University of California Press.

Chung, S. and Cho, H. (2017) *Fostering parasocial relationships with celebrities on social media: Implications for celebrity endorsement: Celebrity parasocial relationships on social media*, Psychology and Marketing, Vol. 34(4), pp. 481-495.

Cialdini, R.B. (1993) *Influence: Science and Practice.* 3rd Ed. New York: Harpercollins College Publishers.

Constantinides, E. and Fountain, S. (2008) *Web 2.0: Conceptual foundations and marketing issues,* Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice, Vol. 9(3), pp. 231-244.

Cooper, P.G. (2018) *Social Media, Salem Press Encyclopaedia* [Online]. Available at: http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=trueandauthtype=ıp,cookie,shiban ddb=e rsandan=89139034andsite=eds-liveandscope=site (Accessed: 16 July 2019).

Corfman, K. (1991) *Comparability and comparison levels used in choices among consumer products,* Journal of Marketing Research, Vol. 28(3), pp. 368-374.

Costa, E. (2016) *Social Media in Southeast Turkey: Love, Kinship and Politics*. London: UCL Press.

Cova, B. and Shankar, A. (2012) *Tribal Marketing*, in L. Penaloza, N. Toulouse and L. M. Visconti, *Marketing Management: A Cultural Perspective*. Routledge, pp. 178-193

Crane, D. and Bovone, L. (2006) *Approaches to material culture: The sociology of fashion and clothing*, Poetics, Vol. 34(6), pp. 319-333.

Creswell, J.W. (1998) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions.* Sage Publications, Inc.

Creswell, J.W. (2012) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches.* 3rd Ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J.W. (2015) *Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri: Beş Yaklaşıma Göre Nitel Araştırma and Araştırma Deseni*. Çeviren M. Bütün and S.B. Demir. Ankara: Siyasal Yay. Dağ.

Creswell, J.W. and Plano, C.V.L. (2011) *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research.* 2nd Edition. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Daniel, W.W. (1999) *Biostatistics: A Foundation For Analysis in the Health Sciences*. 7th Edition. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V. and Hudders, L. (2017) *Marketing through instagram influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude,* International Journal of Advertising, Vol. 36(5), pp. 798-828 [Online] Available at: Https://Www.Lub.Lu.Se/En/Search-Systems-And-Tools/Lubsearch (Accessed: 13 March 2019).

Debono, K.G. and Richard, J.H. (1988) *Source expertise, source attractiveness, and the processing of persuasive information: A functional approach*, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 55(4), pp. 541–546.

Dedeoğlu, A.Ö. (2010) *Discourses of motherhood and consumption practices of Turkish mothers,* Business and Economics Research Journal, Vol. 1(3), pp. 1-15.

Demby, E. (1974) *Psychographics and From Whence it Came*, in Wells, W.D., ed., *Life Style and Psychographics*. Chicago: American Marketing Association, pp. 9-30.

Denzin, N. (1978) *Sociological Methods: A Sourcebook*. NY: McGraw Hill.

Dewing, M. (2012) *Social Media: An Introduction*. Library of Parliament.

Dholakia, R. and Sternthal, B. (1977) *Highly credible sources: Persuasive facilitators or persuasive liabilities?* Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 3(4), pp. 223-232.

Dichter, E. (1966) *How word-of-mouth advertising works,* Harvard Business Review, Vol. 44(6), pp. 147-160.

Dickson, P. (1982) *Person- situation: Segmentation's missing link*, Journal of Marketing, Vol. 46(4), pp. 56-64.

Djafarova, E. and Rushworth, C. (2017) *Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female*

*users,* Computers In Human Behavior [Online]. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.11.009 (Accessed: 4 March 2019).

Douglas, S. and Michaels, M. (2005) *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How it Has Undermined All Women*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Dreamgrow. (2017) *Top 15 Most Popular Social Networking Sites* [Online]. Available at: https://www.dreamgrow.com/top-15-most-popular-social-networking sites. (Accessed: 20 May 2017).

Dreamgrow. (2019) *Top 10 Social Networking Sites by Market Share Statistics* [Online]. Available at: https://www.dreamgrow.com/top-10-social-networking-sites-market-share-of-visits/ (Accessed: 20 September 2020).

Drichoutis, A.C., Kazarudus, P. and Nayga, R.M. (2007) *An assessment of product class involvement in food-purchasing behavior,* European Journal of Marketing, Vol. 41(7/8), pp. 888–914.

Duberley, J. and Carrigan, M. (2012) *The career identities of 'mumpreneurs': women's experiences of combining enterprise and motherhood*, International Small Business Journal, Vol. 31(6), pp. 629–651.

Dubois, B. (2000) *Understanding the Consumer*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.

Ehrenreich, B. and Deirdre E. (2005) *For Her Own Good: Two Centuries of the Experts' Advice to Women*. Second Edition. Anchor Books.

Ekinsmyth, C. (2011) *Challenging the boundaries of entrepreneurship: The spatialities and practices of UK 'Mumpreneurs',* Geoforum, Vol. 42(1), pp. 102–114.

Ellison, N., Heino, R. and Gibbs, J. (2006) *Managing impressions online: Self-presentation processes in the online dating environment*, Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, Vol. 11(2), pp. 415-441.

Elo, S. and Kyngäs, H. (2008) *The qualitative content analysis process*, Leading Global Nursing Research, Vol. 62(1), pp. 107-115.

Engel, J.F, Kollat, D.J. and Blackwell, R.D. (1968) *Consumer Behavior*. Newyork: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Engel, J.F., Black, R.D. and Miniard, P.W. (1993) *Consumer Behavior*. 7th Ed. Newyork: The Dryden Press.

Entwistle, J. (2000) T*he Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Erdoğan, Z.B. (1999) *Celebrity endorsement: A literature review*, Journal of Marketing Management, Vol. 15(4), pp. 291-314.

Ergül, H., Gökalp, E. and Cangöz, İ. (2012) *"Medya Ne Ki… Her Şey Yalan!" Kent Yoksullarının Günlük Yaşamında Medya*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

Erkan, I. and Evans, C. (2016) *Social media or shopping websites? The influence of ewom on consumers' online purchase intentions*, Journal of Marketing Communications, Vol. 24(6), pp. 1-17.

Erlandson, D.A., Harris, E.L., Skipper, B.L. and Allen, S.D. (1993) *Doing Naturalistic Inquiry: A Guide to Methods.* Newbury Park: Sage Publications, Inc.

Erz, A. and Christensen, A.B.H. (2018) *Transforming consumers into brands: Tracing transformation processes of the practice of blogging*, Journal of Interactive Marketing, Vol. 43, pp. 69–82.

Escalas, J.E. and Bettman, J.R. (2003) *You are what they eat: the influence of reference groups on consumers' connections to brands*, Journal of Consumer Psychology, Vol. 13(3), pp. 339-348.

Evans, N.J., Phua, J., Lim, J. and Jun, H. (2017) *Disclosing instagram influencer advertising: The effects of disclosure language on advertising recognition, attitudes, and behavioural intent,* Journal of Interactive Advertising, Vol. 17(2), pp. 138-149.

Evanschitzky, H., Iyer, G., Hesse, J. and Ahlert, D. (2004) *E-Satisfaction: A re-examination,* Journal of Retailing, Vol. 80(3), pp. 239-247.

Featherstone, M. (2010) *Body, image and affect in consumer culture*, Body and Society, Vol. 16(1), pp. 193-221.

Feick, L. and Higie, R. (1992) *The effects of preference heterogeneity and source characteristics on ad processing and judgements about endorsers*, Journal of Advertising, Vol. 21(2), pp. 9-24.

Ferraro, R., Bettman, J.R. and Chartrand, T.L. (2008) *The power of strangers: The effect of incidental consumer brand encounters on brand choices*, Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 35(5), pp. 729-741.

Folbre, N. (1987) *The Pauperization of Motherhood: Patriarchy and Public Policy in the United States*, in Naomi G. and Harriet Engel G. (eds.) *Families and Work*. Temple University Press, pp. 491-511.

Forbes, K. (2016) *Examining the beauty industry's use of social influencers*, Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications, Vol. 7(2), pp. 78-87.

Forbes, L.P. and Vespoli, E. (2013) *Does social media influence consumer buying behavior? An investigation of recommendations and purchases*, Journal of Business and Economics Research, Vol. 11(2), pp. 107-113.

Franke, R.H. and Kaul, J.D. (1978) *The hawthorne experiments: First statistical interpretation,* American Sociological Review, Vol. 43(5), pp. 623-643.

Freberg, K., Graham, K., Mcgaughey, K. and Freberg, L.A. (2010) *Who are the social media influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality*, Public Relations Review, Vol. 37(1), pp. 90-92.

Fred, S. (2015) *Examining Endorsement and Viewership Effects on the Source Credibility of Youtubers* [Online]. Available at: http://Scholarcommons.Usf. Edu/Cgi/Viewcontent.Cgi?Article=6883andContext=Etd (Accessed: 20 March 2017).

Friedman, H.H. and Friedman, L. (1979) *Endorser effectiveness by product type*, Journal of Advertising Research, Vol. 19(5), pp. 63–71.

Friedman, M. (2013) *Mommy Blogs and the Changing Face of Motherhood*. Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press.

Friestad, M. and Wright, P. (1994) *The persuasion knowledge model: How people cope with persuasion attempts*, Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 21(1), pp. 1–31.

Fuchs, C. and Sevignani, S. (2013) *What is digital labour? What is digital work? What's their difference? and why do these questions matter for understanding social media?*, Triple C: Communication and Capitalism and Critique, Vol. 11(2), pp. 237-293.

Furedi, F. (2013) *Paranoyak Anne-Babalık*. Çeviren A. Tüfekçi. İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık.

Galica, K. and Chou, W.Y.S. (2014) *Instagram for health: Peer-to-peer fitness motivation,* The Society of Behavioral Medicine, Vol. 47, pp. 43.

Gannon, V. and Prothero, A. (2018) *Beauty bloggers and youtubers as a community of practice,* Journal of Marketing Management, Vol. 34(3), pp. 1-28.

Garcia, A.C. (2009) *Ethnographic approaches to the internet and computer mediated communication*, Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, Vol. 38(1), pp. 52-84.

Garifova, L. (2016) *Realization of small businesses economic interests on instagram*, Journal of Economics and Economic Education Research, (Suppl. Special Issue), pp. 133-139.

Geyser, W. (2020) *The State of Influencer Marketing 2020: Benchmark Report* [Online]. Available at: https://influencermarketinghub.com/influencer-marketing-benchmark-report-2020/ (Accessed: 14 February 2020).

Global Influencer Survey. (2016) *We Asked, They Answered: How Micro-Influencers Really Want to Work With Brands.* Available at: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a9ffc57fcf7fd301e0e9928/t/5acd07da03ce649 b2aab9ecf/1523386331810/how+microınfluencers+really+want+to+work+survey+re branded.pdf (Accessed: 20 October 2019).

Goffman, E. (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. London: Penguin Books.

Gram, M. and Pedersen, H.D. (2014) *Negotiations of Motherhood- Between İdeals and Practice, Motherhoods, Markets and Consumption*, in S. O'Donohoe, M. Hogg, P. Maclaran, L. Martens and L. Stevens (eds.) *The Making of Mother, Motherhoods, Markets and Consumption: The Making of Mothers in Contemporary Western Cultures.* London: Routledge, pp. 99-114.

Granovetter, M. (1973) *The strength of weak ties*, American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 78(6), pp. 1360–1380.

Gräve, J. (2017) *Exploring The Perception of Influencers vs. Traditional Celebrities: Are Social Media Stars a New Type of Endorser?.* 8th International Conference on Social Media and Society, 28 July 2017, pp. 1-5.

Green, F.J. (2012) *Evaluating Mothers in Supernanny and Crash Test Mummy,* in E. Podnieks, ed., *Mediating Moms: Mothers in Popular Culture*. Mcgill-Queen's Press-MQUP.

Gröngroos, C. (1994) *From marketing mix to relationship marketing: Towards a paradigm shift in marketing*, Management Decision, Vol. 32(2), pp. 4-20.

Guba, E.G. and Lincoln, Y.S. (1994) *Competing paradigms in qualitative research*, Handbook of Qualitative Research, Vol. 2, pp. 163-194.

Hall, P.C. (1998) *Mothering mythology in the late twentieth century: Science, gender lore and celebratory narrative*, Canadian Woman Studies, Vol. 18, pp. 59–63.

Hanna, R., Rohm, A. and Crittenden, V.L. (2011) *We're all connected: The power of the social media ecosystem,* Business Horizons, Vol. 54(3), pp. 265–273.

Harmon, R. and Coney, H. (1982) *The persuasive effects of source credibility in buy and lease situations*, Journal of Marketing Research, Vol. 19(2), pp. 255-260.

Häubl, G. and Trifts, V. (2001) *Consumer decision making in online shopping environments: The effects of interactive decision aids,* Marketing Science, Vol. 19(1), pp. 4-21.

Hauser, J., Urban, G. and Weinberg, B. (1993) *How consumers allocate their time when searching for information*, Journal of Marketing Research, Vol. 30(4), pp. 452–466.

Hays, S. (1998) *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Hearn, A. and Schoenhoff, S. (2015) *From Celebrity to Influencer: Tracing the Diffusion of Celebrity Value Across the Data Stream*. Wiley Online Library.

Heinonen, K. (2011) *Consumer activity in social media: managerial approaches to consumers' social media behavior*, Journal of Consumer Behavior, Vol, 10(6), pp. 356-364.

Hellier, P., Geurse, G., Carr, R. and Rickard, J. (2003) *Customer repurchase intention: A general structural equation model,* European Journal of Marketing, Vol. 37(11/12), pp. 1762–1800.

Hennig-Thurau, T., Gwinner, K.P., Walsh, G. and Gremler, D.D. (2004) *Electronic word-of-mouth via consumer-opinion platforms: What motivates consumers to articulate themselves on the internet,* Journal of Interactive Marketing, Vol. 18(1), pp. 38-52.

Hess, A. (2017) 'The teenage life, streamed live and for profit', *The New York Times,* 6 Haziran [Online]. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/06/arts/lively-the-teenage-lifestreamed.html?smid=fb-nytimesandsmtyp=curandsmvar=wkndstand_r=0 (Accessed: 12 September 2018).

Hirschman, E.C. (1986) *Humanistic inquiry in marketing research: Philosophy, method and criteria,* Journal of Marketing Research, Vol. 23(3), pp. 237-249.

Hoffner, C. and Buchanan, M. (2005) *Young adults' wishful identification with television characters: The role of perceived similarity and character attributes.* Media Psychology, Vol. 7(4), pp. 325-351.

Hogg, M., Abrams, D., Otten, S. and Hinkle, S. (2004) *The social identity perspective: Intergroup relations, self-conception, and small groups,* Small Group Research, Vol. 35(3), pp. 246-276.

Holbrook, M.B. and Elizabeth C.H. (1982) *The experiential aspects of consumption: consumer fantasy, feelings and fun,* Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 9(2), pp. 132-40.

Hollebeek, L., Glynn, M. and Brodie, R. (2014) *Consumer brand engagement in social media: conceptualization, scale development and validation*, Journal of Interactive Marketing, Vol. 28(2), pp. 149-165.

Hopkinson, G.C. and Hogg, M.K. (2005) *Stories: How They are Used and Produced in Market(Ing) Research*, in R. Belk, ed., *Handbook of Qualitative Methods in Marketing*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Hotsuit. (2019) *The Global State of Digital in 2019* [Online]. Available at: https://www.hootsuite.com/resources/digital-in-2019 (Accessed: 23 December 2019).

Houston, M. and Rothschild, M. (1978) *Conceptual and Methodological Perspectives on Involvement, Educators Proceedings*, in S. Jain, ed., *Research Frontiers in Marketing: Dialogues and Directions*. Chicago: American Marketing Association, pp.184-187.

Hovland, C., Irving, J. and Harold, K. (1953) *Communication and Persuasion; Psychological Studies of Opinion Change.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Howard, J.A. and Sheth, J.N. (1969) *The Theory of Buyer Behavior*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Hsieh, H. and Shannon, S.E. (2005) *Three approaches to qualitative content analysis*, Qualitative Health Research, Vol. 15(9), pp. 1277–1288.

Hsu, C.L., Lin, J.C.C., and Chiang, H.S. (2013) *The effects of blogger recommendations on customers' online shopping intensions*. Internet Research, Vol. 23(1), pp. 69-88.

Huber, J. and Klein, N. (1991) *Adapting cutoffs to the choice environment: the effects of attribute correlation and reliability*, Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 18(3), pp. 346-357.

Hunter, A. (2016) *Monetizing the mommy: Mommy blogs and the audience commodity,* Information, Communication and Society, Vol. 19(9), pp. 1306–1320.

Influence Center Survey. (2020) *Social Upends Traditional Media In Driving Shopping Purchases* [Online]. Available at: http://blog.influence-central.com/social-upends-traditional-media-in-driving-shopping-purchases/ (Accessed: 24 June 2019).

Influencer Marketing Hub. (2020) *The State of Influencer Marketing 2020: Benchmark Report* [Online]. Available at: https://influencermarketinghub.com/influencer-marketing-benchmark-report-2020/ (Accessed: 14 February 2021).

Jaffari, S.I.A. and Hunjra, A.I. (2017) *Mediating impact of celebrity endorsement in relationship of celebrity characteristics and consumers purchase intention*, Journal of Social Sciences, Vol. 10(2), pp. 329-344.

Jain, S.P. and Posavac, S.S. (2001) *Pre-purchase attribute verifiability, source credibility, and persuasion,* Journal of Consumer Psychology, Vol. 11(3), pp. 169-180.

Jenkins, H. (2006) *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide.* New York: New York University Press.

Johnson, K. (2015) *Behavioral education in the 21st century*, Journal of Organizational Behavior Management, Vol. 35(1-2), pp. 135-150.

Johnston, R. and Kong, X. (2011) *The customer experience: A road-map for improvement*, Managing Service Quality, Vol. 21(1), pp. 5−24.

Kahle, L. and Pamela, H. (1985) *Physical attractiveness of the celebrity endorser: A social adaptation perspective,* Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 11(4), pp. 954-61.

Kahle, L.R. and Chiagouris, L. (Eds.). (1997) *Values, Lifestyles, and Psychographics*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Kahraman, M. (2013) *Sosyal Medya 101 2.0: Pazarlamacılar için Sosyal Medyaya Giriş.* İstanbul: Mediacat Yayıncılık.

Kamins, M., Brand, M., Hoeke, S. and Moe, J. (2013) *Two-sided versus one-sided celebrity endorsements: The impact on advertising effectiveness and credibility*, Journal of Advertising, Vol. 18(2), pp. 4-10.

Kamins, M.A. (1990) *An investigation of the 'match-up' hypothesis in celebrity advertising: when beauty may be only skin deep,* Journal of Advertising, Vol. 19(1), pp. 4- 13.

Kapitan, S. and Silvera, D. (2015) *From digital media influencers to celebrity endorsers: Attributions drive endorser effectiveness*, Marketing Letters, Vol. 27(3), pp. 553-567.

Kaplan, A. and Haenlein, M. (2011) *Two hearts in three-quarter time: How to waltz the social media/viral marketing dance,* Business Horizons, Vol 54(3), pp. 253-263.

Kaplan, A.M. and Haenlein, M. (2009) *Consumer use and business potential of virtual worlds: the case of "second life",* International Journal On Media Management, Vol. 11(3-4), 93-101.

Kaplan, A.M. and Haenlein, M. (2010) *Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media,* Business Horizons, Vol. 53(1), pp. 59-68.

Karlsen, R. (2015) *Followers are opinion leaders: The role of people in the flow of political communication on and beyond social networking sites*, European Journal of Communication, Vol. 30(3), pp. 301-318.

Katz, E. and Lazarsfeld, P.F. (1955) *Personal Influence: The Part Played by People In the Flow of Mass Communications: A Report of the Bureau of Applied Social Research*. New York: The Free Press of Glencoe.

Katz, E. and Lazarsfeld, P.F. (1955) *Personal Influence: The Part Played By People In The Flow of Mass Communications: A Report of the Bureau of Applied Social Research*. New York: The Free Press of Glencoe.

Kaur, G. (2016) *Social media marketing*, Asian Journal of Multidisiplinary Studies, Vol. 4(7), pp. 34-36.

Kaynak, E. and Kara, A. (2001) *An examination of the relationship among consumer lifestyles, ethnocentrism, knowledge structures, attitudes and behavioural tendencies: A comparative study in two CIS states*, International Journal of Advertising, Vol. 20(4), pp. 455-482.

Keller, E. and Berry, J. (2003) *The Influentials: One American in Ten Tells the Other Nine How to Vote, Where to Eat, and What to Buy.* New York: Free Press.

Keller, J.M. (2012) *Virtual feminisms: girls' blogging communities, feminist activism, and participatory politics*, Information, Communication and Society, Vol. 15(3), pp. 429–447.

Kelman, H. (2006) *Interests, relationships, identities: Three central issues for individuals and groups in negotiating their social environment*, Annual Review of Psychology, Vol. 57, pp. 1-26.

Kembau, A. and Mekel, P.A. (2014) *Reference groups, family, roles and status on young consumer behavior towards purchase intentions of luxury fashion brands*, Journal EMBA, Vol. 2(2), pp. 1172-1178.

Kemp, S. (2018) *Digital in 2018: Worlds Internet Users Pass The 4 Billion Mark* [Online]. Available at: https://wearesocial.com/blog/2018/01/global-digital-report-2018 (Accessed: 19 July 2018).

Khan, G. and Khan, N. (2005) *Susceptibility to informational social influence on purchase decisions of designer label apparel: The mediating role of gender,* The Business Review, 4(1), pp. 32-37.

Kinnear, T. and Bernhardt, K. (1986) *Principles of Marketing*. 2nd Edn. Glenview: Scott, Foresman and Co., pp. 146,149,150.

Kleiman, S. (2004) *Phenomenology: To wonder and search for meanings*, Nurse Researcher, Vol. 11(4), pp. 7-19.

Kotler, P. (2011) *Principles of Marketing*. 14th Edition. Pearson Education.

Kotler, P. and Armstrong, G. (2005) *Marketing: An Introduction*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.

Kotler, P. and Keller, K.L. (2006) *Marketing Management*. 12th Edn. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.

Kotler P., Armstrong G., Saunders J. and Wong V. (2002) *Principle of Marketing*, 3rd edition, Pretence Hall $Europe.

Kotler, P. and Keller, K.L. (2018) *Marketing Management.* 15th Edn. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.

Kotler, P., Kartajaya, H. and Setiawan, I., (2017) *Marketing 4.0: Moving From Traditional To Digital*. Hoboken: Wiley.

Kotler, P., Roberto, N. and Lee, N. (2002) S*ocial Marketing: Improving the Quality of Life*. 2nd Edition. Thousand Oaks: Sage

Kozinets, R. (2014) *Social brand engagement: A new idea*, Marketing Intelligence Review, Vol. 6(2), pp. 8-15.

Kozinets, R.V. (2015) *Netnography: Redefined*. London: SAGE.

Krippendorff, K. (1969) *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology*. London: Sage Publications.

Krotz, F. (2009) *Stuart Hall: Encoding/Decoding und Identität*, in Hepp A., Krotz F., Thomas T. (eds.) *Schlüsselwerke der Cultural Studies. Medien – Kultur – Kommunikation.* Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, pp. 210–223.

Kvale, S. (1996) *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Kvale, S. and Brinkmann, S. (2015) *Interviews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing.* 3rd Edition. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Langer, R. and Beckmann, S. (2005) *Sensitive research topics: Netnography revisited*, Qualitative Market Research, Vol. 8(2), pp. 189-203.

Lastovicka, J.L. and Gardner, D.M. (1979) *Components of Involvement*, in J.C. Maloney and B. Silverman (eds.) *Attitude Research Plays For High Stakes*, Chicago: American Marketing Association, pp. 53-73.

Lazarsfeld, P.F., Berelson, B. and Gaudet, H. (1944) *The People's Choice. How the Voter Makes up His Mindin a Presidential Campaign*. Columbia University Press.

Lazer, W. (1963) *What models in marketing?* Journal of Marketing, Vol. 27(2), pp. 70-73.

Lee, C. (1997) *Social context, depression and the transition to motherhood*, British Journal of Health Psychology, Vol. 2(2), pp. 93–108.

Lee, A. and Labroo, A. (2004) *The effect of conceptual and perceptual fluency on brand evaluation*, Journal of Marketing Research, Vol. 41(2), pp. 151-165.

Lee, H.-M., Henze, D.K., Alexander, B. and Murray, L.T. (2014) *Investigating the sensitivity of surface-level nitrate seasonality in Antarctica to primary sources using a global model,* Atmos. Environ., Vol. 89, pp. 757-767.

Lehdonvirta, V. (2012) *A History of the Digitalization of Consumer Culture*, in Mike Molesworth and Janice Denegri-Knott (eds.) *Digital Virtual Consumption*. London: Routledge, pp. 11–28.

Leibenstein, H. (1950) *Bandwagon, snob, and veblen effects in the theory of consumers' demand. the quarterly*, Journal of Economics, Vol. 64(2), pp. 183-207.

Letheren, K., Russell-Bennett, R., Mulcahy, R. and Mcandrew, R. (2019) *Rules of (consumer) engagement: technology as manager, assistant, intern,* European Journal of Marketing, Vol. 53(9), pp. 1934-1961.

Li, Y.M., Lee, Y.L. and Lien, N.J. (2014) *Online social advertising via influential endorsers,* International Journal of Electronic Commerce, Vol. 16(3), pp. 119-153.

Liang, T.P., Ho, Y.T., Li, Y.W. and Turban, E. (2011) *What drives social commerce: The role of social support and relationship quality*, International Journal of Electronic Communications, Vol. 6(2), pp. 69–90.

Lincoln, Y.S. and Guba, E.G. (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Sage.

Lipovetsky, G. (1987) *L'Empire De L'Éphémère: La Mode Et Son Destin Dans Les Societes Modernes.* Gallimard.

Lisa, G. (2008) *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. London: Sage.

Lister, M., Dovey, J., Giddings, S., Grant, I. and Kelly, K. (2009) *A New Media: A Criical Introduction*. 2nd Edition. Routledge

Liu, J. and Teo, T.S. (2007) *Consumer trust in e-commerce in the United States, Singapore and China,* Amega, Vol. 35(1), pp. 22-38.

Liu, S., Jiang, C., Lin, Z., Ding, Y., Duan, R. and Xu, Z. (2015) *Identifying effective influencers based on trust for electronic word-of-mouth marketing: A domain-aware approach,* Information Sciences, Vol. 306, pp. 34-52.

Lopez, L.K. (2009) *The radical act of 'mommy blogging': Redefining motherhood through the blogosphere,* New Media Society, Vol. 11(5), pp. 729-747.

Lowery, S.A. and Defleur, M.L. (1995) *Milestones in Mass Communication Research: Media Effects.* 3rd Ed. White Plains: Longman.

Luo, Y. (2005) *Do insiders learn from outsiders? Evidence from mergers and acquisitions.* The Journal of Finance, 60(4), pp. 1951-1982.

Lyons, B. and Henderson, K. (2005) *Opinion leadership in a computer-mediated environment.* Journal of Consumer Behaviour, Vol. 4(5), pp. 319-329.

Mangold, W.G. and Faulds, D.J. (2009) *Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix*, Business Horizons, Vol. 52(4), pp. 357-365.

Marwick, A. (2015) *Instafame: Luxury selfies in the attention economy*, Public Culture, Vol. 27(1), pp. 137-160.

Mason, J. (2002) *Researching Your Own Practice: The Discipline of Noticing*. Routledge.

Matthes, J. and Kohring, M. (2008) *The content analysis of media frames: toward improving reliability and validity,* Journal of Communication, Vol. 58(2), pp. 258-279.

Mayfield, A. (2008) *What Is Social Media?* [Online]. Available at: http://www.icrossing.co.uk/fileadmin/uploads/ebooks/what_is_social_media_icrossing_e book.pdf (Accessed: 01 October 2015).

Mccarthy, E.J. (1964) *Basic Marketing: A Managerial Approach, Homewood*. IL: Irwin Inc.

Mccracken, G. (1988) *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Mccracken, G. (1989) *Who is the celebrity endorser? Cultural foundations of the endorsement process*, Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 16(3), pp. 310.

Mcgrail, A. (2013) The Blogconomy: Blogging Stats [Infographic] [Online]. Available at: http://Www.Socialmediatoday.Com/Content/Blogconomy-Blogging-Stats-Infographic (Accessed: 20 March 2017).

Mendoza, M. (2010) *I blog. You buy. How Bloggers are creating a new generation of product endorsers*, Digital Research and Publishing, Vol. 7, 114-122.

Merwe, R. and Heerden, G. (2009) *Finding and utilizing opinion leaders: Social networks and the power of relationships*, South African Journal of Business Management, Vol. 40(3), pp. 65-76.

Miles, J. (2013) *Instagram Power: Build Your Brand and Reach More Customers with the Power of Pictures*. New York: Mcgraw-Hill.

Miller, D., Sinanan, J., Wang, X., McDonald, T., Haynes, N., Costa, E., ... and Nicolescu, R. (2016) *How the World Changed Social Media*. UCL Press.

Miller, S.M. (2010) *Towards a Multimodal Literacy Pedagogy: Digital Video Composing as 21st Century Literacy*, in P. Albers, ed., *Literacies, Arts, and Multimodality. Urbana- Champaign*. IL: National Council of Teachers of English, pp. 254-281.

Mitchell, V.W. and Boustani, P. (1993) *A preliminary investigation into pre-and post-purchase risk perception and reduction*, European Journal of Marketing, Vol. 28(1), ss 56.

Mittal, V. and Kamakura, W. (2001) Satisfaction, repurchase intent and repurchase behavior: Investigating the moderating effect of customer characteristics, Journal of Marketing Research, Vol. 38(1), pp. 131-142.

Mizrachi, N. and Zawdu, A. (2010) *Between global racial and bounded identity: Choice of destigmatization strategies among ethiopian jews in Israel*, Ethnic and Racial Studies, Vol. 35(3), pp. 436-452.

Montoya, M. (2016) *Preparing for interview research: the interview protocol refinement framework,* The Qualitative Report, Vol. 21(5), pp. 811-831.

Moon, B.J. (2004) *Consumer adoption of the internet as an information search and product purchase channel: Some research hypotheses*, International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising, Vol. 1(1), pp. 104-118.

Moon, J.H., Lee, E., Lee, J.A., Choi, T. and Sung, Y. (2016) *The role of narcissism in self-promotion on instagram,* Personality and Individual Differences. Vol. 101, pp. 22-25.

Morris, C. (2006) *From ideologies of motherhood to 'collecting mother goddesses'*, Archeology and European Identity, Creta Antica, Vol. 7, pp. 69-78.

Motiejunaite, J. (2005) *Women's Rights: The Public/Private Dichotomy*. New York: International Debate Education Association.

Muniz, A.M. and Schau, H.J. (2009) *Vigilante marketing and consumer-created communications,* Journal of Advertising, Vol. 36(3), pp. 35-50.

Narayana, C.L. and Markin, R.J. (1975) *Consumer behavior and product performance: An alternative conceptualization,* Journal of Marketing, Vol. 39(Octaber), pp. 1–6.

Neher, K. (2014) *Visual Social Marketing For Dummies*. Hoboken: John Wileyand Sons, Incorporated.

Nejad, M., Sherrell, D. and Babakus, E. (2014) Influentials and influence mechanisms in new product diffusion: An integrative review. The Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, Vol. 22(2), pp.185-208.

Newman, D. (2015) *Love it or Hate it: Influencer Marketing Works* [Online]. Available at: https://www.forbes.com/sites/danielnewman/2015/06/23/love-ıt-or-hate-ıt-ınfluencermarketing-works/#69bf6392150b (Accessed: 17 May 2018).

Nicosia, F.M. (1966) *Consumer Decision Process*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Nielsen. (2015) *Global Trust in Advertising. Winning Strategies for an Evolving Media Landscape* [Online]. Available at: https://www.nielsen.com/content/dam/ nielsenglobal/apac/docs/reports/2015/nielsen-global-trust-ın-advertising-report-september-2015.pdf (Accessed: 29 June 2018).

Nikunen, T., Saarela, M., Oikarinen, E., Muhos, M. and Isohella, L. (2017) *Micro-enterprise's digital marketing tools for building customer relationships*, Management, Vol. 12(2), pp. 171-188.

Nistor, C., Yalcin, T. and Pehlivan, E. (2018) *Duplicity in alternative marketing communications,* Markets, Globalization and Development Review, Vol. 3(2), Article 4.

O'Reilly, A. (2010) *Outlaw(Ing) motherhood: a theory and politic of maternal empowerment for the 21st century*, Hecate, Vol. 36(1), pp. 17.

O'Guinn, T.C., Shrum, L.J. (1997) *The role of television in the construction of consumer reality,* Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 23(4), pp. 278–294.

Ohanian, R. (1991) *The impact of celebrity spokespersons' perceived image on consumers' intention to purchase,* Journal of Advertising Research, Vol. 31(1), pp. 46–54.

Okdie, B.M., Guadagno, R.E., Bernieri, F.J., Geers, A.L. and Mclarney-Vesotski, A.R. (2011) *Getting to know you: Face-to-face versus online interactions*, Computers in Human Behavior, 27(1), pp. 153-159.

Oliver, R. (1999) *Whence consumer loyalty?,* Journal of Marketing, Vol. 63(4), pp. 33-44.

Omnicore Agency. (2017) *Instagram by the Numbers: Stats, Demographics and Fun Facts* [Online]. Available at: www.omnicoreagency.com/instagram-statistics/ (Accessed: 30 August 2019).

Pansari, A. and Kumar, V. (2017) *Customer engagement: The construct, antecedents, and consequences,* Journal of The Academy of Marketing Science, Vol. 45(3), pp. 294-311.

Park, D.H., Lee, J. and Han, I. (2007) *The effect of on-line consumer reviews on consumer purchasing intention: The moderating role of involvement*, International Journal of Electronic Commerce, Vol. 11(4), pp. 125-148.

Parmaksız, P.M.Y. (2012) *Digital opportunities for social transition: Blogosphere and motherhood in Turkey,* Fe Dergi, Vol. 4(1), pp. 123-134.

Patton, M. (2015) *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. 4th Edition Ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Pavia, T.M. (2014) *The Role of Product and Place in the Vulnerability of Visible Difference*. 39th Annual Macromarketing Conference, pp. 119-131.

Pelet, J.E. and Papadopolou, P. (2013) Investigating Social Networks in M-Commerce. T*he 2nd International Conference On Strategic Innovative Marketing.* Available at: http://cgi.di.uoa.gr/~peggy/papers/ic_sim%202013%20social_commerce.pdf

Pembecioğlu, N. (2016) *Ben'den Vazgeçerek 'Daha' and 'En' Olmaya Doğru Bir Adım Olarak Özçekim.* Görüntü, Kimlik and Etik Konferansı, Beykent Üniversitesi, İstanbul.

Peter, J. and Olson, J. (1990) *Consumer Behavior and Marketing Strategy.* 4th Edn. Boston: Irwin/Mcgraw-Hill.

Petersen, E. (2014) *Redefining the workplace: The professionalization of motherhood through blogging,* Journal of Technical Writing and Communication, Vol. 44(3), pp. 277–296.

Pietro, L.D. and Pantano, E. (2012) *An empirical investigation of social network influence on consumer purchasing decision: The case of Facebook*, Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice, Vol. 14(1), pp. 18-29.

Plummer, J.T. (1974) *The concept and application of life style segmentation*, Journal of Marketing, Vol. 38(1), pp. 33–37.

Polit, D.F. and Beck, C.T. (2012) *Nursing Research: Generating and Assessing Evidence for Nursing Practice*. 9th Edition. Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

Porter, C., Donthu, N., MacElroy, W. and Wydra, D. (2011) *How to foster and sustain engagement in virtual communities,* California Management Review, Vol. 53(4), pp. 80-110.

Porter, M. and Kelso, J. (Eds) (2006) *Theorising and Representing Maternal Realities*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Powell, R. (2010) *Good bothers, bad mothers and mommy bloggers: Rhetorical resistance and fluid subjectivities*, MP: An Online Feminist Journal, Vol. 2(5), pp. 37-50.

Quinton, S. (2013) *The community brand paradigm: A response to brand management's dilemma in the digital era,* Journal of Marketing Management, Vol. 29(7), pp. 912-932.

Racolţa-Paina, N.D. and Luca, T.A. (2010) *Several considerations regarding the online consumer in the 21st century*, Management and Marketing, Vol. 5(2), pp. 85-100.

Ratneshwar, S. and Shelly C. (1991) *Comprehension's role in persuasion: The case of its moderating effect on the persuasive impact of source cues*, Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 18(1), pp. 52-62.

Reason, P. (1981) *Human Inquiry in Action: Developments in New Paradigm Research.* Beverly Hills: Sage.

Reichelt, J., Sievert, J. and Jacob, F. (2014) *How credibility affects ewom reading: The influences of expertise, trustworthiness, and similarity on utilitarian and social functions,* Journal of Marketing Communications, Vol. 120, pp. 65-81.

Ren, Y., Kraut, R.E. and Kiesler, S. (2007) *Applying common identity and bond theory to design of online communities*, Organ. Stud. Vol. 28(3), pp. 377–408.

Rich, A. (1976) of *Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. London: Virago.

Richins, M.L. and Root-Shaffer, T. (1988) *The Role of Evolvement and Opinion Leadership in Consumer Word-of-Mouth: An Implicit Model Made Explicit*, in

Micheal J., ed., *NA - Advances in Consumer Research Volume 15*. Houston: Association for Consumer Research, pp. 32-36.

Rogers, E.M., Vaughan, P.W., Swalehe, R.M.A., Rao, N., Svenrud, P., Sood, S. and Alford, K.L. (1997) *Effects of an Entertainment-Education Radio Soap Opera, Twende Na Wakati, on Family Planning and HIV/AIDS Prevention in Tanzania.* POFLEP Research Report. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico, Department of Communication and Journalism; Arusha, Tanzania.

Rosenberg, J. S., Cross, F. R. and Funabiki, H. (2011) *KNL1/Spc105 recruits PP1 to silence the spindle assembly checkpoint,* Curr Biol, Vol. 21(11), pp. 942-7.

Rothlisberger, F.J. and Dickson, W.J. (1939) *Management and the Worker*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Rothschild, M.L. (1979) *Advertising Strategies For High and Low Involvement Situations*, in C. Maloney and B. Silverman, ed., *Attitude Research Plays For High Stakes*. pp. 74-93.

Rubin, H.J. and Rubin, I.S. (2012) *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data.* 3rd Edition. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Russell, C.A. and Rasolofoarison, D. (2017) Uncovering the power of natural endorsements: A comparison with celebrity-endorsed advertising and product placements. International Journal of Advertising, Vol. 36(5), pp. 761–78.

Russo, G. (2004) *Maternità Surrogata in Età Avanzata (Nonne Madri),* in A Cura Di Giovanni Russo, ed., *Enciclopedia Di Bioetica E Sessuologia*. pp. 1129.

Safko, L. (2012) *The Social Media Bible: Tactics, Tools, and Strategies for Business Success.* 3rd Ed. Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons.

Sago, B. (2017) *The influence of social media messages sources on millennial generation consumers*, International Journal of Integrated Marketing Communication, Vol. 2(2), pp. 7–14.

Sammis, K., Lincoln, C. and Pomponi, S. (2016) *Influencer Marketing For Dummies*. Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

Satı, A. and Kazançoğlu, İ. (2020) *The Effect of Food Influencers on Consumers' Intention to Purchase Food Products/Services,* Journal Of Gastronomy, Hospitality And Travel, Vol. 3(2), pp. 150-163.

Schmidt, J. (2007) *Blogging practices: An analytical framework*, Journal of Computer Mediated Communication, Vol. 12(4), pp. 1409-1427.

Schreier, M. (2012) *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice*. London: Sage Publishing.

Schulz, P., Cobley, P. (2013) *Theories and Models of Communication. De Gruyter Mouton. Berlin* [Online]. Available at: https://www.scribd.com/ document/343726373/schulz-cobley-2013-theories-and-models-of-communication-pdf (Accessed: 7 December 2018).

Schwarz, O. (2010) *On friendship, boobs and the logic of the catalogue*, Convergence, Vol. 16(2), pp. 163–183.

Scoble, R. and Israel, S. (2006) *Naked Conversations: How Blogs are Changing the Way Business Talk With Customers*. Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons.

Sender, K. and Decherney, P. (2016) *Stuart hall lives: Cultural studies in an age of digital media,* Critical Studies in Media Communication, Vol. 33(5), pp. 381–384.

Senft, T.M. (2008) *Camgirls: Celebrity and community in the age of social networks,* International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media, Vol. 4(2-3), pp. 189-193.

Shadkam, M. and O'Hara, J. (2013) *Social commerce dimensions: The potential leverage for marketers,* Journal of Internet Banking and Commerce, Vol. 18(1), pp. 1.

Shalev, E. and Morwitz, V.G. (2012) *Influence via comparison-driven self-evaluation and restoration: The case of the low-status influencer,* Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 38(5), pp. 964–980.

Shan, Y. (2016) *How credible are online product reviews? The effects of self-generated and system-generated cues on source credibility evaluation*, Computers In Human Behaviour, Vol. 55, pp. 633-641.

Shannon, C.E. and Weaver, W. (1949) *The Mathematical Theory of Communication.* University of Illinois Press.

Shannon, C.E. and Weaver, W. (1949) *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*. Urbana: The University of Illinois Press.

Sigala, M. and Gretzel, U. (2017) *Advances in Social Media for Travel, Tourism, and Hospitality: New Perspectives, Practice and Cases*. California: Routledge.

Silverman, D. (2005) *Doing Qualitative Research*. 2nd Ed. London: Sage.

Simon, H.A. (1982) *Models of Bounded Rationality*. Volume 2. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Singhal, A., Sood, M. and Rogers, E.M. (1996) *The Gods are Drinking Milk! Word-of Mouth Diffusion of a Major News Event in India.* Unpublished Paper. Athens: Ohio University, School of Interpersonal Communication.

Skalski, P., Neuendorf, K.A. and Cajigas, J.A. (2017) *Content Analysis in the Interactive Media Age,* in Kimberly A., ed., *The Content Analysis Guidebook.* 2nd Edition. Neuendorf: Sage Publications.

Slater, D. (1997) *Consumer Culture and Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Smith, D.E. (1987) *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology*. Boston: Northwestern University Press.

Smith, S.R. (2009) *Social Justice and Disability: Competing Interpretations of the Medical and Social Models*, in K. Kristiansen, S. Vehmas and T. Shakespeare, ed., *Arguing About Disability: Philosophical Perspectives*. Routledge, pp. 15-29.

Sojka, J. and Giese, J. (2003) *Using individual differences to detect customer shopping behavior,* The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research, Vol. 13(4), pp. 337 –353.

Solis, B. (2016) *The Influencer Marketing Manifesto: Why the Future of Influencer Marketing Starts with People and Relationships not Popularity* [Online]. Available at: http://pages.tapinfluence.com/hubfs/ınfluencer_marketing_manifesto.pdf (Accessed: 21 February 2019).

Solomon, R.M. (2006) *Consumer Behavior: Buying, Selling, and Being*. 7th Ed. Pearson Education.

Song, S. and Yoo, M. (2016) *The role of social media during the pre-purchasing stage.* Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology, Vol. 7, pp. 84-99.

Spiggle, S. (1994) *Analysis and interpretation of qualitative data in consumer research,* Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 21(3), pp. 491-503.

Spradley, J.P. (1979) *The Ethnographic Interview*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Sproutsocial. (2020) *Important Instagram Stats You Need To Know For 2020* [Online]. Available at: https://sproutsocial.com/ınsights/ınstagram-stats/ (Accessed: 9 July 2019).

Statista. (2018) *Digital Advertising Report 2018 - Social Media Advertising* [Online]. Available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/459689/social-media-advertising-revenue-growth-digital-market-outlook-usa/ (Accessed: 21 September 2019).

Sternthal, B., Phillips, L.W., Dholakia, R. (1978) *The persuasive effect of source credibility: A situational analysis,* Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 43, pp. 285–314.

Stewart, J.B. (1964) *Repetitive Advertising in Newspapers; A Study of Two New Products*. With The Assistance of Carl P. Slenk. Boston, Harvard University, Division of Research, Graduate School of Business Administration.

Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1998) *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Sudha, M. and Sheena, K. (2017) *Impact of influencers in consumer decision process: The fashion industry,* SCMS Journal of Indian Management, Vol. 14(3), pp. 14-30.

Szymanski, D.M. and Hise, R.T. (2000) *E-satisfaction: An initial examination*, Journal of Retailing, Vol. 76(3), pp. 309-322.

Tang, L. (2017) *Mine your customers or mine your business: The moderating role of culture in online word-of-mouth reviews*, Journal of International Marketing, Vol. 25(2), pp. 88-110.

Tapscott, D. and Williams, A.D. (2006) *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything*. 2nd Edition. New York: Penguin Group.

Tashakkori, A. and Teddlie, C. (1998). *Mixed Methodology: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. 1st Edition. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

The Oxford Dictionaries. (2013) The Oxford Dictionary [Online]. Available at: https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/selfie (Accessed: 3 Sempteber 2019).

The Parents Magazine. (1998) *Having a Baby Made Me Realize 'Having It All' Is LOL* [Online]. Available at: https://www.parents.com/parents-magazine/parents-perspective/having-a-baby-made-me-realize-having-it-all-is-lol/ (Accessed: 27 September 2019).

Thinkling. (2020) *Barnlund's Model of Communication* 1970 [Online]. Available at: https://www.thinglink.com/scene/627233635358998529 (Accessed: 20 March 2019).

Thompson, C.J. and Haytko, D.L. (1997) *Speaking of fashion: Consumers' uses of fashion discourses and the appropriation of countervailing cultural meanings*, Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 24(June), pp. 15–42.

Tkaczyk, J. (2016) *Digital Consumer: Trends and Challenges*. Poland: Poltext.

Toolshero. (2015) *Scientific Management and Taylorism* [Online]. Available at: https://www.toolshero.com/page/81/?taxonomy (Accessed: 22 April 2019).

Tozlu, A. (2016) *Karar verme yaklaşımları üzerinde herbert sımon hegemonyası*, Sayıştay Dergisi, Vol. 102, pp. 27-45.

Turkle, S. (1997) *Constructions and Reconstructions of Self In Virtual Reality: Playing In The Muds*, in S. Kiesler, ed., *Culture of the Internet*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, pp. 143–155.

Tuten, T.L. (2008) *Advertising 2.0: Social Media Marketing in a Web 2.0 World*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Tuten, T.L. and Solomon, M.R. (2016) *Social Media Marketing*. New Delhi: Sage.

Urbany, J., Dickson, P. and Wilkie, W. (1989) *Buyer uncertainty and information search*, Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 16(2), pp. 208-215.

Uzunoglu, E. and Kip, S. (2014) *Brand communication through digital influencers: leveraging blogger engagement,* International Journal of Information Management, Vol. 34, pp. 592–602.

Valck, K.D., Hoffman, D., Hennig-Thurau, T. and Spann, M. (2013) *Social commerce: A contingency framework for assessing marketing potential*, Journal of Interactive Marketing, Vol. 27(3), pp 311-323.

Valente, T.W., Poppe, P.R. and Merritt, A.P. (1996) *Mass-media-generated interpersonal communication as sources of information about family planning,* Journal of Communication, Vol. 1, pp. 247-265.

Van Dijck, J. (2012) *Facebook as a tool for producing sociality and connectivity*, Television and New Media, Vol. 13(2), pp. 160–176.

Van Meter, K. (1990). *Methodological and Design Issues: Techniques For Assessing The Representatives of Snowball Samples*, in E.Y. Lambert, ed., *The Collection and Interpretation of Data from Hidden Populations.* US Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration, National Institute on Drug Abuse, pp. 31-43.

Van Reijmersdal, E.A., Neijens, P.C. and Smit, E.G. 2005. *Readers' reactions to mixtures of advertising and editorial content in magazines*, Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising, Vol. 27, pp. 39–53.

Vashisht, K. (2005) *A Practical Approach to Marketing Management (With Case Studies).* New Delhi: Atlantic Publisherand Distributors.

Veblen, T. (1899) *The Theory of The Leisure Class.* New York: Macmillan.

Vogt, W.P. (1999). *Dictionary of Statistics and Methodology: A Nontechnical Guide For The Social Sciences.* London: Sage.

Vyncke, P. (2002) *Lifestyle segmentationfrom attitudes, interests and opinions, to values, aesthetic styles, life visions and media preferences*, European Journal of Communication, Vol. 17, pp. 445.

Wang, C. and Zhang, P. (2012) *The evolution of social commerce: the people, management, technology and information dimensions*, Communications of the Association for Information Systems, Vol. 32, pp. 1–23.

Wang, H. and Pallister, J. and Foxall, G. (2006) *Innovativeness and involvement as determinants of website loyalty: III. Theoretical and managerial contributions*, Technovation, Vol. 26(12), pp. 1374-1383.

Wang, S. and Scheinbaum, A. (2018) *Trustworthiness trumps attractiveness and expertise: enhancing brand credibility through celebrity endorsement*, Journal of Advertising Research, Vol. 58(1), pp. 16-32.

Wangenheim, F. and Bayón, T. (2003) *The effect of word of mouth on services switching: Measurement and moderating variables*, European Journal of Marketing, Vol. 38(9710), pp. 1173-1185.

Wanta, W. and Elliott, W.R. (1995) *Did the "magic" work?  Knowledge of HIV/AIDS and the knowledge gap hypothesis*,  Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly, Vol. 72(2), pp. 312-321.

Ward, A.N. (2012) *Mom Blogs: Portrayals of Contemporary Mothering Standards, Styles, and Secrets*. Provo: Brigham Young University.

Watts, D. and Dodds, P. (2007) *Influentials, networks, and public opinion formation*, Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 34(4), pp. 441–458.

We are Social. (2017) Digital in 2017: Global Overview [Online]. Available at: https://wearesocial.com/special-reports/digital-in-2017-global-overview   (Accessed: 16 February 2018).

We Are Social. (2019) *Digital in 2019: Global Overview* [Online]. Available at: https://wearesocial.com/global-digital-report-2019 (Accessed: 9 July 2019).

Webb, L.M. and Lee, B.S. (2011) *Mommy Blogs: The Centrality of Community In The Performance of Online Maternity*, in M. Moravec, ed., *Motherhood Online: How Online Communities Shape Modern Motherhood*. Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, pp. 244–257.

Weick, K. (1979) *The Social Psychology of Organizing*.  Reading: Addison-Wesley.

Weimann, G. (1994) *The Influentials: People Who Influence People*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Weiswing, D. (2016) *FBIC's Weinswig Named One of Top Retail Influencers For 2016* [Online]. Available at: https://www.deborahweinswig.com/news/press-releases/fbics-weinswig-named-one-of-top-retail-ınfluencers-for-2016/ (Accessed: 12 June 2019).

White, K. and Dahl, D.W. (2006) *Are all out-groups created equal? Consumer identity and dissociative influence,* Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 34(4), pp. 525-36.

Wilk, R. (1997) *A critique of desire: Distaste and dislike in consumer behavior*, Consumption, Markets and Culture, Vol. 1(2), pp. 175-196.

Wood, J. and Conrad, C. (1983) *Paradox in the experiences of professional women*, Western Journal of Speech Communication, Vol. 47(4), pp. 305-322.

Woodward, K. (2003) *Representations of  Motherhood*, in S. Earle and G. Letherby (eds.) *Gender, Identity and Reproduction*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 18–32.

Xiang, L., Zheng, X., Lee, M.K. and Zhao, D. (2016) *Exploring consumers' impulse buying behavior on social commerce platform: The role of parasocial interaction,* International Journal of Information Management, Vol. 36(3), pp. 333-347.

Yıldırım, A. and Şimşek, H. (2016) *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri*. Ankara: Seçkin Yayıncılık.

Yüksek Öğrenim Kurumu. (2019) *Ulusal Tez Merkezi* [Online]. Available at: https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/ (Accessed: 20 December 2019).

Yurdakul-Sahin, D. and Atik, D. (2013) *Celebrity influences on young consumers: Guiding the way to the ideal self*, Izmir Review of Social Sciences, Vol. 1(1), pp. 65-82.

Yusuf, A.S., Che Hussin, A.R. and Busalim, A.H. (2018) *Influence of ewom engagement on consumer purchase intention in social commerce*, Journal of Services Marketing, Vol. 32(4), pp. 493-504.

Zaichkowsky, J. (1986) *Conceptualizing involvement*. Journal of Advertising, Vol. 15(2), pp. 4-14.

Zak, S. and Hasprova, M. (2019) *The Role of Influencers in the Consumer Decision-Making Process.* SHS Web of Conferences 74, 03014, Globalization and its Socio-Economic Consequences 2019. https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20207403014 .

Zaltman, G. (2003) *How Customers Think: Essential Insights into The Mind of The Market.* Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Zanger, C. (2014) *Social Media und Die Veränderung Der Kommunikation*, in *Ein Überblick Zu Events Im Zeitalter Von Social Media.* Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler, pp. 3–6.

Zarrella, D. (2010) *The Social Media Marketing Book.* California: O'Reilly.

Zengingönül, O. (2012) Kür*esel Put: Tüketim Ekonomisi Yeni Sapkınlık: Sosyal Bilinç.* 1st Edition. Ankara:Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık.

Zhao, X. and Russell W.B. (2009) *Politicizing consumer culture: advertising's appropriation of political ideology in China's social transition*, Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 35(2), pp. 231-44.

Zimmer, M. and Anthony H. (2011) *Privacy, Context, and Oversharing: Reputational Challenges in a Web 2.0 World*, in Hassan M. and Mark T., ed., *The Reputation Society: How Online Opinions are Reshaping the Offline World.* Cambridge: MIT Press, pp. 175-184.

**APPENDICES**

*Appendix A- Interview Protocol for Follower Mothers*

**Start:**

**First Step:** A speech describing the researcher's self-introduction, the researcher's purpose, the confidentiality of information, and the expectations for the outcome of this study (Kvale, 1996)

**Note:** Participant information (Annex-3) and participant consent (permission) form (Annex-2) to be read and signed by the participant are attached. Since the participant did not see these questions, the information form and the consent (permission) form were not included in the form as a cover letter. At this stage, the information form will be signed and explained to the participant as a separate print out. Received via e-mail in face-to-face interviews.

In order to record the interview, permission will be requested and the consent (permission) form (Annex-2) will be signed. The consent (permission) form is attached to the application file alongside other documents.

(Hello, I'm Ece Çam. I'm doing my doctoral thesis on Marketing at Izmir University of Economics. I'm doing a study on the factors affecting consumer behavior. There is no right or wrong answer to the questions we will ask in our study. The important thing is to learn your thoughts on this subject. Your comments will be published in scientific works. Only pseudonyms will be used in the analysis and your identity will not be disclosed. You can pause or stop the questions/chat at any time. At this point, you can find more detailed information in the participant information and consent (consent) forms that I have sent to your e-mail address beforehand. Read them before the study Thank you for confirming.

It is necessary to record our interview in order to make a written transcript and to document the study and get a written transcript. These records will be used by me for research and these records will not be shared with third parties. I request your information and approval on this matter. )

**Second Step: Participant Characteristics (Demographic + Lifestyle + Daily Activities)**

Let's start by getting to know you, can you tell us a little about yourself?

Socio-Demographic Data:

Age of participant:

Marital status:

Job:

Education Status:

Number of children:

Children's ages:

Where he lives:

**Daily Events:**

1. How is your day going?
2. Do you have free time? How do you spend your free time?
3. Can you describe your lifestyle?
4. Do you use social media? Which social media platform do you spend most of your time on?

**Main Questions:**

Now we can start talking about the main issues of our work.

**Motherhood and Values:**

You just said that you are a mother while talking about yourself. Let's talk a little bit about this.

1. How important is it to you to have a family and spend time with them?
2. What does having a family mean to you? (Safety, belonging, dignity)
3. What comes to mind when you think of motherhood? Can you describe your thoughts on this subject?
4. Can you talk about your mother? How was your relationship with him?

5. Is your mother's mothering style similar to your mother's?

6. In what ways are you similar? At what points do you leave?

7. Today, we see that the subject of motherhood is handled on very different platforms than in the past. Are there any areas that you have observed in this subject?

8. Do you witness the subject of motherhood being discussed on social media? Where are they?

**Social Media and Motherhood:**

You just said that you spend time on social media and use Instagram.

General Instagram Following Behavior:

9. May I know your opinion about Instagram?

10. Are there any Instagram phenomena you follow? Which phenomenon accounts do you prefer to follow? What are your favorite accounts?

11. Can you please specify the topics and areas of interest that these people share?

12. Are there any accounts that you have unfollowed and that you feel uncomfortable with?

Motherhood on Instagram (Instamom)- Behaviors and Attitudes:

13. Is there a phenomenon mother you follow? If yes, how long have you been following?

14. Does your behavior of following the phenomenon mothers change periodically? (such as pregnancy, early infancy, preschool)

15. What do you think of these mothers?

16. What are your thoughts on the motherhood and lifestyle of these people?

17. What could be your reasons for following the phenomenon mother?

Question: How do the topics or suggestions you hear from others shape your attitudes? (attitude towards word of mouth)

18. Can you show me a few examples of your favorite Instagram posts from these accounts?

   - Do you remember how you felt when you saw this post?

   - What was your favorite thing about this post?

   - Are there any posts that make you feel uncomfortable when you see them contrary to this post?

   - Do you remember the feeling when you see them?

19. In what ways do these accounts affect your feelings? (attitude towards spokesperson: credibility, reliability, liking, identification)

20. How do you see the knowledge and competence level of the phenomenal mothers you follow? (attitude towards information source)

21. Do you have any samples from them?

**Instagram Maternity-Shopping Decisions and Product Groups:**

22. How do you make your purchases (shopping)? So what influences your decision?

23. Where do you get ideas from when you buy a product?

24. When you decide to buy something, are you influenced by the opinions and opinions of others?

25. Are you influenced by Instagram pages when deciding to buy something?

26. Which content shared by mothers interests you the most?

**Inquire:** product category, suitability and importance of the product to the exhibitor's profile

27. Do you remember any of the products shared by the phenomenon mother?

28. Did you buy the products and services shared by the phenomenal mother?

29. Which category of products do you buy more in this way?

30. Is there a product or service that you have seen and disliked on the page of a phenomenal mother?

31. Do you have any posts that you can cite as examples?

**Instamom and Its Effects on the Purchase Process:**

32. How did the phenomenon affect your thinking while making a decision about the mother?

33. When you see a product shared by the phenomenon mother, do you think you need this product? (need recognition)

34. Do you still want to buy it even if you don't need it? (desire creation)

35. When you decide to buy a product, do you do research to get information about it? (information search)

36. Can you compare with similar products? (evaluating alternative products-evaluation of product options)

37. From which sources do you research? (evaluating alternative information source)

38. If you decide to buy the promoted product, from which channels do you shop?

**Inquire:** Link on Instagram page, product website, online shopping platforms, store.

39. How important are comments to you? (feedback)

40. After using the product you bought, do you comment under the post on the Instagram page? (feedback and engagement)

**Dark side:**

41. Do you have any doubts or concerns about the products and services shared by Instamoms?

**Question:** To increase the base of followers, to increase the visibility of the brand, to mislead on unfamiliar subjects, to increase the sales of the promoted product, to gain income and fame, to gain benefits (dark sides).

Thank you very much. Would you like me to share the results when the study is complete?

**Interview Protocol for Instamoms**
**Start:**

**First Step:** A speech describing the researcher's self-introduction, the researcher's purpose, the confidentiality of information, and the expectations for the outcome of this study (Kvale, 1996)

**Note:** Participant information (Annex-3) and participant consent (permission) form (Annex-2) to be read and signed by the participant are attached. Since the participant did not see these questions, the information form and the consent (permission) form were not included in the form as a cover letter. At this stage, the information form will be signed and explained to the participant as a separate print out. Received via e-mail in face-to-face interviews.

In order to record the interview, permission will be requested and the consent (permission) form (Annex-2) will be signed. The consent (permission) form is attached to the application file alongside other documents.

(Hello, I'm Ece Çam. I'm doing my doctoral thesis on Marketing at Izmir University of Economics. I'm doing a study on the factors affecting consumer behavior. There is no right or wrong answer to the questions we will ask in our study. The important thing is to learn your thoughts on this subject. Your comments will be published in scientific works. Only pseudonyms will be used in the analysis and your identity will not be disclosed. You can pause or stop the questions/chat at any time. At this point, you can find more detailed information in the participant information and consent (consent) forms that I have sent to your e-mail address beforehand. Read them before the study Thank you for confirming.

It is necessary to record our interview in order to make a written transcript and to document the study and get a written transcript. These records will be used by me for research and these records will not be shared with third parties. I request your information and approval on this matter. )

**Second Step: Participant Characteristics (Demographic + Lifestyle + Daily Activities)**

Let's start by getting to know you, can you tell us a little about yourself?
Socio-Demographic Data:

Age of participant:

Marital status:

Job:

Education Status:

Number of children:

Children's ages:

Where he lives:

**Daily Events:**

1. How is your day going?

2. Do you have free time? How do you spend your free time?

3. Can you describe your lifestyle?

Social media identity (Motives, Values, Self-Perception):

We are aware that you are an active user and sharer on social media. There are thousands of people following you.

1. Can we listen to the short story of how you got to this position?

**Question:** Basic motivations, value systems, self-image/self concept.

2. On which subjects do you usually share your posts?

3. What inspires you when creating content? Can you tell us about your feelings and thoughts on this subject?

**Main Questions:**

Now we can start talking about the main issues of our work.

**Motherhood and Values:**

You just said that you are a mother while talking about yourself. Let's talk a little bit about this.

4. How important is it to you to have a family and spend time with them?

5. What does having a family mean to you? (Safety, belonging, dignity)

6. What comes to mind when you think of motherhood? Can you describe your thoughts on this subject?

7. Can you tell us about your mother? How was your relationship with him?

8. Does your mother's motherhood style match your mother's?

9. In what ways do you resemble each other? At what points do you leave?

10. Today, we see that the subject of motherhood is handled on very different platforms than in the past. Are there any areas that you have observed in this subject?

**Social Media and Motherhood:**

11. How do you think the subject of motherhood is handled on social media? How is motherhood represented?

12. What type of posts do you like to create?

13. Do the posts you share differ periodically? Like the new year, festive periods…

14. Can you tell us about your feelings about the comments on your posts about motherhood?

15. How is the feedback you get from your followers? Could it be good or bad, can you talk a little bit?

16. Is there a phenomenon mother you follow on Instagram?

17. If yes, can you share your thoughts about their life and motherhood? Do you have any samples in them?

18. Are there things that make you different from other phenomenal mothers?

19. As a phenomenal mother, based on your experience, how does the concept of motherhood affect the posts of an Instagram phenomenon?

20. Which behaviors might affect it more? May I know your feelings on this matter?

**Instamom- Follower Relationship:**

21. Can you tell us a little about your followers?

22. Do you know about the followers' profile?

23. What are your followers' requests and desires from you/your page, can I get your thoughts?

24. Do you communicate with them frequently? Do you reply to their comments? Do they contact you directly?

25. Do you meet or meet with your followers outside of Instagram?

26. Do your sharing frequency and content diversity change depending on the periods you are in? (such as pregnancy, early infancy, preschool)

27. Does the number and interaction of your followers differ during these periods?

**Instagram Maternity- Product Groups:**

28. Which product/service groups are you most interested in?

29. Which product group do you share more about?

30. Which product/service groups want to connect with you?

31. Do you collaborate with brands when creating content? If so, can you talk a little bit about your thoughts on these brands?

32. Do your followers ask you a lot of questions about products?

**Instamom and Its Effects on the Purchasing Process:**

33. How effective do you think the posts you show products are in terms of their shopping?

34. Do you think your followers are influenced by you while making a purchase? If so, how do you achieve it?

35. Do you think you influence the products and services they will choose while producing content? If yes, how are you trying to do this?

**Dark side:**

36. We are aware that social media phenomenon is an important communication tool and has commercial value. We also know that there are some criticisms about the shares of social media phenomena. For example; Increasing the base of followers, increasing the visibility of the brand, misdirecting the unknown, increasing the sales of the promoted product, gaining income and fame, gaining benefits (dark sides).

Is there any phenomenon, product/service group or brand that you criticize in this regard?

If you were to bring yourself a self-criticism, what would you say?

Thank you very much. Would you like me to share the results when the study is complete?
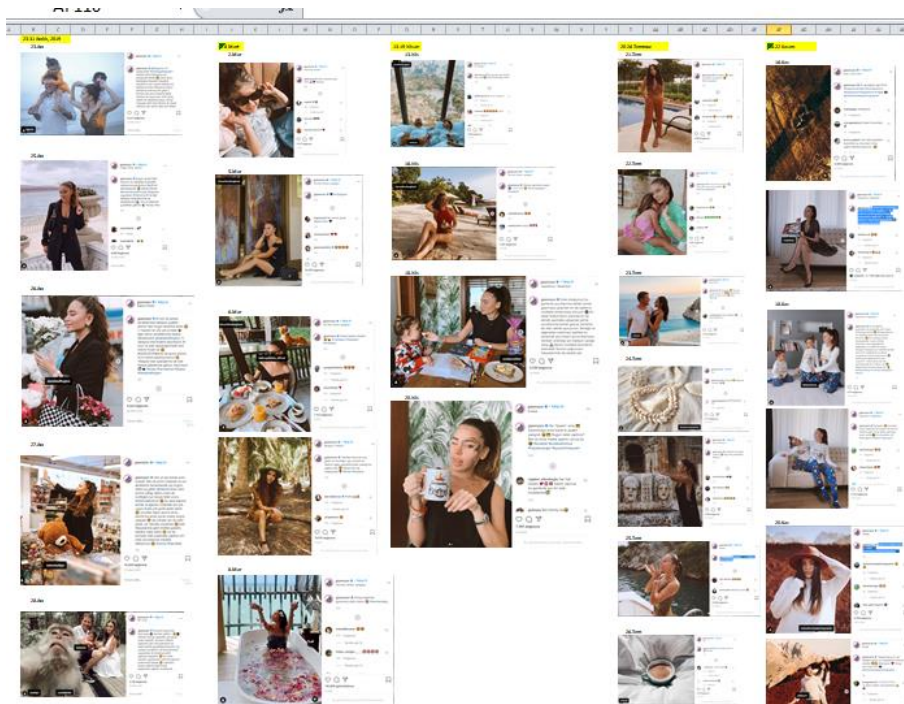
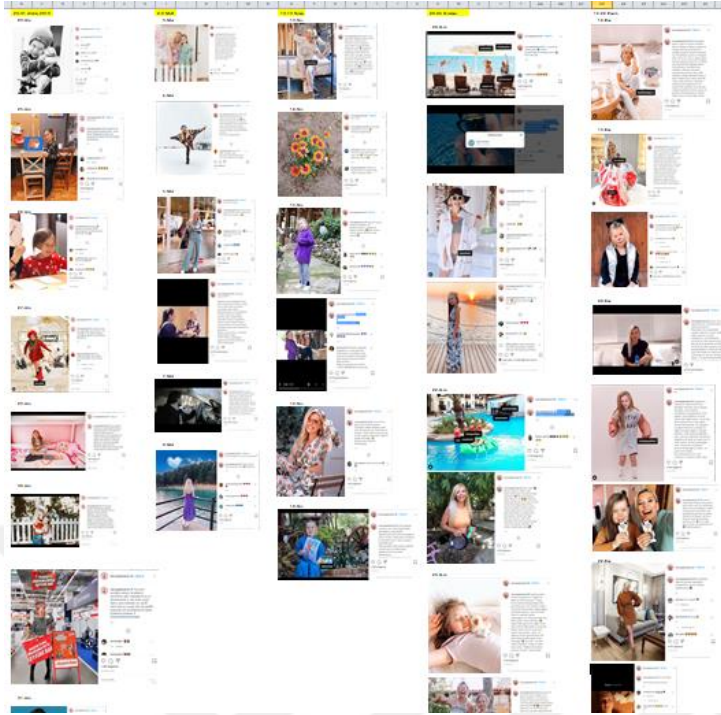*Appendix B- Photos From Instamoms Pages*

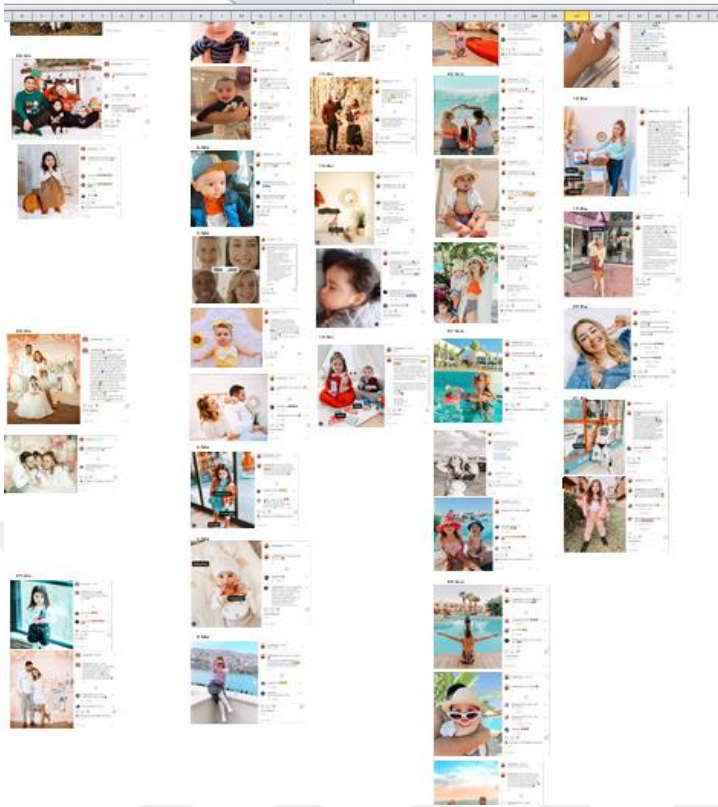**Posts of Imren Gürsoy**

**Posts of Pınar Dönmez**



**Posts of Gizem Zor**

**Posts of Merve İpek Öztürk**



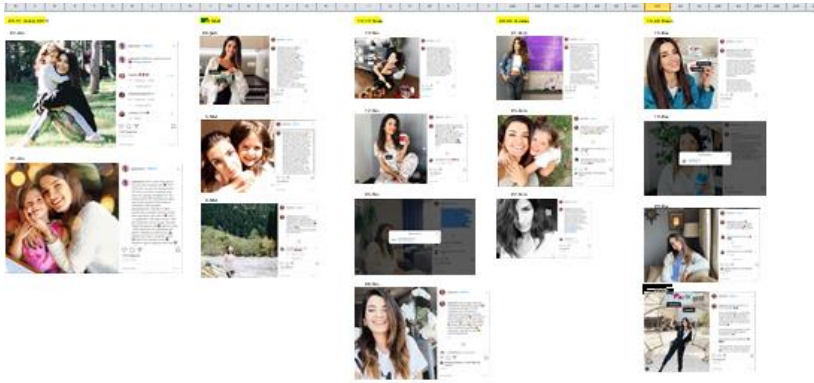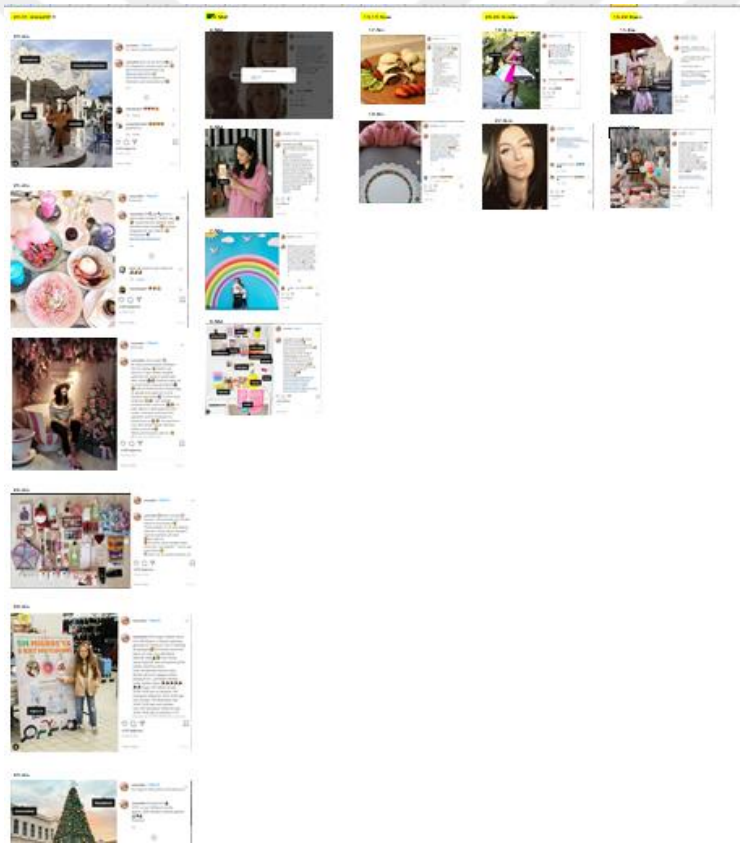**Posts of Melek İçmeli**
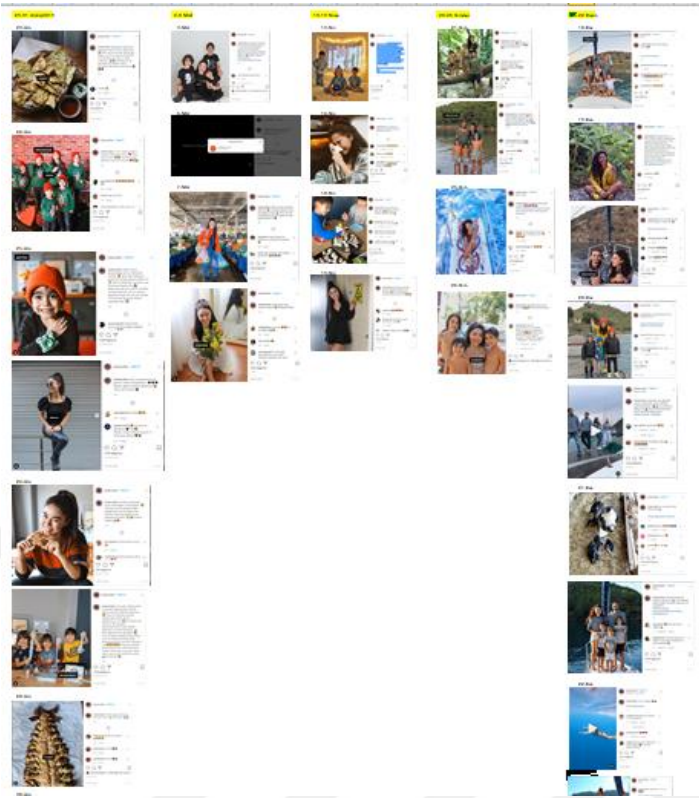
**Posts of Melek Hayta**



**Posts of Yonca Kunacav**
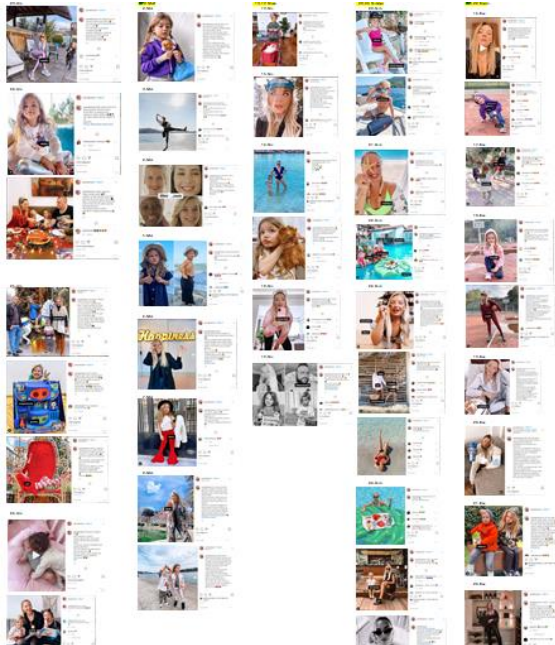
**Posts of Gül Kütevin**



**Posts of Cansu Efe**

**Posts of Bohemother**

*Appendix C- Ethics Committee Statement*

**SAYI :** B.30.2.İEÜ.0.05.05-**020**-*101*                                          18.09.2020

**KONU :** Etik Kurul Kararı hk.

**Sayın Ece Çam,**

**"Instagram Anneleri Bağlamında Sosyal Medya Fenomenlerinin Tüketici Alım Sürecine Etkileri Üzerine İnceleme"** başlıklı projenizin etik uygunluğu konusundaki başvurunuz sonuçlanmıştır.

Etik Kurulumuz 10.08.2020 tarihinde sizin başvurunuzun da içinde bulunduğu bir gündemle toplanmış ve projenin incelenmesi için bir alt komisyon oluşturmuştur. Projenizin detayları alt komisyon üyelerine gönderilerek görüş istenmiştir. Üyelerden gelen raporlar doğrultusunda Etik Kurul 18.09.2020 tarihinde tekrar toplanmış ve raporları gözden geçirmiştir.

Sonuçta 18.09.2020 tarih ve 112 numaralı Etik **"Instagram Anneleri Bağlamında Sosyal Medya Fenomenlerinin Tüketici Alım Sürecine Etkileri Üzerine İnceleme"** konulu projenizin etik açıdan uygun olduğuna oy birliği ile karar verilmiştir.

Gereği için bilgilerinize sunarım.

Saygılarımla,

**Prof. Dr. Filiz Başkan**
**Etik Kurul Başkanı**

# CURRICULUM VITAE

Ece Çam İpekoğlu was born in September 24, 1987. She completed her high school education in Konak Anatolian High School. She was graduated with a bachelor's degree in International Relations and the EU from Izmir University of Economics, Izmir, in 2010 with a double major degree from International Trade and Finance. She was high honour student. She completed her master's degree in Political Science, Energy Markets at Sabancı University. In September 2014, she enrolled in the Ph.D. program in Business Administration with a major of marketing at Izmir University of Economics. When she was doing PhD, she was working as a marketing specialist at several firms. She has been working at Felda Iffco Turkiye as a assistant brand manager since 2016.