

Chapter 62

Digitalization of Labor: Women Making Sales Through Instagram and Knitting Accounts

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ABSTRACT

The digital culture created by the new media shows itself in most of today's everyday life practices. Displacing the social structure, the digital culture also led to the digitalization of labor. In fact, while many products can be sold through Instagram today in Turkey, there are lots of accounts (pages) where handmade products (blankets, baby clothes, bags, pencil cases, etc.) are sold and many women who contribute to family budget, as well. Thus, the subject of this research is to study the knitting accounts which belong to the women making sales through Instagram. That way, it has been aimed to understand that how labor becomes digitalized by Instagram. The accounts which are making sales through Instagram and will be studied in the research are as follows: orgu.battaniyemmm, bebek_orgu_evi, and orgu_sepeti. Within the scope of this research, semi-structured in-depth interviews will be made with the owners of mentioned accounts, and through these accounts, it will be revealed that how digital culture makes labor a commodity and how digitalizes it.

INTRODUCTION

It is very clear that the new media is a new and effective form of communication. Through new media environments, social practices, like the social structure, are changing and transforming. The emerged digital culture, while characterizing a new social culture, carries global and technological elements within it. Everyone agrees at the point of the intense inclusion of new media environments in everyday life. That is to say, from computer games to online journalism to social media platforms, today's environment represents the rituals of everyday life.

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Nowadays, when people can communicate with their neighbours through new media, it is essential to think about the effect that digital cultures have on the social structure and individual practices. Because with digitalization, even work has become a digital form. For instance, Instagram, which has emerged as a photo sharing application, also describes a digital platform on which your labour is sold today. Women who sell handcrafts through Instagram accounts and contribute to the family budget are important actors in this process and show us how to digitalize their labour through Instagram.

Therefore, the subject of this study is the digitalization of labour through Instagram. Thus, it will be understood how this process is like. At this point, we should mention that not only handcraft but also many ready-to-use products are sold through Instagram, and there are also many corporate and non-corporate (individual) accounts. In our study entitled “*Perceptive of Consumption Changing with New Media: Women’s Shopping Practice via Instagram*” (Yegen and Yanık, 2015), it was observed that women purchased many products such as mobile phone accessories, shoes, clothes, and that the Instagram has become a market place for production and consumption. Along with this, there are some other studies claimed the same phenomenon. For example, Lavoie (2015, p. 79) believes Instagram has become an increasingly popular “business” and “communication” tool. In this context, the sale of handmade products through Instagram can be interpreted as an indication that Instagram is today a medium of business and communication.

It is important that the study focuses on this issue, as it is important to know how your labour has changed and transformed in digital media and become a commodity. Therefore, the aim of the study is to understand the transformation of digital media in terms of the users who sell their handcrafts through Instagram. For this reason, the study is not only of a subjective quality, but also contributes to the studies related with digital culture. In this study, new media and digital cultures were discussed at theoretical part, 3(three) media accounts with high number of followers selected by random sampling which sale knitting handcrafts through Instagram. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with the account holders. Limited with the study, 3 (three) knitting accounts were examined and the handcraft products which are outstanding were presented and the obtained data were recorded by the author in electronic form. In the study, five (5) Instagram users selected with random sampling were interviewed on sales of handcrafts through Instagram.

DIGITAL CULTURE

The new media has become widespread in recent years and has brought new communication possibilities like Social Network Service (SNS) and Smart Phones to our lives. The new media, which generate new technologies and new communication opportunities (Chang, 2014) for the disadvantaged segments in society (hearing impaired, elderly etc.), have gained momentum with globalization and create new media environments (Vaagan, 2008, Abrahamson, 2000), a new culture “Digital culture” (Darley, 2000). Today, many new media tools such as movies, games, videos are presenting digital culture.

Digital culture is deeply expressed in electronic or digital media, because it does not only express a technological practice, but also social arrangements and practices (Deuze, 2005, pp. 4-5). As the world becomes more and more digital, it is claimed that the digital field will probably become the first and only existing field. According to these approaches, it is predicted that there will be no non-numerical area in the coming years (Rosati, 2012). It is very clear that digital technology changes all areas of life (Yates, 2016). Digital culture has created a new structure in society. This is an interactive structure emerged by

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