

Facebook in Turkey in 2012: Facebook on Printed Media

Ulaş Başar Gezgin¹⁺

¹ Nişantaşı University

Abstract. How did Facebook appear on Turkish printed media in 2012? Is Facebook the panacea or Pandora's box? What were the common themes in news related to Facebook? How did Facebook transform the society, if it did? This paper is based on a review of Facebook-related news that appeared on the top Turkish mainstream newspaper (Hürriyet). It shortly discusses these questions with a focus on news related to Facebook on Turkish printed media. The paper starts with a depiction of the Facebook trends in Turkey and then set out to delineate the appearance of Facebook on Turkish printed media in 2012 which is followed by the conclusion. The paper concludes that the misuse of Facebook (criminal activities and violent incidents) weighs heavier than the intended use of Facebook (alternative media and education functions) in Turkey of 2012.

Keywords: Social Media, Facebook, Popular Culture and Turkey.

1. Facebook Trends in Turkey

According to a recent study, Turkish youth (age range: 15-24) spends 1 hour daily on average on Facebook which is almost all the time spent on Internet. Facebook is the second activity by online users after surfing in Turkey. Official statistics show that in a minute, nearly 700,000 Facebook status updates and nearly 80,000 Facebook shares take place. On the other hand, 16% of young people in Turkey never had Facebook account [1].

52% of Turkish households have computers, while 41% have Internet connection. By this online household trend, it is observed that Internet cafes are not preferred much to connect [2]. (This may have implications for sharing inappropriate content on Facebook.) 85% of children (<18) have a Facebook account with 1/3 younger than 13 years of age [3]. Parent-dependent Facebook accounts for children (≤ 13) are rightly proposed [4].

2. Appearance of Facebook on Turkish Printed Media in 2012

'Facebook' as the search word returns 8,000 results on Hürriyet, the top mainstream newspaper with 1,700 results for 2012 (as of 24 December 2012). In this section, common themes derived from Facebook-related news on Hürriyet are presented.

First of all, it can be observed that Facebook is used as a post-event investigation tool, especially after deaths or criminal activities (e.g. [5]). After suicides, Facebook walls are being checked for the final messages and for collecting data for the legal investigation (e.g. [6]). In one case, thieves were identified via Facebook connections [7]. In another, it was found that a murderer changed his Facebook password to 'massacre' before the murder [8].

Personal data shared on Facebook can lead to sexual abuse, theft, mobbing, fraudulence etc. [9]. Given that Facebook stores personal data, possible misuse or abuse of these data by Facebook for commercial purposes or national security makes users insecure [10]. Furthermore, news telling that Facebook accidentally posted private messages on users' walls (e.g. [11]) and that Facebook posts users' e-mail addresses [21] feed this feeling of insecurity.

It is a common trend among employers to check social media profiles of the applicants. While Facebook is used for private and immediate expressions, this long-term and official consequences have not been taken into account by the users. Facebook group memberships can be checked to get 'a better idea' about the

⁺ Ulaş Başar Gezgin. Tel.: + 90 535 370 33 73;
E-mail address: ulasbasar@gmail.com

applicant that can't be inferred from cv [12]. From a positive perspective, Facebook also increases the chance of getting a job in some other settings. For example, a Facebook user got a TV series job as a consequence of a competition on Facebook [13]. Facebook apps to find a job are promoted by online recruitment websites (e.g. [14]). These apps allow construction of professional profiles.

As it is easier to take photos with the new technologies, visual expressions of users highly developed [15], but not a comprehensive understanding of how photos might be interpreted by others. This explosion of expressivity has even been associated with normality, as it is thought that psychopaths are not willing to share much (cf. [16]). Cases of illegal hunting have been detected due to the photos posted by the hunter(s) on Facebook (e.g. [17]). They have been sanctioned to pay high fees, since they violated hunting regulations. Dog fighting was detected on Facebook photos and punished as well [18]. If they wouldn't post the photos on Facebook, they wouldn't have paid the fines. But the question is; without Facebook, would they be as willing as they are to hunt? This question is meaningful, since people sometimes do something merely for sharing on Facebook.

Facebook has been a platform where users could find their childhood sweethearts. Some of them even divorced and married with them (e.g. [19]). On the other hand, keeping ex-partners on Facebook usually leads to more troubles [20]. In one case, a teenager committed suicide due to the end of Facebook love [21]. In another case, a married woman is thought to commit suicide, after confessing that she had sex with Facebook friends [22]. In a third case, a man shot his wife, since she opened a Facebook account [39]; and in a fourth case, she was not only wounded for the very same reason, but killed [23, 24].

Throughout 2012, stolen Facebook accounts were used by con 'artists' to get money from deceived users [25]. Five separate cases involved lawyers, judges, teachers and a businessman; while three other high profile cases involved two parliamentarians and a mayor separately [26, 27, 28, 29, 30]. In another case, a woman lost a huge sum to a con man that appeared to be a psychic on Facebook [31]. Another tactic by con 'artists' was asking for small sums of money with the promise of paying high returns [32].

Facebook appeared as an arena to force underaged or young female victims to sex and sex trade in various cases (e.g. [32]). It was also an instrument of blackmail by nude or nearly nude photos (e.g. [32]). In cases of indirect aggression, kids have been bullied on Facebook [33, 34]. In some cases, Facebook served as a tool to escalate aggression and anger. In one case, fight on Facebook led to stabbing in real life [35]. In another case, boyfriend of a female Facebook user invited an online harrasser from her account and stabbed him [36]. In another brutal case, a businessman was abducted, tortured and blackmailed by people he met on Facebook [37]; while in a particularly bloody case, A Turkish man who fled from Europe to Turkey due to business-related issues was shot dead by his ex-partner who found his hidden address by Facebook photos of his apartment [38]. Likewise, in the final case, a user's status update moved thieves to rob the house after he departed for another city [39].

A less frequent use of Facebook in Turkey in 2012 was for educational purposes: Two universities provided applications for vocational guidance on Facebook [40], while another university offered access to university library by a Facebook application [41]. On the other hand, teachers who shared photos on Facebook drinking alcohol at a picnic on holiday some years back were investigated by their school, after the photos appeared on printed newspapers by headlines such as 'Scandal at School'. As a response, they are suing the newspaper for defamation [42]. In another case, students who shared questions on Facebook after a central entrance examination were prosecuted and their exams were not processed [43].

3. Conclusion

As presented in the previous section, Facebook-related news are mostly negative. Yet there are a few positive ones such as education news and news about a baby who was fortunately identified and diagnosed at an early stage thanks to Facebook viewers that don't know the parents [44]. However, this didn't take place in Turkey, but in U.S..

Based on how Facebook appeared on printed media, it can be concluded that Facebook was not promising as an alternative news media. Facebook-based independent news was rare. As implied by a Turkish musician, Facebook is far from providing users' own media against the power of the mainstream

media [45]. Negatives of Facebook are stronger than the positives. With the ongoing Facebook policies, technical structure and applications, Facebook would continue to serve as Pandora's Box for the society: Full of evil when opened.

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