

Chapter 20

Political Consumerism and Social Networking Usage: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of the study is to reveal the relations between the internet and social media usage and the basic motives behind the actions and engagements of political consumers departing from the thoughts and individual experiences of scholars. Therefore, the study first draws a framework of the political consumer, political consumerism, and the effects of political consumerism. Then it investigates the link between the internet and social media use and the aforementioned concepts. In other words, the purpose of the study is to analyze the extent to which internet and social media use and increase the likelihood of engaging in political consumerism through the method of a case study. As a method of sampling, quota sampling method was chosen. The in-depth interviews were performed in a semi-structured form to maintain the coherence and details. The results of this study and similar studies are thought to be beneficial for improving the quality of life for consumers, corporations, and governments related to agenda setting and policy making.

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INTRODUCTION

Consuming, consumption and consumption-oriented lifestyle and its process has been phenomenon societal, political and financial arguments in recent years. Since the concept consumption is described as purchasing, utilization and destroying of products and services; it has expanded by ongoing financial issues such as selection, purchasing, utilization, questioning, repairing after purchasing and maintenance; environmental and ethical qualities of the products purchased by customers, practices of the companies and various societal demands regarding the production conditions, along with societal and financial developments stemming from globalization and increasing welfare.

Along with globalization, markets have become fields that various societal groups and consumer citizens express their citizenship rights in different ways, rather than being limited product and service exchange fields between suppliers and consumers.

Demands occurring depending on different products and services can be aimed both to governments to have the necessary regulations made and to companies directly. Consumer citizens can impose effective enforcements by using their purchasing power in societal movements. Societal movement organizations put their participants' consumption preferences forward and integrate them to the level of creating pressure on producers/manufacturers. Integrated financial markets and developed digital/social networks provide instant communication. Television, mobile phone and internet have transformed the interrelation of consumer citizens and have helped the problem of ubiquitousness to be achieved. This issue has led to dispersion of events from their local environment and the crumbling of the unity of time and location.

As a result of lesser importance of physical distance by technological developments, individuals in modernizing process have gone beyond the limited area that they live, have departed from their traditional way of living and have begun to show themselves as a member of the group that they belong to. This issue has proved the reality of individualism and individuals have been on the rise. Apart from being members of social groups, classes and communities; approaching individuals in line with their own rights has become more applicable.

Individuals as consumers have looked for ways to make their existence more meaningful by shaping their lifestyles based on their purchasing power and using their freedom of preference in a market that they purchased products/services. As a result of this, novice consumption-related movements, especially environmental movements has provided ethical and political correctness aspect through developing a responsible, eco-friendly and conscious insight. This notion, which has essentially started as a movement towards consumer sovereignty within an advanced capitalist system has evolved into consumer citizenship that individuals consider consumption as a political, societal and environmental activity (Isin, E. & Wood, K. 1999: 138).

Consumer citizen possesses an individual portrait of ability to make preferences based on ethical, societal, financial and environmental ideas and can actively participate into protecting fair and sustainable development through paying attention in local, national and global levels and being aware of his/her responsibilities.

It is necessary for individuals to be aware of their rights and responsibilities as citizens, consumers and workers. Being a consumer and citizen who can access information and make use of it requires displaying socially responsible behaviours including critical awareness, action and devotion, societal and environmental responsibility and global solidarity.

Consumers who can display such behaviours have the power of affecting the market and internalize the awareness and responsibility accompanied by fulfilling the duty of being fair. This responsibility

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