



THE USE OF THE MOBILE WEB IN TURKEY BY SOCIAL MEDIA PROFESSIONALS

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Abstract

When the era of Web 2.0 started, long established PR and marketing professionals failed to understand the change that the society was undergoing. They were slow to adapt newly emerged technologies and social media platforms to their communication strategies. Meanwhile new technology geeks came onto the scene as social media professionals in the area of marketing. Some have established their own agencies or been employed by well known companies to conduct marketing campaigns specially tailored for social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter etc. Soon creative campaigns proved that these new communicators in Turkey knew how to interact with the new generation of users. However, the Internet still continues its transformation in the form of a mobile web. In recent years, the proliferation of better internet services and, smaller and cheaper mobile devices has led to an explosive growth of mobile technology. According to statistics revealed by GSM companies in Turkey, mobile internet usage has reached 31% exceeding the EU average of 30%. This study aims to demonstrate the degree of awareness of the mobile web that social media professionals have, the rate of mobile applications they implement, and how they see the future of the mobile web in Turkey.

Introduction

From telegraph to the Internet, each information and communication technology has brought about dramatic and radical transformations in society, and as a result new lifestyles and work models have emerged. For many professions these technologies have become the core asset of their existence and continuity. Public relations is one of them. Describing, indeed defining public relations has been problematic since its inception.

In an article published in 1977 by Rex Harlow, one of pioneers in PR, stated that, even then, there were 472 definitions of public relations (Harlow, 1977) but all that 472 definitions had one element in common: Communication. Public Relations is based on communication. It uses every available medium, especially means of mass communication to convey carefully planned messages to desired target audience. As a result it has always been expected of PR practitioners to monitor the developments in communication technologies. Indeed, it is an essential requirement if one is to take the lead in building successful company and brand reputation campaigns tailored for newly emerging technologies.

At the beginning PR practitioners used web as another publishing tool for disseminating information that they could have control over. The only difference they could see was the speed and the easy globalization of the message. They didn't have to worry much about the competition of attracting attention, either. The motto was "If you build, they will come." which was true for the era. The users who were mesmerised by the ability of reaching different information sources in other parts of the world without leaving their desks were keen on visiting almost every web presence provided by different bodies related to their areas of interest. However this was just the beginning of a big transformation. By the late 90s Internet technologies had empowered Tim Berners Lee's dream when he invented World Wide Web: "Read/Write Web" (Gilmor, 2004). With the advent of Internet 2.0 technologies, 21st century has turned into the age of participation and collaboration of users. Prior to the Internet none of mass communication technologies served individuals as a base where they could disseminate their knowledge without the control of a corporate body. Today's digital natives are active creators of media content, unlike previous generations who used to be passive viewers and receivers of messages. Participation, interactivity, socialising, engagement, connectivity, sharing and social networking have become key patterns of their expectations. This is where PR professionals failed to understand the change and the evolution of both users and the web.

The new nature of social media had brought up the issue of control. PR practitioners preferred to have control over the message wherever and whenever they could. However with the advent of social media to reach and hold an audience meant giving them a voice (Lordan, 2006). A case study presented in a doctorate dissertation that aimed to demonstrate the effects of Internet technologies on PR and target audience(s) clearly reflects the anxiety caused by the stress of losing control (Karabulut, 2008). When Richard Dennison from British Telecom who was just a user of social media and working in IT department first introduced his plan to have an internal communication platform like MySpace where employees could create profiles and weblogs, people from communication department objected since they thought it would be difficult to have control over what was shared and written. The demand from young employees who used social media in their private lives was a strong driving force in adapting social media within the company (Karabulut, 2008).

The situation outside wasn't different, either. Increasing number of social media users extended their expectations in terms of having communication with companies and brands which became another driving force for companies to employ Internet 2.0 technologies. Users even discovered how to use social media to pressure companies to get what they wanted. The story of Kulüp Vaio Türkiye founded by Ercüment Büyüksener who widely recognised as one of first social media professionals, is a good example. Ercüment Büyüksener was only a technology geek and loved his Vaio and wanted to have contact with other Vaio users in Turkey. So, he decided to initiate Kulüp Vaio Türkiye. The club was founded as an independent structure contrary to the other three Vaio Clubs in different countries that formed under the roof of Sonny. Through Büyüksener's weblog and the web page of the club, the members organised meetings, came together, shared experiences, provided solutions. They were functioning like brand ambassadors and filling a gap that Sony failed to fill. Kulüp Vaio Türkiye's well organised community events made Sonny pay attention to the community. Büyüksener (then 23 years old) was offered employment as Sonny Vaio Türkiye's Local Strategies Specialist in 2007 improve and apply communication strategies with online users. His case was used as an example in 23 other countries where Sonny operated (Basusta, 2009). In 2010, one of Turkey's well established PR agency, Zarakol İletişim Hizmetleri, formed its Zarakol 2.0 division and asked Büyüksener to be their consultant in this area. In 2011, He became a lecturer in one of Turkey's prestigious foundation universities, Bilgi University, and still continues his job in Sonny, and to consult companies and PR agencies through his agency called Hayal Akademisi (www.ercument.org).

Promoqube is another social media agency worth mentioning. Since its foundation by two young university graduates in 2010, the agency has become one of most preferred agencies by brands to develop social media communication strategies. The agency, today, serves 35 important brands in Turkey like TTNNet, Starbucks, Ülker, Vakko, Danone, Pfizer, Efes Pilsen etc. (Media Cat Online, 2012).

Companies that realised the importance of social media environments didn't only start to seek for help from social/digital media agencies, they have also created job positions for this purpose. Job postings for social media specialists has notably increased in the last two years. The general manager of Kariyer.net, Yusuf Azoz, states that the first job posting advertised for a social media specialist was first published in 2010 which was followed by nine others the same year. The number went up to 66 in 2011, not including postings for SEO, e-commerce, adwords and digital marketing specialists. "If we add these, the number goes up to 200. As of January 25, 2012 there are almost 30 companies that are looking for social media specialist through our database." (Kösedağı, 2012).



The term “social media specialist” has also taken its place in Turkish Dictionary of Occupational Titles (<http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/25292523/>). The two requirements that stand out are to be a good user of social media and creativity. Being an active Facebook or Twitter user, writing a blog, having a good network help candidates to get the job they want (Kösedağı, 2012).

The Internet still continues its transformation in the form of a mobile internet. In recent years, the proliferation of better internet services and, smaller and cheaper mobile devices has led to an explosive growth of mobile technology which, again, has created new challenges for communicators. This paper aims to demonstrate the degree of awareness and acceptance of the mobile web that social media specialists have; if they are as successful at adapting mobile communication strategies as they were at adapting social media. The starting point of this study was to find out if these young specialists were making the same mistake of failing to understand the change PR professionals made since mobile devices require different strategy. The sample for the study was chosen from Social Bakers web site which provides social media specialists and managers with the most relevant summaries on social media performance of local Facebook brand pages and YouTube channels in each country that the site covers. There were many brands listed in statistics related to Turkey. Although the ranking in the list was based on brands, the author decided to take the first 25 companies as a sample since some companies had more than two brands in the first 25. It was believed that this would provide more relevant information. The top 25 companies which act like the leaders and are followed and imitated by the others, were contacted for the study, and asked to participate in a web-based online survey.

The Change in the Form of The Fourth Screen

With the rise of smartphones and tablet PCs, the concept of “the screen” and consumers’ digital media consumption has changed again. Every transformation in the screen –from cinema screen to TV, from TV screen to computer, from computer to mobile devices) has had great influence on the society. Each generation that witnessed these changes formed new models of social and work life. Consequently different terms have been used to describe them. Today is the age of digital omnivores. The term is used for consumers who access content through several touch points during the course of their daily digital lives. In 2011, the majority of all mobile phone owners consumed mobile media on their device (comScore, 2011).

Mobile industry, especially smartphones, outpaced many technology related markets in 2011. According to Gartner Inc.’s report, worldwide communication device sales to end users totalled 427.8 million units in the first quarter of 2011, an increase of 19 percent from the first quarter of 2010. Smartphones accounted for 23.6 percent of overall sales in the first quarter of 2011, an increase of 85 percent year-on-year (Press Release by Gartner, 2011). Roberta Cozza, principal research analyst at Gartner, believes that this share could have been even higher but manufacturers announced a number of high-profile devices during the first quarter of 2011 that would not be shipped until the second quarter of 2011 (Gartner, 2011).

The development of mobile devices and mobile technologies in the market have also led to new formations in education. New teaching programmes have been opened dedicated to mobile technologies. Beykoz Vocational of Logistics, for instance will have its first students for the programme called “Programming Mobile Technologies”.

Table 1: Worldwide Mobile Terminal Sales to End Users in 1Q 11 (Thousands of Units)

Company	1Q 11 Units	1Q11 Market Share (%)	1Q 10 Units	1Q10 Market Share (%)
Nokia	107,556.1	25.1	110,105.4	30.6
Samsung	68,782.0	16.1	64,897.1	18.0
LG	23,997.2	5.6	27,190.1	7.6
Apple	16,883.2	3.9	8,270.1	2.3
RIM	13,004.0	3.0	10,752.5	3.0
ZTE	9,826.8	2.3	6,104.3	1.7
HTC	9,313.5	2.2	3,378.4	0.9
Motorola	8,789.7	2.1	9,574.5	2.7
Sony Ericsson	7,919.4	1.9	9,865.7	2.7
Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd.	7,002.9	1.6	5,236.1	1.5
Others	154,770.9	36.2	104,230.3	29.0
Total	427,846	100.0	359,605	100.0

Source: Gartner (May 2011)

Table 2: Worldwide Smartphone Sales to End Users by Operating System in 1Q 11 (Thousands of Units)

Company	1Q 11 Units	1Q11 Market Share (%)	1Q 10 Units	1Q10 Market Share (%)
Android	36,267.8	36.0	5,226.6	9.6
Symbian	27,598.5	27.4	24,067.7	44.2
iOS	16,883.2	16.8	8,359.7	15.3
Research In Motion	13,004.0	12.9	10,752.5	19.7
Microsoft	3,658.7	3.6	3,696.2	6.8
Other OS	3,357.2	3.3	2,402.9	4.4
Total	100,769.3	100.0	54,505.5	100.0

Source: Gartner (May 2011)

Mobile device technology nowadays includes everything from the very basic mobile phone to the full featured telephones with web access and multimedia capabilities, and more and more content is being developed for this medium which has led to huge increase in mobile data traffic parallel to the sales of units. The Cisco Visual Networking Index (VNI) Global Mobile Data Traffic Forecast Update maintained by Cisco aims to track and forecast the impact of visual networking applications. According to the report released on February 14, 2012 mobile data traffic grew 2.3 fold in 2011, more than doubling for the fourth year in a row. The forecast projected for the growth in 2011 was about 131 percent which, in reality, went up to 133 percent, higher than anticipated (Cisco, 2012).

Other findings that the report includes:

- Last year’s data traffic was eight times the size of the entire global internet in 2000.



- By the end of 2011 the mobile video traffic was 52 percent of the general online traffic.
- Mobile network connection speeds grew 66 percent. Globally, the average mobile network downstream speed in 2011 was 315 kilobits per second (kbps), up from 189 kbps in 2010. The average mobile network connection speed for smart phones in 2011 was 1344 kbps up from 968 kbps in 2010.
- In 2011, a fourth generation (4G) connection generated 28 times more traffic on average than a non-4G connection. Although 4G connections represent only 0.2 percent of mobile connections today, they already account for 6.6 percent of mobile data traffic.
- Average smartphone usage nearly tripled in 2011. The average amount of traffic per smartphone in 2011 was 150 MB per month, up from 55 MB per month in 2010.
- Smartphones represent only 12 percent of total global handsets in use today but they represent 82 percent of total handset traffic.
- In 2011, the number of mobile connected tablets tripled to 34 million, and each tablet generated 3.4 times more traffic than average smartphone.
- Non-smartphone usage increased 2.3 fold to 4.3 MB per month in 2011 compared to 1.9 MB per month in 2010. Basic handsets still make up the vast majority of devices of the network (88 percent)

The report also compares the growth of the Internet and mobile data traffic. The current growth rates of mobile data traffic resemble those of the fixed network from 1997 through 2001 when the average yearly growth was 150 percent (Table 3) (Cisco, 2012).

Table 3. Global Mobile Data Growth Today is Similar to Global Internet Growth in the Late 1990s

Global Internet Traffic Growth (Fixed)		Global Mobile Data Traffic Growth	
1997	178%	2009	140%
1998	124%	2010	159%
1999	128%	2011	133%
2000	195%	2012 (estimate)	110%
2001	133%	2013 (estimate)	90%
2002	103%	2014 (estimate)	78%

Source: Cisco VNI Mobile, 2012

The growth rate of mobile usage in Turkey is also high. According to recent statistics the number of mobile phone subscribers has increased from 50 million in 2006 to 80 million in 2011 including more than 20 million 3G subscribers (Isbecer, 2011) which represents 31 percent of cellular network market exceeding the European Union average of 30 percent (Invest in Turkey, 2011). With the completion of mobile revolution in the country, the overall mobile penetration rate is expected to reach 95 percent in 2013 (Isbecer, 2011). Availability of 3G has also increased the smartphone usage. The number of smartphone users in Turkey has already outpaced many developed countries in the world. Research firm GFK Turkey declares that although smartphones were 14 percent of global device sales in the first three quarters of 2010, they were already 16 percent in Turkey (Luna, 2011). Like the numbers for the Internet growth told us that it would become a major communication medium for everybody, the same is the same for mobile devices. The mobile telephone has become social media in a box that includes nearly every social media tool in one device (Safko and Brake, 2009). Mobile users use their device for several activities. ComScores' recent report titled comScore 2012 Mobile Future in Focus, gives a list of activities done by users in USA, EU5 (United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, Spain), Canada and Japan (comScore, 2012).

Selected Mobile Activities by Share of Total Mobile Audience

	U.S.	EU5	Canada	Japan
Sent text message	74.3%	84.4%	69.2%	44.4%
Took photos	60.3%	59.8%	55.1%	63.9%
Used email	40.8%	30.0%	35.9%	57.3%
Accessed social networking/blog				
Accessed weather	35.2%	23.2%	29.8%	35.1%
Played games	31.4%	27.5%	30.8%	15.3%
Accessed search	29.5%	20.4%	25.8%	30.8%
Accessed maps	26.5%	18.2%	21.9%	19.4%
Accessed news	25.5%	20.0%	20.1%	24.3%
Listened to music	23.8%	27.4%	23.0%	13.3%
Accessed sports info	21.8%	16.5%	16.0%	19.7%
Accessed financial news or stock quotes	15.1%	11.3%	11.4%	17.9%
Accessed online retail	12.2%	8.2%	6.1%	10.0%

comScore Mobilens, 3 mon. avg. ending Dec-2011

As mobile devices, especially smartphones, continue to develop and become part of everyone's "remote controls for life," more and more companies will understand how to better serve their target audiences with demographically specific, geo targeted, trusted network, permission-based information and advertising (Safko and Brake, 2009).



Research Objectives and Methodology

In order to investigate social media professionals' approach and adaptation of mobile internet the following research objectives were defined:

1. To identify the degree of awareness and adaption of mobile internet by social media professionals who work for successful brands that have been listed in Social Bakers' top 25 brands.
2. To define the approach those companies' managements when a mobile internet communication project is proposed.
3. To identify how social media professionals see the future of mobile internet in Turkey.

The data for the survey were collected through an online questionnaire made available by Google Documents in March 2012. First, companies were contacted by phone and explained the aim of the survey, later an e-mail message containing an explanation and the web address of the questionnaire was sent to the social media specialists of the companies that were ranked in the first 25 of the list of Social Bakers. The ranking on the list depending on daily activities of users on Facebook brand pages changes very frequently. The ranking used for this study belonged to the second week of February. The response rate which has been subject to many academic studies related to public relations research done by Kent, Taylor and Turcilo (2006), Van Ruler and Lange de (2003), (as cited in Alikilic, Atabek, 2011) was quite low at the earlier stage. Additional follow up calls were made to increase the response rate. At the end of a month the number of companies that responded to the survey went up to more than half of the research population targeted at the beginning.

Apart from the first few questions that aimed to picture the profile of the social media professionals participated, 20 open-ended questions were asked which designed to serve the objectives of the study.

Sample

The sample was chosen from a resource that was directly related to the subject of this study. Social Bakers –as explained on its web site- is a global social media and digital analytics company with customers in 75 countries representing every continent. Social Bakers help companies measure the effectiveness of their social marketing campaigns across all major networks like Facebook, YouTube etc. It provides social media professionals and managers with the most relevant summaries on social media performance of local Facebook brand pages and Youtube channels in each country. For this study the statistics of Facebook were chosen since Facebook is the most preferred social media environment in Turkey. There are currently 31.315.860 Facebook users in Turkey which makes it number six in the ranking of all Facebook statistics by country.

The rankings in Social Bakers' list are based on name of the brands. However the author decided not to use name of brands as criteria therefore it was concluded to select a sample population of top 25 companies that owned the brands in the list since some companies had more than two brands in the top 25. The author believed that that would mean reaching more social media specialists. The top 25 companies which act like leaders are followed and imitated by the others. These companies were contacted for the study, and asked to participate in a web-based online survey. The companies that formed the top 25 in the list, in the second week of February were as the following:

Avea, Turkcell, Nikefootball, TTNNet, Nokia Türkiye, Ülker, Garanti Bankası, Volkswagen Türkiye, OXXO, Akbank, Fiat Türkiye, Renault Türkiye, Kayra Tekstil, Vodafone, Unilever, Avon Türkiye, Teknosa, Samsung, Starbucks Türkiye, Efes Pilsen, Greenpeace Akdeniz, Zühre Padesü, Frito Lay, Armine,

Limitations

The first limitation encountered was the difficulty of getting through to the right person. Telephone numbers of the companies were collected from the web and first people who were spoken to were the switchboard operators. In some cases the author even couldn't get hold of operators, either. Several attempts had to be made to contact the same person, sometimes for about two weeks. The author could not have direct contact with only two social media specialists even though she was given their external and direct office numbers.

The second difficulty was to get some social media specialists answer questions by the time that they promised. Because of their busy schedule several phone calls had to be made to remind about the survey. Unfortunately seven of the social media specialists who were contacted personally several times ended up not replying the survey in needed time for this study.

"Company policy" as they put it, was another source of limitation. One specialist after consulting with her manager, did not reply the questions at all. Two of the respondents preferred not to respond to some questions because of the same reason. The questions that caused hesitation were mostly related to the approach of the management to the use of mobile internet. Interestingly one of Turkey's leading GSM companies' social media professional even refused to answer the question that was designed to find out the percentage of mobile internet campaigns they ran besides the management related questions.

Findings

Findings related to the degree of awareness and adaption of mobile internet.

- Search results that are drawn from the answers of 15 respondents show that the companies that have taken the lead on Facebook, do not support mobile internet strategies and practises as desired even though the mobile internet projects are proposed by social media specialists. Only one respondent stated that he/she did not make any suggestions for mobile internet communication plans which represents only 6.6% of the respondents.
- The adaption rate of mobile internet use in the whole communication efforts does not usually total up to 40% in companies. 26% of the respondents declared that mobile internet usage forms less than 10% of the whole. Only 4 (26%) participants acknowledged 50% and over adaption rate in the whole.
- Despite being keen on using mobile internet for contacting target audience(s) the participants didn't actually know the rate of smartphones and 3G penetration in Turkey. Merely one respondent who is working for a GSM company gave the right percentage which is cited above.
- Participants were asked to identify what kind of expectations of brands were met by the use of mobile internet. 26% of participants (4 respondents) didn't answer the question. The answers that were given can be categorised under nine features (usually more than one expectation were named by the same respondent):

Interactivity	54%
Ease of access	27.2%
Specific segmentation of target audience(s)	18.18%
Rapid communication	18.18%
Increased visibility and positive image	18.18%
Transferring information	9%



Instant sharing	18.18%
Creating brand loyalty	
Location based marketing	27.2%

- One question was designed to identify what participants thought about the needs of mobile internet users. This question aimed to demonstrate the degree of awareness that participants had about users. Again, 4 participants didn't answer the question. The given answers covered the followings:
 - Easy and fast access
 - Rich content
 - Low cost
 - Connecting social networks
 - Listening to music and watching videos
 - Instant messaging and sharing
 - Playing games
 - Being informed about promotions
 - Getting info about traffic (mostly), sports and news
 - User friendly devices
 - Web content that is specially designed for mobile devices
- The table below reflects what participants think of advantages and disadvantages of mobile internet which resembles to the list above:

Advantages	Disadvantages
Ease of use (anywhere, anytime)	Not having enough capacity that provides speed (that causes connection problems)
Rich media content (when provided)	Inadequate security measurements
Specific segmentation (narrowcasting)	Inadequate content (because of users' fast consumption of content)
Location based marketing	Low perception of advertiser
Rapid communication	The constant expectation of novelties of users
Being able to have the medium all the time	High cost
Instant messaging and sharing	Not having standards about the technology
Wide availability of mobile service	Users' inadequate knowledge about the technology.

- The most preferred mobile apps by the participants. (12 responses were given in order from mostly used to less frequently used)
 - Social media apps (Facebook, Twitter)
 - Traffic apps
 - Game apps
 - Photo sharing apps (Instagram)
 - News feeds apps
 - Shopping
 - HootSuite (It allows users to connect to multiple social networking sites from one website)
 - Social media specialists were also asked about what kind of characteristics that PR, marketing and advertising messages and practises should have. According to received 11 responses (each participant gave more than one characteristics) messages and practises should;
 - be user friendly -easy to use and understand- (stated six times)
 - meet the needs of users (stated three times)
 - not contain direct advertising and marketing messages (stated twice)
 - be fun (stated twice)
 - be updated regularly (stated once)
 - not contain misleading content (stated once)
 - have secure software (stated once)
 - be location based –which according to the respondent, provide personalisation and customization of the message- (stated once)
 - Findings show that 14 of the participants reads/follows digital media and marketing related sources on the net. Mashable being the most preferred one (by five participants) is followed by Webrazzi and TechCrunch (by 3 participants). The others are as follows: Mediacat, Marketing Türkiye, Sosyalmedyahaber.com, sosyalmedyatv.com, The Next Web, Wired, Contagious, DigitalBuzz, The Verge, Fast Company, Bigumigu, Engadget, Gizmodo, E-Marketer, Digital Age and, blogs and forums.
- Findings related to the approach of companies' management when a mobile internet communication practise is proposed.*
- According to responses received from 14 participants the approach of company's management to mobile practises is highly positive (85.7%). None of the respondents declared negative approach but two of them emphasised sceptical approach (14.2%).
 - The participants were asked to define what concerns that the management had about mobile practises. 12 responses were received. The most common concern is about the effectiveness of the medium. Managements would also like to have certain data about the penetration of smartphones in the population and in their target audience(s) and customers. The quality of the connectivity is another issue that managers care for. Interestingly these are the facts that social media professionals use to persuade the management to accept the use of mobile internet. 10 respondents gave similar responses to the question which was about what convincing facts they used to management.
- Findings related to how they see the future of mobile internet*
- The question related to the future of mobile internet were replied by 12 respondents all of whom think that mobile internet and mobile devices will become major communication medium and will provide more and more opportunities to design better personal and customised messages. One respondent highlights his concern about the risk of rapid change of technology and thinks that users might get bored with this rapidness. .



Conclusion

The Internet still continues its change in the form of the fourth screen. The numbers tell us that the mobile internet and devices will overtake existing communication mediums. We are already familiar with this scene that we witnessed through the development of the Internet. Fast changing technologies is making the competition harsh and taking the lead is only possible with the early adaption of these changes. PR practitioners failed at the first wave of the shift and had to bear having new practitioners in the field of communication. Now social media practitioners are facing a similar challenge. It is normal to expect them to monitor and adapt new technologies immediately but this study finds that the adaptation process is not only in their hands. Although some of them would like to employ new strategies tailored for mobile internet, managements prefer to see what is going to happen. A small percentage of the practitioners chose to stay where they are. Even though they manage to run successful Facebook brand pages that are listed in the top 25 brands they don't have any intentions of using the mobile internet. That approach, sooner or later will cost them losing their target audience and their brands.

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