

## **Relationship Between Influencers and Generation Z: Following and Interest Levels in The Pandemic Process**

**Zeynep ALKAN**

Near East University

Faculty of Communication, Department of Public Relations & Advertising

Nicosia, Cyprus

[zeynep.alkan@neu.edu.tr](mailto:zeynep.alkan@neu.edu.tr)

**Sevilay ULAŞ**

Çankaya University

Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences

Ankara, Turkey

[sevilay.ulas@cankaya.edu.tr](mailto:sevilay.ulas@cankaya.edu.tr)

### **Abstract**

Influencers stand out especially in communication activities where the brands and institutions try to reach the targeted audience. This study aims to evaluate the Z generation and influencer communication during the pandemic. The research was held on the influencer following practices of influencer following Z generation sample living in Northern Cyprus. Semi-structured questions were used through online interviews between 1 and 30 April. The findings concluded that the Z generation is most actively involved in Instagram, mostly follow influencers on Instagram, spends 1 to 5 hours on social media platforms and the expression “to spend free time” were encountered as a reason for following influencers. Influencer following reasons have not changed during the Covid-19 pandemic and the interest towards influencers has been at the same rate compared to pre-pandemic period. The participants have also observed that the posts of the influencers have increased during the pandemic.

**Keywords:** Covid-19 Pandemic, Influencer, Influencer Communication, Influencers - Generation Z, Generation Z, Social Media - Generation Z.

## **Influencer'lar ve Z Kuşağı Arasındaki İlişki: Pandemi Sürecinde Takip ve İlgi Düzeyleri**

### **Özet**

Influencerlar özellikle marka ve kurumların hedeflenen kitleye ulaşmaya çalıştığı iletişim faaliyetlerinde öne çıkmaktadır. Bu çalışma, pandemi sürecinde Z kuşağı ve influencer iletişimini değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta yaşayan Z kuşağı örneğini takip eden influencer uygulamalarını takip eden influencer üzerine bir araştırma yapılmıştır. 1-30 Nisan tarihleri arasında online görüşmeler yoluyla yarı yapılandırılmış sorular kullanılmıştır. Bulgular, Z kuşağının en aktif olarak Instagram'da yer aldığı, Instagram'da en çok influencer'ları takip ettiği, sosyal medya platformlarında 1 ila 5 saat geçirdiği ve influencerları takip etme nedeni olarak "boş zaman geçirmek" ifadesine rastlandığı sonucuna varıldı. Covid-19 pandemisi sırasında influencer takip nedenleri değişmedi ve influencerlara olan ilgi pandemi öncesi döneme göre aynı oranda oldu. Ayrıca katılımcılar pandemi döneminde influencerların paylaşımlarının arttığını gözlemledi.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Covid-19 Pandemisi, Influencer, Influencer İletişimi, Influencerlar ve Z Kuşağı, Z Kuşağı, Sosyal Medya ve Z Kuşağı.

### **Introduction**

The corona virus, which emerged in the recent past, has become an epidemic that has affected the whole world as of 2020. The impact of covid-19, which continues today, has caused changes and transformations in our daily life practices. In line with the decisions taken throughout the countries, people had to stay in their homes and be isolated. Therefore, it is seen that individuals take a more active role in social media platforms. In this context, brands and institutions need to promote their products on social media platforms to reach the target audience. Therefore, social media has become very popular as a communication tool within the Covid-19 period. One of the main factors that provided the popularity of these applications are influencers, with a communication process that takes place through these influencers. Influencers are defined as people who share their product or brand experiences with their followers through social media platforms aiming to increase the purchasing action within the target audience (Ulaş & Alkan, 2020). In short words, influencers are people who produce content on social media platforms. (Ulaş & Alkan, 2022).

Generation Z, born into technological developments, seems to be more active in the process of interacting through social media platforms compared to other generations. The life practices of the Z generation are realized through applications dominated by the internet. They benefit from social media platforms at the point of getting an information about a product or

brand. Influencers are seen as a means of communication for this generation as they care about reaching information quickly. Therefore, it is important for the Z generation that influencers convey their positive or negative opinions about the product in a short time. The reason for this is that they are a generation that does not want to waste time. It is seen that the understanding of advertising in the traditional media is insufficient to appeal to the Z generation. Generation Z is defined in the literature as a generation that attaches great importance to "authenticity". Therefore, they consider it more valuable to listen to the life practices of sincere and authentic people. In this context, the way to reach the Z generation passes through influencer collaborations and digital platforms. It is thought that the Z generation were more active in the social media and more interested in influencers during the pandemic process than other periods.

## **Literature Review**

### **Pandemic and Influencers**

The corona virus (covid-19), which has affected the world in the recent past and continues its effect today, is defined as SARS-CoV-2 by the World Health Organization. Covid-19 is expressed by experts as a new type of infectious disease. It is seen that the corona virus affects the "sinuses, nose and throat", which is attributed to the upper respiratory tract, and the "trachea and lungs" in the lower respiratory tract. In this context, it has been determined that in addition to respiratory disorders, many symptoms such as fever, dry cough, and tiredness are also encountered in covid-19 (WHO, 2020a; Fauci et. al, 2020; Pathak, 2021; Liu et al., 2020).

It is stated that the corona virus first appeared in the last days of December 2019, in a market area where wholesale of seafood takes place in Wuhan city of Hubei province of China. At this point, it has been determined that the corona virus is a type of virus found in animals. As of 2019, it has been stated that it is a member of a kind of infected virus family that can be encountered in other living species, especially humans. Therefore, it is seen that covid-19 has spread rapidly from person to person since its emergence. In this direction, it has been stated by the World Health Organization that as of March 11, 2020, covid-19 has turned into a pandemic worldwide (Evren & Us, 2020:9; WHO, 2020a; WHO, 2020b; Huang & Pranata, 2020; Çöl & Güneş, 2020; Republic of Turkey Ministry of Health, 2020).

With the declaration of the corona virus as a pandemic, it has caused changes in our life practices. In this context, the closure of people in their homes to protect themselves from the virus and the restrictions imposed by the authorized units have allowed individuals to spend more time in social media applications (Alkan & Ulaş, 2021a). Events that need to be physically

attended by individuals have been postponed due to pandemic conditions. In this context, it is seen that brands focused on individuals through social media platforms and influencers to promote their products during the pandemic process. Robin Ward stated that influencers generally produce outdoor content for product and brand promotion. In addition, he also stated that in the environment of uncertainty arising from the pandemic, a rapid transformation period was entered within the sector with the effect of the performance of influencers in influencer collaborations. Despite the awareness of the importance of influencers in the digital world, they have gained even more value with the pandemic. It has been determined that the brands on the WARC platform have allocated 40% of their resources in line with their influencer collaborations during the pandemic process in 2020. On the other hand, it has been seen that a fashion brand that cooperated with an influencer has gained momentum by 165% from the beginning of the pandemic to the present and doubled its sales. (Ward, 2021; Frolov, 2021; Mizrahi et. al., 2020).

### **Generation Z and Influencers**

Technological developments in the global context have paved the way for the emergence of a new generation. At this point, the technological developments that came to the fore at the beginning of the 2000s also revealed the Z generation. In other words, people born in the year 2000 and after, are referred to as Generation Z. When we look at the literature, it is seen that there is no common decision on the starting year of people born in the Z generation. In this context, there are opinions that it emerged in the 2000s according to some studies and in 1995 according to others. Generation Z is also defined as "Internet Generation", "Next Generation" or "Instant Online" in the literature due to being born in a completely digital age. (Aydın & Başol, 2014). In addition, it is seen that Prensky describes the Z generation as "Digital Natives" in his works. (Prensky, 2001). Generally, when we look at the family structure of the generation Z, it is stated that they grow up in families where the number of siblings are low, and for this reason, they are weaker than other generations in terms of human relations and socialization. On the other hand, it is said that individuals belonging to the generation Z have an entrepreneurial structure compared to other generations (Arar, 2016).

Definitions regarding Generation Z are given below in table 1.

Authors	Definitions of the Generation Z
(Alkan & Ulaş, 2021a).	Although the Z generation is the generation born within the 21st century; They are interpreted as the first generation to grow up without a clear distinction between online and offline reality.
(Rickes, 2016).	The generation in question is defined as the z generation as well as “postmillennials, plurals, sharing generation and iGen”.
(Van den Bergh & Behrer, 2016).	Being impatient, emotional, accepting their mistakes, dreaming of building a good world, being emoji-onal and having a developed visual perception are considering to be the main characteristics of the members of the Z generation.
(Gardner & Davis, 2013).	Due to its relationship with technology, the Z generation is also defined as the "App Generation".
(Greenfield, 2008).	Generation Z, which is at the center of the modern digital era; can be described as a native of the digital era.
(Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005).	Generation Z is also referred to as the "Net Generation". In this context, they are people associated with concepts such as speed of access to information, unlimited access to digital technology, and immediacy. They can be characterised as a generation that is open-minded and wants to stay in touch with social differences.

**Table 1:** Definitions of Generation Z.

When we look at the features that distinguish the members of Generation Z, from other generations; In the first place, it is seen that technological tools such as tablets, computers and smart phones come to the fore in life practices. In this context, the Z generation has a dominance over technological devices. Therefore, it can be said that they can use technological tools well and take a more active part in accessing and interpreting information. In other words, it is seen that the members of the generation Z take an active role in the process of interacting and communicating through social media platforms that are included in our lives as a result of the new media. At this point, it has been stated that individuals belonging to this generation prefer to live alone and have a structure focused on acting with ambitious and materialistic thoughts. At the same time, there are statements that they enjoy producing innovations, are trustworthy but difficult to satisfy, and thus experience indecision (Çetin & Karalar, 2016; Tuncer & Tuncer, 2016; Seymen, 2017; Bencsik et. al., 2016; Thompson & Gregory, 2012; Suleman & Nelson, 2011).

The characteristics of the Z generation are given in table 2.

Generation Z Characteristics	
Using advanced technology,	The spirit of unity and togetherness
5 screens open and sharing at the same time	Working to succeed and win
Active and volunteer	Realistic
Believe in unity and togetherness	Focused on the future
Self-confident	Being humble
Communicating with images/videos and visuals	Creator of materials and subjects

**Table 2:** Generation Z Characteristics (Seymen, 2017).

Generation Z, which is so associated with technology, tend to carry their technological tools with them. In this context, they actively participate on the internet and provide instant satisfaction. Therefore, Generation Z needs to be in communication and interaction with the environment and with the world at the same time. In other words, generation Z is attributed as the representatives in an "always connected" world over the internet and social networks (Seymour, 2019; Van Loggerenberg & Lechuti, 2018; Duffett, 2020; Francis & Hoelef, 2018; Turner, 2015). It is seen that the situation of the generation Z realizing their life practices and communication process through virtual environments affects the social, interpersonal, and listening skills of individuals (Tulgan, 2013). In this context, it is said that the distraction of the members of the generation Z is more than the other generations. Therefore, they prefer faster advertising content. Otherwise, their interest in the promoted products and brands are easily distracted (Stuckney, 2016). In other words, they do not show a patient approach to content that they do not see entertaining or valuable as information. Accordingly, they quickly pass through the posts that do not make them laugh or convey information about their life experiences. Therefore, brands should turn to shorter-term posts when creating product contents (Formost, 2021). In other words, Generation Z prefers interaction via video. On the other hand, they expect videos to be fast and clear within eight seconds. This is due to their shorter attention span (Strickland & Pithey, 2019).

In this direction, it is important for the Z generation to witness the experience process and to realize the advertisement quickly. At this point, it is thought that influencers, who are attributed because of the transformation process in the technological context, dominate the generation Z. (Wolf, 2020). It is seen that the individuals of Generation Z prefer digital advertisements where transparency and originality are at the forefront, instead of the traditional advertising approach carried out by brands. (Shopltk, 2021). Influencer collaborations are

considered important for this generation. This is because it is difficult to reach the generation Z through traditional media channels. In this context, it is necessary to benefit from new media tools and environments (NACS, 2020). Generation Z needs a real voice that shares product, purchase, and life experiences. This need is met by influencers who have been brought to the "friend" position by their followers (Shopltk, 2021). Generation Z attaches importance to the "authenticity" feature in influencers. The fact that influencers have detailed information about the product and brand they promote, ensures the trust of the Z generation. In a study conducted by Morningconsult.com, it was found that influencers are popular among individuals belonging to the Z generation (Adfluence, 2021). Generation Z wants to see people who produce various content related to a product promotion. In this case, influencers are followed by generation z in terms of reflecting their different experiences (Formost, 2021).

The expectations of the Z generation from the influencers are original content production, an honest approach, uniqueness, association between the product and the influencer, acting naturally like themselves, and finally not making statements that they earn a monetary income. While it is seen that sincerity is at the basis of the relationship between Generation Z and influencer, individuals also associate influencers with their own lifestyles, preferred brands, and products. On the other hand, it is stated that the attractiveness of influencers is among the reasons for them to be followed. (Wolf, 2020). In addition, Generation Z wants to interact with influencer brand collaborations they see on social media platforms with elements such as "touch, swipe and click". Therefore, they attach importance to interaction (Kim, 2021; Djafarova & Bowes, 2020). Women belonging to the generation Z stated that their influencer content is more memorable. In this regard, it was concluded that one of the four women in the generation Z obtained information about a new brand and product through an influencer (CKitchen, 2020).

The result of the research on the habits of the Z generation is given in Table 3.

Statistics on Advertising and Social Media Habits of Generation Z
78% of the Z generation attaches importance to the originality of the brands that give their advertising content.
54% of Generation Z research on social media platforms before making a purchase.
Generation Z is quite successful in recognizing the unnatural brand experience process.
63% of Gen Z states that they are influenced by the content offered by Google Ads.
65% of Generation Z admit that they make purchases in line with the recommendations of influencers.

**Table 3:** Statistics on Advertising and social media Habits of Generation Z (Pritchard, 2019).

According to a study, it has been determined that 52% of Generation Z trust the influencers they follow. In this context, the fact that influencers share a product review, arrange live broadcasts, or share staged posts shows that they are reliable enough to have a buying effect on their followers (Shopltk, 2021; Glacier Team, 2018). According to the research conducted by Kantar, it has been determined that 44% of the Generation Z decide to buy based on the product recommendation of the influencer. In addition, another study by Survey Monkey revealed that 58% of Generation Z shop in line with the ideas and suggestions of the influence (Adfluence, 2021).

Influencers are described as people who create authority and trust over their followers. In this context, it has been revealed that 60% of the Generation Z are more interested in products and brands recommended by influencers. In addition, influencers provide effective access through social media platforms. Therefore, it not only increases reliability, but also leads to purchase and also increases brand awareness (Hernández, 2021).

According to McKinsey and Company's research, Generation Z is more willing to buy for personalized product promotions and products that highlight their individuality. On the other hand, Morning Consult's latest Influencer Report revealed that 52% of Generation Z trust influencers on social media platforms to get advice about products or brands (Fontein, 2019). According to Morning Consult's research, it was determined that 16% of generation Z men and 24% of generation z women received purchasing advice from influencers (Padfield, 2021).

## **Methods**

### **Subject of Research**

Along with the pandemic, changes are observed in our personal practices and in the way, brands target their audience through communication activities. As a result, the covid-19 process has enabled influencers to gain momentum day by day. In the context of this research, the focus is on the social media usage practices and influencer following practices of the Generation Z, which has adapted to the digital transformation, especially during the pandemic period.

### **Purpose of The Research**

In this study, it is aimed to reveal the evaluation of the generation Z and influencer communication during the pandemic period. In this direction, an evaluation was made on the influencer tracking practices for the influencer following generation Z individuals living in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.



## **Importance of The Study**

The limited number of studies in the field related to the generation Z, influencer, covid-19 period, and the effectiveness of the data the study will reveal are considered to be the importance of the study.

## **Research Method**

In line with this study, the qualitative research method under the umbrella of social sciences is considered appropriate. In this context, methods such as observation, interview, and document analysis regarding the solution of a problem are used in qualitative research (Seale, 1999). In line with the qualitative research method, interview was deemed appropriate as a data collection tool. In this framework, data were collected online through semi-structured forms. In the semi-structured interview type, the researcher determines the questions or topics before the interview in the context of the subject and undertakes the role of guidance. Semi-structured interview offers the opportunity to go in-depth in the context (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2018). Within the scope of the study, thirty people from the generation Z who live in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and follow influencers were interviewed online with a semi-structured questionnaire between 1 and 30 April 2021.

The universe of the research is consisted of generation Z. In this direction, the sample of the study consists of the generation Z who follows the influencer and lives in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. In this framework, in line with the universe of the research, a preliminary interview was conducted with the people who could be included in the sample group in line with the purpose of the study. In this direction, semi-structured questionnaires were created by making use of the relevant literature. In order for the questionnaire to be a pilot study, interviews were conducted with a sample group regarding the questions. In this context, the questions were revised again. The revised semi-structured questionnaire that was created was also applied to the determined sample group in an online environment.

## **Research Questions**

To reveal an assessment of the relationship between generation Z and influencers, the relevant questions were created within the scope of the research, considering the level of followings and interests in the pandemic process.

In this context, the questions are as follows.

1. Are there any changes in the influencer following practices of the Z generation before and after the pandemic?
2. Do people who follow influencers actively use social media?
3. From which social media channels do the Z generation follow influencers?
4. Are the amounts of time spent on social media and influencers are same?

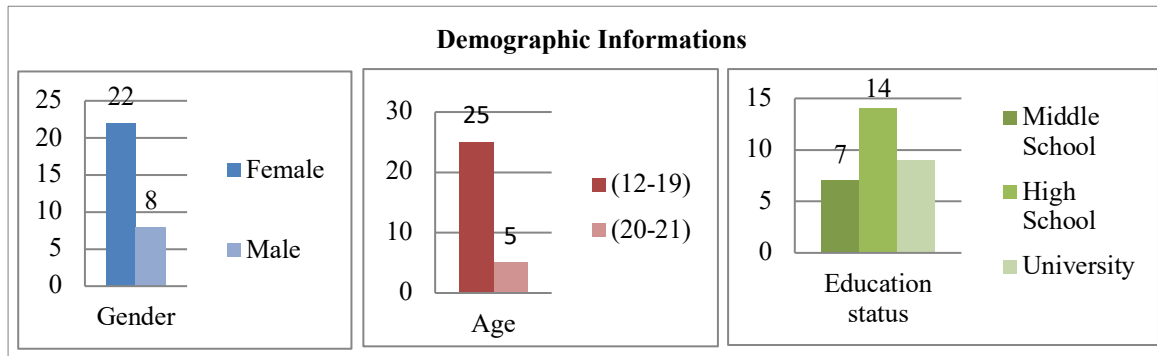
### Limitations of The Research

Due to its nature, the research includes certain limitations. In this direction, in order to reach the sample, the research was limited to thirty people living in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus belonging to the generation Z. In this context, the research was limited to be conducted between 1-30 April 2021.

### Findings

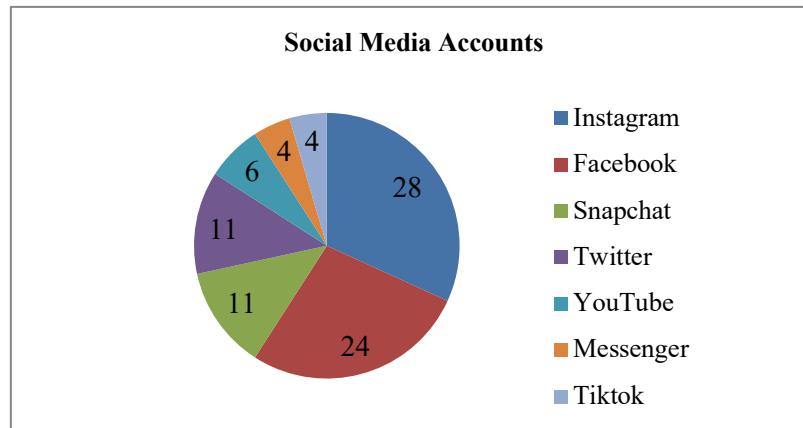
Considering the gender of the generation Z participants of the study:

Twenty-two of the thirty people were girls and eight were boys. Twenty-five of the participants were between the ages of twelve and nineteen, and five of them were between the ages of twenty and twenty-one. When the education level was examined, seven secondary school, fourteen high school and nine university students were identified (see table 4).



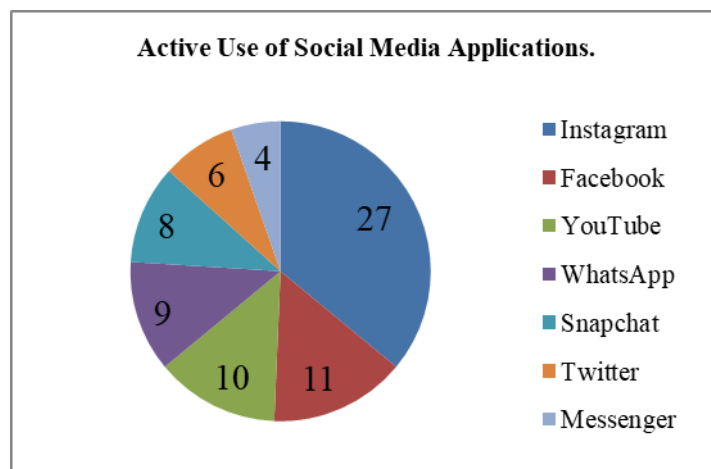
**Table 4:** Demographic Informations

Considering the question about which social media applications the Z generation has an account in: It has been determined that twenty-eight out of thirty people prefer the Instagram application. Twenty-four of the thirty people followed Facebook, eleven Snapchat, eleven Twitter, six YouTube, four Messenger, four Tiktok, three Pinterest, two Discord, and one Twitch, Reddit, Telegram, Skype. In this context, it is witnessed that thirty participants have accounts in more than one social media application (see table 5).



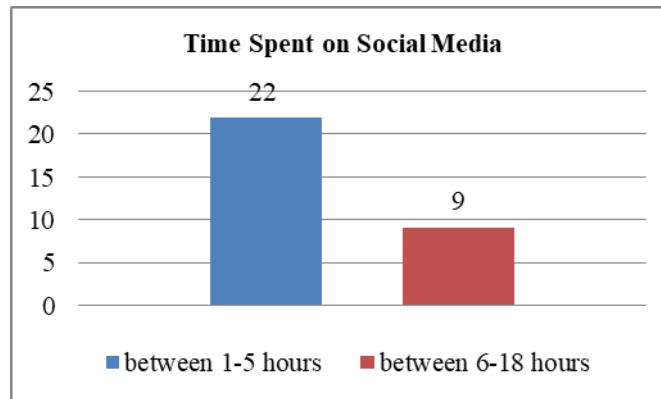
**Table 5:** Social Media Accounts.

Which social media applications the Z generation actively uses: It has been determined that twenty-seven out of thirty people use Instagram, eleven use Facebook, nine use WhatsApp, eight use Snapchat, six use Twitter, four use Messenger, three use Tiktok, and two use discord. In addition, it has been seen that one person each uses Twitter, Twitch, Reddit and Telegram applications. In this context, it is witnessed that thirty participants are actively involved in more than one social media application (see table 6).

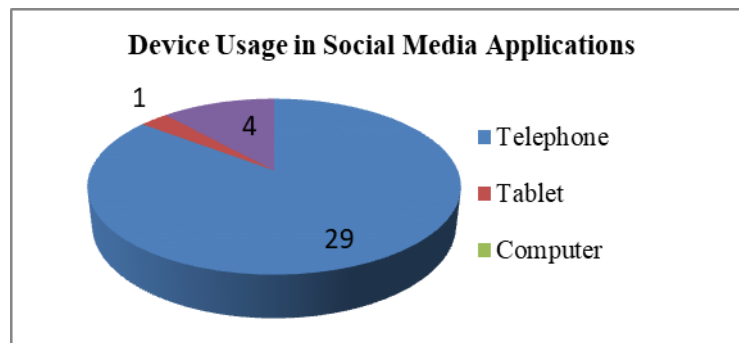


**Table 6:** Active Use of Social Media Applications.

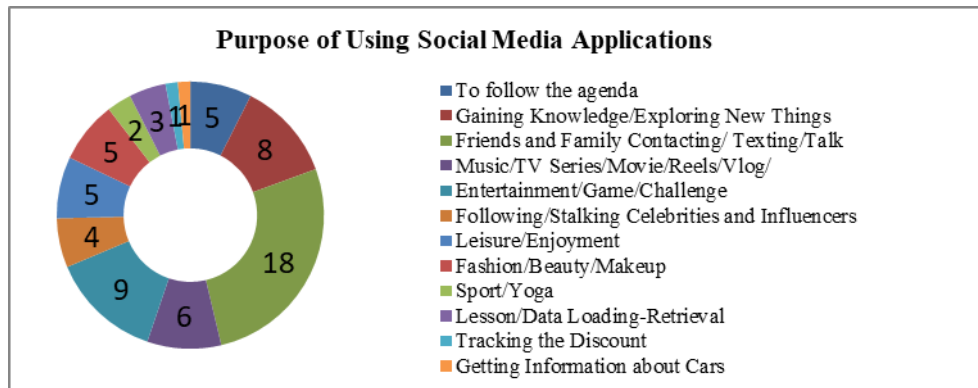
In the context of the question about how many hours a day Gen Z spends on social media applications on average: It was determined that twenty-two of the thirty people spent between 1-5 hours and nine of them between 6-18 hours (see table 7).

**Table 7:** Time Spent on Social Media

The device usage of the Z generation in social media applications: It is seen that twenty-nine out of thirty people use social media applications over the phone. Four people use it both on the phone and on the computer. It was determined that one person also logged into social media platforms via a tablet (see table 8).

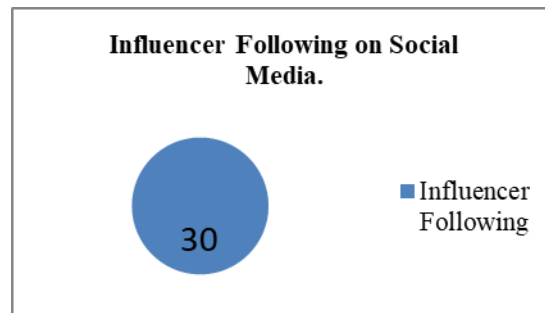
**Table 8:** Device Usage in Social Media Applications

The purpose of using social media applications of the generation Z: Eighteen out of thirty people prefer it to "communicate, text and talk with friends and family". Nine people use it for their "entertainment, game and challenge". It is observed that eight people use social media applications to "gain information and discover new things at the same time". In addition to this, respectively, "fashion, beauty, makeup", "following the agenda", "spending time and enjoying", "following celebrities and influencers, stalking", "music, TV series, movies, reels, vlog", "lesson, data download-receiving", "sports-yoga", "following discounts", "getting information about cars" are also among the purposes (see table 9).



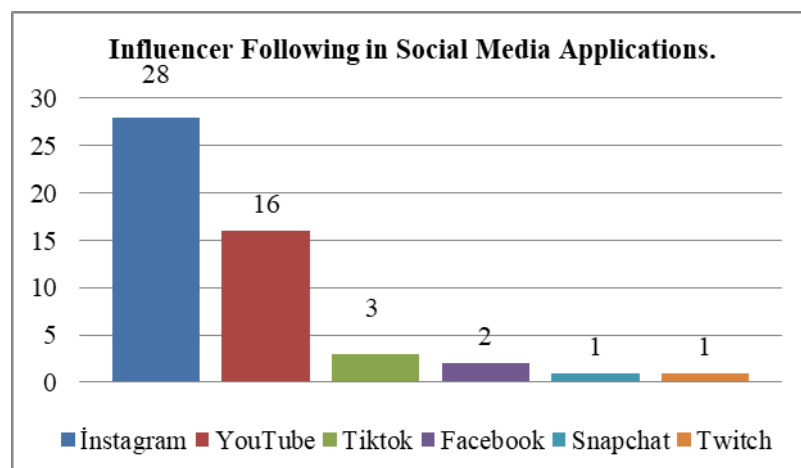
**Table 9:** Purpose of Using Social Media Applications.

The influencer following generation Z: Thirty participants were also found to follow influencers (see table 10).



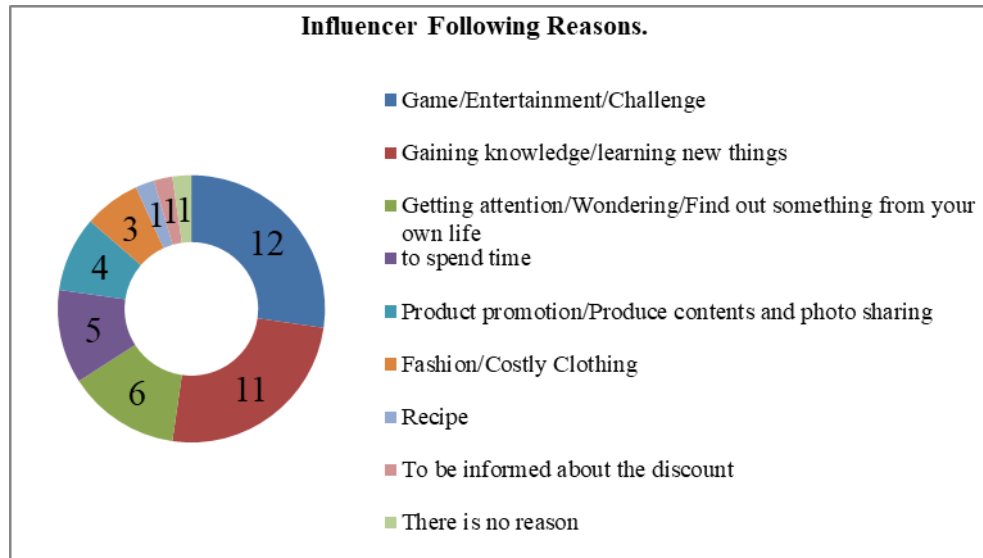
**Table 10:** Influencer Following on Social Media.

In which social media applications does the generation Z individuals follow the influencer: Twenty-eight of the thirty people were found to prefer Instagram. In addition, it was determined that sixteen people prefer YouTube, three people prefer Tiktok, two people prefer Facebook, and one person prefer Snapchat and Twitch (see table 11).

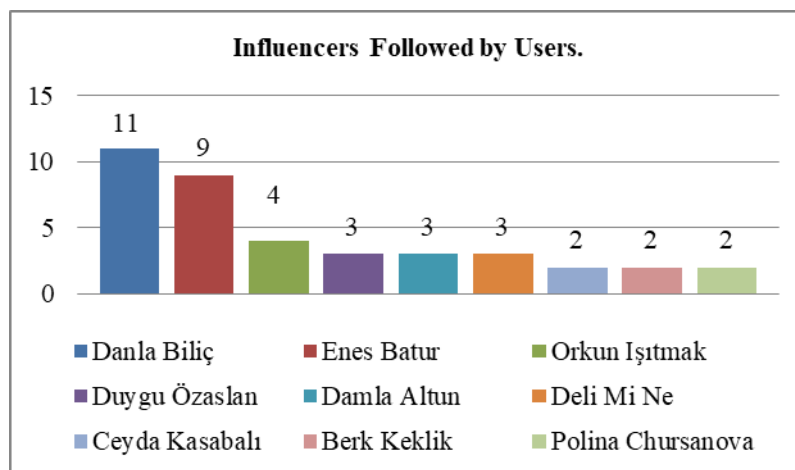


**Table 11: Influencer Following in Social Media Applications.**

The reasons for generation Z individuals following the influencer: “Game/entertainment/challenge” came to the fore as the most among reasons for following the influencer with thirty responses. This was followed by “gaining knowledge/learning new things”. The expression “there is no reason” among the reasons for following the influencer also draws attention within the scope of the study (see table 12).

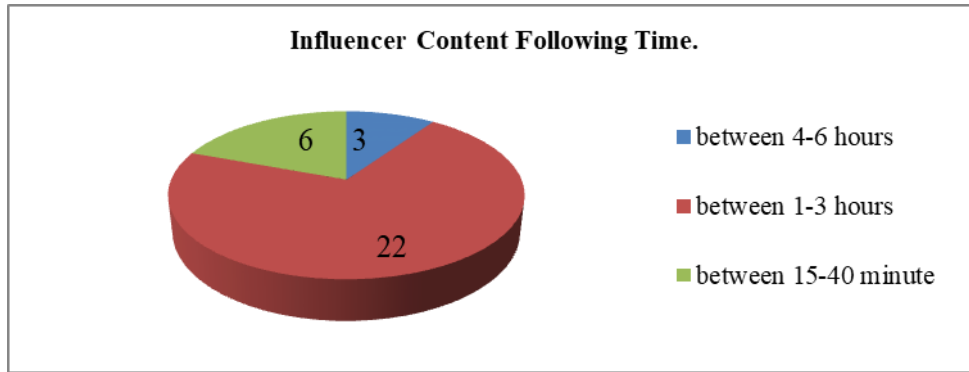
**Table 12: Influencer Following Reasons**

Which influencers does the generation Z follow: It was mostly identified as Danla Biliç. This was followed by Enes Batur and Orkun Işıtmak (see table 13).

**Table 13: Influencers Followed by Users.**

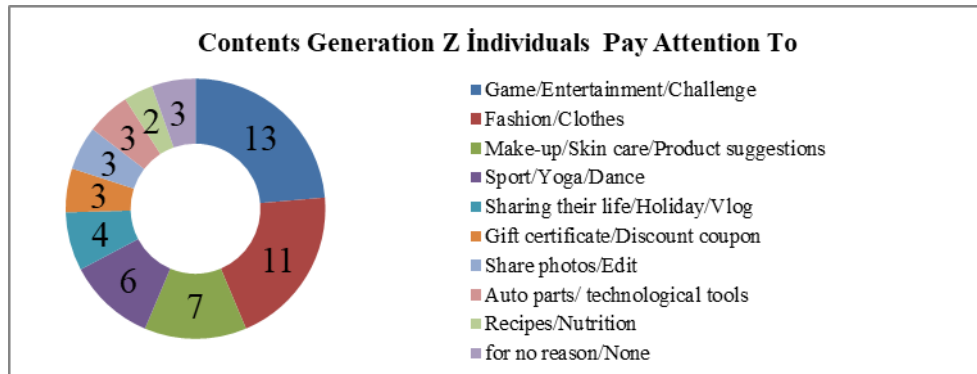
The time spent on following influencers content: It has been concluded that the Z generation individuals follow the content sharing of the influencers for a maximum of 1-3

hours. In line with the study, it was determined that six people followed the influencer for 15-40 minutes and three people for 4-6 hours (see table 14).



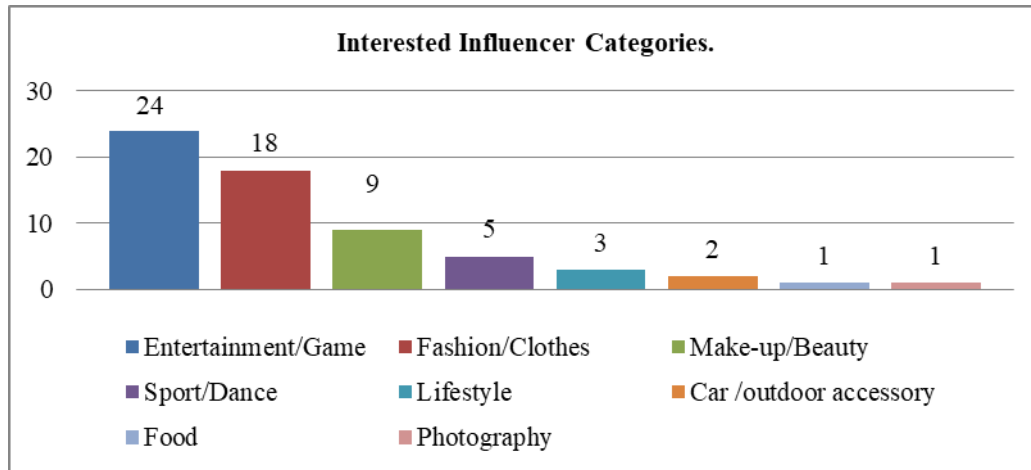
**Table 14:** Influencer Content following Time.

Which influencer contents does the Generation Z individuals pay attention to: It has been concluded that they mostly pay attention to the "game/entertainment/challenge" content. In this context, it is seen that "clothing" and "make-up/skin care/product recommendations" are among the prominent contents, respectively. In addition, it has been stated by some of generation Z participants that they follow influencers "for no reason", so they do not pay attention to any of their shared content (see table 15).



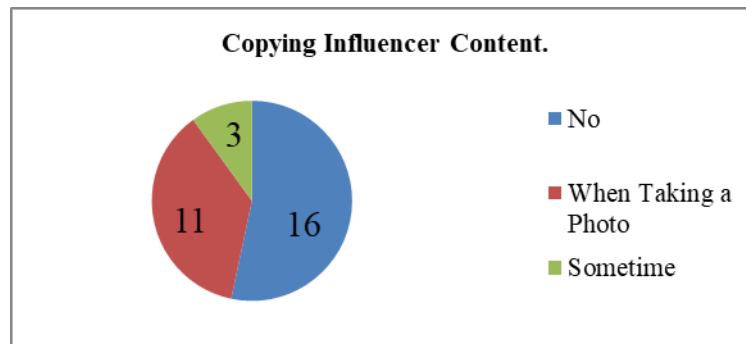
**Table 15:** Contents Generation Z Individuals Pay Attention To.

Which influencer categories are the followers interested in: It has been determined that the generation Z is mostly interested in the influencer category in of "entertainment / game". This is followed by "fashion/clothing" and "make-up/beauty". The least interesting category is "lifestyle, car/outdoor accessories, food, photography" (see table 16).



**Table 16:** Interested Influencer Categories.

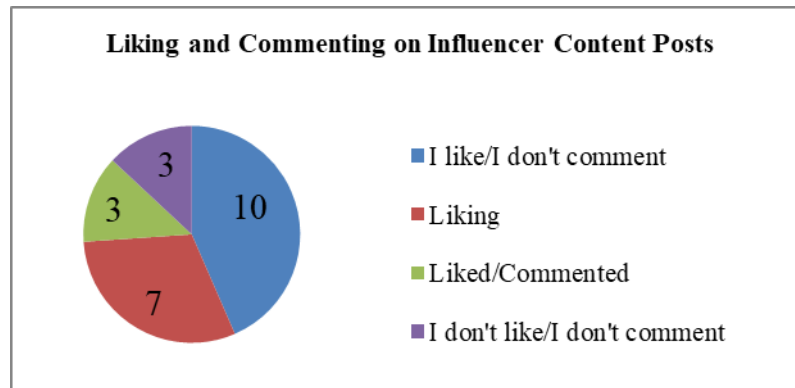
Does the followers copy influencer content on their own profile: It has been determined that sixteen out of thirty people do not copy the content of influencers. In this context, it was seen that eleven people copied influencer content while taking photos. In addition, it was concluded that three people sometimes copied influencer content (see table 17).



**Table 17.** Copying Influencer Content

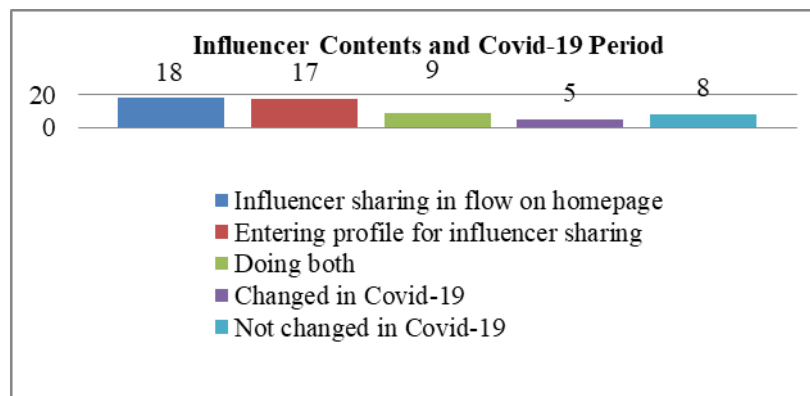
Does Generation Z like and comment on every content shared by influencers: The answer of “I like/I don't comment” came to the fore the most among individuals who are the members of Generation Z. Respectively, “I don't like”, “I like, I comment” and finally “I don't like, I don't comment” were found. (See table 18).





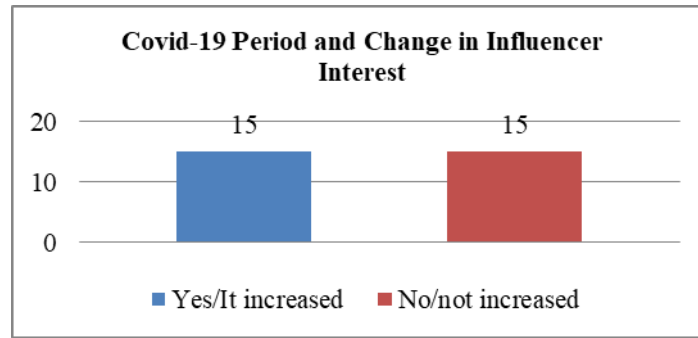
**Table 18:** Liking and Commenting on Influencer Content Posts.

Are the Influencer contents viewed within the flow on social media platforms or privately by entering the profile: It has been concluded that it is mostly encountered "in the flow on the home page". It has been determined that a large proportion of the generation Z enters the profiles of influencers for the content. Eight of the thirty people stated that this process did not change during the Covid-19 period, while five people stated that it did (see table 19).



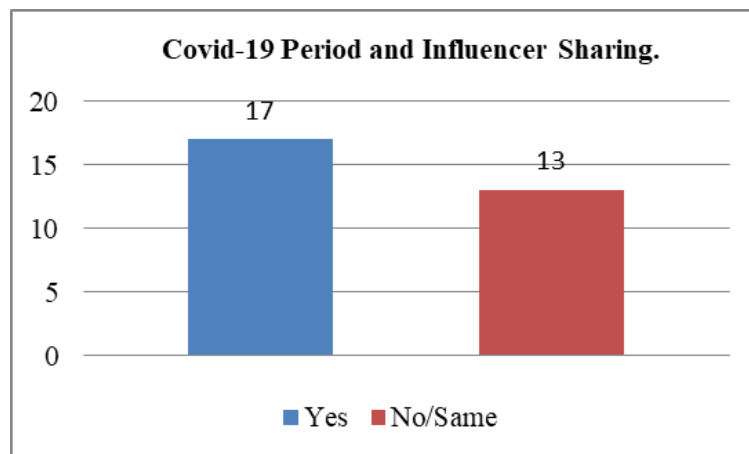
**Table 19:** Influencer Contents and Covid-19 Period.

Whether the level of interest in influencers has changed during the covid-19 pandemic process: Fifteen of the thirty members of the generation Z stated that there was no increase in their interest in influencers during the covid-19 period, while fifteen of them stated that there was an increase in their interest (see table 20).



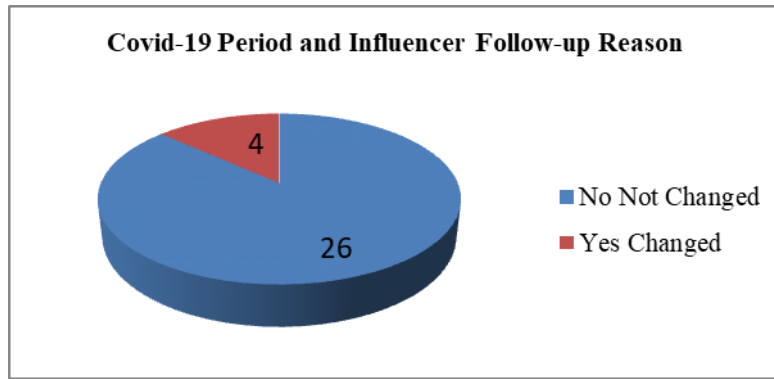
**Table 20:** Covid-19 Period and Change in Influencer Interest.

Whether the participants observed a change in the content of influencers during the covid-19 pandemic period: Seventeen of the thirty people belonging to the generation Z have observed a change in the sharing of influencers during the covid-19 period. In addition, thirteen people stated that the influencers' sharing continued in the same way (see table 21).



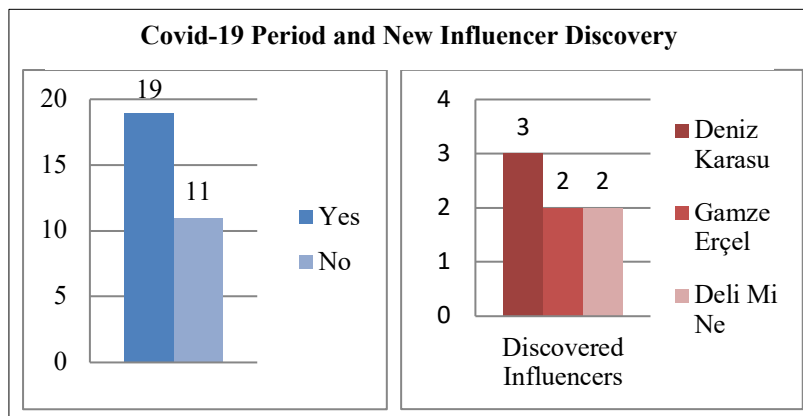
**Table 21:** Covid-19 Period and Influencer Sharing.

**Whether the reasons for following influencers have changed during the Covid-19 pandemic period:** It has been concluded that twenty-six of thirty individuals who are members of the generation Z have not changed the reasons for following influencer during the covid-19 period. On the other hand, four people stated that their reasons for following influencer changed during the covid-19 period (see table 22).



**Table 22:** Covid-19 Period and Influencer Following Reason.

Whether the participants discovered new influencers during the Covid-19 pandemic process: it was concluded that nineteen out of thirty people discovered new influencers and eleven people did not. When we look at the newly discovered influencers during the Covid-19 period, “Deniz Karasu”, “Gamze Erçel” and “Deli Mi Ne” came to the fore (see table 23).



**Table 23:** Covid-19 Period and New Influencer Discovery.

### Discussion and Conclusion

Corona virus is defined as an epidemic that has affected the world since 2020. Covid-19 has led to differences in the life practices of all humanity. In this context, it is known that countries and individuals go into closures and restrictions within themselves. Today, these restrictions are changing with the effect of the corona virus. It can be said that individuals have an active participation in social media platforms during the process. Therefore, it is seen that social media applications come to the fore with covid-19 in communication environments.

Brands need to take an active role in social media platforms in order to connect with young audiences. It can be said that social media platforms are an indispensable part of

individuals belonging to the generation Z. This generation, which is exposed to social media platforms at every moment of the day, has reached the level of understanding which advertisements are insincere, contactless or on the contrary, how sincere, and how much effort is put in (Floreno & Ortiz, 2021). Therefore, “originality, sincerity and authenticity” is seen as an important element for the generation Z. Influencers carry out a communication process that includes the elements that the generation Z cares about.

In order to appeal to the generation born into the digital transformation process, brands need to be on social media platforms during the covid-19 pandemic process. In this context, a process in which the star of the influencers shines as a communication tool has been entered. It is seen that with the corona virus, influencer collaborations have become popular and become a process preferred by almost every brand.

In the context of the study, it has been determined that 28 of 30 people have an account in Instagram. In addition to Instragram, 24 of them have Facebook accounts. In general, 30 participants also have accounts in other applications such as "Discord, Twitch, Reddit, Telegram, Skype, Snapchat, TikTok, Pinterest, Twitter".

In the context of the study, it was found that 27 out of 30 people use Instagram. According to Kim's study, among the social media platforms where the generation Z is active, Instagram and YouTube came to the fore with 81%. In other words individuals form generation Z stated that they want 56% of brands to be on Instagram and 38% on YouTube (Kim, 2021). According to another study, three-quarters of generation Z individuals use Instagram, 63% Snapchat and 62% YouTube. In addition, 60% are on the TikTok application (Hernández, 2021).

Of the 30 members of Generation Z, 21 spend 1-5 hours and 9 people spend 6-18 hours on social media platforms. On the other hand, according to Hernández's research, Generation Z spends an average of 3 hours on the social media platform every day (Hernández, 2021). The time intervals obtained within the scope of the study can be evaluated as an indicator of how active the generation Z is on social media platforms. Within the scope of the study, it has been determined that most of the social media platforms are accessed via the phone. Among the reasons for using social media platforms, expressions such as "to have free time", "to have fun" and "to stock up" were encountered. On the other hand, they also stated that they use it "to communicate". The generation Z continues their lives in a way that they should be in an active "internet"-connected environment and be in communication. Therefore, being in communication is important for this generation. In addition, it is thought in line with the answers given that they consider social media applications as an environment they use to enjoy.

28 of the participants follow influencers on Instagram. This is followed by YouTube and TikTok, respectively. According to Fontein's study, it is stated that men of the Z generation follow more influencers on YouTube and women follow more on Instagram (Fontein, 2019). Considering the reasons for the generation Z to follow influencers, "game, entertainment and challenge" came to the fore. In addition, the expression "there is no reason" was also encountered. When we look at the literature, it is also seen that it is important for the Z generation to enjoy the social media and the process of following the influencer. In this context, it is considered as a possible fact that entertainment and pleasure content will come to the fore in influencer following reasons.

In the context of the study, it was determined that the most followed influencer by the generation Z was Danla Biliç. It has been determined that the generation Z individuals follow the content shared by the influencers for a maximum of 1-3 hours. It has been determined that influencers pay the most attention to "game, entertainment and challenge" content in their content sharing, while the expression "for no reason" is also included. In this context, it is seen that the Z generation individuals who follow influencers for no reason do not pay attention to any influencer content. It has been determined that the generation Z is generally interested in influencers in the "entertainment and game" categories. This was followed by "fashion and clothing", "make-up and beauty".

It has been determined that generation Z individuals generally do not copy influencer content on their own social media platforms. On the other hand, some people stated that they copied influencer poses while taking photos. In addition, individuals stated that they generally like the photos of influencers and do not comment. In this context, it has been seen that individuals participating in the study communicate with the influencers they follow through likes. They generally encounter the contents shared of the influencers they follow "in the flow on the home page". Some of them stated that they "entered the profile of the influencer for the contents shared". It has been determined that this process has not changed during the corona virus period.

It was stated that 15 of the 30 people participating in the study did not increase their interest in influencers during the covid-19 pandemic process, while the other half increased their interest in influencers. 17 of the 30 participants stated that they did not observe that the shares of influencers increased during the covid-19 period, and 13 people stated that they continued in the same way. In this context, it is thought that it is possible for the members of the generation Z, who are constantly exposed to the content of influencers through social media

platforms, not to notice the intensity of the shares during the covid-19 process. On the other hand, 26 of 30 people stated that the reasons for following influencers did not change during the covid-19 period. In this context, it is thought that this generation's own wishes are at the forefront in the process of following the influencer. Therefore, it is seen that an effect of environmental factors does not influence following practices. It has been concluded that generation Z individuals have discovered new influencers during the Covid-19 pandemic process. "Deniz Karasu" came to the fore among these influencers.

To briefly mention the behaviors observed within the scope of the study; It was observed that the generation Z individuals expressed their answers clearly. In this context, they preferred to give short answers to the questions with words instead of making sentences during the online interview. When viewed within the framework of the Covid-19 pandemic process, it has been observed that there is no difference in the practices of following influencers for the generation in question. In this context, it can be said that they continue their activities on social media platforms as if they continue their daily routines. There are some suggestions to shed light on future studies. In this context, a comparison can be made regarding the social media usage practices and influencer followers of the Y and Z generation. In addition, an intergenerational comparison study can be made for the covid-19 pandemic period.

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