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THESIS

**THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA AS INFORMATION
OPERATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS TOOLS FOR THE
TURKISH ARMED FORCES**

by

Sercan Turan

June 2018

Thesis Advisor:
Second Reader:

Steven J. Iatrou
Raymond R. Buettner Jr.

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**THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA AS INFORMATION OPERATIONS
AND PUBLIC RELATIONS TOOLS FOR THE TURKISH ARMED FORCES**

Sercan Turan
Lieutenant Junior Grade, Turkish Navy
BS, Turkish Naval Academy, 2008

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from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
June 2018**

Approved by: Steven J. Iatrou
Advisor

Raymond R. Buettner Jr.
Second Reader

Dan C. Boger
Chair, Department of Information Sciences

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ABSTRACT

Social networking sites (SNSs) are becoming essential to communication and interaction. While companies use social media to advertise their products, politicians use it to influence people and garner trust. Similarly, some modern armed forces are also embracing social media to reach an increasing number of people and share information daily. The Turkish Armed Forces, on the other hand, have only a few social networking sites, launched in 2015 and 2018—relatively late compared with other armed forces. Moreover, the public cannot interact with the Turkish Armed Forces on these sites due to severe restrictions including “comment and like blocking.” Lack of presence online can foster disinformation and a lack of confidence. To prevent disinformation, garner trust, and maintain positive relationships with the public, this thesis recommends ways the Turkish Armed Forces can maximize its communication efforts utilizing social networking sites in an effective and well-structured way. This thesis obtains data from several social media analytics tools in order to search, extract, analyze, and visualize data and focuses on statistics about the Internet and SNSs related to Turkey, the Turkish Armed Forces, and the world to point out the importance of being active on SNSs for public relations and information operations.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ICT	information and communication technologies
IW	information warfare
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NPS	Naval Postgraduate School
PEOU	perceived ease of use
PRSA	Public Relations Society of America
PU	perceived usefulness
SNS	social networking site
TAF	Turkish Armed Forces
TAM	Technology Acceptance Model
TRA	Theory of Reasoned Action

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. OVERVIEW

Social networking sites (SNS), with their millions of users, are becoming leading tools for communication and interaction around the world. The majority of users consider the use of SNSs a part of their everyday lifestyle. It is almost impossible for some people to live without checking their social networking accounts on a daily or even hourly basis. People use these accounts to communicate, to share their life moments, to reach and share information, to read the news, to organize events, and so on. SNSs provide users the ability to know what is going on around the world. Furthermore, the average user also can reach influential people in society and interact with them on social media platforms. With fast and convenient features, SNSs are becoming one of the most effective information tools around the world.

Every individual or organization has a different purpose and goals for utilizing the social-media and Internet environments. While companies use social media to advertise their products, politicians use these environments to influence people and garner trust. Similarly, some modern armed forces are also embracing social media to reach an increasing number of people and share information daily. The Turkish Armed Forces, on the other hand, have only a few social networking sites, which launched in 2015 and 2018—very late compared with other armed forces. Moreover, Turkish citizens cannot interact with the Turkish Armed Forces via these SNSs due to severe restrictions including “comment and like blocking.” Hence, the Turkish Armed Forces share official information utilizing only the official website and a few restricted social media accounts that are not popular or widely used among the Turkish people. Being unsuccessful in spreading information and unable to connect with people can allow for disinformation and promote a lack of confidence. To prevent disinformation, garner trust, and maintain positive relationships with the public, the Turkish Armed Forces must maximize their use of social networking sites in an effective and well-structured way.

B. PROBLEM STATEMENT

A recent study conducted by the Wise Men Center for Strategic Studies (based in Turkey) in 2013 showed 63.9 percent of people in Turkey trust the Turkish Armed Forces.¹ Even though this percentage seems quite a bit higher than the Turkish publics' trust in other organizations (e.g., Turkish police, government, parliament, and justice), it is not as high as it was in the past, and it will go down unless the Turkish Armed Forces take some precautions. One of the most important aspects of gaining trust within a particular target audience is to communicate with them effectively and to use the right communication means. As already mentioned, the Turkish Armed Forces are currently using just their official website and a few other social media accounts, which are mostly restricted to commenting, liking, and interacting in order to share information and announce the military's activities. The problem is that this method does not seem particularly effective since people tend not to visit official government websites to share information. Because of this lack of presence online, the Turkish Armed Forces is at a disadvantage in shaping its public image and explaining its mission, and that has enabled detractors and unofficial sources to shape this image for them in misleading or unflattering ways. Considering the Turkish public as the target audience, the Turkish Armed Forces needs better ways of sharing information and performing a benign type of information operations and public relations.

C. PURPOSE STATEMENT

The primary purpose of this thesis is to determine whether the Turkish Armed Forces should embrace the use of SNSs and the Internet-based information environment to perform a benign type of information operations and public relations in order to build trust and maintain relationships with the Turkish public while promoting the mission of the Turkish Armed Forces, and engaging the Turkish public to support the military.

¹ Salih Akyürek and Mehmet Ali Yılmaz, *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetlerine Toplumsal Bakış*, [Turkish Societal Perceptions on the Turkish Armed Forces] (Istanbul: Wise Man Center for Strategic Studies, 2013), http://www.bilgesam.org/Images/Dokumanlar/0-2-2014021940tsk_algi-anketi_rapor_08nisan2013.pdf.

D. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How can the Internet-based information environment and SNSs be used in order to build trust and maintain relationships between the Turkish Armed Forces and the Turkish public?

- Is it possible to create transparency using social media?
- What are the best, fastest, and cheapest ways to diffuse the information to the community?
- What are the benefits and the drawbacks of using social media while spreading information?
- Which rules should be followed to create and use social media networking correctly?
- What is the role of social media and the Internet in performing public relations? Should the Turkish Armed Forces utilize or ignore these tools?
- Should the Turkish Armed Forces consider social networking comments and posts by the public to be free surveys and utilize this information to determine and revise their rules, policies, and activities?
- What are the cultural concerns preventing the use of SNSs by the Turkish Armed Forces?
- What are the security risks of using social media and interactive Internet sites within the Turkish Armed Forces? How can the Turkish Armed Forces mitigate the vulnerabilities?

E. SCOPE OF THE THESIS

Chapter I: This chapter gives a general outline of the problem with the motivation for the research.

Chapter II: This chapter discusses previous research. It gives further information on the “information environment,” “information operations,” “public relations,” “trust,” and “social media and social networking sites” and explains the relationships between them.

Chapter III: This chapter investigates how SNSs, and the Internet-based information environment can be used to spread information, influence the public, and build

trust. It also shows the benefits and drawbacks of using social media, the ways of implementing public relations, and the methods of preventing defamation.

Chapter IV: This chapter illustrates how social networking sites, social media, and the Internet-based information environment have developed so far and how they continue to grow. In doing this, several statistics on the use of the Internet and social media both in Turkey and worldwide are provided.

Chapter V: This chapter takes an in-depth look at the Turkish Armed Forces' social media accounts and provides information on how these accounts are being used with the statistical results.

Chapter VI: This chapter summarizes the key findings of the thesis and provides recommendations for social networking and Internet utilization for the Turkish Armed Forces.

F. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research begins with a quick review of several key terms such as “information environment,” “information operations,” “public relations,” “trust,” “social media,” and “social networking sites,” and shows how these terms are related to each other. Additionally, based on previous research, it explains how these key terms and definitions relate to each other.

Second, this research provides an introduction to influence theory and explains how social media and social networking sites can be utilized to influence people. Furthermore, it clarifies some of the critical points such as transparency, the benefits and drawbacks of social media, promotion and public relations topics, cultural concerns about adopting social media, and describes how social media can be useful to prevent defamation.

Third it provides statistical data in order to show how SNSs and the Internet-based information environment have developed recently and how they likely will change in the future. Because of a lack of related sources about Turkey, the United States Armed Forces will be used as a model and ideas will further be supported with examples of other civilian organizations.

Data were obtained from several social media analytics tools in order to search, extract, analyze, and visualize data with a focus on statistics about the Internet and SNSs related to Turkey, the Turkish Armed Forces, and the world. Additionally, emphasis placed on the importance of being active on SNSs for public relations and information warfare specialists who work for the Turkish Armed Forces.

G. SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH

This thesis research may change the way people look at the feasibility of using SNSs and Internet-based information environment implementations in the Turkish Armed Forces and may encourage the Turkish Armed Forces' decision makers to embrace these emerging tools for the potential benefits in performing information operations and public relations.

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II. BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it, nothing can succeed.

—Abraham Lincoln²

A. OVERVIEW

Gaining trust and maintaining positive relationships and connections are the desired ends for influencers to consolidate public support. This chapter introduces fundamental terms and definitions related to and having a significant role in building trust, influence, and public support. Such terms as information environment, information operations, public relations, trust, social media, and social networking sites are introduced. Second, based on previous research, it explains how these key terms and definitions relate to each other.

B. RELATED TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

In order to have a better understanding of how to build trust and maintain positive relationships, we explain pertinent terms and definitions as follows.

1. Information Environment

Edward Waltz defines information as organized sets of data and these data can contain any observations and measurements. Once information is analyzed and has a valuable meaning to individuals, it turns into knowledge.³

Information, for sure, is one of the most important keys that people use to influence others, to promote their ideas, to win hearts and minds, and to create desired effects on target audiences. In attempting to influence the target audience, influencers can either manipulate information or distribute it without manipulation. In order to reach the desired end, information should not wait where it stands. Information is not valuable unless it is processed and spread to target audiences. It should be dynamic and accessible to target

² David Zarefsky, “Public Sentiment Is Everything: Lincoln’s View of Political Persuasion,” *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 15, no. 2 (1994), 23–40.

³ Edward Waltz, *Information Warfare: Principles and Operations* (Boston, MA: Artech House, 1998).

audiences through appropriate instruments. Information collection, information processing, and information dissemination occur in an environment, and we call it the information environment. Specifically, the U.S. Joint Publication on information operations defines the information environment as “the aggregate of individuals, organizations, and systems that collect, process, disseminate, or act on information.”⁴

The information environment consists of three dimensions. The first is the physical dimension, which is the set of tools that help commanders to create and spread information. Such tools can be humans, computers, media, and any communication infrastructure. The second is the informational dimension that determines how we utilize, analyze, and spread information. The third is the cognitive dimension, which is the aggregate of the thoughts and insights of individuals and groups we want to influence. We can easily define this dimension as the most significant and complicated part of the information environment because this dimension varies depending on people’s beliefs, background, experience, and moral values.⁵

2. Information Operations

As information technology develops, it will change the way that war is conducted to a more unconventional way. It is not easy to defeat an enemy without defeating the enemy’s mindset and ideas. In order to defeat an enemy’s mindset and ideas and to conquer the cognitive dimension, it is essential to dominate the information environment and make the enemy think favorably of your desired ends. In the information age, information dominance is more important than it has ever been in the past. We can simply define information operations as efforts to defeat or change the enemy’s mindset and ideas. It is an aggregated effort to conquer the cognitive dimension and create desired effects on target audiences by using the information environment and its related instruments.

A more detailed definition that appears in the U.S. Joint Publication on information operations is as follows: “the integrated employment, during military operations, of

⁴ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Information Operations*, JP 3–13 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2014), http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_13.pdf.

⁵ Ibid., .12–13.

information related capabilities in concert with other lines of operation to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp the decision making of adversaries and potential adversaries while protecting our own.”⁶

This thesis does not advocate conducting information operations since our target audience is the Turkish public, and they are not adversaries. However, using information-related capabilities to influence the Turkish public, to garner trust, and to maintain relationships is recommended. Even though our research is not directly related to information operations, it has indirect impacts that support information operations. The more people support your ideas and policies, the more powerful you are. Having powerful support from your own public influences your adversaries in a negative way and disrupts them in the cognitive dimension.

3. Public Relations

Following nearly a year of research and a public vote, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) announced a new definition for public relations, previously defined in 1982. According to the new definition, “public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics.”⁷

Some of the goals of public relations include anticipating and interpreting public opinion, advising management for policy changes, planning methods to influence or change public opinion. In order to achieve these goals, public relations practitioners use multiple communication means.⁸ In today’s Internet world, one of the most effective communication platforms is SNSs.

Social networking sites, with their user-friendliness, approachability, ease of access, and cost-effectiveness create exceptional opportunities for public relations

⁶ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Information Operations*, JP 3–13 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2014), http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_13.pdf.

⁷ “What Is Public Relations?,” Public Relations Society of America Inc., accessed April 17, 2017, <http://www.prsa.org/aboutprsa/publicrelationsdefined>.

⁸ “Official Statement of Public Relations,” Public Relations Society of America Inc., accessed April 17, 2017, <http://www.prsa.org/aboutprsa/publicrelationsdefined>.

practitioners to communicate with the public.⁹ It also allows public relations practitioners to collect and analyze information in order to advise management about any changes on current policies.

With the developing technology of the Internet, governmental and non-governmental organizations, commercial companies, militaries, and several other groups and individuals are utilizing the Internet to announce their official information to provide correct information to the public and to prevent disinformation. Spreading official information allows organizations and individuals to protect their information's integrity, and it prevents information from being manipulated by a competitor or adversary. The importance of official information is emphasized in the U.S. Joint Publication on public affairs as well. "Official information can help create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of national interests and policies and mitigate any adverse effects from unofficial, misinformed, or hostile sources."¹⁰ Organizations can release official information by using their official websites and their verified social networking accounts. Press and media also spread this official information by referring to these official websites and social networking accounts.

As in most democratic countries in the world, in Turkey freedom of the press is protected by the constitution. Aside from that, Turkey in 2003 passed a law that allows citizens to access specific information that governmental organizations have. This law makes governmental organizations responsible for sharing information and publicizing their activities. In order to meet these responsibilities, the Turkish Armed Forces operate an official website and a few restricted social media accounts to announce their activities, exercises, and statements on past and ongoing issues. However, it is still debatable whether these efforts are sufficient to spread information and promote the Turkish Armed Forces' policies, ideas, and activities.

⁹ Nina Eyrich, Monica L. Padman, and Kaye D. Sweetser, "PR Practitioners' Use of Social Media Tools and Communication Technology," *Public Relations Review* 34, no. 4 (2008), 412–414.

¹⁰ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Public Affairs*, JP 3–61 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2016), http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_61.pdf.

4. Public Affairs Relationship to Information Operations

Even though the concepts of public affairs, or PA, and information operations may seem similar, they are neither exactly the same nor entirely different. North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) military public affairs policy explains the relationship between these two concepts as follows:

PA and Info Ops are separate, but related functions. They directly support military objectives, counter adversary disinformation and deter adversary actions. They both require planning, message development, and media analysis, though the efforts differ with respect to audience, scope, and intent. All military information activities must be closely coordinated with PA in order to ensure consistency in the messages to external audiences and to promote overall effectiveness and credibility of the campaign. Info Ops is a military function to provide advice and coordination of military information activities in order to create desired effects on the will, understanding and capability of adversaries, potential adversaries and other NAC [North Atlantic Council]-approved parties in support of Alliance mission objectives.¹¹

5. Trust

The best way to find out if you can trust somebody is to trust them.

—Ernest Hemingway¹²

The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines trust as “to believe someone is good and honest and will not harm you, or that something is safe and reliable.”¹³

“Scholars and practitioners widely acknowledge trust’s importance. Trust makes cooperative endeavors happen. Trust is a key to positive interpersonal relationships in various settings because it is central to how we interact with others.”¹⁴ When it comes to

¹¹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Military Public Affairs Policy*, (Brussels, Belgium: NATO, 2011), <https://www.nato.int/ims/docu/mil-pol-pub-affairs-en.pdf>.

¹² “Ernest Hemingway Quotes,” Xplore Inc., accessed May 9, 2018, https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/ernest_hemingway_383691.

¹³ *Cambridge Dictionary*, s.v. “Trust,” accessed April 18, 2017, <http://www.dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/trust>.

¹⁴ D. Harrison McKnight and Norman L. Chervany, “The Meanings of Trust,” (working paper, University of Minnesota, 1996), 3, http://misrc.umn.edu/workingpapers/fullpapers/1996/9604_040100.pdf.

public affairs and information operations, building and maintaining trust is one of the most essential desired ends. Public affairs and information operation agents need to express and show that they or their organizations (such as companies, agencies, army, navy) are trustworthy and will not harm anyone except their adversaries. In today's information environment, SNSs are the platform where people try to establish and maintain trust with their audience. The more people one has in one's social networking circle, the more people one will add to one's circle, and all the people in one's circle will enhance and extend one's trustworthiness. Spreading accurate and exact information at the right time is the key factor in accomplishing this credibility and expanding trustworthiness.

6. Social Networking Sites and Social Media

First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win.

—Gandhi¹⁵

Danah M. Boyd and Nicole B. Ellison define social networking sites (SNS), as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.”¹⁶

Becoming the leading tools for communication, social media enables online social interaction. These leading tools not only allow users to communicate and interact but also provide opportunities to share, edit, and review diversified content worldwide.¹⁷ Social media tools and services show diversity in terms of their methods, purposes, and solutions. While conventional media such as radio, television, and newspapers are platforms

¹⁵ “Mahatma Gandhi Quotes,” Xplore Inc., accessed May 9, 2018, https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/mahatma_gandhi_103630.

¹⁶ Danah M. Boyd and Nicole B. Ellison, “Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship,” *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 13, no. 1 (2007), 210–230.

¹⁷ John Carlo Bertot, Paul T. Jaeger, and Derek Hansen, “The Impact of Policies on Government Social Media Usage: Issues, Challenges, and Recommendations,” *Government Information Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (2012), 30–40.

primarily for professional broadcasters, social media allows any user to create and share content.¹⁸ Furthermore, social media generates many-to-many interaction among located any place in the world.¹⁹

In the first years of popular SNSs like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, many people thought these sites were mainly intended for individuals within a bounded system. However, with the increasing popularity of these SNSs, it is now clear that, in addition to individuals, a significant number of organizations, companies, and political parties utilize SNSs. Even though some individuals prefer to keep their connections within a bounded area, companies and organizations are eager to reach a wide range of people and promote themselves.

Since the introduction of several SNSs, they are continually increasing the amount of the users that they have. This dramatic increase is also attracting the attention of scholarly and industry specialists. SNSs, for example, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, have attracted millions of users and a significant number of these users utilize these platforms on a daily basis. Availability and accessibility features of these platforms definitely play a major role in this huge development and expansion.²⁰ Considering this development and expansion, SNSs could be used by organizations, governments, companies, and anyone else for whom one main goal is to reach communities and to promote and share their ideas, policies, services, and products.

There are several different types of SNSs; however, the technology and ideas behind all SNSs are similar. They all use the Internet to reach their users; collect data; share data depending on their users' preferences, and try to protect privacy and aim to serve users better. Even though they use similar methods, the groups that develop within SNSs are various. While some sites support the idea of reuniting people who knew each other in the past, some sites aim to connect people who have shared interests in sports, music, political views, or nationality. Another way in which SNSs differ is their method of communication

¹⁸ Ibid., 31.

¹⁹ Ibid., 31.

²⁰ Boyd, "Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship," 210–230

and expansion. While some sites use video and picture sharing, others use blogging and posting of comments.²¹ SNSs provide us the opportunity to spread what we think, what we believe, and what we do. Spreading the ideas we have and letting people know what we believe and what we do are the critical elements of communication, and communication is one of the most important aspects of gaining the trust of people and influencing them.

The most popular social networks allow their users to log in and operate in diverse languages, communicate, and establish connections with friends and people worldwide. Today approximately two billion people are using social networking sites, and as mobile device usage increases, the number of the people using social networks is expected to grow.²²

While the most popular social networking sites originated in the United States, some European and Chinese networking sites have also emerged since they provide local sources and content. In particular, VK, the largest European social media platform, and Qzone and Renren, originated in China, have reached millions of users.²³ Social media users, often times, have accounts and membership on more than one platform stemming from the variety of opportunities that these platforms offer to users. Instagram and Flickr, for example, concentrate on photo sharing. Facebook and Google Plus, on the other hand, are generally aimed at making connections between friends and family. Facebook, in particular, offers users the ability to tap several different computer and mobile applications with which it is compatible. YouTube, being a video sharing platform, encourages users to produce and stream their own videos and engages them with other video content. There are also blogging and microblogging services such as Twitter and Tumblr that allow users to connect and communicate rapidly using a limited content.²⁴

The following text defines and identifies some of the popular social media and social networking services.

²¹ Ibid.

²² “Most Famous Social Network Sites Worldwide as of April 2017,” Statista Inc., accessed June 5, 2017, <http://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/>.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

a. Facebook

Facebook was created as a social networking site by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004. Initially, it was open to just Harvard students; however, it rapidly became popular in other schools and eventually was available to everyone over two years. Following to become available to the public, Facebook has succeeded to turn into the world's most popular and prominent social networking site. As of April 2017, Facebook had more than 1.94 billion active users monthly in the world, and more than one billion of them were mobile users.²⁵ Facebook defines its mission as to "give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected. People use Facebook to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what's going on in the world, and to share and express what matters to them."²⁶

It has become easy for Facebook to classify what people's interests are, what they like most, what they shop for, and what they think about people, organizations, political leaders, celebrities, and so forth. Having more than one billion users gives Facebook the opportunity to collect the users' data and enables them to sell this information to several companies. According to the statistics and facts report on Facebook published by Statista Inc.,²⁷ the "Like button" on Facebook is integral to enabling companies and brands to capture valuable marketing information.

Facebook allows its users to create their own Facebook page, add friends and share personal updates and photos. According to Facebook user statistics, a very popular feature of Facebook is the "like button." Designed to facilitate feedback and recommendations to friends, it is now integrated into virtually every major website, especially those offering content. The "like button" also opened the door for marketers to benefit from Facebook's

²⁵ "Statistics and Facts about Facebook," Statista Inc., accessed June 5, 2017, <https://www.statista.com/topics/751/facebook/>.

²⁶ "Company Info-our Mission," Facebook Inc., accessed June 5, 2017, <https://newsroom.fb.com/company-info/>.

²⁷ "Statista is an online statistics aggregator providing business, marketing, demographic, and economic statistics. The company supplements the statistical information with a significant amount of content, including company dossiers, topical reports, and high-quality infographics. Statistics are available here on a wide variety of industries and topics, including advertising, telecommunications, chemicals, energy, education, consumer goods, e-commerce, banking, healthcare, retail, demographics, sports, transportation, and tourism. Statista combines statistics from government and NGO sources with industry data from an array of outlets." Bonnie J. M. Swoger, "EReviews," *Library Journal* 140, no. 9 (May 15, 2015): 1, <http://libproxy.nps.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.edu/docview/1679261074?accountid=12702>.

popularity. Facebook enables brands to address their fans directly, which is why marketers put a lot of effort into generating Facebook fans. Major companies like Disney, Coca-Cola, and Nike have tens of millions of Facebook fans according to this brand ranking.²⁸

In addition to reporting it has 1.94 billion active monthly users as of March 31, 2017, Facebook boasts 1.28 billion users are active on Facebook on a daily basis. Among the active daily users, 745 million of them connect via mobile devices.²⁹ Daily active users make up approximately 10 percent of the world population. That many people using a social networking platform on a daily basis makes Facebook a lifestyle practice. These users would seem committed to keeping connected with friends, family, and the world. Facebook offers its users the opportunity of discovering the world easily and in a fast way.

b. Twitter

Twitter defines itself on its website as “the place to find out about what is happening in the world right now. Whether you are interested in music, sports, politics, news, celebrities, or everyday moments”³⁰ Even though Twitter is used in various areas by various users, almost all users have the same goal: to reach people, to tell their ideas, to establish and maintain connections, and finally to garner trust, which makes a user the right person to follow, listen to, and share ideas and life moments.

Twitter is a web-based social networking site designed as a blog with a limited number of characters. Users are restricted to blog within 280 characters at most. Twitter allows its members to share and post about their experiences, ideas, and everyday moments on this platform.³¹ People have the chance to take part in communities and social

²⁸ “Statistics and Facts about Facebook,” Statista Inc., accessed June 5, 2017, <https://www.statista.com/topics/751/facebook/>.

²⁹ “Company Info-our Mission,” Facebook Inc., accessed June 5, 2017, <https://newsroom.fb.com/company-info/>.

³⁰ “Getting Started with Twitter,” Twitter Inc., accessed June 6, 2017, <https://support.twitter.com/articles/215585>.

³¹ Leslie Ward, “Using Social Media Activity to Identify Personality Characteristics of Navy Personnel” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2016).

movements, to get real-time updates from their favorite sports players, musicians, and political leaders, and even to have the chance to interact with them.³²

While the public can see users' posts without any restrictions, users have the option to set their profiles and accounts to "protected mode." This allows users to determine who can see their "tweets."³³

Twitter, with 328 million active monthly users as of the first quarter of 2017, is currently one of the leading and influential social networking sites worldwide. Members can post and read tweets and follow the accounts, organizations, and all kinds of members that interested them. Twitter, especially during live television broadcasts and sporting events, has become a common way for members to get contact with other people and share their opinions.³⁴

Since Twitter has become the prominent way of engaging people and interacting with them in real time, most of the companies, celebrities, politicians, and military members have started to utilize Twitter as the unique platform where they share and exchange ideas, influence people, and enhance their popularity, fame, and credibility.

c. YouTube

YouTube defines its mission as "to give everyone a voice and show them the world."³⁵ YouTube is a video-sharing platform that allows people to make their own videos and share them with others while experiencing several kinds of videos uploaded by other users. This capability also gives users the opportunity to establish and maintain social relationships.³⁶

³² "Getting Started with Twitter," Twitter Inc., accessed June 6, 2017, <https://support.twitter.com/articles/215585>.

³³ Leslie Ward, "Using Social Media Activity to Identify Personality Characteristics of Navy Personnel" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2016).

³⁴ "Statistics and Facts about Twitter," Twitter Inc., accessed June 6, 2017, <https://www.statista.com/topics/737/twitter/>.

³⁵ "About the Tube," YouTube Inc., accessed June 7, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/yt/about/>.

³⁶ Patricia G. Lange, "Publicly Private and Privately Public: Social Networking on YouTube," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 13, no. 1 (2007): 361–380.

These videos include music videos and TV clips, as well as video blogs, gaming videos, short original videos, and educational content. It is generally free to view except for some copyright and regional restrictions. YouTube is the largest video-sharing site where users upload more than 400 hours of video content every minute and watch one billion hours of video every single day as of March 2017.³⁷

YouTube, founded in 2005, reaches 72 percent of the population in the United States and is now one of the most viewed social networking platforms worldwide.³⁸ Mobile devices, on the other hand, have allowed people to reach and watch YouTube videos on the go, which has increased video consumption at a significant rate.³⁹

Although YouTube was launched as a video sharing website where people can upload and watch their own funny, interesting, and worthwhile videos, since then it has become a platform where companies and individuals make money.⁴⁰ Since it is free to upload and share videos, it has become the most convenient and inexpensive way to promote an item or idea by many users. Similarly, some other organizations such as Armed Forces, United Nations foundations, and aid agencies utilize YouTube to create awareness and promote their campaigns. We can also observe some ethnic and legitimate religious groups trying to educate people and gain public awareness or trust on YouTube just as several terrorist organizations and radical extremists are using it to spread black propaganda.

d. Instagram

Instagram is the most popular photo-sharing social networking platform where users can edit their photos and videos using various filters. These posts can also be seen by the user's friends and followers on Facebook and Twitter. People can also comment on

³⁷ "Statistics and Facts about YouTube," Statista Inc., accessed June 7, 2017, <https://www.statista.com/topics/2019/youtube/>.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

posts, and users can add links to any other website they want people to visit.⁴¹ With its simplicity and user-friendliness, Instagram has gained millions of members and created a unique platform where not only people meet and interact but also companies advertise their products and individuals promote their ideas.

Instagram reached more than 700 million active monthly users worldwide as of April 2017, and it benefits from a variety of other social networks to share its content. Members can share their posts on Instagram and, if allowed, Instagram at the same time shares the same posts on other social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. This makes Instagram being one of the most popular social platforms with high levels of member engagement.⁴²

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

Much research focuses on social networking and its relationship to information operations and public relations, as well as on the associated vulnerabilities, risks, and methods of implementation. Following are some examples of research made on the topic.

Gabriel R. Downey, David A. Hollis, and Harold D. Rouse analyzed several SNSs' usage by companies, politicians, and government officials. They suggested that "The United States Information Operation professionals should develop tactics, techniques, and procedures in order to conduct Information Operations."⁴³ They listed the suggestions that consist of best practices of both political and marketing campaigns as follows.⁴⁴

Determine the information needs of the audience: By understanding what the social community is interested in, you can develop the appropriate messages. Discovering the common interests of the audience and monitoring the interests as they evolve is critical to successful IO SNS messaging.

⁴¹ Linda Coles, *Marketing with Social Media: 10 Easy Steps to Success for Business* (Milton, Australia: John Wiley & Sons, 2014).

⁴² "Statistics and Facts about Instagram," Statista Inc., accessed June 8, 2017, <https://www.statista.com/topics/1882/instagram/>.

⁴³ Gabriel R. Downey II et al., "You Have Been Friended by the U.S. Military: Using Social Networking Services for IO Messaging" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2010).

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Be transparent with intentions and identity: Failure to be transparent and open about intent for its online social presence will likely alienate audiences.

You do not control the message: Encouraging comments and discussion can lead to opportunities for increased contribution, co-creation, and feedback. This feedback is yet another measure of effectiveness on which to measure the SNS influencing campaign.

Be interactive: listen and participate: Listening to SNS conversations provides a means of measuring effectiveness of messages and identifying potential future content analysis.⁸ Failure to listen and participate in conversations will result in less effective messaging.

Give and take: do not create an online “lawn sign”: People do not go to SNS to read the same information they can get from other sources. By understanding what the social community is interested in you can better develop messages to meet their information requirements.

Get people talking: facilitate interactive communication: SNS users desire to share information and interact with others. Messaging that does not harness the interactive communications capabilities of SNS will drive followers to other sites.

Harness the power of volunteers (users): Cause people to commit themselves to your cause. Encouraging and directing the online activities leads to increased commitment to your cause, opportunities for recruiting additional followers, spreading your message, and gaining valuable insight from the population.

Get involved and participate: Be active on as many sites as possible, in order to reach as many people as possible. Redeliver a message in a fresh and new way.⁴⁵

In his Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) master’s thesis, John J. Lenkart identified the potential social media vulnerabilities that individuals and organizations could expose to.⁴⁶ He focused on the social engineering attempts by hostile actors who try to acquire sensitive information from critical persons and “proposed a mitigation and prevention

⁴⁵ Ibid., 2–3.

⁴⁶ John J. Lenkart, “The Vulnerability of Social Networking Media and the Insider Threat: New Eyes for Bad Guys” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2011).

strategy that couples training and awareness with active surveys and monitoring of critical persons within an organization.”⁴⁷

David S. Westover, Jr., in another NPS master’s thesis, examined how the U.S. military has changed its public affairs methods since the Vietnam War. In particular, he focused on the relationship between transparency and trust. He also claimed that one of the tools for establishing transparency would be utilizing Internet-based social media because it has changed ways of sharing information between individuals, groups, and organizations.⁴⁸

In his master’s thesis, also for NPS, Shawn A. Bohrer claimed that there is an obvious misunderstanding between the U.S. military and the public, where each side does not fully understand the other’s demands, mission, and expectations. He suggested that this problem stems from media-military relationships and in order to remove the civil-military gap, a well-planned cooperation between military and media is required.⁴⁹

Lindley Curtis et al., in their survey, indicated that “[s]ocial media tools are becoming beneficial methods of communication for public relations practitioners in the nonprofit sector. Organizations with defined public relations departments are more likely to adopt social media technologies and use them to achieve their organizational goals.”⁵⁰ Considering the Turkish Armed Forces as a nonprofit sector having public relations practitioners, it also supports the idea of embracing social media tools to reach target audiences and to promote an idea or policy.

Nevertheless, Andrew Miller remarked that it is not always easy to adopt a new technology. Organizations and the members of them resist adopting new technology since they are not familiar with it and do not know how to use it. Social media, being a relatively

⁴⁷ Ibid., 53.

⁴⁸ David S. Westover, “Via Dialogue or Messaging How Air Force Public Affairs Is Leveraging Social Media” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2010).

⁴⁹ Shawn A. Bohrer, “Military-Media Relationships: Identifying and Mitigating Military-Media Biases to Improve Future Military Operations” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2003).

⁵⁰ Lindley Curtis et al., “Adoption of Social Media for Public Relations by Nonprofit Organizations,” *Public Relations Review* 36, no. 1 (2010): 90–92.

new technology, has encountered similar difficulties and obstacles to being adopted by organizations.⁵¹ He also suggested that “[t]he key to successful implementation and sustainability of social media in any organization is to realize that the cultural changes must be considered up front. Social media is merely a tool. Like any new tool, there is a necessary adjustment period where the user has to grow into a comfort level with it.”⁵²

Aside from people’s resistance to adopting new tools and technologies, some studies have focused on people’s attitudes to sharing information. Constant et al. studied sharing information within organizations and tried to find answers to what organizations and their members think about sharing and disseminating information.⁵³ The study also described what cultural or specific reasons make organizations and their members agree or disagree on information sharing.⁵⁴ The researchers found that “both self-interest, as well as the organizational culture, influenced information sharing. The more a person believes that information sharing is the correct, socially expected behavior, the more they are willing to share. The more user-friendly the computer systems, the more willing users are to use them to share.”⁵⁵

D. GAPS IN THE LITERATURE

The Turkish Armed Forces have only a few social networking accounts, and these accounts do not allow for interaction with the public. Information sharing on these platforms is an example of one-way communication that prohibits the exchange of mutual ideas or feedback. There are several studies on SNSs in Turkey; however, none of them examines the Turkish Armed Forces and military-hosted SNSs. This research tries to contribute to the social media concept regarding military utilization and tries to find

⁵¹ Andrew Miller, “Cultural Barriers to Organizational Social Media Adoption,” in *Social Knowledge: Using Social Media to Know What You Know* (New York, NY: IGI Global, 2011), 96–114.

⁵² Ibid., 110.

⁵³ David Constant, Sara Kiesler, and Lee Sproull, “What’s Mine is Ours, Or is it? A Study of Attitudes about Information Sharing,” *Information Systems Research* 5, no. 4 (1994): 400–421.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

alternative ways for the Turkish Armed Forces to garner trust and maintain relationships with the Turkish public.

E. SUMMARY

This chapter introduced fundamental terms and definitions that are related to and have a significant role in building trust, expanding influence, and increasing public support. Such terms as information environment, information operations, public relations, trust, social media, and social networking sites were introduced. It also explained how these key terms and definitions relate to each other.

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III. SPREADING INFORMATION, INFLUENCING THE PUBLIC, AND BUILDING TRUST VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

The press is not the enemy and to treat it as such is self-defeating.

—U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, May 2007⁵⁶

A. OVERVIEW

This chapter first provides an introduction to influence theory and explains how social media and social networking sites can be utilized to influence people. Second, it clarifies some of the critical points such as transparency, and the benefits and drawbacks of spreading information on social media. Third, it explains how social media can be used as a promotion and public relations platform and to collect data via free surveys. Lastly, it provides information on cultural concerns about adopting social media and describes how social media can be useful to prevent defamation.

B. INFLUENCE AND STRATAGEMS OF INFLUENCE

The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines influence as “The capacity to have an effect on the character, development, or behavior of someone or something, or the effect itself.” Another meaning for influence, in the same dictionary, is as follows: “The power to shape policy or ensure favorable treatment from someone, especially through status, contacts, or wealth.”⁵⁷

Influence is the key factor to gain and maintain trust. One who wants to garner trust must have the ability to influence his or her audiences. Hence, much has been studied on influence to clarify methods of winning hearts and minds, and shape people’s behavior and feelings.⁵⁸ Theorists have devised many stratagems and tactics related to social influence.

⁵⁶ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Public Affairs*, JP 3–61 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2016), III-1, http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_61.pdf.

⁵⁷ *Oxford Dictionaries*, s.v. “Influence,” accessed June 3, 2017, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/influence>.

⁵⁸ Thomas F. Pavlik, “Operational Social Influence in the Vietnam War, an Analysis of Influence Tactics used by the U.S. Marine’s Combined Action Program and the Viet Cong in South Vietnam” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2011).

Anthony Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson identified four stratagems of influence.⁵⁹ The first stratagem of influence is “to take control of the situation and establish a favorable climate for your message, a process called pre-persuasion. Pre-persuasion refers to how the issue is structured and how the decision is framed.”⁶⁰ In order to take control of the situation, it is essential to create a favorable platform where we can disseminate the information we want under our control. Pratkanis identified this situation as a tactic called “Control the Flow of Information.”⁶¹ Influencers and military leaders, in the scope of this thesis, can best control the flow of information by spreading information via several tools such as television, newspapers, radios, the Internet and, of course, social media.

It is also possible for military leaders to decide which part of any information will be shared in order to influence the target audience. When considering that enemies also try to influence the public, military leaders must recognize that the one who dominates the flow of the information is more likely to win influence. To dominate the flow of information, influencers, including military leaders, can employ several tactics, such as propaganda, censorship, and specific leaks of real information.⁶² Taking into account that the Internet, particularly social media, is the new way by which information is passed and spread across the world and communities, military leaders should seek and find ways to control and dominate social media to be successful in terms of influencing the public and eliminating disinformation created by malicious people.

The second stratagem of influence is “establishing a favorable image in the eyes of the audience which is called source credibility.”⁶³ Influence and source credibility are the key factors of the information operations and public relations (messaging) fields. In order to be successful and reach desired end goals in these fields, it is essential to build credibility

⁵⁹ Anthony R. Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson, *Age of Propaganda: The Everyday Use and Abuse of Persuasion* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 2001).

⁶⁰ Ibid., 47.

⁶¹ Anthony R. Pratkanis, *The Science of Social Influence: Advances and Future Progress* (New York, NY: Psychology Press, 2011).

⁶² Pavlik, “Operational Social Influence in the Vietnam War.”

⁶³ Pratkanis and Aronson, *Age of Propaganda*, 47.

for both the organization and the messages to be communicated. Even though many researchers advise that the speaker of the desired message or content should have high credibility to influence an audience, credibility of the channel or medium also plays a significant role in persuading and influencing the desired audiences. Therefore, people will have a tendency to rate one communication channel and mediums as more or less credible and reliable than others.⁶⁴

In today's information environment, people want to reach and share information instantly in real time. People also prefer direct and trusted communication with organizations and other people in public forums. Social media platforms, because of their rapid and participatory nature, definitely are the key tools to satisfy these preferences and needs. Establishing a "direct" and "trust-based"⁶⁵ relationship quickly and maintaining that relationship is essential in influencing an audience in the immediacy of the information environment.

The credibility of a writer or a communicator brings to mind two qualities: trustworthiness and the knowledge. However, in the current social media environment, credibility is measured by newly evolving terms such as "authenticity," "legitimacy," "transparency," or "authority."⁶⁶ Verified accounts, for example, on Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube make both owners and social media itself more credible.

It is also more likely for people to think that social media is more credible than other platforms since it allows users to generate their own content, share and exchange ideas, have contact directly with people in a very short period of time almost with no delay.

The third stratagem of influence is to "construct and deliver a message that focuses the targets' attention and thoughts on exactly what the communicator wants them to think about—for example, by distracting the targets from arguing against the proposal, by

⁶⁴ Minjeong Kang, "Measuring Social Media Credibility: A Study on a Measure of Blog Credibility," *Institute for Public Relations* (2010): 59–68.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

focusing targets' attention on a vivid and powerful image, or even by inducing targets to persuade themselves.”⁶⁷

The last stratagem of influence acknowledges that “effective influence controls the emotions of the target and follows a simple rule: Arouse an emotion and then offer the target a way of responding to that emotion that just happens to be the desired course of action.”⁶⁸ Combining the third and fourth stratagems, we can see that creating an emotional message is the most critical approach since it will touch the target audience's hearts and minds and make them think and behave as the influencer desires.

Even though traditional media, such as newspapers, magazines, radios, and TV broadcasts, are convenient ways to transmit an emotional message, they are being supplanted by evolving technologies and different types of audience needs. The Internet, particularly social media and SNSs, with their speed and penetration rate have become the most convenient and accessible tools for promoting ideas and influencing people. Moreover, social media users, whether intentionally or not, are using the aforementioned stratagems. Considering current social media accounts based on different types of topics such as politics, music, games, entertainment, and so on, we can definitely conclude that these platforms have become the new way to gain access to and influence millions of people in real time at little or no cost.

C. DIFFUSION OF INNOVATIONS

Being the latest form of interaction and communication, social media has destroyed the barriers of time and place that once confronted people and has become the universal tool among all media communication channels (e.g., radio, television, newspaper, or the Internet). This adoption has been exponential and unlike any other innovations, reaching billions of people worldwide. While television took 13 years to gain 50 million users, Facebook reached 50 million users in one year and Twitter in nine months.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Deirdre McCaughey et al., “Best Practices in Social Media: Utilizing a Value Matrix to Assess Social Media's Impact on Health Care,” *Social Science Computer Review* 32, no. 5 (2014):575–589.

It has never been easy to make an idea, innovation, or concept gain acceptance by the public. Despite promotion by experts and scholars, a new idea or innovation typically takes some time before it is embraced. Everett M. Rogers defined diffusion as “the process in which an innovation [is] communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system.”⁷⁰ Adoption probability depends on four main elements: the innovation itself, the communication channels, the time, and the social system.⁷¹ For this reason, organizations need to consider the methods and ways of spreading or diffusing an idea or innovation to ensure its adoption is faster than anticipated.⁷² When it comes to social media, it is clear that the diffusion process for that innovation has already been widely completed.

In the context of social media, the aforementioned rapid diffusion process can be best explained with the “Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)” and the “Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA),” which are the most powerful theories in Information Systems. According to TAM and TRA, diffusion of an innovation depends on two concepts, “perceived usefulness (PU)” and “perceived ease of use (PEOU).” These terms also reflect the features of any innovation, and social media is the best practice of PU and PEOU, which has shaped communication and social interaction in the current information environment.⁷³

Statistically, most human characteristics form a normal distribution. These characteristics are either physical or behavioral (e.g., weight, height, and intelligence), and a majority of the characteristics intensify near the average value. Adoption of an innovation tends to follow a normal distribution. Majority of a society adopts an innovation almost at the same time. The more people adopt an innovation, the faster the other people adopt the same innovation. As shown in Figure 1, the cumulative number of adopters is an S-shaped curve, and the curve accelerates to maximum speed when half of the individuals adopt the

⁷⁰ Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 5th ed. (New York, NY: Free Press, 2003), 5.

⁷¹ McCaughey et al., “Best Practices in Social Media.”

⁷² Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*.

⁷³ Izak Benbasat and Henri Barki, “Quo Vadis TAM?” *Journal of the Association for Information Systems* 8, no. 4 (2007),:7.

innovation or idea.⁷⁴ Figure 1 illustrates the diffusion process and the increase in the number of new adopters; it also shows that reaching half of the adopters is the critical point of the diffusion process.

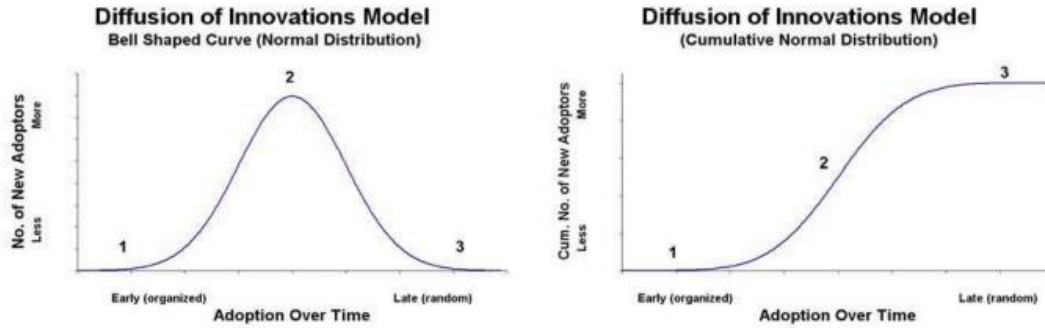


Figure 1. The Diffusion Process.⁷⁵

In the context of this thesis, the main purpose is to encourage the Turkish public to engage with the military via the Turkish Armed Forces' social media accounts. In other words, diffuse the idea of embracing and engaging with these social media accounts. The more people that engage with these social media accounts, the more widely the messages spread and the more effective communication can be.

Applying the diffusion of innovations concept requires a focus on:

1. **The innovation** as the idea of gaining trust and building relationships,
2. **The communication** channels as the use of popular and effective social media platforms,
3. **The time** as the period at which we reach a specific level of trustworthiness, and

⁷⁴ Minjeong Kang, "Measuring Social Media Credibility: A Study on a Measure of Blog Credibility," *Institute for Public Relations* (2010): 59–68.

⁷⁵ Everett M. Rogers et al., "Complex Adaptive Systems and the Diffusion of Innovations," *Innovation Journal: The Public Sector Innovation Journal* 10, no. 3 (2005): 1–26.

4. **The social system** as Internet users of the Turkish public and other countries.

As stated earlier, diffusion of an innovation has four main elements. Of all the elements, the communication channel is the most significant, and it is specified as social media in our research. Social media will be the communication channel through which messages get from one individual or organization to another individual.⁷⁶

One of the most common tools for telling a specific group of people about the presence of an idea or innovation is mass media, which allows creating awareness among the public. Through television, radio, magazines or newspapers, one or a few individuals can reach an audience of many and influence them in favor of message owner's needs and wishes. These types of one-to-many communication channels, however, are not the best way of influencing or persuading people to accept a new idea or innovation. One-to-one communication channels, on the other hand, are the most influential tools to get an idea or innovation adopted.⁷⁷ Additionally, similarity and connection in socioeconomic and education status will catalyze the growth of diffusion of an innovation. In fact, previous research on successful diffusion indicates that adoption of an innovation is most often unrelated to the innovation's scientifically proved advantages. Surprisingly, it depends on the subjective evaluation of another individual who has already adopted the innovation. Scientific evaluations mostly apply for the ones who first adopt the innovation. Therefore, diffusion is a process that occurs in close social networks where individuals want to emulate first adopters or pretend to have the innovation adopted earlier by other individuals.⁷⁸

Face-to-face talks and telephone calls are examples of one-to-one communication channels. Social media can also be utilized as one of the best practices of one-to-one communication channels since it allows users to generate their own content, interact with influential members, and exchange ideas. Hence, in order to diffuse a concept, in the case

⁷⁶ Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

of this research building trust and maintaining relationships, we recommend utilizing social media as an information operation and public relations tool rather than television, radio, newspapers, and the traditional official websites within the Turkish Armed Forces.

D. CREATING TRANSPARENCY USING SOCIAL MEDIA

Enrique Bonsón et al. describe transparency as “the literal value of accountability,” and they suggest that “an accountable bureaucrat and/or organization must explain or account for their actions.” Web-based transparency, in particular, is described as making information open and available to the public on the Internet.⁷⁹

Notably, government transparency became an international issue in the war negotiations after World War I. Many nations struggled to pass freedom of information laws and promote transparency in government. While only 11 nations had laws on freedom of information in the mid-1980s, that number reached 59 nations by the end of 2004.⁸⁰ To be perceived as a democratic country by other nations, people, and organizations, a country must have laws on transparency and grant its citizens the right to access government information. These laws signify the trustworthiness of the government, attempt to prevent corruption, and ensure the accuracy of governmental information, while they build and maintain trust between governments and the public.⁸¹ Similarly, the military has much to talk about and comment on as well, even though some people may think that military affairs are secret. Surrounded by an environment where information spreads in seconds from one end of the world to another, it is impossible to prevent people from being curious about what is going on in the military. Most people believe that they have the right to access all the information flowing in and out their countries.

⁷⁹ Enrique Bonson et al., “Local E-Government 2.0: Social Media and Corporate Transparency in Municipalities,” *Government Information Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (2012): 123–132.

⁸⁰ John C. Bertot, Paul T. Jaeger, and Justin M. Grimes, “Using ICTs to Create a Culture of Transparency: E-Government and Social Media as Openness and Anti-Corruption Tools for Societies,” *Government Information Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (2010): 264–271.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 264.

As John C. Bertot et al. asserted in their article on government transparency, there are four typical ways that information becomes transparent and reaches the public.⁸² These channels are “Proactive dissemination by the government,” “Release of requested materials by the government,” “Public meetings,” and lastly, “Leaks from whistleblowers.”⁸³ All these channels are possible with traditional media such as newspapers, television, and radio. However, because the public needs to reach information easily and quickly and desires to have a more transparent environment, social media and SNSs offer the fastest and most widespread information sharing and communication technology to meet these expectations.⁸⁴

From all four of the aforementioned channels emerges the issue of leaks from whistleblowers. Clearly, the first three channels originate from official government sources while the last one does not. In fact, it is not a channel authorized by any government officials. Even though some may support whistleblowers thinking that they find out about illegal and immoral activities and report them to the public, considering the possibility of slander, it is not advisable to rely on and support whistleblowers. Social networking sites, of course, have become the preferred platform for whistleblowers because these sites are the fastest and most convenient tools for spreading information. Nevertheless, it also brings along some censorship attempts to control social media contents since the information shared by unauthorized people on social media could be misleading and untrue.

One of the primary tools for promoting transparency, openness, and access to information is without doubt SNSs. Yet, some governments have been trying hard to censor social media. Current techniques to filter social media, however, are not effective as those for filtering traditional Internet services. Nonetheless, these SNSs are not completely protected from government censorship.⁸⁵ Twitter, one of the leading SNSs, has become a widely used platform for people to discuss and comment on politics, government strategy,

⁸² Ibid., 264.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 268.

justice, and military topics. At the same time, it is also the most popular platform for whistleblowers and slanderers worldwide, which has made it the target of censorship attempts.

According to the transparency report published by Twitter for the second half of 2014, Twitter received 796 requests to remove particular content. Turkey made 477 of all removal requests between July and December 2014, more than all other nations' removal requests combined (see Appendix C).⁸⁶ In the first half of 2015, various courts and governments applied to remove 1,003 tweets, and Turkey is the leading country, having 72 percent of all requests.⁸⁷ Similarly, in the transparency report for the first half of 2017, Turkey, with nearly 2,000 removal requests, was the top country requesting deletion of content. Nevertheless, only 11 percent of these requests were granted to some extent (see Appendix E).⁸⁸ Appendixes A through E depict the number and frequency of Twitter content removal requests made by government and law enforcement agencies between 2014 and 2017.

Among the requests for content removal, some targeted accounts that had posts or comments about the Turkish Armed Forces and military. Some users thought those accounts were slanderous while others considered them the contributions of whistleblowers. These controversial accounts became very popular and increased their number of followers day after day because there was no official response on social media by the Turkish Armed Forces.

Because the Turkish Armed Forces have a limited presence on social media, people tend to follow unofficial and personal accounts and increase the credibility of these accounts, either intentionally or not. For this reason, it is recommended that the Turkish

⁸⁶ Felix Richter, "Turkish Authorities most Controlling of Twitter Content," Statista Inc., accessed April 17, 2017, <https://www.statista.com/chart/3217/twitter-content-removal-requests/>.

⁸⁷ Mathias Brandt, "Turkey Dominates Global Twitter Censorship," Statista Inc., accessed April 17, 2017, <https://www.statista.com/chart/3727/share-of-all-twitter-content-removal-requests/>.

⁸⁸ Niall McCarthy, "Turkish Authorities Top for Twitter Censorship," Statista Inc, accessed April 17, 2017, <https://www.statista.com/chart/11177/turkish-authorities-top-for-twitter-censorship/>.

Armed Forces launch their own social media accounts, disseminate official information, and curtail the opportunities for those unofficial accounts to spread disinformation.

Having their nation at the top of the list of countries with content removal requests on Twitter—or any other social media platform—surely makes people skeptical about their government organizations’ and law enforcement agencies’ commitment to being transparent. It is also inevitable for the public to question these kinds of efforts, to create conspiracy theories, and to wonder what is actually behind the requests.

In order to prevent conspiracy theories and disinformation from being created thanks to these content removal requests and attempts at censorship, government organizations, including the military, should be proactive in disseminating accurate and proper information and release the necessary materials and documents. It is also critical what media the government uses to spread information. Being proactive is not enough; the government—including the Turkish Armed Forces—must be as fast as the detractors. Such speed and accuracy issues clearly direct us to utilize today’s most convenient and fastest communication medium: social media. Instead of constantly trying to block troublemakers’ efforts, the Turkish Armed Forces needs to have credible and verified social media accounts and to manage them professionally and accurately. Such an approach will surely make the public believe and trust the government and their militaries rather than their detractors.

E. BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS OF INFORMATION SHARING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Government organizations, including the militaries of many nations, are utilizing social media and SNSs to interact with the public. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram are the prominent popular examples that are used intensively by government organizations. Since having social media makes it easier for the public to reach and speak to government organizations and officials, many researchers think that social media allows

building and improving government and public relationships.⁸⁹ Increasing usage of social media allows government agencies to broaden their services, to create a platform where the public and government officials can exchange ideas, and to contribute to the “decision making and problem solving processes.”⁹⁰ Even though there are many benefits of social media, usage of social media creates new risks in managing information security issues. Embracing social media so fast and without knowing its background security and privacy risks can cause significant problems.⁹¹

1. Benefits

In today’s information environment that changes dramatically and swiftly, social media and SNSs are powerful and beneficial tools. Specifically, Bertot et al. identified four major benefits of using social media: “collaboration, participation, empowerment, and time.”⁹² Social media are collaborative and participatory because it naturally consists of social interaction. It allows many individuals to create communities to talk and connect with each other, as well as exchange their ideas and information. People also get together on social platforms in order to speak up for a mutual aim or awareness. The fact that social media allows individuals to speak up and show that they also have something to say is a benefit called “empowerment.” Individuals and organizations alike can use this inexpensive method to disseminate their opinions and criticize powerful traditional media, politicians, or any other individual or organization in communities using social media. Finally, social media platforms and tools give their users opportunities to share and access the information they desire almost instantly in real time.⁹³

⁸⁹ Sergio Picazo-Vela, Isis Gutierrez-Martinez, and Luis Felipe Luna-Reyes, “Understanding Risks, Benefits, and Strategic Alternatives of Social Media Applications in the Public Sector,” *Government Information Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (2012): 504–511.

⁹⁰ John Carlo Bertot, Paul T. Jaeger, and Derek Hansen, “The Impact of Policies on Government Social Media Usage: Issues, Challenges, and Recommendations,” *Government Information Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (2012): 30–40.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁹² Bertot, Jaeger, and Grimes, “Using ICTs to Create a Culture of Transparency,” 264–271.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

Government activities on social media also offer several benefits for both the public and the governments themselves.⁹⁴ Adopting social media allows the public to participate in discussions on government development and implementations, realizing the first benefit: “democratic participation and engagement.”⁹⁵ The second benefit is “co-production,” which means the public helps social media to turn to a good purpose by feedback or suggestions. Co-production will enhance government services in terms of service quality, delivery, and responsiveness.⁹⁶ Government engagement on social media also allows the public to create new ideas on social subjects. Many innovations are possible through the contribution of public knowledge and capacity. This third benefit, called crowdsourcing, enables a large group of people or a community to be employed in order to develop new technologies or analyze specific data without spending money.⁹⁷

All benefits mentioned earlier are also valid for and apply to military organizations. Military organizations also offer services to disseminate information and communicate with the public. As the utilization of social media has become ordinary and widespread for political and social use worldwide, the significance of social media usage by military organizations has increased as well.⁹⁸ Moreover, terrorist organizations and slander groups use these emerging tools; therefore, it is an absolute necessity for military leaders to embrace social media to promote their own mission, strengthen their relationship with the public, and counter the digital presence of these adversaries. Militaries and military leaders that do not comprehend the methods and implementations of social media will eventually surrender to the enemies and the enemies will enhance their efforts on this virtual but vital ground.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Bertot et al., “The Impact of Polices on Government Social Media Usage: Issues, Challenges, and Recommendations,” 30–40

⁹⁵ Ibid., 31.

⁹⁶ Bertot et al., “The Impact of Polices on Government Social Media Usage,” 30–40.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Thomas D. Mayfield III, “A Commander’s Strategy for Social Media,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (2011). <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a535374.pdf>.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

In terms of the military context, Brentan Pomeroy has suggested many benefits that can come from engaging not only the public but also members of military units and their families on social media. These benefits are as follows.

Social media use continues to rise as a means of communication ... All military units should evaluate which applications or online services provide the greatest benefits at the lowest costs and invest now. The risks ... will remain present if lower-level units do not engage in social media; participation helps mitigate those risks by providing an official voice from the unit on social media as well as by providing unit leadership with situational awareness in the social media realm. Additionally, social media can help unit leadership identify areas for improvement within their unit, and it allows them to effectively communicate with their personnel as well as the public in a manner they are well accustomed to. Finally, social media has the potential to help support recruiting, family stability, professional relationships, and training. If the military fully engages now, we stand to improve the number and quality of personnel we are recruiting. We will benefit from improved communication with families and a better understanding of their needs. Our professional network will expand, and it will last longer since it is easier to maintain relationships online as we all move around the world. Social media is here to stay. It is time to reap the benefits of it and engage.¹⁰⁰

2. Drawbacks

Since social media have evolved into an interactive tool for government agencies and the public because of its openness, accessibility, and participatory nature, it has also raised concerns in governments and government agencies about potential risks and drawbacks that may come with adopting social media.¹⁰¹ Andrea L. Kavanaugh et al. also found that governments are not fully aware of all the benefits and drawbacks of the social media that they use to interact with citizens. Governments often employ this tool without monitoring, analyzing, and collecting the data created on their social media accounts. The authors also suggested that governments should know who their actual audience is, how

¹⁰⁰ Brentan Pomeroy, "Time to Engage in Social Media," *Military Review Online Exclusive* (March 2017). <http://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/Online-Exclusive/2017-Online-Exclusive-Articles/Time-to-Engage-in-Social-Media/>.

¹⁰¹ Gohar Feroz Khan, Bobby Swar, and Sang Kon Lee, "Social Media Risks and Benefits: A Public Sector Perspective," *Social Science Computer Review* 32, no. 5 (2014): 606–627.

social media interactions affect the public, and when to talk and respond to citizens directly.¹⁰²

In terms of social media, the associated risks can hinder the willingness of an individual or organization to adopt these new communication tools. Gohar Feroz Khan, Bobby Swar, and Sang Kon Lee identified four risks related to public servants using the social media accounts belonging to government organizations: “time risk, psychological risk, social risk, and privacy risk.”¹⁰³

The first risk is time, particularly wasted time. Social media enables a variety of addictive activities, such as listening to music, playing games, or shopping online. These activities, which may be pleasant for passing leisure time, can lead people to waste a significant amount of time and have negative consequences in terms of productivity in the workplace in the public and private sectors.¹⁰⁴ Specifically, public relations experts using social media to communicate with citizens could become addicted to social media and lose concentration. Similarly, citizens who engage in social media activity and spend considerable time on it will also be affected negatively in their routine daily lives.

The second risk is the psychological risk. Khan, Swar, and Lee defined it as “the concern or uncertainty by a user of social media that the usage of social media results in loss of self-esteem contributing to a negative effect on feelings and peace of mind.”¹⁰⁵ Since social media provides an open platform where people connect, interact, and share information with others, a user should expect a potential attack by other users in the form of negative posts, comments, and remarks. These negative remarks can cause social media users to worry every time they plan to share and post related content or comment on it. In terms of government-based social media, it is also vulnerable to visitors who post negative comments or content. It is also possible for these social media accounts to turn into

¹⁰² Andrea L. Kavanaugh et al., “Social Media Use by Government: From the Routine to the Critical,” *Government Information Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (2012): 480–491.

¹⁰³ Khan et al., “Social Media Risks and Benefits: A Public Sector Perspective,” 606–627.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 611.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 612.

platforms where citizens and critics of related government or public branches make complaints. Such risks make governments agencies reluctant to use social media.¹⁰⁶

The third one is the social risk. Khan, Swar, and Lee cite Featherman and Pavlou's definition of social risk: "a potential loss of one's social group as a result of adopting or using service in social media, looking foolish or untrendy"¹⁰⁷ People who use social media intensively may be perceived as being less social than others. This habit keeps people away from meeting people face to face and makes them unsocial. When it comes to social media usage by government agencies and organizations, there will be also people who do not want to embrace social media. These people may have several different reasons for resisting or disliking social media. Such reasons can be listed as negative thoughts on social media, problems connecting to the Internet, and being uninformed on using social media and the Internet.¹⁰⁸ In this context, Bertot et al. define "technology access and literacy"¹⁰⁹ as the barriers to social media. "Technology literacy" refers to being able to use such technologies. Therefore, government organizations and the public sector should provide their workers with the necessary training and level of technology literacy. Furthermore, these organizations should ensure that the usability, functionality, and accessibility features of tools make it easy to adopt social media and offer services and communication channels.¹¹⁰

Last is the privacy risk. Most social media users may be suspicious about how the information they share on social media platforms can be used by other users, and it is an acceptable concern. There is always the risk of losing control of one's private information and how it is spread on social media. Malicious users expose the private information of others without the approval or even awareness of the real owner. Examples could be using fake identities, stealing photos, and using private data in order to defraud others.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 612.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 612.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 612.

¹⁰⁹ Bertot, Jaeger, and Grimes, "Using ICTs to Create a Culture of Transparency," 264–271.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 268.

¹¹¹ Khan, Swar, and Lee, "Social Media Risks and Benefits," 606–627.

Organizations also encounter privacy risks when they do not take essential precautions to train employees and to build essential information security policies. Hence, privacy risk plays a negative role in the adoption of social media by organizations.¹¹²

Use of social media is also risky for the military. Brentan Pomeroy lists four threats for military organizations using social media.¹¹³ The first threat is the increased time spent on social media and the corresponding decrease in productivity of the troops, which threatens “Organizational Performance.”¹¹⁴ The second threat is the possibility of posting inappropriate content and damaging connections and relationships with the public. Negative content can also come from the audience, which targets military members and their families as well. These behaviors can threaten “professionalism” and can be mitigated by training and social media monitoring.¹¹⁵ “Network Security” and “Operation Security” are the other vulnerability subjects. Since social media accounts run on regular computers and the Internet, these platforms and tools are vulnerable to any type of cyber-attack, making military social media accounts just as vulnerable as those of regular users of social media. The intensive usage of social media creates a potential environment for cybercrimes, and these threats can be minimized by a sound Internet security policy that includes adequate training, updating and following the new technological advances on information systems, and keeping a permanent eye on social media activity.¹¹⁶ When it comes to operation security, risks and threats can stem from internal sources. Service members that post any photos, videos, or information that includes classified and restricted content can generate threats to operation security. It is inevitable that service members share some information to an extent with their family members and friends. This could also cause potential threats to operation security unless service members receive adequate education and training on information and operation security.¹¹⁷

¹¹² Ibid., 613.

¹¹³ Pomeroy, “Time to Engage in Social Media.”

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 5.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 5.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 5.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 5.

F. PROMOTION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

Building relationships, garnering trust, and promoting ideas and items are the answers to the question “What do they, public relations practitioners, do?”

Public relations practitioners use several methods and media to reach their desired end goal. Emails, websites, telephone calls, face-to-face communication, and Intranet use are such examples of these methods and media. These media and methods, of course, will undoubtedly change or evolve depending on the ongoing technological developments. With the enormous technological development in recent decades, social media and SNSs are definitely replacing the traditional public relations tools.

Social media offer a golden opportunity for public relations officials to connect, interact, and communicate with their target audience and deliver the desired message since more than half of the world’s population is interested in and active on social media, and the time those people spend on these sites is increasing dramatically.¹¹⁸ As Peter Steyn et al. stated, the most convenient way of reaching customers, clients, or viewers for organizations is to use social media sites, and their members prefer these methods rather than utilizing old-style media tools such as newspapers, magazines, and TV or radio broadcasts.¹¹⁹

Since social media usage has intensified among public relations practitioners, research on this subject is also increasing. Briones et al., in their article, suggested that social media forms a connection with the target audience, and that audience starts to feel sympathy for the organization. Furthermore, trust and satisfaction are built, and the target audience starts to support the organization by stimulating positive dialogue. Briones et al., in their article, also suggested that social media plays a significant role when it comes to media relations. Since journalists and television programmers follow organizations’ social media accounts, in many cases journalists try to get in touch with public relations

¹¹⁸ Rowena L. Briones et al., “Keeping Up with the Digital Age: How the American Red Cross Uses Social Media to Build Relationships,” *Public Relations Review* 37, no. 1 (2011): 37–43.

¹¹⁹ Peter Steyn et al., “The Social Media Release as a Public Relations Tool: Intentions to Use among B2B Bloggers,” *Public Relations Review* 36, no. 1 (2010): 87–89.

representatives as opposed to the old-style way of the public relations representative trying to reach television stations, newspapers, magazines, and such media.¹²⁰

Even though most commercial organizations are utilizing social media intensively, some non-profit organizations have not embraced this technology thoroughly yet and are still observing others, waiting to see how they are managing this process.¹²¹ Considering the advantages of social media as a public relations tool, though, we strongly recommend that non-profit organizations take advantage of these emerging tools. Military organizations, in particular, need more public support than other non-profit organizations. Widespread public support is not possible without building and maintaining a strong relationship with the public, by garnering trust and satisfying the target audience.

Garnering public trust and support should be relatively easy for many non-profit and non-governmental organizations. Most of these organizations indicate that their mission is to help humanity to develop. Such a mission is acceptable to and would be readily supported by a majority of people. Military organizations also aim to help humanity through their operations. Even though an important mission of most militaries is to provide humanitarian aid, it is sometimes necessary to destroy the enemy to carry out that mission. By destroying the enemy, we mean killing people, and this sort of action does not easily get support from the public, even when the people killed are the world's most dangerous terrorists. The point here is to persuade the public that the enemies are harmful to humanity and require destruction. In order to persuade the public, the military must build trust and credibility, and one of the methods of building trust and credibility is to listen to the target audience carefully, invite them to participate in the conversation, and of course, get feedback from them. These types of efforts will definitely make the target audience feel their opinion is valuable and enables them to contribute possible solutions to any problem area. In order to get people involved in the conversation, it is imperative to offer the most convenient platforms, which are none other than social media platforms. Social media allows people to interact with other users and help them to share ideas and be part of a

¹²⁰ Ibid., 39.

solution to many problems. This is an advantage over traditional media tools such as newspapers, magazines, and TV broadcasts where it is quite hard to interact and make one's voice stand out from the crowd.

G. CULTURAL CONCERNS ABOUT ADOPTING SOCIAL MEDIA

Most technological innovations in communication such as telephones, radios, the Internet, and email have been presented as tools to fulfill corporate, commercial, or military purposes with ease and convenience. Social media, on the other hand, have been adopted by individuals for their personal or private lives. Since the primary purpose of social media is not as a business application, organizations were not aware of how this technology could benefit them commercially. While some organizations started to adopt social media, others have held back, considering some of the drawbacks such as safety, vulnerability, reduced efficiency, and unexpected feedback and criticisms.¹²²

The Turkish Armed Forces is one example of those organizations that have built such barriers to adopting social media. For years, the Turkish Armed Forces did not introduce any social media account. Then, in April 2015, the Turkish Armed Forces launched YouTube, Flickr, and Google+ accounts; however, these accounts are purposely not interactive. They do not support commenting, liking, and disliking options, which makes them quite conservative. In February 2018, the Turkish Armed Forces launched Twitter and Instagram accounts. The Instagram account is restricted to commenting, and it only allows users to like the content. The Twitter account is the only social media account that allows followers or other users to reply to the original content. Due to the nature of Twitter, the Turkish Armed Forces cannot block replies to original content. Furthermore, these accounts are unique to the Turkish Armed Forces. No other accounts belong to the Turkish Navy, Army, Air Force or any subdivisions of these branches at the time of this writing. Thus, the Turkish Armed Forces still faces barriers to adopting social media, unlike many other modern armed forces that utilize social media intensively around the world.

¹²² Andrew Miller, "Cultural Barriers to Organizational Social Media Adoption," in *Social Knowledge: Using Social Media to Know what You Know* (New York, NY: IGI Global, 2011), 96–114.

Andrew Miller defined several cultural barriers¹²³ to adopting social media. Some of the barriers that suit the Turkish Armed Forces are the following:

1. The fear of subjecting efforts to deep inspection and criticism,
2. The concern for reduced productivity,
3. The security risk of sharing information online,
4. The concern to comply with legal reporting producers on social media,
5. The concern for losing control of subordinates.¹²⁴

There are underlying reasons, of course, that create these concerns or barriers. Many people have lost their jobs, families, or even their freedom due to exposing their private or organizational issues and committing cybercrimes on social media.¹²⁵ Companies or organizations have also been facing severe criticism when they share, for example, an inappropriate post or campaign on social media, where information spreads very fast and reaches millions of people. Such posts may annoy a particular group of people depending on their culture, religion, ethnicity, or similar reasons. These examples raise the question of whether organizations and companies should embrace social media and take advantage of its benefits or get along with zero risk and keep conservative and stable.

In order to create productive and advanced organizations informed by their own audience, employees, and the public, decision-makers should consider the great opportunities offered by social media. Social media should be seen as a technology tool, similar to old technology tools, which has already been embraced by organizations and made them more efficient and innovative. Instead of building barriers to new technology, decision-makers should consider social media as an opportunity and not hold their organizations back from technological improvements. Decision makers must consider cultural changes needed within the organizational culture and the time needed to make these changes.¹²⁶

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

Since social media and SNSs have millions of users it often times can mean a group of people that have a significant influence effect; unexpected dangers and difficulties such as inappropriate use of social media accounts may emerge. Such negative outcomes can create terrible situations that need a long time and much effort to repair. Hence, organizations must educate themselves on transparency, openness, and social media in order to understand how to utilize these tools. Companies and organizations can benefit by inviting internal groups and employees to be the first to interact on the corporate social media account. These internal members should be encouraged by decision-makers to share their ideas since they are the ones having the most relevant knowledge.¹²⁷

Internal groups and employees, as related to the Turkish Armed Forces, comprise the followers and supporters for the organization's social media accounts, and they can play a significant role in satisfying desired end goals. With more than 500,000 members and staff, the Turkish Armed Forces should promote their social media accounts effortlessly and can spread the official messaging as desired. Adding the family members and close friend circles of military members, it is no surprise that these social media accounts can reach millions of followers, fans, and supporters.

Social media can be a quick reference for an organization's members, supporters, and followers. It also helps organizations to build a network from which they can benefit by gathering and analyzing information from all participants and shareholders. Utilizing social media and sharing ideas, members and supporters can contribute to innovation and development within an organization. Being aware of this reality, individuals will try to come up with ideas and to reap more benefits. Being part of a social media network will also partly remove the barriers posed by the hierarchy and allow people to express themselves freely and feel important. Even though there are many risks and drawbacks to embracing social media, there many more benefits and paybacks if the social media process is well directed and maintained.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Miller, "Cultural Barriers to Organizational Social Media Adoption," 96–114.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

H. WHISTLEBLOWERS AND PREVENTING DEFAMATION

Governments and organizations that declare themselves as working for the public good and protecting community have the responsibility to reveal illegal, unethical, and fraudulent activities. While this process should be managed over organizations' or governments' official tools, there are, of course, some members within organizations who try to announce these such acts publicly on their own without any permission from authorized officials. These individuals are whistleblowers. There are several reasons for people to blow the whistle such as economic and status reward, to protect themselves from possible examination and punishment, or to protect the rule of law.¹²⁹ Whistleblowers can either reveal their identity or remain anonymous while exposing the sensitive information. Today, one of the primary communication channels for anonymous whistleblowers is social media since it allows users to spread information and reach a large audience. To avoid detection and possible punishment by organizations, whistleblowers can understandably choose to be anonymous. However, being anonymous raises some credibility issues.

Aside from whistleblowers, there are also people who try to slander and defame in order to damage organizations and officials as well. It is generally tough to differentiate these two counterparts since the slanderers can also disseminate partly accurate information in order to deceive the public and cause disinformation. Considering that most slanderers utilize social media to defame, we strongly recommend that organizations should also fight back and dominate these social media platforms. Armed forces, particularly those fighting against terrorist organizations, are no doubt the target for such slander groups. The Turkish Armed Forces, which have been fighting against terrorist groups for many years, should also maximize their efforts to dominate and take control of social media against possible adversaries.

Since social media allows users to generate their own content, everybody can say and post anything, including defamation of others. Along with the damage that comes from

¹²⁹ David Lewis and Wim Vandekerckhove, *Whistleblowing and Democratic Values* (London, UK: The International Whistleblowing Research Network, 2011), 13, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1998293>.

the freedom of posting anything, it also occurs immediately via such platforms. Rather than mainstream media such as newspapers, magazines, broadcast television, and radio, social media carries more risk in terms of promulgating defamation.¹³⁰ Organizations should also take into consideration of managing the risk of exposing defamation.

We recommend four key practices for organizations in order to be successful and take control of their reputation on social media and to guard against adversaries that particularly try to slander and defame utilizing disinformation tactics. These practices are:

1. Having a verified account,
2. Acting pro-actively,
3. Being transparent about discovered illegal and immoral activities and not hesitating to reveal such cases,
4. Showing determination in fighting against illegal and immoral activities discovered within the organization.

The first practice is to have a verified account. Most social media accounts allow their users to verify their accounts by requiring essential information and documentation. One main reason for users to verify their accounts is to prevent fake accounts that mimic the real account and get unfair credit. The other reason is to prevent disinformation. In terms of our research, we focus on preventing slander and defamation. Looking at the social media platforms in Turkey, we can easily observe many social media accounts that have shares and posts about the Turkish Armed Forces and its subdivisions. Some of these accounts have a considerable number of followers and fans. People are liking, commenting on, and sharing these posts without even checking whether the information shared is accurate. This is one of the results of not having enough trusted information sources and verified accounts. These unofficial and personal accounts may be well-meant or malicious. While malicious accounts aim to defame, well-meant accounts can sometimes be harmful since they are not an official source of information and lack the principles and rules of the organization they mean to help. In order to prevent such disinformation from both

¹³⁰ David Rolph, “Defamation by Social Media,” *Precedent* (Sydney, NSW), no. 117 (2013):16–21, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2356028.

malicious and other sources and to direct public interest to a trusted environment, organizations should have verified accounts.

The second principle is to be proactive. Being proactive helps organizations to spread the correct information to their target audience with the desired messages before any malicious individual or group can engage in disinformation. During a military operation or after a traffic accident, for example, malicious accounts or speculators can easily spread false information about the incident. They can misrepresent the numbers of wounded or lost people, or they can claim that the operation is a mistake in order to create fear and defame organizations. Once the information has started to spread on social media, it can quickly reach thousands or millions of people depending on the sources that share and re-share information. Because not all people check the trustworthiness of all information, these disinformation attempts often reach their desired goals, at least in part if not entirely. Since malicious groups and people also utilize social media and any information shared can easily spread at a very rapid rate, organizations should take advantage of utilizing social media proactively.

The third and fourth principles are to be transparent about illegal and immoral activities discovered within one's own organization and not to hesitate to reveal such cases while showing determination to fight against such activities. Unfortunately, such behaviors may surface in any organization because such behaviors exist wherever human beings exist. While some organizations prefer to punish illegal and immoral activities without revealing the case to the public, some prefer to reveal the crime and expose the individuals involved. Organizations that prefer to be conservative on revealing the incident, usually fear being defamed, and they do not want to bring it on themselves. They probably think that the less the public knows, the more trusted the organization would be. Even though this sort of approach may seem reasonable to many, it does not seem very accurate considering the super rapid information and knowledge flow among people today. Just as other inappropriate behaviors do, information and knowledge leaks exist wherever people are. To continue to be conservative about revealing illegal and immoral activities within an organization to the public can eventually create skepticism about organizations. People will begin to question and argue about the integrity of the organization. Suppressing the

information within an organization could eventually result in leaks and rumors, which can reduce an organization's trustworthiness and credibility. Such examples could be corruption or sexual harassment incidents. Rather than hiding crimes from the public, organizations should expose the incident and give the message that they fight corruption and sexual harassment, and show how determined they are in this fight. In doing this, organizations would not only create a transparent and open environment for the public but also prove that mechanisms fighting against illegal activities exist within their organizations.

I. SUMMARY

This chapter first provided an introduction to influence theory and explained how social media and SNSs can be utilized to influence people. Second, it clarified some of the critical points such as transparency and the benefits and drawbacks of spreading information on social media. Third, it explained how social media can be used as a promotion and public relations platform and to collect data for free surveys. Lastly, it provided information on cultural concerns about adopting social media and on how proactive management can prevent defamation on social media.

IV. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF INTERNET AND COMMON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

It is the mark of a truly intelligent person to be moved by statistics.

—George Bernard Shaw¹³¹

A. OVERVIEW

This chapter first provides a statistical analysis of Internet and social media usage. The discussion then suggests why it is important to utilize social media intensively by showing how many Internet and social media users there are worldwide. Second, the chapter focuses on and details these statistics for Turkey, both for civilian and military aspects of utilization.

B. WORLD SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE STATISTICS

In 2018, an expected 2.62 billion people will visit and browse a social networking site in a one-month period. This equals one-third of the world's population and 71 percent of all people who have Internet service in the world. These estimates reveal a significant increase in comparison to previous years due to the enthusiastic adoption of smartphones and other mobile devices.¹³²

Figure 2 displays the number of social media users in the world from 2010 to date and the expected number of users from 2018 to 2021 in billions.¹³³ Figure 3, on the other hand, illustrates the number of social network users in 2017 and 2022 in countries where social media is most popular.¹³⁴ In three years, the projected growth in the number of social

¹³¹ "George Bernard Shaw Quotes," Xplore Inc., accessed May 9, 2018, https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/george_bernard_shaw_127616.

¹³² "Worldwide Social Network User Figures," eMarketer Inc., accessed April 11, 2018, <https://www.emarketer.com/Article/eMarketer-Updates-Worldwide-Social-Network-User-Figures/1016178>.

¹³³ "Number of Social Network Users Worldwide from 2010 to 2021," Statista Inc., accessed April 11, 2018, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/>.

¹³⁴ "Number of Social Network Users in Selected Countries," Statista Inc., accessed April 11, 2018, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/278341/number-of-social-network-users-in-selected-countries/>.

media users is most likely to be 41 percent. As the most common online activity among Internet users, social media engagement, coupled with the expanding use of mobile devices, is increasing dramatically. North America is the place where social media is the most common and widespread. The amount of time users are spending on these sites is also growing. U.S. users, for example, spent an average of 323 minutes weekly on social media sites in the second quarter of 2016.¹³⁵ Since most of the social media sites are adjusted for smartphones and mobile devices as they are for computers, social media is accessible to users wherever they are and whatever they do.¹³⁶

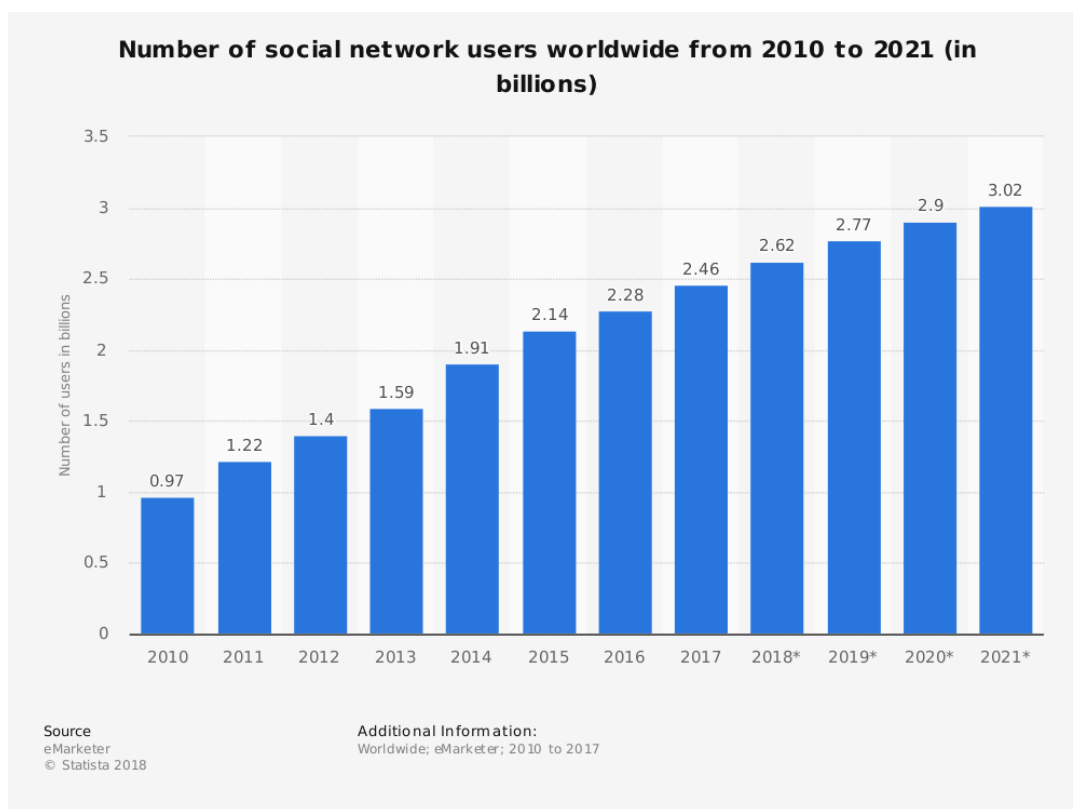


Figure 2. Number of Social Network Users Worldwide.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ “Number of Social Network Users Worldwide from 2010 to 2021,” Statista Inc., accessed April 11, 2018, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/>.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ “Number of Social Network Users Worldwide from 2010 to 2021,” Statista Inc., accessed April 11, 2018, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/>.

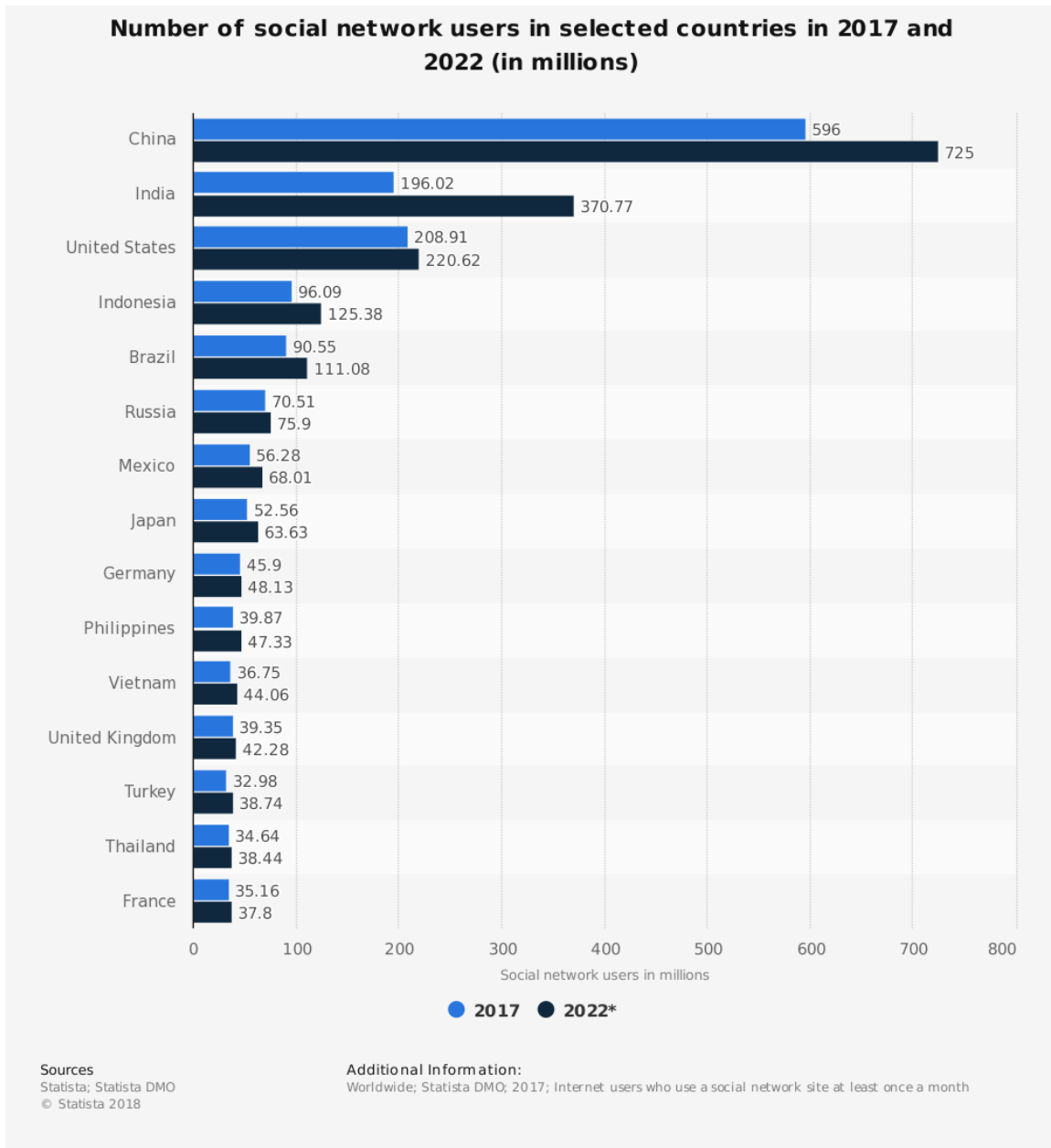


Figure 3. Number of Social Network Users in Selected Countries.¹³⁸

Generating the most of traffic on Internet, social networking sites also create a competition in terms of the numbers of social media users. Figure 4 shows statistics on the

¹³⁸ “Number of Social Network Users in Selected Countries,” Statista Inc., accessed April 11, 2018, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/278341/number-of-social-network-users-in-selected-countries/>.

most common and popular social media and social networking sites according to the number of users who visit those sites at least on a monthly basis.¹³⁹ Having 2.2 billion active members monthly, Facebook takes the top place among all social network platforms. The video sharing platform YouTube has over 1.5 billion active users monthly and takes second place worldwide. The most popular photo-sharing platform is at seventh place and it is Instagram, which has over 800 million active users monthly. The micro-blogging social network Twitter holds the 11th rank with 330 million active users.¹⁴⁰ Even though the most popular social networking sites originated in the United States, services like Qzone and VKontakte, which emerged in China and Russia, offer regional content and boast 568 and 97 million active users, respectively.¹⁴¹

Numerous language options offered by social media companies likely account for why these social networking sites are so popular worldwide. Another significant reason for this popularity is the nature of social media itself, which allows users to communicate with friends, family, and other people eliminating the time and location barriers.¹⁴² Furthermore, the type of service each social networking site offers and the needs of users also influence these rates. While YouTube encourages its users to generate video content, Instagram inspires photo sharing. Microblogging, messaging, status sharing, and information exchange are other kinds of features focused on by Twitter and Facebook.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ “Most Famous Social Network Sites Worldwide as of January 2018,” Statista Inc., accessed April 11, 2018, <http://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/>.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

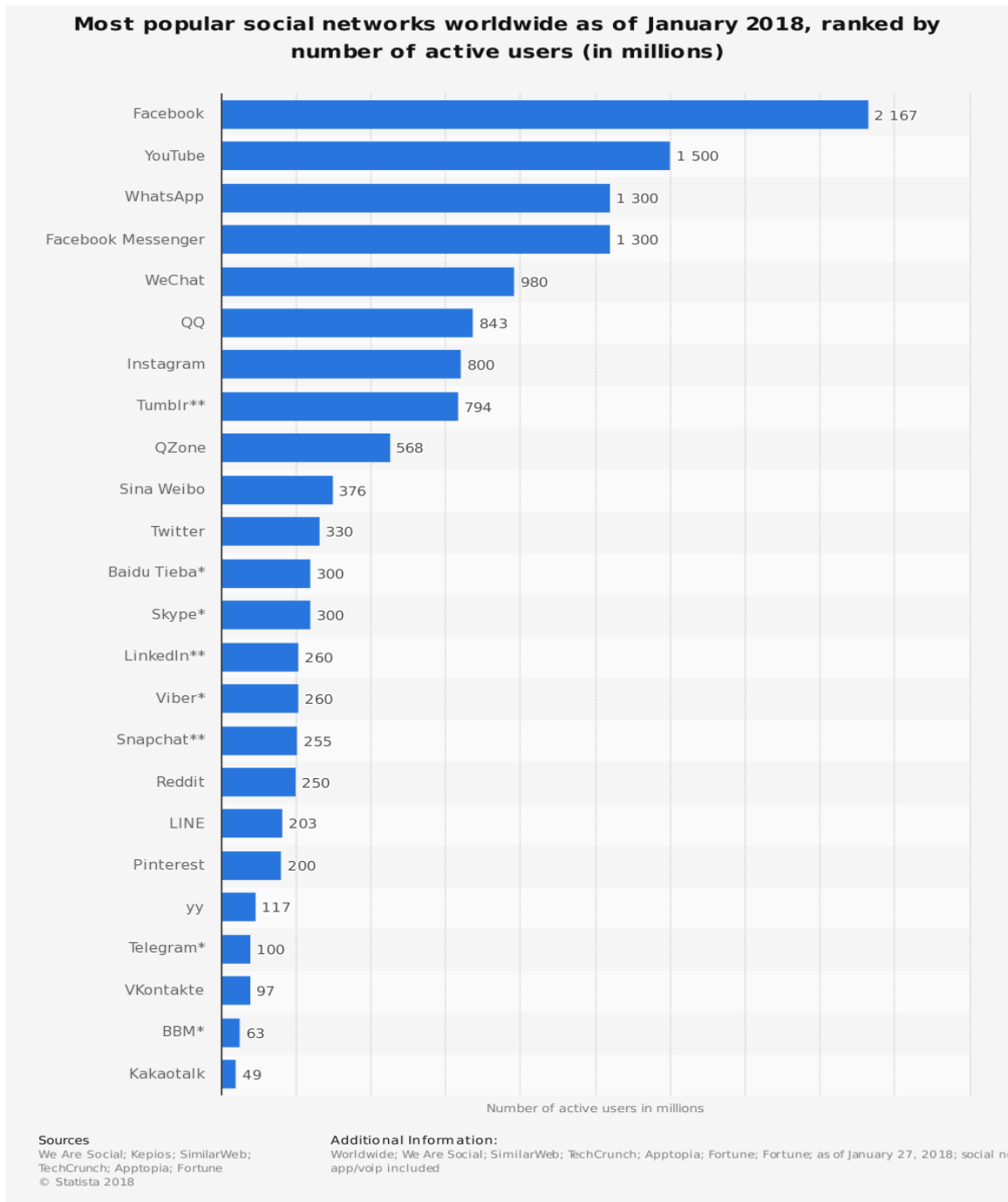


Figure 4. Leading Social Networks Worldwide.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ “Most Famous Social Network Sites Worldwide as of January 2018,” Statista Inc., accessed April 12, 2018, <http://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/>.

Figure 5 and Figure 6 illustrate the countries with the greatest number of Facebook and Instagram members, respectively. While India ranks in first place with 250 million members, Turkey claims ninth place with 51 million members on Facebook, as of January 2018.¹⁴⁵ When it comes to Instagram, the world’s most popular photo-sharing network, the United States takes first place, having over 110 million users, whereas Turkey ranks fifth place with 51 million users.¹⁴⁶ Being one of the leading countries on social media, Turkey’s population and Internet users create a big and significant market for organizations and companies seeking to promote both their ideas and commercial goods.

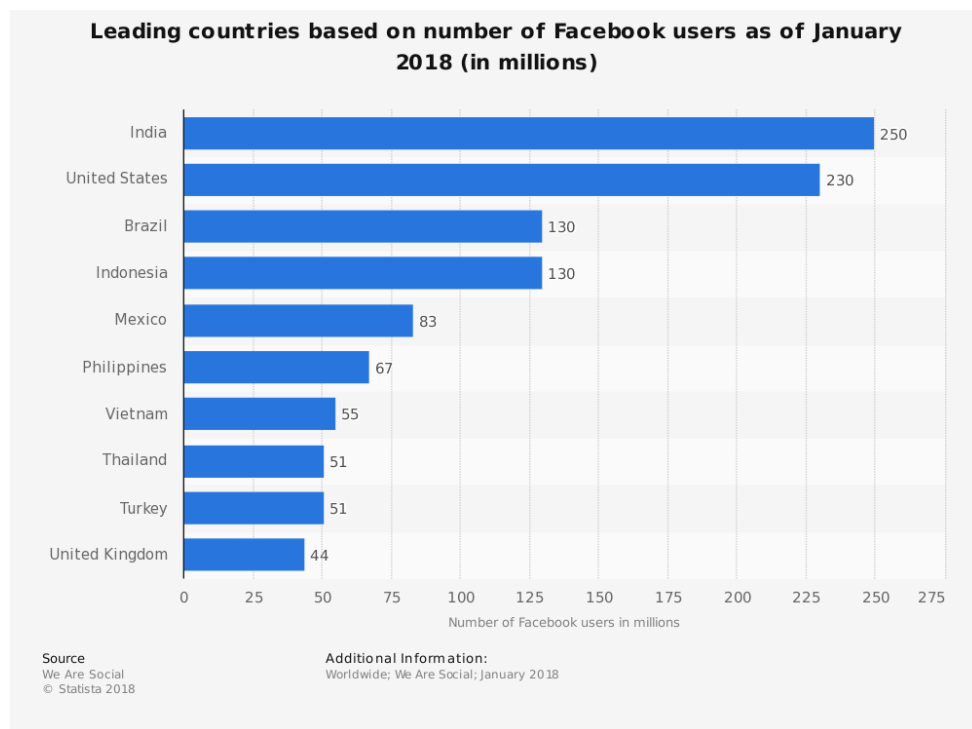


Figure 5. Leading Countries Based on Numbers of Facebook Users.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ “Leading Countries Based on Number of Facebook Users as of January 2018,” Statista Inc., accessed April 12, 2018, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/268136/top-15-countries-based-on-number-of-facebook-users/>.

¹⁴⁶ “Leading Countries Based on Number of Instagram Users as of January 2018,” Statista Inc., accessed April 12, 2018, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/578364/countries-with-most-instagram-users/>.

¹⁴⁷ “Leading Countries Based on Number of Facebook Users as of January 2018,” Statista Inc., accessed April 12, 2018, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/268136/top-15-countries-based-on-number-of-facebook-users/>.

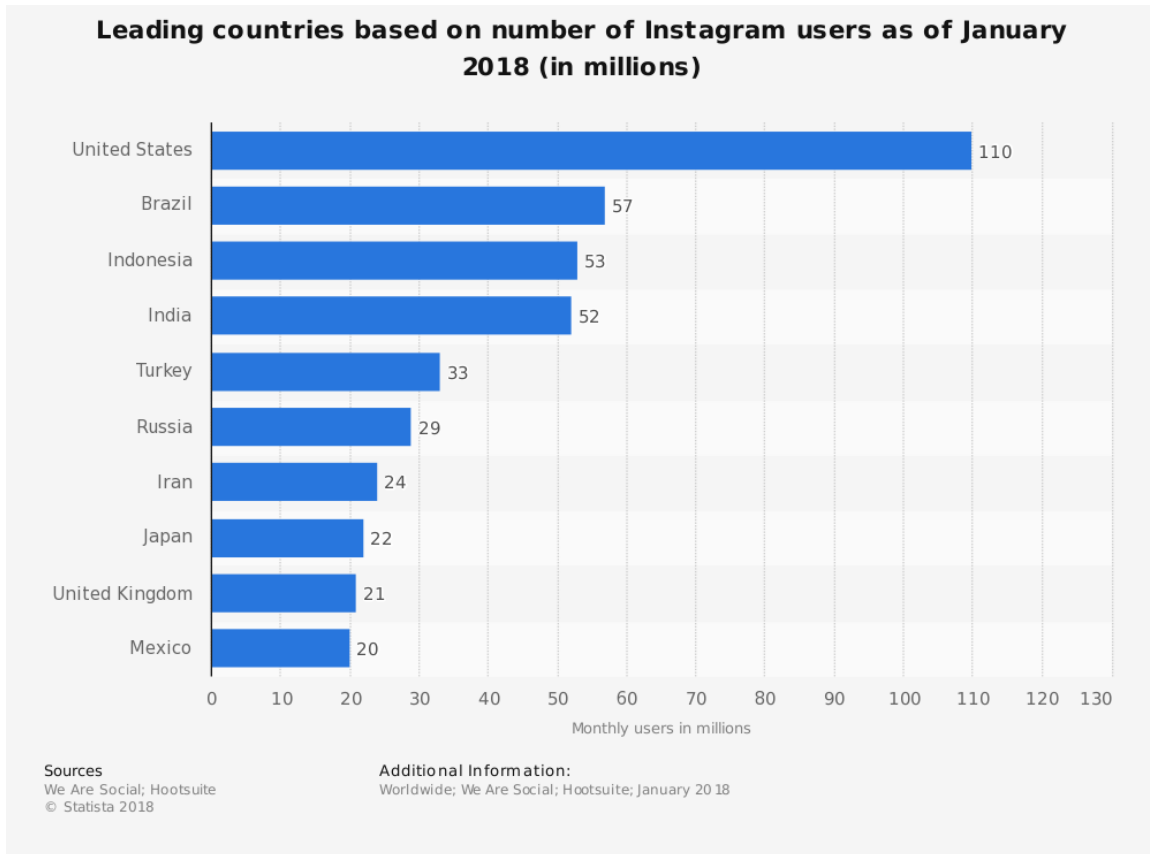


Figure 6. Leading Countries Based on Number of Instagram Users.¹⁴⁸

The data retrieved from Alexa Internet, Inc., show that some SNSs are the most visited web pages of the Internet. Founded in 1996, Alexa Internet, Inc. is a data analytics company that provides website data such as traffic rank, number of visitors, number of page views, and time spent on websites.¹⁴⁹ While Google is the most visited website, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Tumblr, Pinterest, and Flickr takes the

¹⁴⁸ “Leading Countries Based on Number of Instagram Users as of January 2018,” accessed April 12, 2018, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/578364/countries-with-most-instagram-users/>.

¹⁴⁹ “About the Alexa Internet Inc.,” Alexa Internet Inc., accessed May 10, 2018, <https://www.alexa.com/about>.

2nd, 3rd, 12th, 14th, 30th, 57th, 79th and 353rd places, respectively, as shown at Figure 7.¹⁵⁰

Seeing and understanding the fact that large populations of people are visiting these social media sites, companies and organizations are seeking the ways of utilizing and benefiting from this large population and high volume of traffic. The particular utilization process can change depending on the type of organization or company using social media. While commercial companies try to promote their products and increase their sales, non-profit and government organizations; seek ways to increase their credibility and trustworthiness along with the volunteers and donations. The drivers behind how these organizations and companies utilize social media can be explained by a shopping mall example.

Most shopping malls offer many types of particular service. In a food court, for example, one can find anything from pizzas to burgers, from local foods to traditional foods, and so on. This is also valid for clothing where one finds different styles and options offered by several providers. People visit shopping malls because they like having many options easily accessible to them. Companies are also aware of this fact, and they open stores and restaurants at shopping malls. These companies expect to benefit from a large population of shoppers concentrated at shopping malls.

Social media and social networking sites are also the meeting points for a large population of people. As we see from the statistics in Figure 7, these SNSs, being the most crowded and populated sites on the Internet, should be profitable for both organizations and companies. Just as they would at shopping malls with heavy foot traffic or corners where people congregate, companies and organizations should launch and maintain their social media accounts on these meeting platforms when they open stores, restaurants, and exhibitions.

¹⁵⁰ "Site Comparisons," Alexa Internet Inc., accessed April 16, 2018, <https://www.alexa.com/comparison/?sites=youtube.com&sites=facebook.com&sites=twitter.com&sites=instagram.com&sites=linkedin.com&sites=tumblr.com&sites=pinterest.com&sites=flickr.com&cid=5c9bbd65-5820-421a-a179-ecf253034657>.

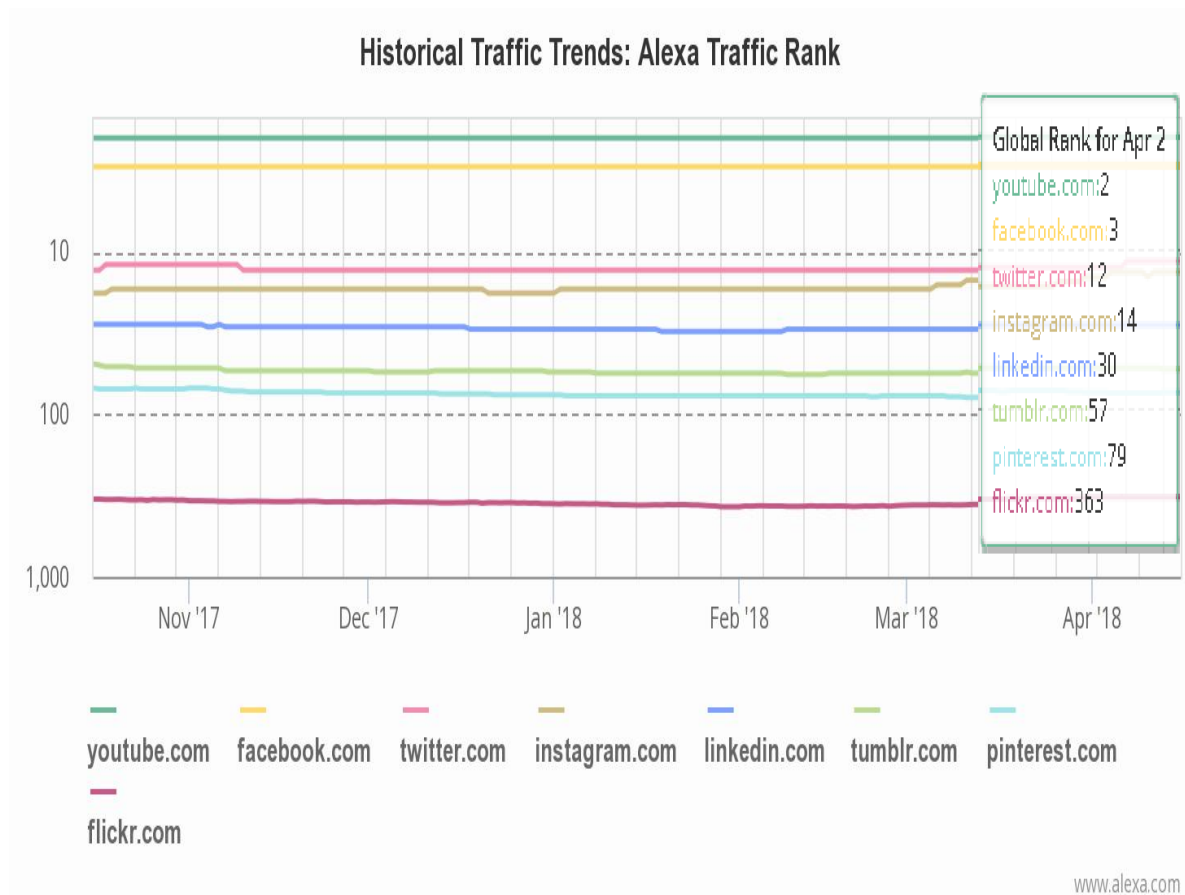


Figure 7. World Traffic Trends for the Most Popular Social Networking Sites between November 2017 and April 2018.¹⁵¹

Along with the increase in the total number of Internet and social media users, we are also simultaneously witnessing an increase in time spent on Internet and social media. While the average user spends approximately six hours a day on the Internet, Turkey's users spend seven hours and nine minutes on the Internet per day and a significant portion of this time is social media usage, which equals two hours and 48 minutes. Having that much time puts Turkey in the 14th and 13th places worldwide in terms of time spent on

¹⁵¹ "Site Comparisons," Alexa Internet Inc., accessed April 16, 2018, <https://www.alexa.com/comparison#?sites=youtube.com&sites=facebook.com&sites=twitter.com&sites=instagram.com&sites=linkedin.com&sites=tumblr.com&sites=pinterest.com&sites=flickr.com&cid=5c9bbd65-5820-421a-a179-ecf253034657>.

Internet and social media, respectively. Figure 8 and Figure 9 show related statistics for the top 20 countries.¹⁵²

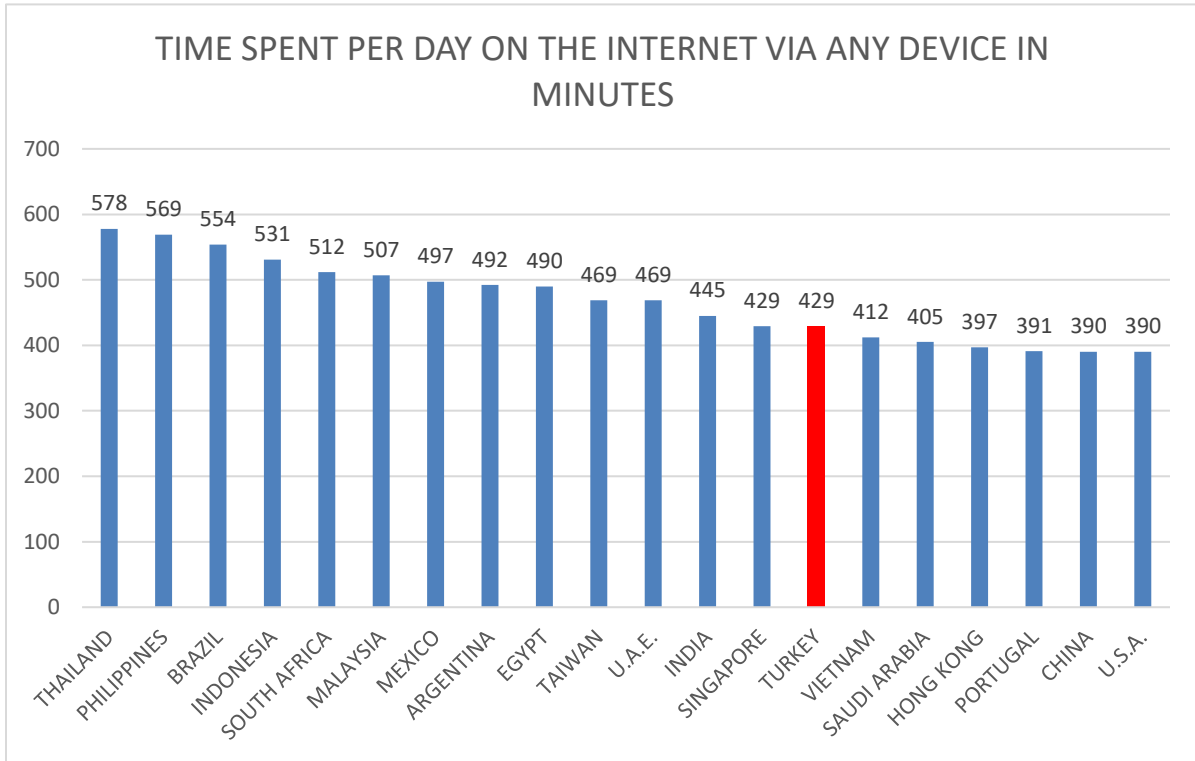


Figure 8. Time Spent per Day on the Internet Worldwide.¹⁵³

¹⁵² Simon Kemp, “Global Digital Report in 2018,” We Are Social Ltd., accessed April 14, 2018, <https://wearesocial.com/blog/2018/01/global-digital-report-2018>.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

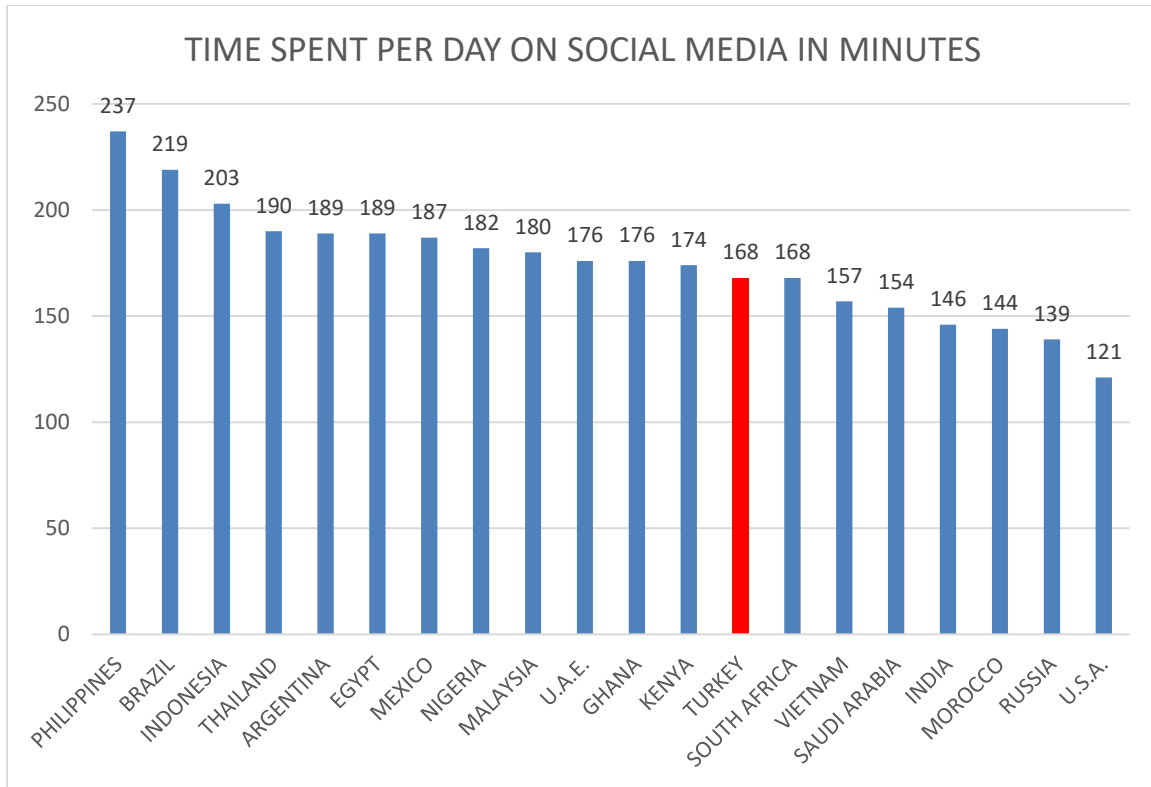


Figure 9. Time Spent per Day on Social Media Worldwide.¹⁵⁴

C. TURKEY STATISTICS

Turkey is the country having among the heaviest traffic on social media, with the members from different age groups, gender groups, and social class. Since social media creates opportunities for specific communities to share their ideas, opinions, and beliefs without any restriction, it has generated possibilities for more free and independent platforms. Having independence and freedom makes individuals in Turkey, as in other countries, more likely to utilize and be part of social media.¹⁵⁵

Turkey has become one of the leading countries when it comes to Internet and particularly social media penetration. Out of 81.33 million people in Turkey, 54.33 million people are Internet users and 51 million people are social media users, as of January

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ahmet Çetinkaya, Özgür Erkut Şahin, and Murat Kirik Ali, "A Research on Social and Political use of Social Media in Turkey," *International Journal of Science Culture and Sport* 2, no. 4 (2014): 49–60.

2018.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, 44 million people, more than half of the population, are active mobile social media users, meaning that they have access to social networks at any time of the day. In comparison to January 2017, a year earlier, six million more people are using the Internet and three million more are on social media.¹⁵⁷ Aside from the increased number of users, time spent on the Internet and social media in Turkey is also increasing. The average amount of time spent daily on the Internet is seven hours and nine minutes, and two hours and 48 minutes on social media via any device.¹⁵⁸

According to the survey conducted by Ahmet Cetinkaya et al., 46.6 percent of participants spend two to four hours, while 12.3 percent spend two to four hours, and 10 percent spend more than six hours on social media. The majority of participants state that Facebook and Twitter are their most active social media accounts, followed by YouTube, Instagram, and LinkedIn, respectively. Apart from how great the amount of time spent on social media, the survey found that a majority of participants think that social media makes people engage with social and political events and issues taking place in their home country.¹⁵⁹

Figure 10 illustrates the penetration of these leading social networks and messenger applications. YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have the top ratings of all, eliminating WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger, which are mainly messenger applications rather than social networks.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ “Digital in 2018 in Western Asia,” We Are Social Ltd., accessed April 19, 2018, https://www.slideshare.net/wearesocial/digital-in-2018-in-western-asia-part-1-northwest-86865983?qid=153a4629-2d66-4ace-bec8-4d2e46ff2db5&v=&b=&from_search=1.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ahmet Çetinkaya, Özgür Erkut Şahin, and Murat Kirik Ali, “A Research on Social and Political use of Social Media in Turkey,” *International Journal of Science Culture and Sport* 2, no. 4 (2014): 49–60.

¹⁶⁰ “Penetration of Leading Social Networks in Turkey as of 3rd and 4th Quarter of 2017, by Platform,” Statista Inc., accessed April 15, 2018, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/284503/turkey-social-network-penetration/>.

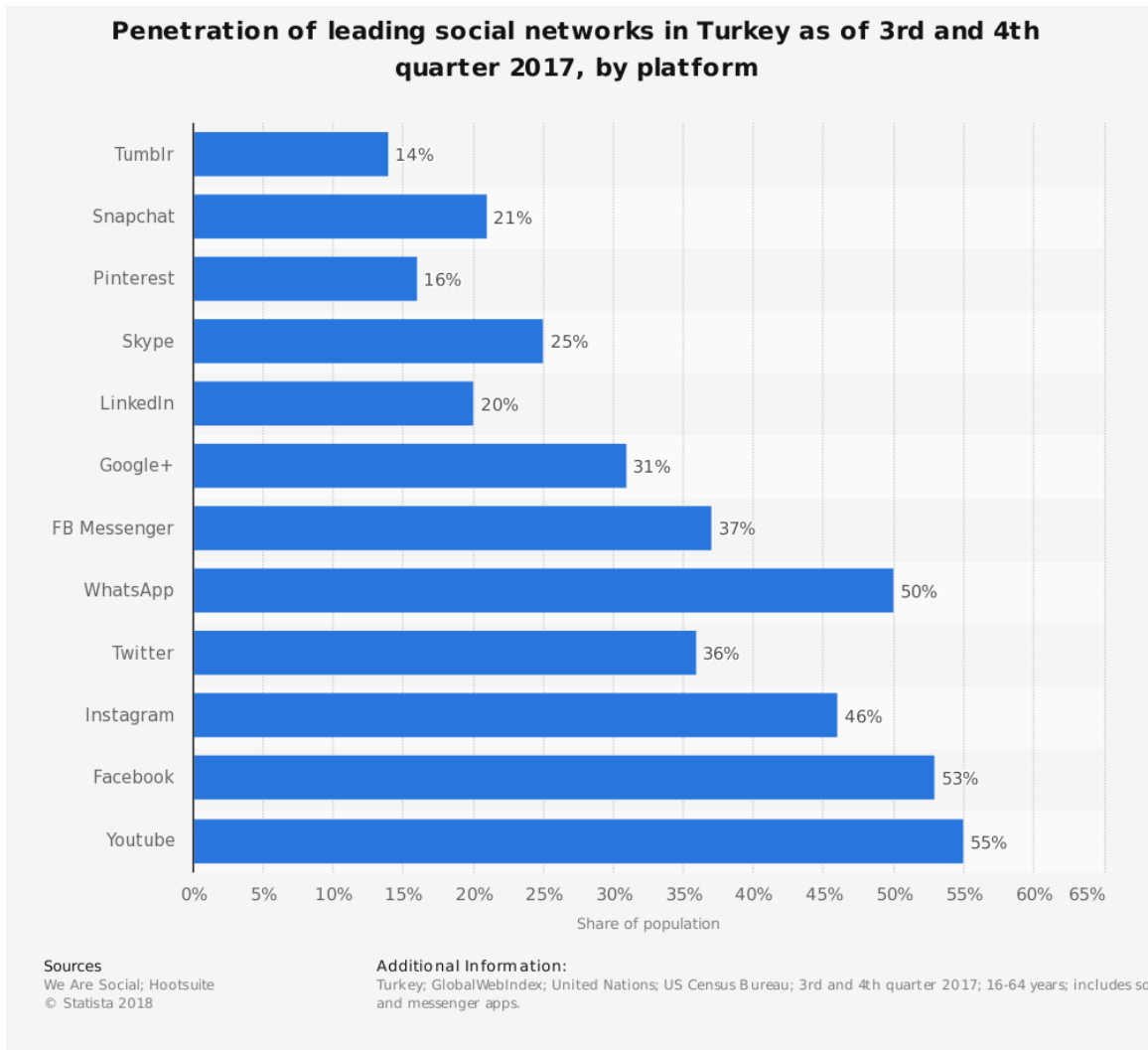


Figure 10. Penetration of Leading Social Networks in Turkey.¹⁶¹

Due to the combination of average daily visitors and page views, we listed the most popular SNSs. This combination is called the traffic rank of that specific network. Table 1 shows the traffic rank of SNSs in Turkey and compares them to the global traffic rank.

¹⁶¹ “Penetration of Leading Social Networks in Turkey as of 3rd and 4th Quarter of 2017, by Platform,” Statista Inc., accessed April 15, 2018, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/284503/turkey-social-network-penetration/>.

YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter take the top four spots, respectively, as of April 2018.¹⁶²

Table 1. Comparison of Traffic Rank of Popular Social Networking Sites in Turkey and the World as of April 2018.¹⁶³

website Name	Global Rank	Rank in Turkey
www.youtube.com	2	2
www.facebook.com	3	6
www.instagram.com	14	10
www.Twitter.com	13	23
www.linkedin.com	30	89
www.tumblr.com	59	108
www.pinterest.com	79	186
www.flickr.com	364	No Data ¹⁶⁴

As opposed to the popularity of SNSs in Turkey, official websites of the Turkish Armed Forces do not take the top ranks in terms of number of visitors and page views.

¹⁶² “Site Comparisons,” Alexa Internet Inc., accessed April 16, 2018, <https://www.alexa.com/comparison/?sites=youtube.com&sites=facebook.com&sites=twitter.com&sites=instagram.com&sites=linkedin.com&sites=tumblr.com&sites=pinterest.com&sites=flickr.com&cid=5c9bbd65-5820-421a-a179-ecf253034657>.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ According to data from the year 2015, Flickr held the 279th rank; however, no ranking data were available for Flickr as of April 2018 since not enough visitors had been to this site to generate exact information.

Table 2 lists the traffic ranks of official websites. Army, Navy, and Air Force websites are currently subdomains of the Turkish Armed Forces' website, and they were all assessed together as of April 2018.¹⁶⁵ Even though the Turkish Gendarmerie and Coast Guard are sub-branches of the Ministry of Internal Affairs as of 2016, we also included them in the list due to the historical and traditional culture they share with the Turkish Armed Forces and the mutual personnel still serve for both the Turkish Armed Forces and the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Table 2. Traffic Rank of Turkish Military Official websites.¹⁶⁶

website Name	Explanation	2015	2018
www.tsk.tr	Turkish Armed Forces	2.963	843
www.kkk.tsk.tr	Turkish Land Forces	2.674	
www.dzkk.tsk.tr	Turkish Navy	11.060	
www.hvkk.tsk.tr	Turkish Air Force	5.084	
www.jandarma.gov.tr	Turkish Gendarmerie	5.848	664
www.sahilguvenlik.gov.tr	Turkish Coast Guard	42.691	3767

D. CONCLUSION

This chapter provided statistical analysis of Internet and social media use both worldwide and in Turkey. By analyzing and interpreting these massive numbers generated

¹⁶⁵ "Site Comparisons," Alexa Internet Inc., accessed April 17, 2018, <https://www.alexa.com/comparison/?sites=tsk.tr&sites=sahilguvenlik.gov.tr&sites=jandarma.gov.tr&cid=b99d17ea-8457-4b1f-b0af-4edbd46d86cb>.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

by Internet and social media, it is clear decision makers should consider establishing an organizational presence on the Internet and social media when it comes to improvement and development strategies.

Improvement and development can change depending on what these decision makers are responsible for. These responsibilities could be increasing sales for a fast food or clothing business, spreading the ideas of a political party, or gaining support for non-profit organizations or militaries. Since public support is the crucial factor for any military organization, the Turkish Armed Forces like other militaries worldwide should meet and interact with the public—virtually, if not in person, in an effort to get their support. These interactions have to take place in a mutually convenient and inviting environment, and social media—rather than the less popular traditional websites—is one of the most convenient environments with its high user interest and penetration rates.

V. THE TURKISH ARMED FORCES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

A. OVERVIEW

Even before the use of social media became widespread worldwide, non-profit organizations had been using official websites in order to share information and reach their target audience. Nevertheless, these efforts, which relied on traditional websites, were not sufficient to fulfill strategic goals. These websites mostly lacked interactive tools such as feedback functionality and discussion boards. Limited to one-way communication, these organizations could not establish a relationship with their target audience. With the development and proliferation of social media, with its user-friendliness and built-in interaction features, came the opportunity for non-profit organizations to launch accounts and build their desired network with whom they could interact and communicate directly.¹⁶⁷

With the dramatic increase in and ease of diffusion of information, people are now bombarded with information coming from the Internet-based environment in particular. Therefore, people are more curious than ever, and they require more information from governments and organizations.¹⁶⁸ Encountering these demands, governments and organizations started to seek the ways of increasing their responsiveness to the public and stakeholders and began to utilize social media.

The Turkish Armed Forces did not launch any social media accounts, however, until 2015. These included YouTube, Google Plus, and Flickr accounts; however, these accounts did not, and still do not, allow users to interact with the Turkish Armed Forces directly. Users cannot comment or leave feedback about posts, pictures, or videos. Users can “like” the posts on all three platforms. Nevertheless, on YouTube, it is not possible to

¹⁶⁷ Kristen Lovejoy and Gregory D. Saxton, “Information, Community, and Action: How Nonprofit Organizations use Social Media,” *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 17, no. 3 (2012): 337–353.

¹⁶⁸ Gregory D. Saxton, Suny Chao Guo, and William A. Brown, “New Dimensions of Nonprofit Responsiveness: The Application and Promise of Internet-Based Technologies,” *Public Performance & Management Review* 31, no. 2 (2007): 144–173.

gain an accurate view of user reactions to a video because the additional dislike option has been disabled in order to hide the number of dislikes.

In addition to these three accounts, the Turkish Armed Forces launched an Instagram account on January 1, 2017, just after Instagram allowed users to disable comments on posts. This account was not an official account until July 30, 2017, when it was announced by the Turkish Armed Forces and verified by Instagram. The Twitter account, on the other hand, was created in September 2016. Similar to the Instagram account, the Twitter account was not announced and verified until February 2018, and Twitter users were not aware of it. Commenting and interacting options on the Instagram account are also disabled as they are on YouTube, Flickr and Google Plus. However, users can like a post, and the public can see that response. Twitter, on the other hand, allows users to reply to posts and tweets because of the nature of Twitter. It is currently not possible on Twitter to disable replies unless one protects one's tweets from a specific user. For this reason, Twitter is the only official account on which users can interact and leave feedback about the posts shared on social media. All social media accounts are limited to these five accounts, and there are no other accounts belonging to any sub-branch or sub-force, including the Turkish Land Forces, Turkish Navy, and Turkish Air Forces. All these accounts are managed by the Turkish Armed Forces Chiefs of General Staff. Figure 11 is a screenshot from the official site of the Chiefs of General Staff that shows the five links to the related social media accounts.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁹ "Social Media Links," Turkish Armed Forces, accessed April 25, 2018, <http://www.tsk.tr/HomeEng>.

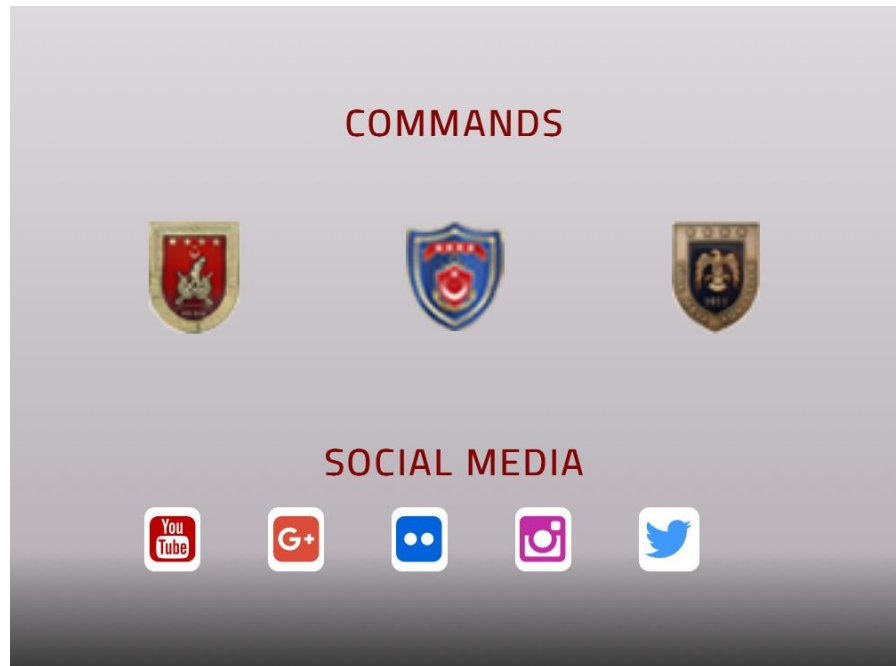


Figure 11. Screenshot of the Turkish Armed Forces' Social Media Links.¹⁷⁰

B. CURRENT SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

This section evaluates these five social media accounts regarding their methods of usage, strategies, success, and statistical outcomes.

1. YouTube

The Turkish Armed Forces' official YouTube account was introduced on March 10, 2015, and it has been active for more than three years. The first video was uploaded on March 16, 2015, and now there are 388 videos shared and 66.467 subscribers as of April 25, 2018. Since there are no statistics about how many likes and dislikes videos get, we will try to evaluate the success of videos in terms of the number of views since their upload date. The 388 videos shared have garnered 8 million total views during the life cycle of the account so far. The mean number of views a video gets is approximately 22,000. Table 3 shows the top ten most-viewed videos as of April 25, 2018.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ "Turk Silahlı Kuvvetleri," YouTube Inc., accessed April 25, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCj4TmBjCZBziZm3ymaG3RQ>.

Table 3. Number of Views of the Most Popular Videos on the Official YouTube Account of the Turkish Armed Forces.¹⁷²

No	The subject of Video and Details	Total Views	On-Air For
1	A folk song music video about the Battle of Canakkale featuring navy personnel and a famous Turkish singer	1.9 million	3 years
2	A music video about National Sovereignty and Children's Day featuring children in navy uniforms	577,000	2 years
3	Video shots of a national naval exercise	395,000	1 year
4	Video shots of Turkish Air Force aerobatic demonstration team	166,000	2 years
5	Promotion video of recruiting contracted staff	157,000	2 years
6	Video shots of a military operation conducted in Syria	148,000	2 months
7	Video shots of a search and rescue operation conducted by the Turkish Coast Guard	139,000	2 years
8	Video shots of a national navy amphibious exercise	134,000	1 year
9	Video of Turkish Armed Forces' anthem	116,000	2 years
10	Promotion video of Turkish special forces	110,000	3 months

Analysis shows that videos about exercises and operations, recruiting information, historical events, and commemoration of martyred soldiers take the highest views. In order to extend its network and reach its target audience on social media, the Turkish Armed Forces should share these types of videos more often, and results should be analyzed and studied.

¹⁷² Ibid.

Over the life cycle of three years, the number of videos shared as illustrated in Figure 12, has decreased significantly, as of the start of 2018. The success of a YouTube channel or a YouTube video can be measured according to number of views, likes, and dislikes. Since the public cannot see the results of likes and dislikes, we measured the success rate depending on the number of views. Figure 13 illustrates the number of views over the life cycle of the YouTube channel. In order to show a clear view and make it easy to compare results, we excluded the top three videos, which keeps the average view value very high at 1.9 million, 577,000, and 395.000 views, respectively. Even though the average number of views is 22,000, 323 of all 388 videos had fewer views than average, and only 17 percent of the videos stand above the average. Related statistics are shown in Figure 14.¹⁷³

¹⁷³ Ibid.

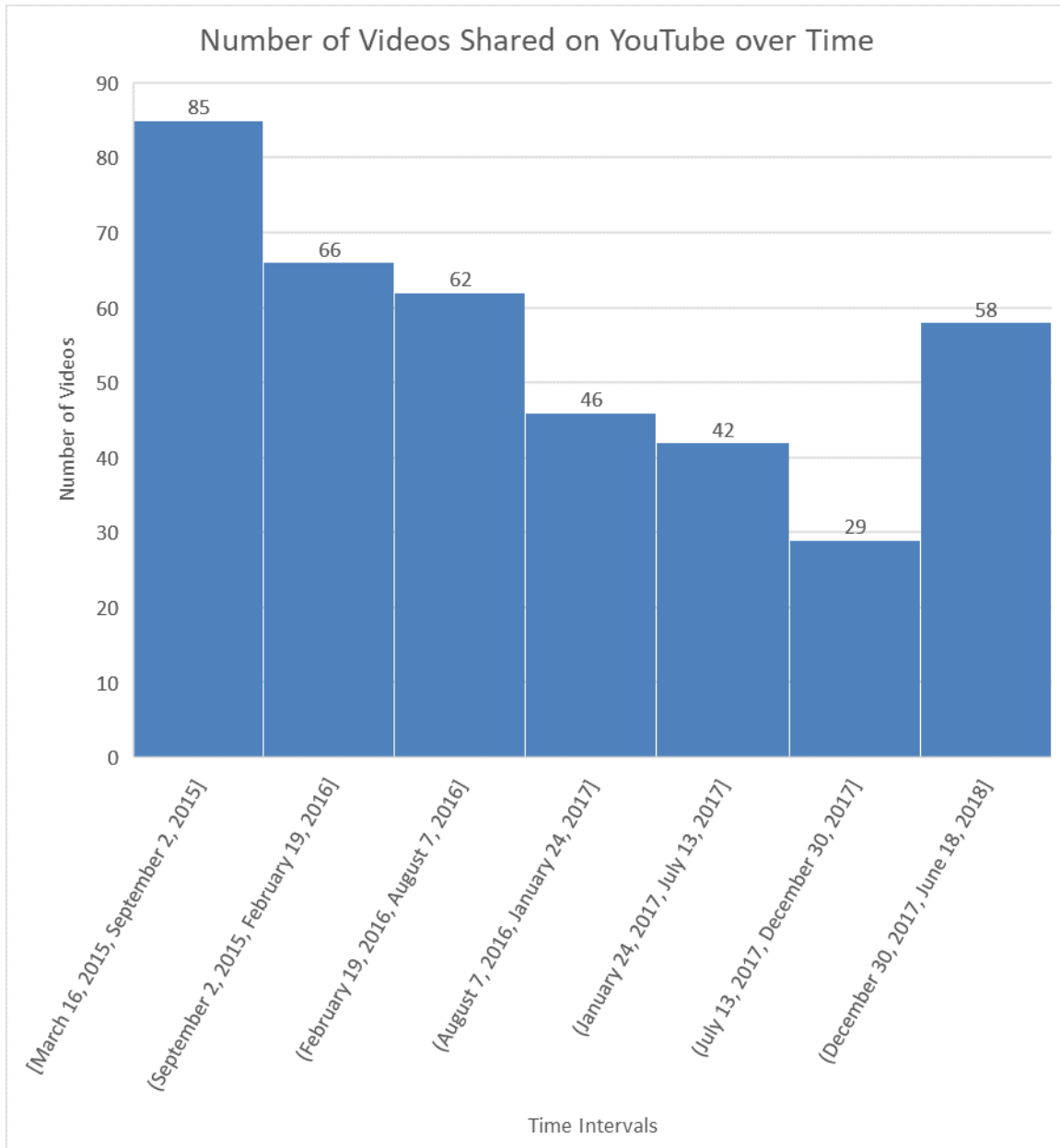


Figure 12. Number of Videos Shared on the Turkish Armed Forces' Official YouTube Account.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

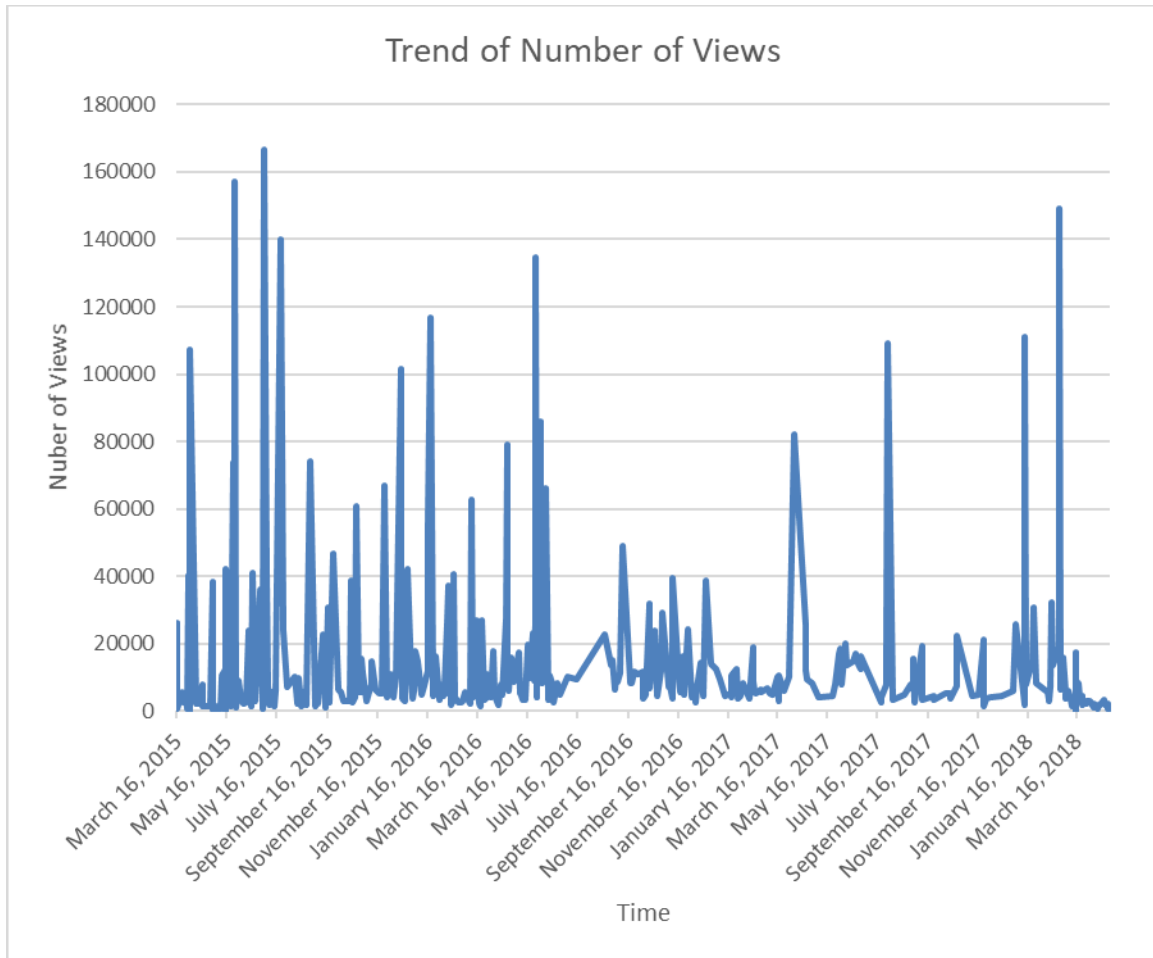


Figure 13. Trend in Number of Video Views on the Turkish Armed Forces' Official YouTube Account (top three videos excluded).¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

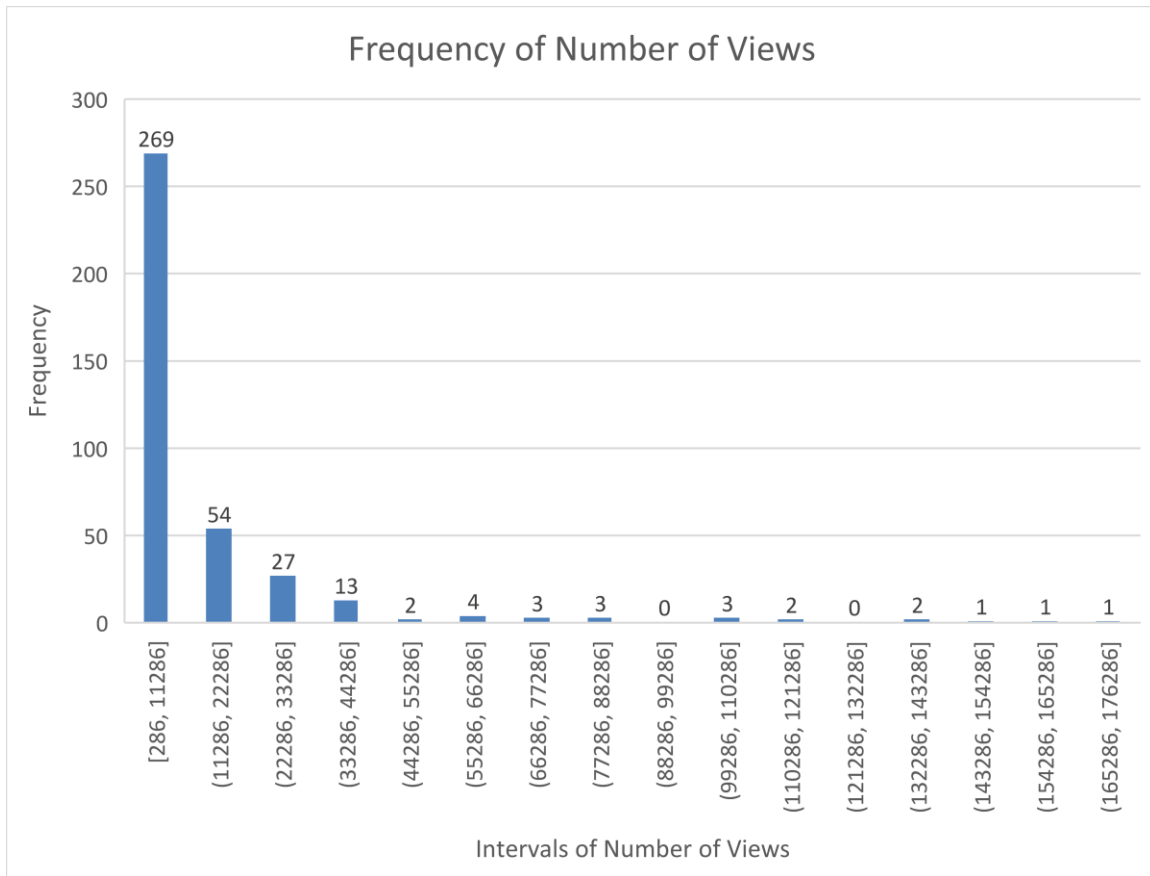


Figure 14. Frequency of the Number of Views of Videos on the Turkish Armed Forces' Official YouTube Account (top three videos excluded).¹⁷⁶

One of the other vital components for success for a YouTube channel is the number of subscribers to that channel. The channel, as of April 25, 2018, has reached 66.000 subscribers in three years. It is expected that the more subscribers a channel has, the more views the channel will receive. Even though the YouTube channel has increased its number of subscribers and reached 66,000 over time, the trend in the number of views does not reflect a constant increase. While one reason for the low view rate could be the number of videos shared, another major reason could be videos that lack quality and interest.

In addition to the two previously mentioned reasons, the most significant reason why the channel does not get a high number of views and does not reach more subscribers

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

is the channel's "no comment is allowed" policy. Current policy is similar to a monologue where others are not allowed to participate and express their opinion. Subscribers are linked to the channel and ultimately to the Turkish Armed Forces; however, they cannot express their support. As Patricia G. Lange suggested in her study, "profile linkages are not the only or even the primary way of supporting a social network through YouTube." It is more suitable to get support by allowing users to respond to the videos. By posting comments, users have the opportunity to show their feelings of support for the account owner and video content. The same study also stated that commenting on videos can maintain relationships by allowing interaction and bright ideas about video content, which motivates both viewers and the account owner to build and empower social relations. It is also important to reply to commenters' posts and continue to interact with them.¹⁷⁷

Many unofficial and personal accounts also share Turkish Armed Forces related content on YouTube. These accounts mostly do not disable comments for users. One notable example is the account named "TSK," which stands for Turkish Armed Forces (TAF). This account, as of April 30, 2018, had nearly 50.000 subscribers, which is quite close to the official account.¹⁷⁸ Even though the oldest video on the TAF account was released just one year ago, the account has more than 18 million views and is one of the best examples of the power of interaction.

2. Instagram

Instagram users did not have the option to disable comments until December 2017; however, the company decided to allow its users to turn off comments. By enabling this option, followers and fans are able to like posts but not leave comments if the account owner prefers users not do so.¹⁷⁹ After gaining the power to disable comments, the Turkish Armed Forces launched an Instagram account in January 1, 2017; however, the account

¹⁷⁷ Patricia G. Lange, "Publicly Private and Privately Public: Social Networking on YouTube," *Journal of computer-Mediated Communication* 13, no. 1 (2007): 376.

¹⁷⁸ "TSK," YouTube Inc., accessed April 30, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/user/trabz0nsp0r61/videos?flow=grid&sort=p&view=0>.

¹⁷⁹ "Instagram Finally, Lets Users Disable Comments," CNN, accessed April 30, 2018, <http://money.cnn.com/2016/12/06/technology/instagram-turn-off-comments/index.html>.

had not been announced publicly and verified by Instagram until July 30, 2017.¹⁸⁰ The first post was shared on January 1, 2017, and as of April 25, 2018, there were 753 posts shared and 352,000 followers to the account. While there were only 36,000 followers when the account first got verified and it took seven months to reach that number of followers, the account now has almost nine times more followers, which happened in nine months.¹⁸¹

For this analysis, the author evaluates the success of the account according to the number of likes that posts receives. The results are compared for the two periods, before and after the account was publicly announced and verified by Instagram. The author maintains that the dramatic increase in the number followers and in the average number of likes on shared posts is due to the public announcement and account verification. There are 753 posts shared and these posts have received 6.8 million likes during the life cycle of the account so far. The mean number of likes a post gets is 9,033.¹⁸² Figure 15 shows the number of posts shared over the life cycle of the account. While trend in the number of posts remained constant until March 2018, a significant increase occurred with the beginning of a military operation, Olive Branch Operation, conducted by the Turkish Armed Forces in Syria.

¹⁸⁰ “TSK Instagram’da Hesap Acti,” NTV, accessed April 30, 2018, <https://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/tsk-instagramda-hesap-acti,FspFWO7C-EOwCcPNCYBXGQ>.

¹⁸¹ “Tskgenelkurmay,” Instagram Inc, accessed April 25, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/tskgenelkurmay/>.

¹⁸² Ibid.

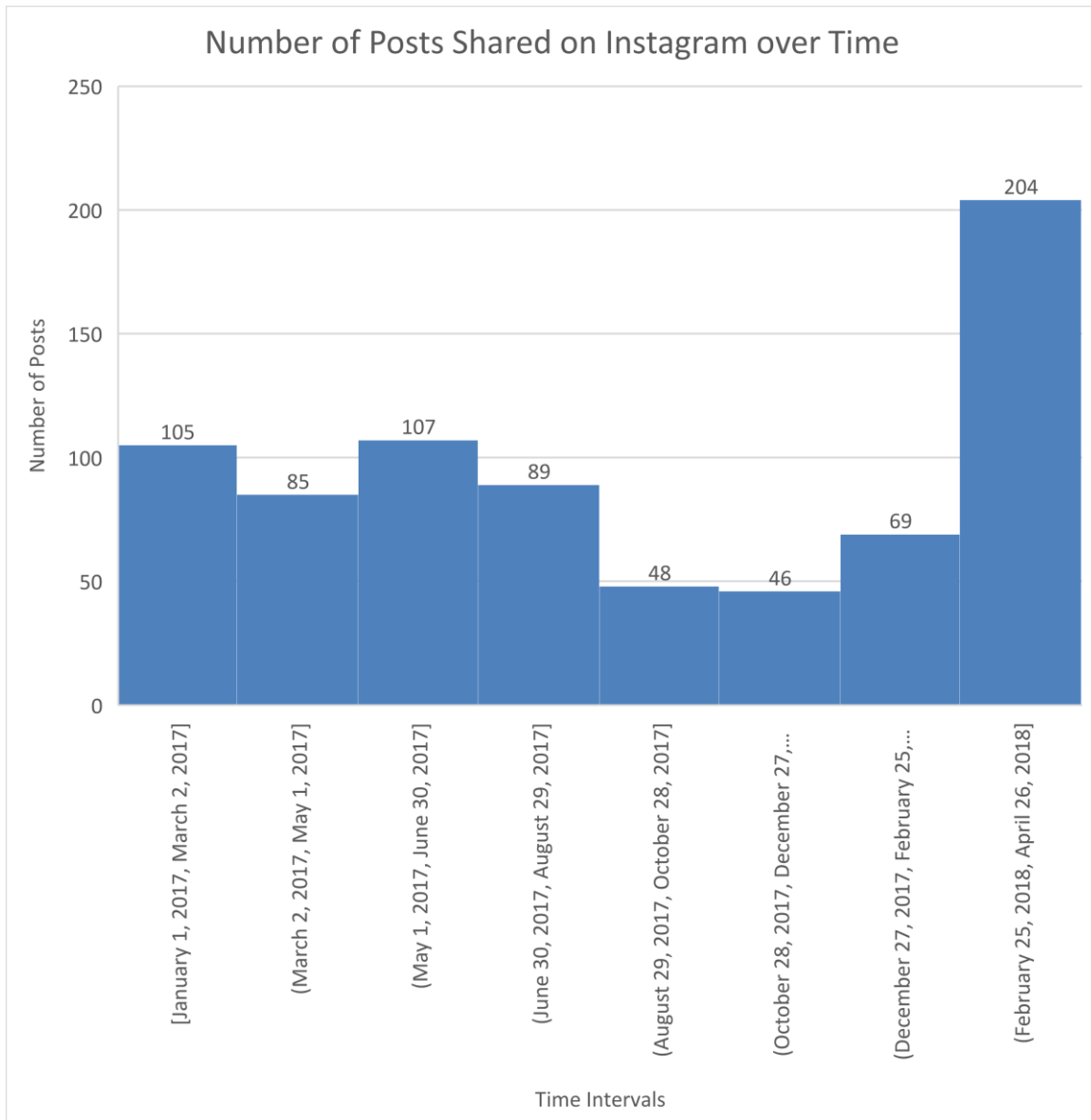


Figure 15. Number of Posts Shared on The Turkish Armed Forces' Official Instagram Account.¹⁸³

Figure 16 illustrates the number of likes that posts received over time, and as can be seen in the figure, a dramatic increase in the number of likes began in August 2017. Along with pictures, posting and sharing of videos on Instagram is also possible, and there were 70 videos shared as of April 25, 2018. These 70 videos have received more than 2.6

¹⁸³ Ibid.

million views, with an average of 43,000 views, which is more than the average number of views of videos shared on the official YouTube account. Figure 17 shows the related statistics for the videos in terms of the number of views and likes.

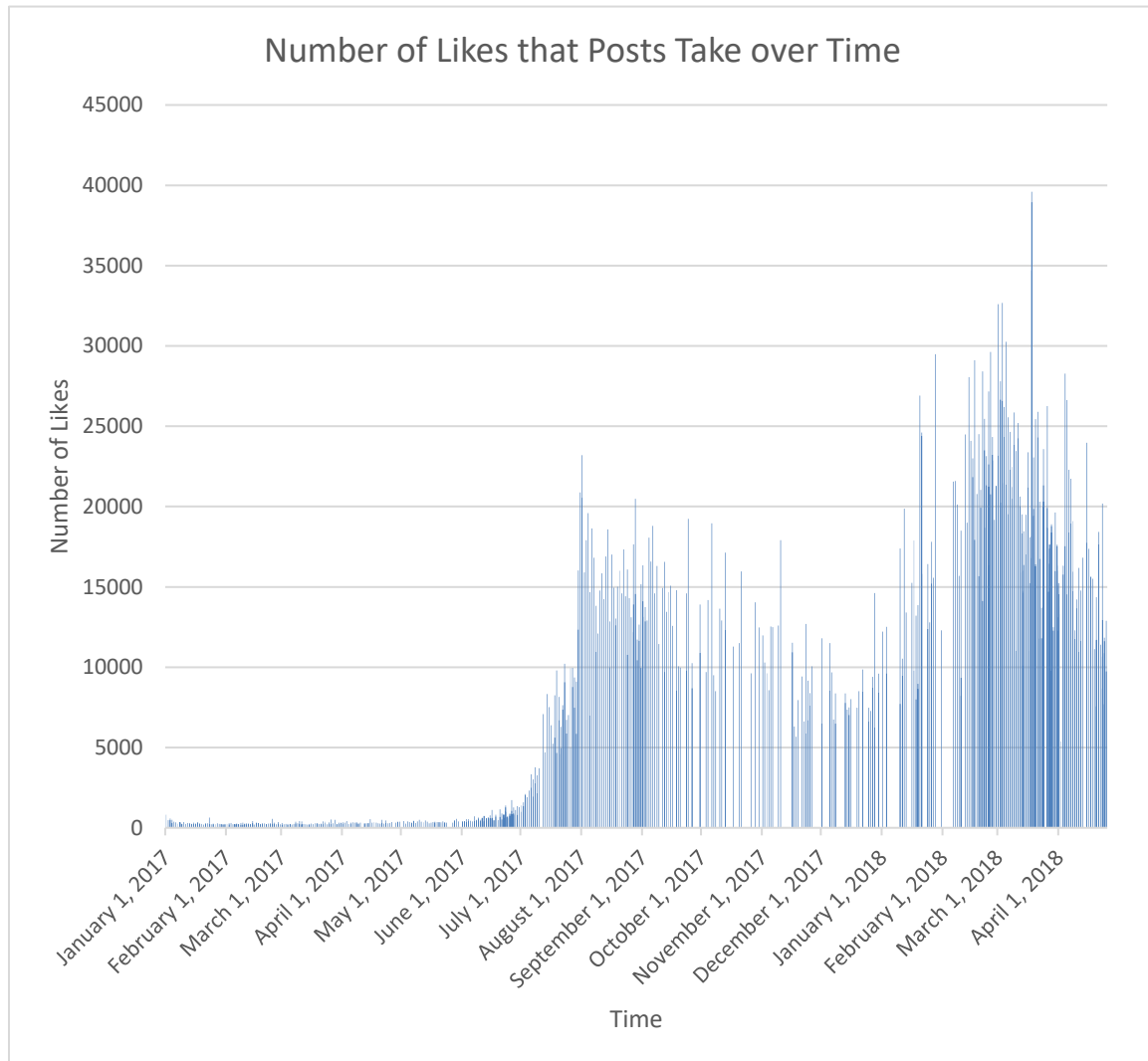


Figure 16. Number of Likes on the Turkish Armed Forces' Official Instagram Account.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

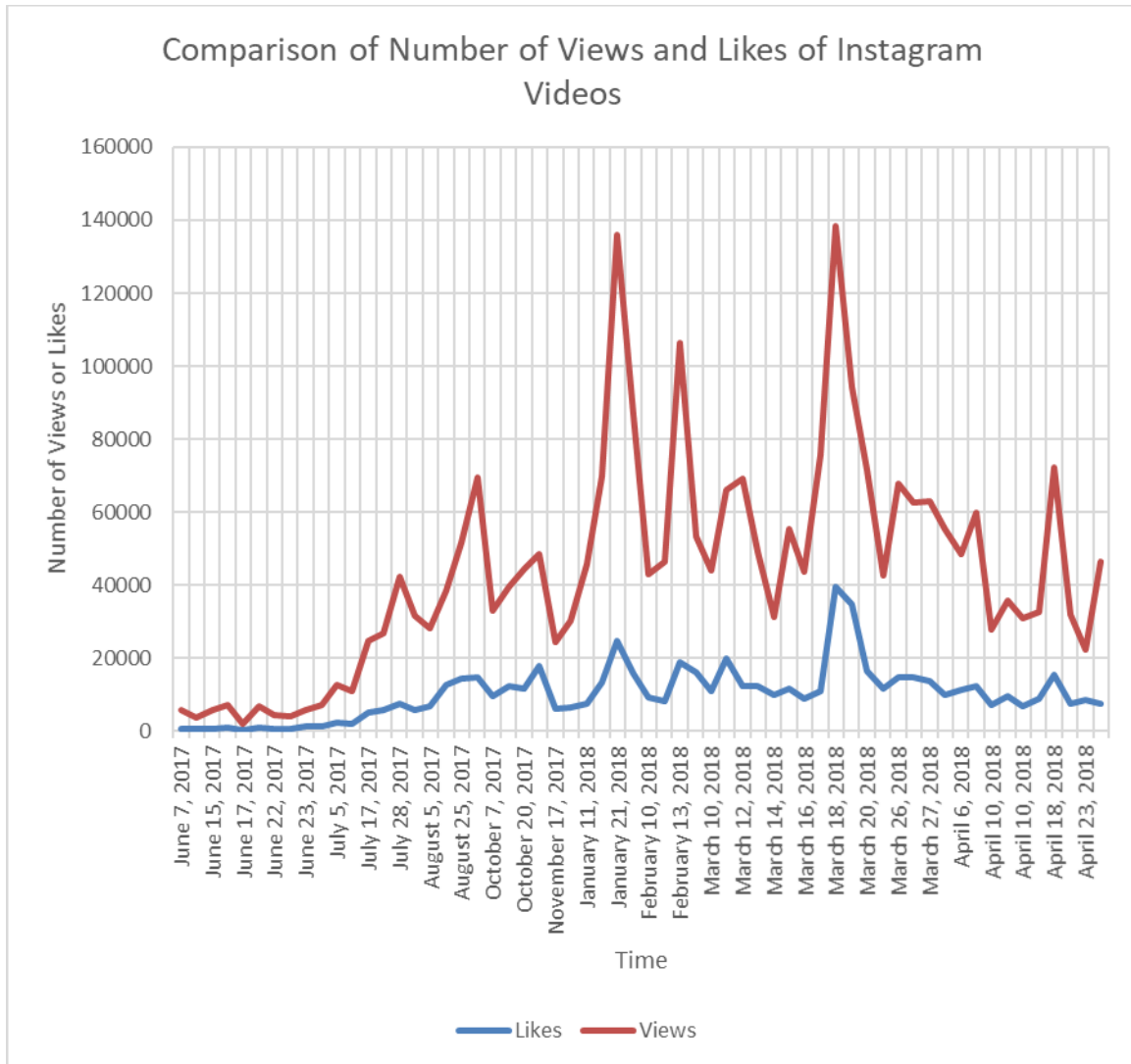


Figure 17. Comparison of the Numbers of Views and Likes of the Videos Shared on the Turkish Armed Forces' Official Instagram Account.¹⁸⁵

To analyze the success results, the account is separated into two periods, where the time of account verification and public announcement is the critical point. While the account with 344 posts earned a total of 374.391 likes (with an average of 1,088 likes) before verification, the account with 409 posts received 6,427,725 likes (with the average of 15,716 likes) after verification. The account showed 17 times more success on total likes and 15 times more on average number of likes after verification. Comparing the posts that

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

include either picture or video, we found that videos received more likes than pictures, where pictures had an average of 8,930 likes and videos an average of 10,223 likes. While Table 4 illustrates the general statistics of the account as a whole, Table 5 and Table 6 show statistics for the periods before and after account verification, respectively. Table 7 compares the number of likes that pictures and videos received on the Instagram account.¹⁸⁶

Table 4. General Statistics for All 753 Instagram Posts Shared between January 1, 2017, and April 25, 2018.¹⁸⁷

Type of Statistic	Likes	Video Views
Total	6,802,116	2,636,728
Average	9,033	43,945
Maximum	39,600	138,463
Minimum	175	1,966

Table 5. General Statistics for 344 Instagram Posts Shared between January 1, 2017, and July 30, 2018 (Unverified Account).¹⁸⁸

Type of Statistic	Likes	Video Views
Total	374,391	201,822
Average	1,088	12,614
Maximum	10,206	42,399
Minimum	175	1,966

¹⁸⁶ “Tskgenelkurmay,” Instagram Inc, accessed April 25, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/tskgenelkurmay/>.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

Table 6. General Statistics for 409 Instagram Posts Shared between July 30, 2017, and April 25, 2018 (Verified Account).¹⁸⁹

Type of Statistic	Likes	Video Views
Total	6,427,725	2,434,906
Average	15,716	55,339
Maximum	39,600	138,463
Minimum	5,382	22,518

Table 7. Average Number of Likes According to Type of Instagram Post That Includes Either Picture or Video.¹⁹⁰

Average Number of	Picture	Video
Likes	8,930	10,223

To conclude, the official Instagram account has shown an apparent success in terms of increasing both its number followers and likes. Along with the verification and public announcement process, the account increased its number of followers by 17 times and the number of average likes by 15 times. The Instagram account has proved that having verified accounts increases the likelihood of success on social media and of extending the account holder's network. The more followers and appreciation an account gets, the more credible the account holder becomes. Considering that being credible is one of the most important factors for gaining trust and building positive relationships with the public, offering and launching verified social media accounts can help an organization reach its desired ends. The Turkish Armed Forces' official Instagram account, like its YouTube account, still has a "no comment policy," and followers cannot participate in discussions or express their relationships and connection to the Turkish Armed Forces. As Lange

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

suggested in her study, the mere act of following an account is not the best way to support an account and ultimately the organization that owns the account; therefore, this author supports the idea that allowing followers to participate in discussions by providing comments will help the Turkish Armed Forces to build positive relationships and connections with the public.¹⁹¹

3. Twitter

As previously mentioned, the official Twitter account that belongs to the Turkish Armed Forces was created in September 2016; however, it was not publicly announced by the Turkish Armed Forces and verified by Twitter until February 14, 2018.¹⁹² Even though there were about 1,000 tweets on the account before the verification and public announcement date, tweets before January 20, 2018, were deleted. The first tweet on the account appeared on January 20, 2018. As of April 26, 2018, there were 825 tweets shared and 271,000 followers of the account. Although it took 29 months from the time the account obtained verification to reach 92,000 followers, the account tripled that number in only two months.¹⁹³ Unlike the YouTube and Instagram accounts, the Twitter account allows followers and users to leave comments by replying to the tweets. The number of comments, retweets, and likes are also visible to the public.

The author assesses the success of the account according to the number of comments, retweets, and likes that posts have. Results are compared for the two periods, before and after the account was publicly announced by the Turkish Armed Forces and verified by Twitter.

There are 825 tweets shared, and these tweets got 491,608 retweets and 2,177,217 likes. Of all tweets, 68 include videos and these videos reached 6,808,500 views in just three months.¹⁹⁴ In comparison to the YouTube videos that reached 8,400,000 views in

¹⁹¹ Patricia G. Lange, "Publicly Private and Privately Public: Social Networking on YouTube," *Journal of computer-Mediated Communication* 13, no. 1 (2007): 361–380.

¹⁹² "TSK'ya Twitter'da Mavi Tik," HaberTurk, accessed April 30, 2018, <http://www.haberturk.com/tsk-ya-twitter-da-mavi-tik-1838763>.

¹⁹³ "TSKGnkur," Twitter Inc., accessed April 26, 2018, <https://twitter.com/TSKGnkur>.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

three years, the Twitter account showed a tremendous success even though not all of the videos shared on Twitter are full-length versions. Figure 18 shows the number of tweets shared over the life cycle of the account.

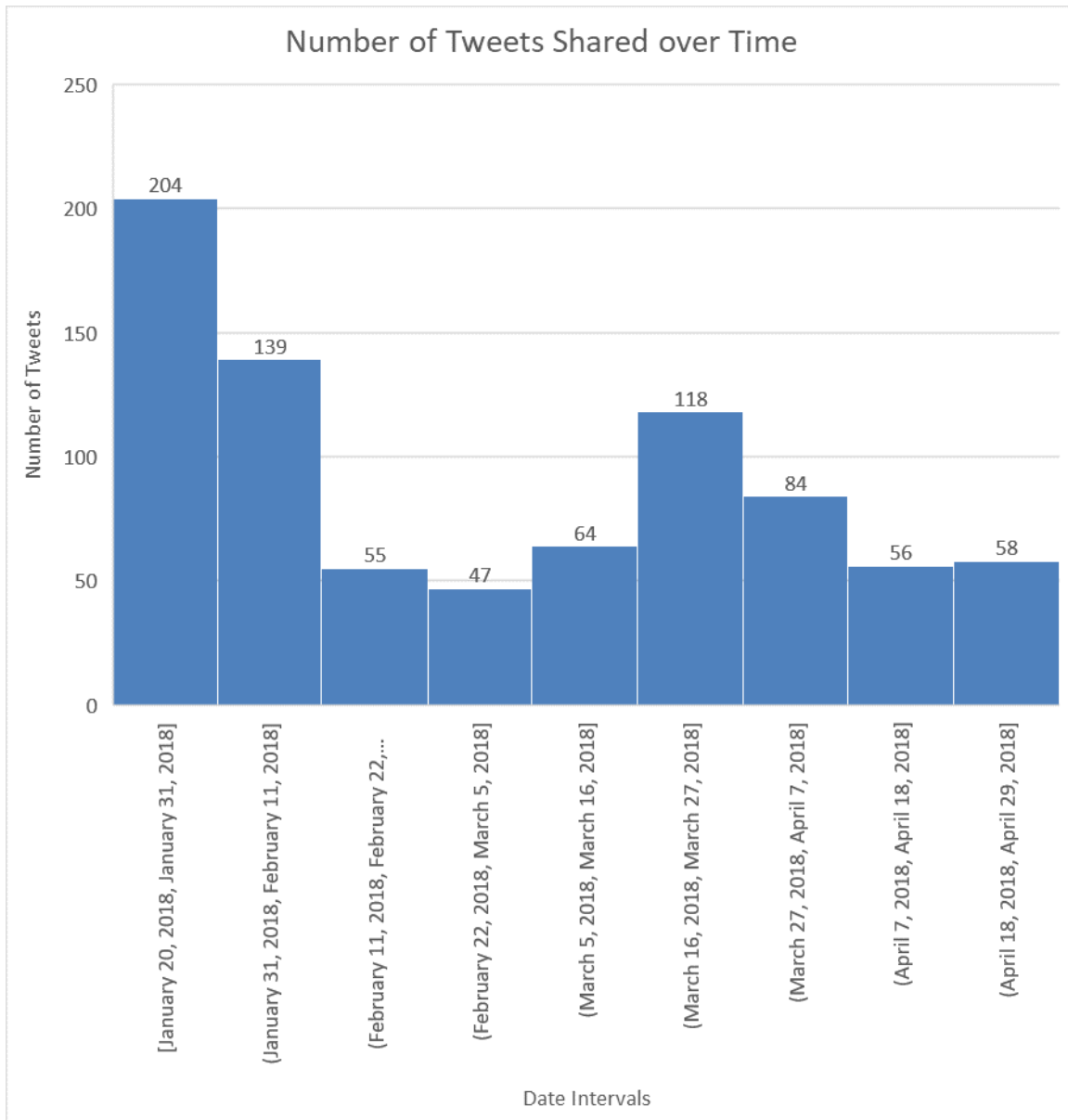


Figure 18. Number of Tweets Shared on The Turkish Armed Forces' Official Twitter Account.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

Figure 19, Figure 20, and Figure 21 show the number of comments, retweets, and likes, respectively, since the release of the first tweet. Since the public announcement of the verified Twitter account, there has been a significant increase for all three parameters.

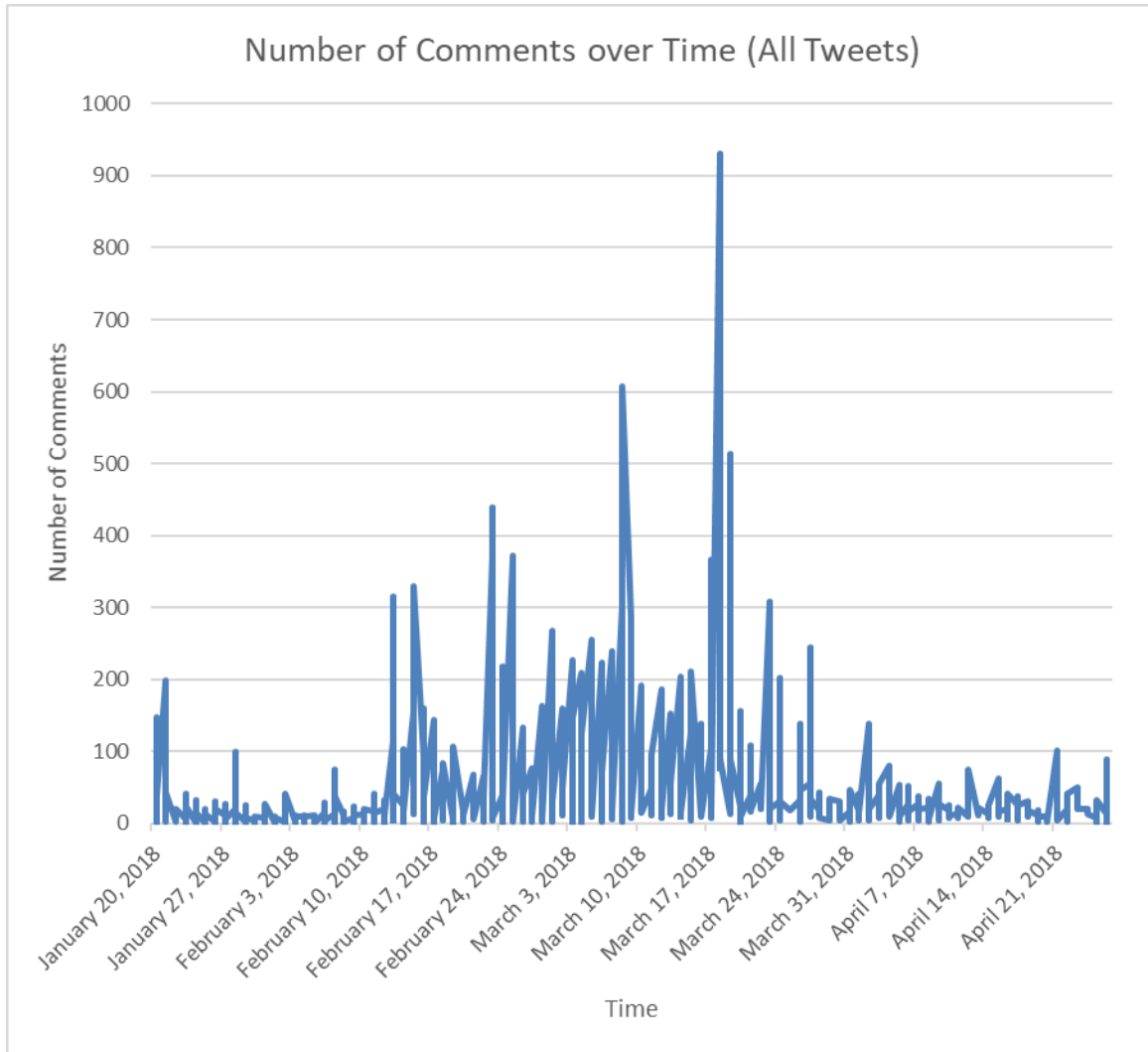


Figure 19. Number of Comments on the Turkish Armed Forces' Official Twitter Account.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

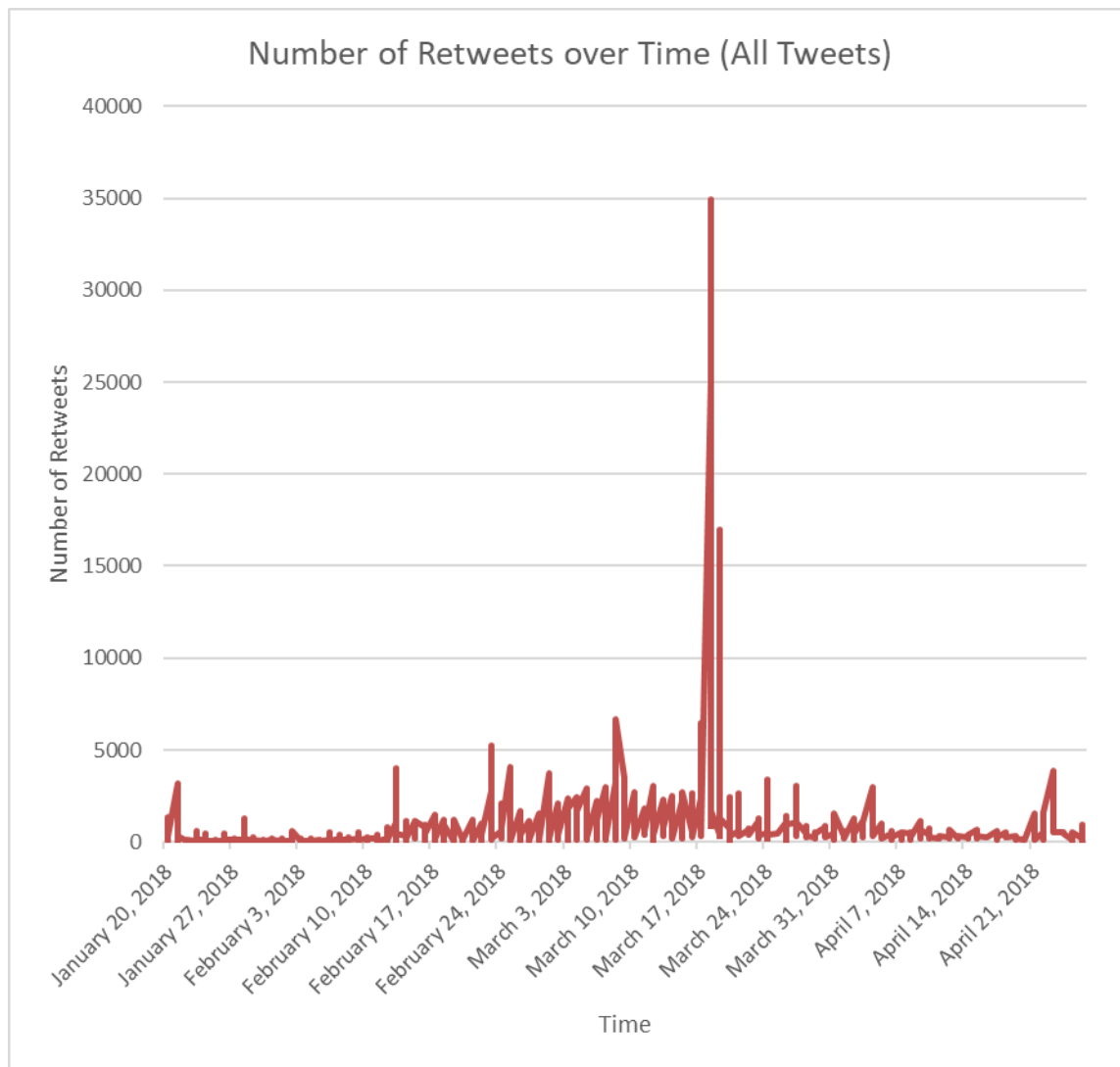


Figure 20. Number of Retweets on the Turkish Armed Forces' Official Twitter Account.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

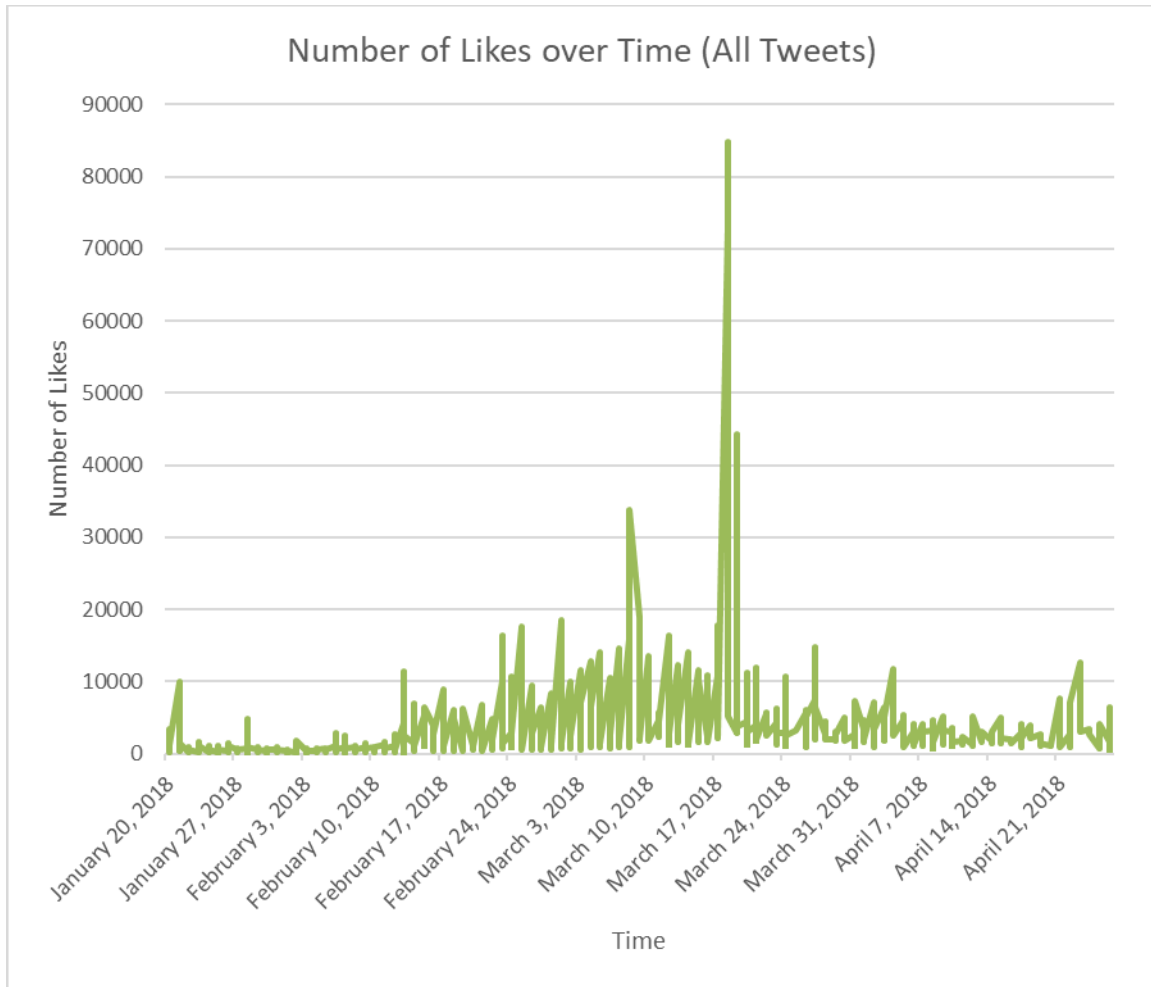


Figure 21. Number of Likes on the Turkish Armed Forces' Official Twitter Account.¹⁹⁸

To analyze the success results, the author separates the account according to two periods, before and after the critical point of account verification and public announcement, as we did for the Instagram account. While the account with the 356 tweets received an average of ten comments, 144 retweets, 594 likes, and 105,443 video views before verification, after verification with 499 tweets it received an average of 51 comments, 939 retweets, 4,191 likes, and 99,515 video views. The account showed 6.5 times more success in the average number of retweets and seven times more on the average number of likes; however, the average number of views remained almost stable. Comparison of the tweets

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

that include picture, video, or just plain text, shows that videos got more likes than pictures, and pictures got more than plaintexts, where videos doubled the pictures and pictures doubled plain texts in terms of the average number of comments, retweets, and likes. While Table 8 illustrates the general statistics of the account as a whole, Table 9 and Table 10 show the statistics for the periods before and after account verification, respectively. Table 11 compares the average number of comments, retweets, and likes received for tweets that include pictures, videos, or plain text on the Twitter account.¹⁹⁹

Table 8. General Statistics for All 825 Tweets Shared between January 20, 2018, and April 26, 2018.²⁰⁰

Type of Statistic	Comments	Retweets	Likes	Video Views
Total	27,357	491,608	2,177,217	6,808,500
Average	33	596	2,639	100,125
Maximum	930	34,900	84,800	1,000,000
Minimum	0	18	80	10,000

¹⁹⁹ “TSKGnkur,” Twitter Inc., accessed April 26, 2018, <https://twitter.com/TSKGnkur>.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

Table 9. General Statistics for 356 Tweets between January 20, 2018, and February 14, 2018 (Unverified Account).²⁰¹

Type of Statistic	Comments	Retweets	Likes	Video Views
Total	3,634	51,237	211,623	738,100
Average	10	144	594	105,443
Maximum	316	4,013	11,300	270,000
Minimum	0	18	80	21,700

Table 10. General Statistics for 469 Tweets between February 14, 2018, and April 26, 2018 (Verified Account).²⁰²

Type of Statistic	Comments	Retweets	Likes	Video Views
Total	23,723	44,0371	1,965,594	6,070,400
Average	51	939	4,191	99,515
Maximum	930	34,900	84,800	1,000,000
Minimum	0	37	300	10,000

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

Table 11. Average Number of Comments, Retweets, and Likes According to Type of Tweet that Includes Either Picture/Video or Only Text.²⁰³

Average Number of	Text	Picture	Video
Comments	20	41	81
Retweets	300	719	1,947
Likes	1,463	3,495	6,317

To conclude, the official Twitter account, like the Instagram account, reflects a readily observable success in terms of increasing the number of followers, likes, and retweets. The Twitter account has also proved that having verified accounts can increase the success of social media accounts. Verified accounts can also help an organization build positive connections with the public and extend its social network, which can result in capturing more appreciation. Unlike all other social media accounts of the Turkish Armed Forces, the Twitter account is the only platform that allows users to reply to tweets and join discussions. Even though leaving comments can help followers express their opinion or level of engagement, as Lange suggested, “people posting excessively negative commentary should be dealt with.”²⁰⁴ In order to deal with the negative comments, account holders should explore the relationship between online and offline behaviors and, after discerning the cause of hate comments, take necessary precautions to mitigate the negative impacts of such comments.²⁰⁵ Even though derogatory comments can create an undesirable environment and negatively affect the online community, these comments can also help to identify the level of confidence and trust within the community.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Lange, “Publicly Private and Privately Public: Social Networking on YouTube,” 366.

²⁰⁵ Patricia G. Lange, “Commenting on Comments: Investigating Responses to Antagonism on YouTube,” *Society for Applied Anthropology Conference*, vol. 31 (2007): 163–190.

4. Flickr

Founded in 2004, Flickr is a photo management and sharing application. Flickr describes its primary goals as to “help people make their photos available to the people who matter to them and to enable new ways of organizing photos and videos.”²⁰⁶

The Turkish Armed Forces created its official Flickr account in March 2015 and had uploaded 3,898 photos as of April 30, 2018. Unlike the account on the popular photo sharing application Instagram, the Turkish Armed Forces’ Flickr account has only 741 followers, and the number of likes that photos on this account receive is quite low. The account has been a verified account since the launch date. Table 12 and Table 13 show the ten photos most often marked “favorite” and most viewed on the account. The account has had 11.7 million views, with an average of 3,000 views per photo, over its three-year life cycle.²⁰⁷

As is the case for the Instagram and YouTube accounts, followers cannot comment on the photos on the Flickr account. One reason why the Flickr account does not achieve high volume in views and likes is the unpopularity of the application both in Turkey and worldwide. In terms of traffic rank, Flickr held the 364th place worldwide as of April 2018. According to data from 2015, the application held the 279th place in Turkey; however, there is currently no exact result for Flickr since traffic to the site is quite low.

²⁰⁶ “About Flickr,” Flickr Inc., accessed April 30, 2018, <https://www.flickr.com/about>.

²⁰⁷ “Turk Silahlı Kuvvetleri,” Flickr Inc., accessed April 30, 2018, <https://www.flickr.com/people/131986175@N03/>.

Table 12. The Most “Favorited” Ten Photos on the Turkish Armed Forces’ Official Flickr Account.²⁰⁸

No	Number of Favorites	Number of Views
1	37	4,533
2	32	3,968
3	26	7,251
4	23	6,626
5	20	5,971
6	20	7,502
7	19	5,510
8	19	6,593
9	18	6,993
10	17	2,795

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

Table 13. Ten Most Viewed Photos on the Turkish Armed Forces' Official Flickr Account.²⁰⁹

No	Number of Views	Number of Likes
1	39,462	5
2	39,167	10
3	37,821	7
4	37,358	12
5	36,359	10
6	36,317	7
7	33,081	7
8	30,517	13
9	26,292	7
10	23,753	0

5. Google Plus

Google introduced Google Plus as a social networking platform in June 2011. Google Plus, like all other social media platforms, allows users to communicate and share with friends, followers, fans, and community. Users can create their own profiles, add other users to their contacts according to different categories called circles (e.g., friends or family).²¹⁰ Since Google Plus is integrated with other services offered by Google, the world's most visited website, the number of Google Plus users is quite high. Nevertheless, in terms of active use and popularity, Google Plus is not as popular as other SNSs such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The platform's popularity level is no different in

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Katie Elson Anderson and Julie M. Still, "An Introduction to Google Plus," *Library Hi Tech News* 28, no. 8 (2011),:7–10.

Turkey. The Turkish Armed Forces launched their official Google Plus account in March 2015, at the same time as their YouTube account, and this account has been a verified account since the launch date. In comparison to the Instagram and Twitter accounts, the Google Plus account has not gained much attention among users of the Flickr account. As with the YouTube, Instagram, and Flickr accounts, users cannot leave comments on the Google Plus account. Additionally, that the public cannot see how many followers the account has. Thousands of posts have been shared on the account so far, and the same posts are being shared on the other social media accounts as well. To offer a quick insight, the last 100 posts have been analyzed in terms of their number of likes and number of shares as of April 30, 2018. The average number of likes for the last 100 posts is 20 while the average number of shares is only 0.5. Figure 22 and Figure 23 illustrate the statistics about the number of likes and shares, respectively, for the last 100 posts shared on the Turkish Armed Forces' Google Plus account.²¹¹

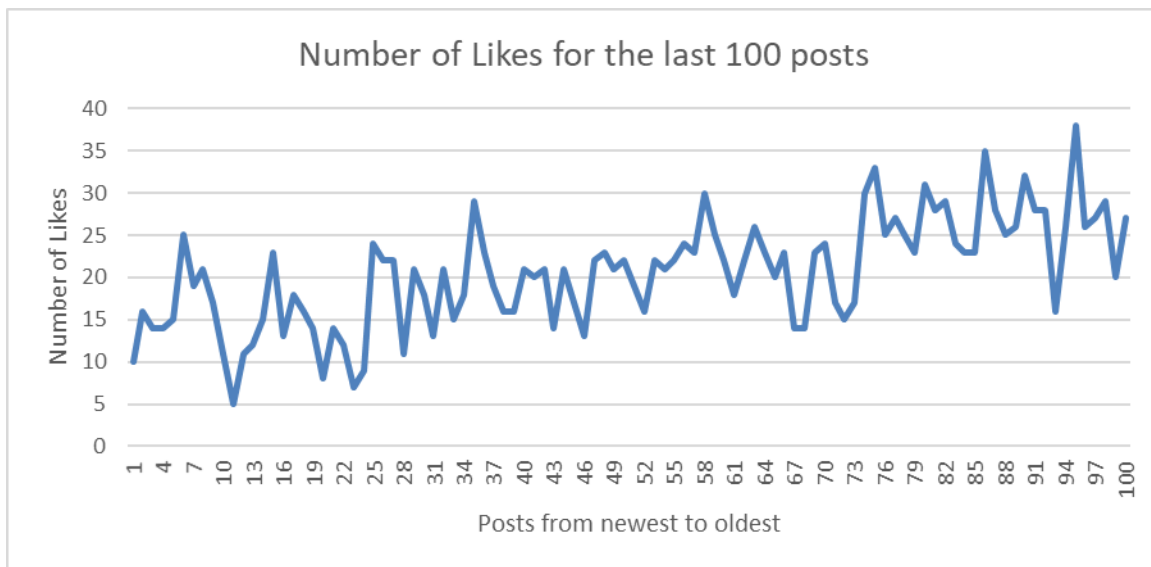


Figure 22. Number of Likes for the Last 100 Posts Shared on the Turkish Armed Forces' Google Plus Account.²¹²

²¹¹ "Turk Silahlı Kuvvetleri," Google Inc., accessed April 30, 2018, <https://plus.google.com/u/0/+TskTrGenelkurmay>.

²¹² Ibid.

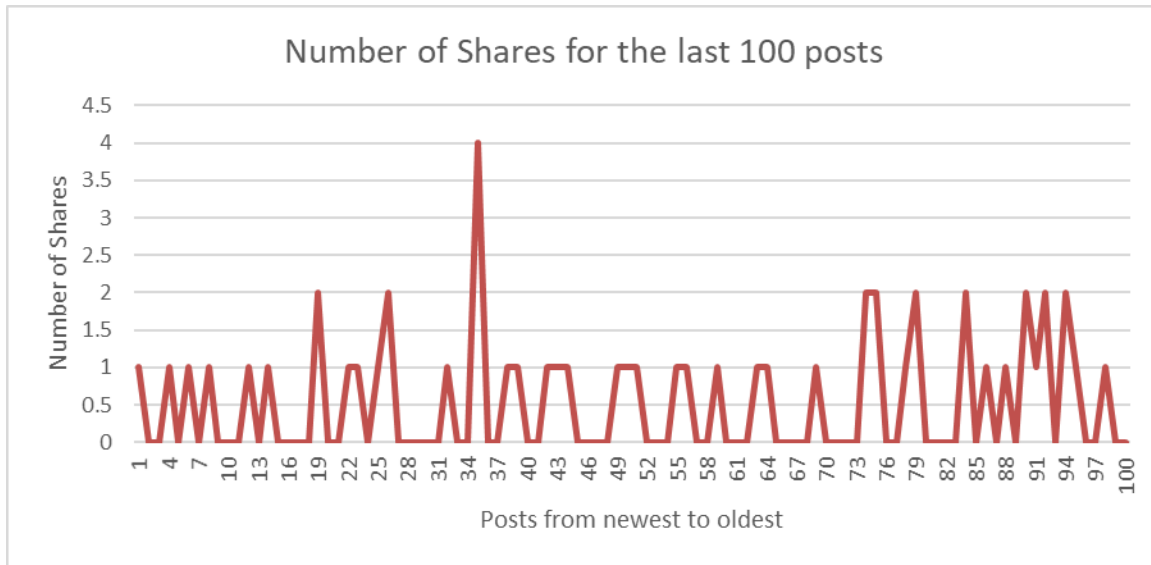


Figure 23. Number of Shares for the Last 100 Posts Shared on the Turkish Armed Forces' Google Plus Account.²¹³

To summarize, the Turkish Armed Forces have not been able to attract a high level of attention to the official Google Plus account thus far. Even though limitations on interaction and communication activities on the account play a role in the account's limited attraction, it is not the only reason why the account has not been successful. The number of active users and penetration rate are the main reasons for its minimal attraction, since Google Plus is nowhere near as popular as other SNSs such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube in terms of the number of active users and penetration rate both in Turkey and the world. Hence, unpopularity of Google Plus in Turkey plays a more significant role on low success level of the account.

C. SUMMARY

This chapter first provided an introduction to the five social media accounts run by the Turkish Armed Forces and evaluated these accounts in terms of their methods of usage, strategies, success, and statistical outcomes. Second, it showed how verified and unverified or official and unofficial accounts differ in terms of the number of followers, post likes,

²¹³ Ibid.

and post shares. The author also suggested that letting followers and social media users communicate and comment can create a positive environment that offers chances to create and support connections between the Turkish Armed Forces and people who follow the social media accounts and are interested in supporting the military.

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VI. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

A. CONCLUSIONS

Internet websites, social networking sites, and social media with their continually increasing number of users have become the most convenient tools of communication, interaction, promotion, and advertising worldwide. These platforms are a standard part of daily life for a majority of the world's population. Even though ordinary people use these platforms primarily to connect and share with their friends and family, many organizations, companies, celebrities, and leaders are leveraging these platforms to enhance their influence and as public relations tools. Modern military organizations are also benefiting from these emerging platforms in order to increase their reputation, promote their activities and policies, and to garner trust.

In this thesis, the author has tried to find answers to the question of whether the Turkish Armed Forces should embrace social networking sites and the Internet-based information environment to perform information operations and public relations in order to build trust and maintain relationships with the Turkish public.

First, this study introduced several key terms and definitions and explored their connection with building trust and maintaining positive relationships, using a mixture of previous scholarly research. It is suggested that public relations practitioners and information operations experts who work for the Turkish Armed Forces should develop tactics, techniques, and procedures to take full advantage of social media.²¹⁴

Second, the discussion clarified influence theory and its relation to utilizing social media. In order to apply the diffusion of innovation theory, the author specified the idea of building trust and garnering trust as an innovation and social media as a communication channel. Further, for this study, the author considered the time by which we would reach a specific level of trustworthiness, and deemed the Internet users in the Turkish public and

²¹⁴ Gabriel R. Downey II, David A. Hollis, and Harold D. Rouse, "You Have Been Friendied by the U.S. Military: Using Social Networking Services for IO Messaging" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2010).

other countries as a social system.²¹⁵ After weighing the advantages and disadvantages of social media, the study argued that social media can play a significant role in communicating with both the public and military members and can trigger potential improvements through creative feedback and recommendation.²¹⁶ Social media usage in the military can also support communication and relations between service members and their families, as well as create an attractive platform for recruiting activities.²¹⁷ Transparency and openness emerge as critical points to build positive relationships and gain trust from the target audience of the military's social media accounts. Just as most organizations have embraced traditional media tools including television, radio, newspapers, and magazines, these organizations—particularly the Turkish Armed Forces—should embrace social media. Cultural barriers that hinder adoption of any new technology, including social media, should be removed. In order to be successful and take control of its presence on social media, while proactively guarding against detractors who use disinformation tactics, we recommended the Turkish Armed Forces follow these four practices:

1. Have a verified account,
2. Act proactively,
3. Be transparent when illegal or immoral activities are discovered in the organization and do not to hesitate to reveal such cases, and
4. Show determination in fighting against corruption.

Third, the author offered statistical analysis of Internet and social media usage both worldwide and in Turkey. After analyzing and interpreting these staggering numbers, the author suggested that decision-makers should consider how to engage members of the military and the public via the Internet and social media when it comes to improvement and development strategies. Of course, strategies for improvement and development can change depending on these decision makers' areas of responsibility. Since public support

²¹⁵ Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*.

²¹⁶ Pomeroy, "Time to Engage in Social Media."

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

is the key factor for any military organization, the Turkish Armed Forces, like other militaries worldwide, should meet and interact with the public—in person or online—to gain their support. These interactions must take place in a mutually convenient and inviting environment, and social media is one of the most convenient environments, boasting high user interest and penetration rates in comparison to traditional websites.

Lastly, this study provided a detailed view of the Turkish Armed Forces' five social media accounts and evaluated these accounts in terms of their methods of usage, strategies, success, and statistical outcomes. Additionally, the research showed how the success of verified and unverified (or official and unofficial) accounts differs in terms of the number of followers, post likes, and post shares. As a key strategy, allowing followers and social media users communicate and comment could create a positive environment that offers chances to create and support connections between the Turkish Armed Forces and the people who follow the military's social media accounts and interested in supporting the military.

Social media have introduced new methods of interaction and opportunities for dialogue that are quick and effective. As such, social media should be considered and adopted as a communication and public relations tool by organizations.²¹⁸ According to Kristen Lovejoy and Gregory D. Saxton's study, non-profit organizations utilize social media to achieve three main goals. These categories are sharing information, building community, and calling users to action.²¹⁹ In order to apply a successful social media policy, the content of the videos, tweets, pictures, and all other posts shared on social media should be coherent with these categories. Additionally, social media content should show a balanced distribution in terms of these three categories. Even though the Turkish Armed Forces disseminate information on social media accounts, they do not allow interaction and two-way communication, features that help to build community and call users to action. For this reason, it is highly recommended that public relations practitioners produce

²¹⁸ Kristen Lovejoy and Gregory D. Saxton, "Information, Community, and Action: How Nonprofit Organizations Use Social Media," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 17, no. 3 (2012): 337–353.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 341.

specific social media content that allows for building community and calling users to action, such as joining the Turkish Armed Forces and donating to military-related organizations.

B. FUTURE WORK

The Turkish Armed Forces currently have only five official social media accounts, and these accounts strictly limit interaction and feedback. All these accounts fall under the Turkish Armed Forces General Chief of Staff, and no military sub-branch or sub-division, including the Turkish Army, Turkish Navy, or Turkish Air Force, has been permitted to launch its own social media account. One recommendation for future work is to research potential social media utilization by the various branches of the Turkish Armed Forces, starting from the Army, Navy, and Air Force and continuing with their sub-commands. At the same time, this effort should include constructing doctrines and policies for the best utilization of social media in order to execute effective public relations and information operations.

Furthermore, since the Turkish Armed Forces' current social media accounts do not allow public interaction and permit followers to comment (except the Twitter account), the military has limited opportunity to get feedback from social media followers and users. Thus, the other recommendation for future work is to permit and analyze user comments. This would enable the Turkish Armed Forces to ascertain public opinion on the military in real time. It would also enable the Turkish Armed Forces to determine what methods and tactics should be applied to minimize negative commenting and thereby maximize positive relationships and connections with the public and members of the military. This research can start with the Twitter account that currently allows commenting and could proceed with the other social media accounts if the "no comment is allowed policy" changes in the future. Although researchers can perform this analysis manually, they should consider using sentiment analysis tools that allow users to automatically classify the comments as positive, negative, or neutral.

APPENDIX A. TWITTER REMOVAL REQUESTS JULY TO DECEMBER 2016

Removal requests worldwide

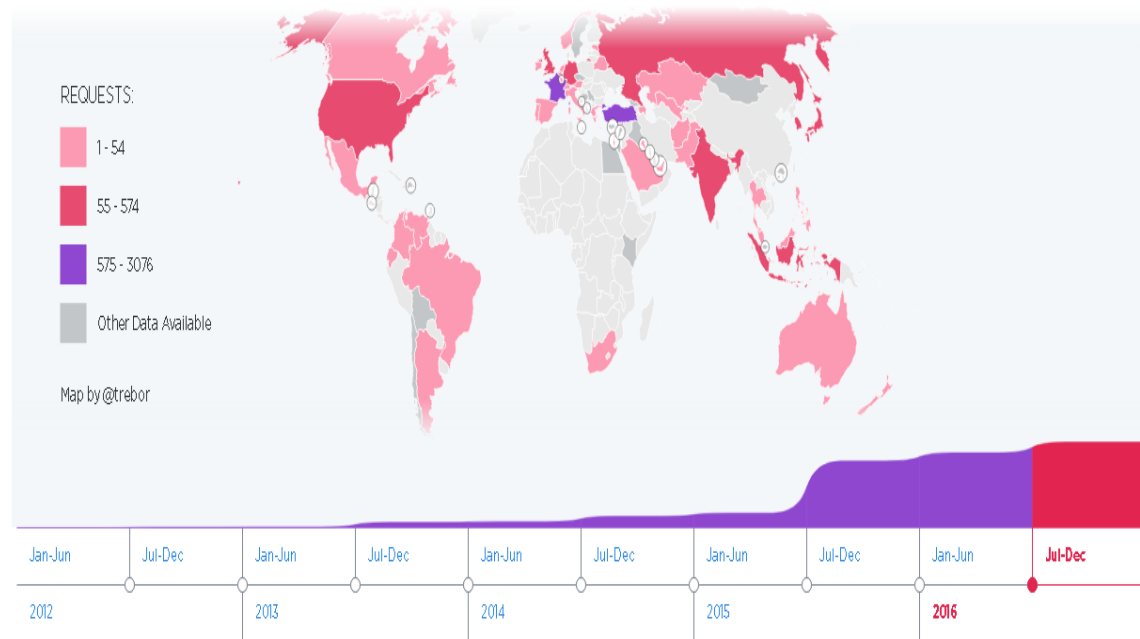


Figure 24. Twitter Removal Requests July to December 2016.²²⁰

²²⁰ “Twitter Removal Requests July to December 2016,” Twitter Inc., accessed June 10, 2017, <https://transparency.twitter.com/en/removal-requests.html#removal-requests-jul-dec-2016>.

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APPENDIX B. TWITTER REMOVAL REQUESTS DETAILS JULY TO DECEMBER 2016

Removal requests

Removal requests - July to December 2016

Removal requests Jul 1 - Dec 31, 2016

Country	Removal requests (court orders)	Removal requests (government agency, police, other)	Percentage where some content withheld	Accounts reported	Accounts withheld	Tweets withheld	Accounts (TOS)
 Turkey	844	2,232	19%	8,417	290	489	544
 Russia	3	519	28%	620	55	89	282
 France	0	1,334	23%	1,430	14	335	298
 United Kingdom	1	65	6%	238	3	16	15
 Brazil	33	14	17%	114	2	15	21
 Germany	0	236	41%	322	2	121	49
 Netherlands	0	3	33%	3	1	2	2
 Egypt	-	-	-	-	0	0	-
 Hong Kong	-	-	-	-	0	0	-
 Iraq	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
 Kenya	-	-	-	-	0	0	-
 Lebanon	-	-	-	-	0	0	-
 Maldives	-	-	-	-	0	0	-

Figure 25. Twitter Removal Requests Details July to December 2016.²²¹

²²¹ Ibid.

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APPENDIX C. TWITTER CONTENT REMOVAL REQUESTS BY GOVERNMENT AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

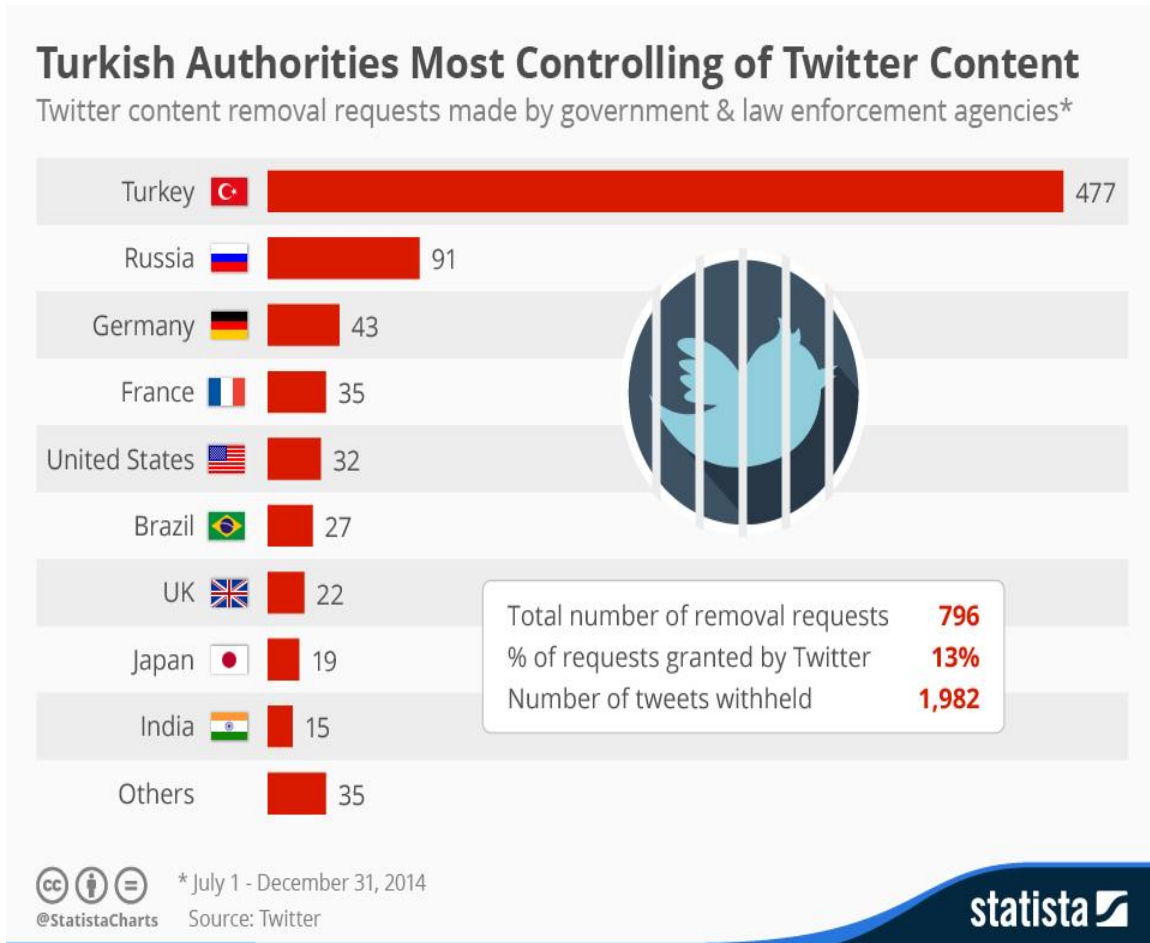


Figure 26. Twitter Content Removal Requests by Government and Law Enforcement Agencies.²²²

²²² Felix Richter, "Turkish Authorities Most Controlling of Twitter Content," Statista Inc., accessed April 17, 2017, <https://www.statista.com/chart/3217/twitter-content-removal-requests/>.

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APPENDIX D. TURKEY DOMINATES GLOBAL TWITTER CENSORSHIP

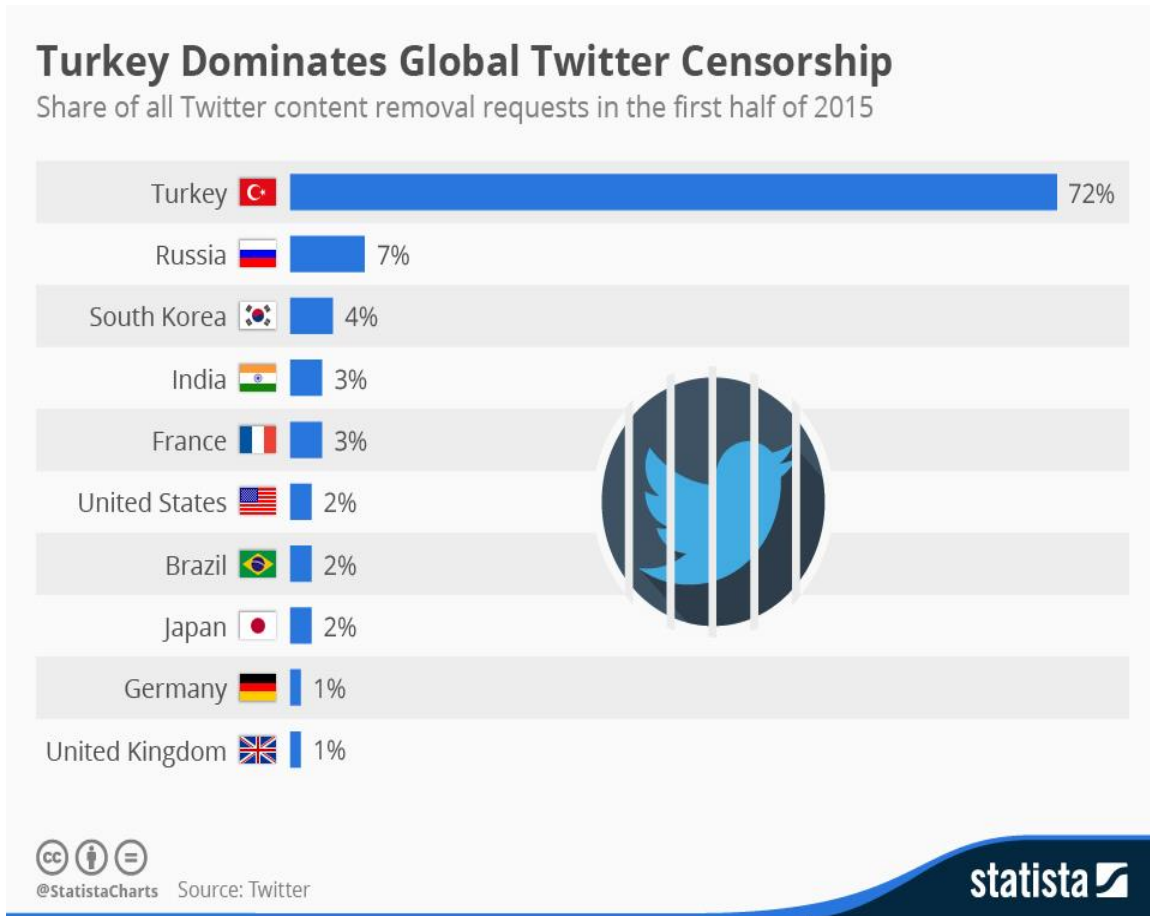


Figure 27. Turkey Dominates Global Twitter Censorship.²²³

²²³ Mathias Brandt, "Turkey Dominates Global Twitter Censorship," Statista Inc., accessed April 17, 2017, <https://www.statista.com/chart/3727/share-of-all-twitter-content-removal-requests/>.

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APPENDIX E. TURKISH AUTHORITIES TOP FOR TWITTER CENSORSHIP

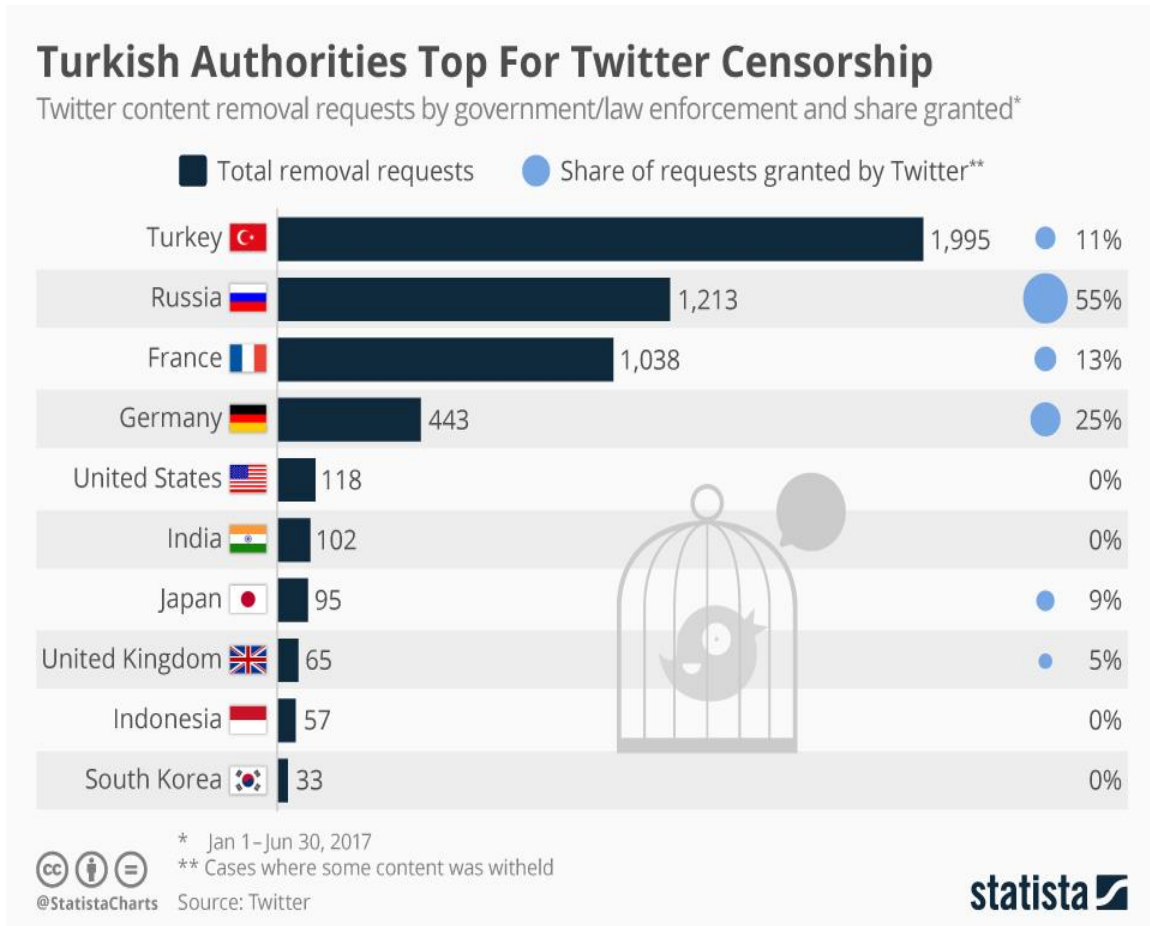


Figure 28. Turkish Authorities Top for Twitter Censorship.²²⁴

²²⁴ Niall McCarthy, “Turkish Authorities Top for Twitter Censorship,” Statista Inc, accessed April 17, 2017, <https://www.statista.com/chart/11177/turkish-authorities-top-for-twitter-censorship/>.

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