KADIR HAS UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES

WHATSAPP GROUPS EXPERIENCES OF OLDER USERS

ESRA ÖZGÜR

ADVISOR: ASSOC. PROF. EYLEM YANARDAOĞLU

MASTER'S THESIS

ISTANBUL, JUNE, 2021

Esra Özgür

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ABSTRACT

Social media statistics fail to demonstrate people who prefer to socialize on private platforms. Older adults are the least studied user group in new media research. This study aims to provide an insight into older users' digital social lives on WhatsApp Groups. Baby Boomers generation (1946 – 1964) is chosen for this research because they met with computer-based communication technologies in their adult life. Unlike digital natives, older users go through a more profound negotiation process when they face a new technology. Domestication theory is used in this thesis to examine their process of adapting WhatsApp groups into their everyday life. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with 15 participants living in Ankara. The analysis revealed that participants started to use WhatsApp groups to maintain their close circle relationships and get information from others. Still, after discovering the features of the platform, they developed new daily habits. It's found that WhatsApp groups are not just a facilitator of communication and socialization. Each WhatsApp group has become a new social space that contributes to users' life as daily positive support. Groups are adopting pre-existing social norms to regulate the communication environment. Analyzing alternative digital socialization practices is essential to gain insight about the future of social media.

Keywords: WhatsApp groups, social media, older users, baby boomers, domestication, mobile communication

ÖZET

Sosyal medya istatistikleri kapalı platformlarda sosyalleşmeyi tercih edenleri gösterme konusunda yetersiz kalıyor. Yeni medya araştırmalarında en az çalışılan kullanıcı grubu yaşlılardır. Bu çalışma, yaşlı kullanıcıların WhatsApp gruplarındaki dijital sosyal hayatına ışık tutmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bilgisayar tabanlı iletişim teknolojileri ile yetişkinlik döneminde tanışmış olan Baby Boomers kuşağı (1946 – 1964) araştırma için seçilmiştir. Dijital yerlilerden farklı olarak, yaşlı kullanıcılar yeni bir teknolojiyi kabul ederken daha derin bir pazarlık sürecine girmektedir. WhatsApp gruplarını günlük hayatlarına nasıl dahil ettiklerini incelemek için evcilleştirme teorisi kullanılmıştır. Ankara'da yaşayan 15 katılımcı ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Yapılan analiz sonucunda katılımcıların WhatsApp grupları yakın çevreleri ile olan ilişkilerine katkı sağlaması ve onlardan haber almak için kullanmaya başladığı, platformun sunduğu özellikleri keşfettikten sonra ise günlük hayatlarında gerçekleştirdikleri yeni alışkanlıklar kazandıkları görülmüştür. WhatsApp grupları sadece iletişim ve sosyalleşme için bir kolaylaştırıcı değildir. Her bir WhatsApp grubu kendi içinde yeni bir sosyal alana dönüşmüştür ve kullanıcıların günlük hayatına olumlu destek sağlamaktadır. Gruplar, iletişim ortamında düzeni sağlamak için var olan sosyal normları kullanmaktadır. Alternatif dijital sosyalleşme pratiklerini incelemek sosyal medyanın geleceğine dair anlayış kazanmak adına önemlidir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: WhatsApp grupları, sosyal medya, yaşlı kullanıcılar, baby boomers, evcilleştirme, mobil iletişim

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First, I would like to express my gratitude to my advisor, Assoc. Prof. Eylem Yanardaoğlu for her continuous support, understanding and guidance in the process of writing this thesis. I appreciate all participants of this research for their time and for sharing their experiences with me. Finally, I am grateful to my family for giving me inspiration and encouragement.

To My Family

LIST OF TABLES

1. INTRODUCTION

The acceleration of technological improvements opened the way for the digitalization of everyday life. Nowadays, people are relying on digital technologies in their everyday life more than ever. The daily routines of people are more dependent on digital devices. Smartphone and application usage as a part of everyday life almost became an obligation. Among many other changes, people's social life also started to shape around information and communication technologies (ICTs). Fast improvements in smartphone technologies with the decreasing cost of mobile internet data plans have made social media platforms more popular and reachable. New possibilities to connect with others through mobile phones varied accordingly. For younger generations born into this world, adapting to new developments in technology is easier. However, even people who do not prefer to be a part of this digital ecosystem or find it difficult to adjust themselves have to be online, at least in some of these platforms, to connect with others. WhatsApp is one of these kinds of necessary platforms in most countries, including Turkey. (Baranseli et al., 2018) Considering WhatsApp as the most popular messaging application in Turkey in recent years (Hootsuite & We are Social, 2020), it can be said that it's one of the primary applications to begin with for people to maintain their personal and also business-related relationships in today's digital world.

Older generations are mostly accused of being distant towards new socialization methods that came into our lives with new media because they met with these technologies such as smartphones and applications in very old age. Even though an older adult resists on holding to traditional and physical methods of socializing, they might still be obliged to upgrade their digital skills for various reasons to avoid consequences such as missing opportunities to strengthen their social ties through social network services (SNSs) and especially for not to be isolated from their younger relatives who relies on social media more with time. (Cornejo et al., 2013) This thesis aims to investigate older adults' experiences on WhatsApp Groups and to understand how they shape the technology at their hand according to their life perspectives, values, and needs.

1.1 Importance of The Research

Younger generations are the main interest point in new media research and that causes prejudiced opinions on older users' involvement with technology and digital media as being passive and distant. As they are being considered in this way, the number of research projects about their digital practices doesn't increase enough to overcome prejudices. This situation applies to most people on the internet who don't seek attention and mostly get ignored in research because they don't produce enough data open to others. Their preference for staying away from public spheres of social media doesn't make them absent even though they don't find a significant place in statistics. To reveal what is going on behind the curtains of encrypted communication platforms, there is a necessity for more research that focuses on people's uncommon experiences to understand the phenomenon differing from general usage of social media.

I believe that understanding alternative ways of usage in digital media platforms by minorities that stay under the radar helps us have a broader perspective on the new media communication. It is also important to understand different tendencies to have a clear vision about the future of new media communication. With its ability to provide group communication and every new feature added in time, WhatsApp evolves from being an instant messaging application to a social media platform. WhatsApp's social media-like environment is undeniable, but it has very significant characteristics that immediately separate the platform from other social media applications, such as its private nature. Changing behaviors of usage with group-based communication is expected to have disruptive implications (Seufert et al., 2016). I believe that the popularity of WhatsApp groups among different types of users also hints about the future environment of social media. There are people that stay under the radar in social network statistics because they prefer to stay in more private areas away from the eyes of strangers. Because of the encrypted nature of these platforms, researchers do not have access to this part of online communication yet in the future a tendency towards private platforms as WhatsApp might cause a rise in this side of digital socialization.

Research that investigates older adults and social media expect benefits to be related only to the growing population of older adults. In this study I expect outcomes more

about a high amount of users who don't get attention when socializing online because of their privacy preferences that don't fit with popular social network sites promoting to share more and more personal data with a broad audience hard to control. This study aims to open a new way to understand alternative usages of new media tools for daily social life and eventually provide insights on the possible future forms of social media. This thesis expected to contribute to the literature by uncovering an underresearched area which is the intersection of mobile messaging app communication with social media.

1.2 The Scope of The Research

The main focus of this study is understanding older users' perceptions towards new media communication and socialization through their experiences with WhatsApp groups. Older adults cover a significant part of populations worldwide. There is no defined age range because they vary according to changing life expectancies with new developments and cultural and biological contexts in different countries (WHO, 2018). "Baby Boomers" generation is chosen as the focus group of this research because they are the first generation that met with computer technologies as adults in their work environment. Yet, they are mostly seen as a distant part of society towards new media technologies. As the baby boomers generation gets into the old age, the percentage of educated elderlies in Turkey increases (TÜİK, 2021). Despite prejudices, there is a significant and increasing number of older adults that are an active part of digital platforms. In this research, I aim to provide an insight into their social lives on WhatsApp Groups and their attitudes that shapes their encounter with new communication technologies.

The evolution of new media communication and how older adults are involved in this environment is presented with its relation to Turkey. Domestication theory is used in this study to understand older adult's acceptance process of WhatsApp Groups into their daily lives and what it means for the future of new media communication. WhatsApp Groups communication has its own characteristics that needs to be examined to understand the meaning of its fast-growing number of users. Research studies on this topic will be presented to evaluate its popularity among older users better.

Domestication theory is used in many different contexts, from household technologies like TV to personal ICTS. How the theory adapted to new technologies, like mobile applications, is examined in this study with its connections to WhatsApp Groups usage.

In addition to the four elements of domestication, factors that affect their perceptions towards digital environments also asked to understand better their negotiation process with their own values and threats that came with new media. General questions about their privacy concerns and attitudes towards misinformation are asked to understand their moral economy in domesticating WhatsApp groups. They are examined under the objectification phase because it is the phase where users show their own values through their usage.

Despite its growing popularity, WhatsApp groups on social life is still a new research era especially in Turkey. Similar research projects have been done on the subject, yet this study would be the first to examine older adults' experiences on WhatsApp Groups in Turkey. Main research question that leads the current study is to find out if "Baby Boomers" have generation-related concerns and perceptions on ICTs that affect the way how they socialize in daily life through their usage of WhatsApp Groups.

To understand the issue better following questions are aimed to be answered in this study:

- What are the motivational reasons for older adults to prefer WhatsApp Groups over popular social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter?
- How they shaped their communication environment in WhatsApp Groups according to their values and perceptions? What's its place in their everyday life? Is it a reflection of their social life?
- Are there any differences in variances in different groups' dynamics? Are there any specific rules and norms?

Semi-structured interviews have been conducted with 15 older adults who use WhatsApp Groups actively in their daily lives to gain information from their perspectives with their own words. During the data gathering process, COVID-19

pandemic started to effect participants everyday life habits. Additionally, to interviews, participants are recontacted in order to understand how meanings of WhatsApp groups have changed for them in this period

2. SOCIAL LIFE AFTER NEW MEDIA

2.1 Evolution of Mobile Communication

We live in a world where the daily life is mainly dependent on mobile technologies. After the internet revolution, communication paradigm changed entirely with each technological development. Through today's smartphones, meanings that mobile communication embodies have always been in a constant acceleration and enrichment. Almost forty years after its first launch, in 1980s mobile phones started to find a place in people's lives, but most notably at the end of 1990s they became an essential everyday device for most societies worldwide (Castells et al., 2009). Since then, it became such an indispensable part of it that it almost became invincible. As an individualized communication device, both large-scale and small-scale interactions of everyday life started to get dependent on it (Ling, 2012).

When looking at the history of how information and communication technologies (ICTs) got into our lives, it is seen that the conversion first started in the work life and the pervasion of these technologies into mundane activities of everyday life did not take very long after that. The evolution of technology and specially the internet changed the way people communicate entirely. From the beginning of the 1990s information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as computers and mobile phones began to be a part of everyday life in most of countries. ICTs impact on communication in the last three decades can be divided into three significant categories: one-to-one, one-to-many, and group communication. (Seufert et al., 2016)

The dominant way of communication for the 1990s is called one-to-one communication and it is characterized as being privately exchanged messages between two equal parts. Coming of Short Message Service (SMS) into our lives with the pervasion of mobile phones at the beginning of the 1990s revolutionized communication for billions of people worldwide. SMS uses standardized GSM protocols to allow mobile phone devices to send 160 characters text messages which eventually evolved into sending various contents including video, picture, and voice but still in a very limited

way. Similar to SMS, internet-based services such as ICQ and MSN Messenger provided users to exchange instant short messages over the internet that eventually became popular on personal computers as an alternative to e-mail services.

The high success of SMS was not an expected outcome for the industry because of its high cost per message according to Agar (2004). He explains the reason behind this unexpected achievement by emphasizing on the power of texting. As many other features came to our lives with mobile phones, this power was also "found by the people who used it, not the people who planned it." (Agar, 2004) This point proves the importance of considering the impact of users when looking at information and communication technologies social constructions of meanings over devices after they are appropriated by users differentiates from what designers expected in the beginning. Everyday life usage of ICTs eventually affects their future designs.

When data costs reduced and applications started to use for different parts of daily life, a new wave of mobile communication happened with mobile instant communication services. At the first decade of mobile communication studies, the focus was on personal interactions like calling or texting to one person. Beginning with 2000's a new trend in online communication emerged.

"The diffusion of Internet, mobile communication, digital media, and a variety of tools of social software have prompted the development of horizontal networks of interactive communication that connect local and global in chosen time." (Castells, 2007) Starting with Web 2.0, social media came into our lives so as 'one-to-many communication.' Web 2.0 describes the point where the internet became more interactive and along with-it new possibilities for self-expression and mass communication emerged. This period of the internet opened the way for "a fuller realization of the true potential of the web platform." (O'Reilly, 2005)

2.2 Social Media

Manuel Castells (2000) talks about how technological developments and digitalization of everyday life affected social and organizational arrangements in a way that could never be possible before. With Web 2.0 opportunities, social networks sites opened new ways for connecting with friends and the world. Since their introduction, social network sites (SNSs) have attracted millions of users and became a part of daily practices around the world. new SNSs are still emerging which focus on different interests and practices (boyd & Ellison, 2008).

Henry Jenkins (2008) celebrated the potential of the internet for people to get organized easily around good purposes including collective information by creating a participatory culture yet with time, social network platforms' profit opportunities started to come out and social media platforms began to get criticized for manipulating how people socialize to make profit. "Connectivity quickly evolved into a valuable resource as engineers found ways to code information into algorithms that helped brand a particular form of online sociality and make it profitable in online markets — serving a global market of social networking and user generated content." (van Dijck, 2013, p.4) The pervasiveness of social media brough new notions to our lives which are shaping our digital experience.

2.2.1 Shaping of the Digital Experiences

Social media brings different groups of people into the same platform in a way it is not possible in real life. As much as strangers around the world, users are also connected to people they know from different parts of their life at the same time and in the same space which cause them to stand in front of a very unnatural kind of an audience. The context collapse stems from this new placement of themselves in front of a crowd which is not easily manageable have both advantages and disadvantages. Context collapse can open new opportunities for connections, but it could also create tension for users to decide an ultimate self-presentation in front of this whole, large, and disorganized audience. (Vitak, 2012) In daily life individuals encounter with different people in different contexts such as school, work, or home life. One's self-expression

changes according to the situation he/she is in. Goffman (1959) explains the concept of self-presentation by using theatrical terms. Just like an actor, people perform in front of others in their everyday life. When the audience and the stage changes, the individual's performance also changes accordingly. However, social media platforms forces people to express themselves in front of all 'friends' they have with a single profile. This forced collection of different parts of their life eventually diminishes boundaries between their work, school, and family life. Karapanos et al. (2015) found that unsatisfying experiences on social media are mostly source from offline social norms, content fatigue and exposure to undesirable content which is inevitable in an environment where it is not easy to control whom to connect with. Platforms like Facebook encourages people to connect to a large audience of people they know. Being exposed to large number of contents shared by different people can evoke certain emotions in people like the sense of unsatisfaction with oneself (Kross et al, 2013) because of comparing accomplishments to what their contacts have. (Chou & Edge, 2012) Fake news, political debates and negative comments can also have detrimental effects on users if they can't control what they see in their flow page.

Social media platforms direct users to act in a certain way but in practice it is not always the case. Users as active participants shape their environments according to their needs and sometimes, they come out with solutions that platform designers did not foresee. In her ethnographic study Costa (2018) found that in Mardin, Turkey social media users often have multiple Facebook profiles to interact with different people in their life and by using fake names and pseudonyms they shape their communication environment on Facebook according to their needs. This study also proves the importance of understanding different user groups experiences around the world and specially out of western context.

Privacy concerns can be related to new trends on communication channels. When WhatsApp was not as popular as today, Church & Oliveira (2013) found that people were depending on SMS as a more reliable, privacy preserving technology. The privacy concern mentioned here stems from WhatsApp's showing if a person is online, typing a message or their last access information (Church & Oliveira, 2013). For users that are

used to SMS, WhatsApp's new features seemed to be restricting their freedom to decide when they want to answer others. Being online all the time became normal when mobile internet usage increased, and concerns change according to new developments. For instance, a research, two years later, also presents 'monitoring of others' under unsatisfying experiences of WhatsApp but this time it is not examined as a big privacy concern because this paper compares WhatsApp to Facebook where surveillance issues take more attention (Karapanos et al., 2015). As I suggest in this thesis, now, people use WhatsApp to avoid privacy concerns coming with social media like the involvement of third parties as strangers or companies.

There is no one ultimate choice of social media for people. Research shows that users can use different mediums for different purposes and for different groups (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010, Karapanos et al. 2015, Church & Oliveira, 2013, Nouwens et al., 2017) and at the user's side, even for one platform, the usage behavior differentiates according to gender and demographics. (Rosenfeld et al. 2018; Koçak & Vergiveren, 2019)

3. WHATSAPP

WhatsApp is the most popular mobile messaging application globally and also in Turkey, as the statistics show, WhatsApp is the preliminary application that people prefer for mobile communication. (We are Social & Hootsuite 2020) WhatsApp is not developed with the aim of becoming a competitor for social media platforms. WhatsApp is a mobile instant messaging application similar to what SMS provides with augmented features. Facilitating large group conversations was one of the main reasons for appropriation of WhatsApp which is almost impossible to manage in SMS (Rosenfeld et al., 2018). It allows users to share different kind of contents besides texts including video, audio, documents and location information to individuals or a group. It is an internet-based mobile application that uses existing data plan without any extra cost to users. With each update over years WhatsApp got into an interesting place in people's everyday communication.

WhatsApp is different from many social media platforms. WhatsApp doesn't require users to construct a detailed profile. It is unnecessary in WhatsApp because users are already tagged with their phone numbers and the application is generally expected to be used by people that already know each other for some level. It is not normal to meet with new people and it is not intended to. In WhatsApp there is only two ways to send a message to someone. First, they should be added to the phone directory with their number or else someone who has both persons' phone numbers must add them to the same group. Defining WhatsApp as a social medium is a controversial subject. After a comprehensive examination of other scholars' definitions on social media, Carr and Hayes (2015) defined social media as the following: "Social media are Internet-based channels that allow users to opportunistically interact and selectively self-present, either in real-time or asynchronously, with both broad and narrow audiences who derive value from user-generated content and the perception of interaction with others" (Carr & Hayes, 2015, p.50). I believe that this definition is broad enough to involve the rich spectrum of social media platforms of today and the future. WhatsApp started as a

mobile instant messaging app but its high use for group communication expanded its value in terms of socialization.

There is no profile construction and broadcast ability to strangers as it is in Facebook or Twitter. Contacts and groups are shaped according to social relations from physical life of people. When considering this the profile becomes unnecessary for users in this platform because their profile depends on their physical self already. They are still encouraged to upload a profile picture as well as a status. Status was the initial feature of WhatsApp when it first launched in 2009. The platform was alerting when a contact's status changed. Similar to Facebook and Twitter's 140-character space WhatsApp provide 139 characters for statues and emojis are also allowed. Users mostly feel the need to complete this "communicative space in order to forge their 'online persona' (Sánchez-Moya & Cruz-Moya, 2015) with words or emoticons.

When compared to traditional SMS, WhatsApp provides an environment for more social and natural interactions that eventually leads to higher frequency of chatting, coordination, and group communication. (Church & Oliveira, 2013) Unlike Facebook where it is hard to control the audience and content flowing, WhatsApp opens new intimate communication opportunities, especially with its group function (Karapanos et al. 2015; Nouwens et al., 2017).

3.1 Group Communication

Private groups are not a new feature in new media but comparing to what social media platforms offer such as Facebook Groups, it is easier to control the audience in WhatsApp and because of the platforms' nature, communication is similar to traditional communication. WhatsApp is an instant mobile communication application but with the 'group' feature it provides users a private space for socialization with small amount of people that generally already know each other. The fact that all members are connected to each other by their phone numbers adds another level of confidence. Because group members mostly have previous relations with each other stems from their physical social environments, interactions that happen in WhatsApp groups brings a sense of

togetherness and intimacy (O'Hara et al., 2014) which is not dependent on time and space and happens through various contents that the platform offers.

> It is togetherness and intimacy enacted through small, continuous traces of narrative, of tellings and tidbits, noticings and thoughts, shared images and lingering pauses. This friendship has a history and an ongoing trajectory into the future. It has a rhythm whereby people are coming together and then parting knowing they will come back not to the same space but through the next act of communication, the next expression of 'what's happening' (O'Hara et al., 2014, p.1141)

Any user can create a group with any of their contacts. The creator of the group has privileges like adding and removing members and can also authorize other members as administrators. Nouwens et al. (2017) takes attention to the importance of the ability to create different groups for different part of one's life and they refer these idiosyncratic associations that users develop as *communication places*. "Users appropriate the features and technical constraints of their apps to construct personal communication environments with unique membership rules, perceived purposes, and emotional connotations" (Nouwens et al., 2017, p.734).

3.2 Research on Whatsapp

"WhatsApp is a cultural artifact intrinsically linked to another cultural artifact, the smartphone." (Fernández-Ardèvol & Rosales, p. 201) What kind of benefits that these technological improvements brought to different parts of human life is highly researched by different perspectives. WhatsApp is very useful for many different areas of working life and education. It can be used as a tool for language learning (Almekhlafy & Alzubi, 2016) as well as communication because it provides a space to get organize quickly among colleagues for instance clinical communication between surgical teams (Johnston, et al., 2015; Emre et al., 2017) and in case of students to always have access to teachers and other students for support (Rambe & Bere, 2013; Boulos et al., 2016; Robinson et. al, 2015; Bansal & Joshi, 2014; Pınar and Pınar, 2017). Its usage in citizen journalism also shows that how new media communication technologies effected the relation of society with traditional media channels by

facilitating social organization (Kahraman and Önder, 2017). Koçak and Vergiveren (2019) exhibited the essentiality of WhatsApp groups for X, Y and Z generations in Turkey, what differs is the purpose of usage among genders and generations. Ersöz (2019) analyzes a WhatsApp parent group's messages to explore the dymanics of group communication and information sharing. Unlike professional groups, parent groups don't have strong authority and leadership roles but they are still dependent on real life social life dynamics as she found: "WhatsApp groups takes after offline groups in terms of norms, relationships and interactions" (Ersöz, 2019, p.1150).

Considering the popularity of the platform for communication in many different parts of the world, the need for the recognition of WhatsApp's importance for digital socialization, as much as other social media services (Garimella & Tyson, 2018) and unique group dynamics emerging in the platform makes it also interesting for social presence studies. (Robinson et al., 2015; Ersöz, 2019)

Increasing numbers of WhatsApp users and the popularity of private messaging in platforms like Facebook and Instagram shows that the tendency to interact in private environments in digital media getting higher every day. Still, because of the private nature of this kind of environments it is not possible to examine this phenomenon deeply from the outside, although some research projects managed to collect data from WhatsApp without invading users' privacy. (Rosenfeld et al., 2016; Garimella & Tyson, 2018) WhatsApp groups tend to be used by people that know each other for some level yet there are many public groups where users can find online. By focusing on public groups rather than private, Garimella and Tyson (2018) showed the possibility of collecting publicly available data from WhatsApp. Rosenfeld et al. (2016) used statistical and data analytic tools to develop prediction models for user's behaviors in WhatsApp Groups. These research projects give a general idea about users' behaviors but in order to understand their personal and divergent experiences, but still there is need for direct interaction with users. Statistics on the usage trends of social media does not give enough information on the privacy concerns of different user profiles so it is necessary to make further research on the topic that includes people's personal experiences and perceptions.

Research projects on WhatsApp that include users of different age groups proved the impact of the stage of life on the adoption and usage (Rosenfeld et al., 2016; Rosales & Fernández-Ardèvol, 2016; Gazit & Aharony, 2018) yet older are mostly disregarded (Van den Broeck et al., 2015; Koçak & Vergiveren, 2019). The lack of research on users above this age supports prejudices about older adults being passive towards digital media technologies. Even so, research that specifically focused on elderlies and social media shows that a considerable amount of this group actively participates in this new digital area of life (Erendağ Sümer, 2017; Baranseli et al., 2018; Fernández-Ardèvol et al., 2019). Their growing presence in this era, a new necessity emerges for reconsidering the design of social media applications according to their specific needs. (Chang et al., 2018; Baranseli et al., 2018). As much as what elderlies adopted, their rejection process for certain technologies is also important. Fernández-Ardèvol et al. (2019) emphasizes the importance of their decisions in new media environment by claiming that "not using a given technology is one way that older individuals articulate their expertise about their own lives, in the same way that attribute new meaning to those technologies they decide to use. Therefore, older individuals express their agency and autonomy through their use and non-use of technology" (p.48). How they experience new media environments is a crucial part for understanding today and the future of digital communication technologies.

4. OLDER ADULTS OF DIGITAL AGE

"Sociability increasingly depends on (and is enabled by) mobile digital technologies, a trend no generation stays away from" (Fernández-Ardèvol & Rosales, 2017, p.3). However, older users are still disregarded in new media communication studies generally. Population of older adults is increasing rapidly in modern societies because of higher life expectancy, lower fertility rates and explosion in the number of baby population after second war (De Schutter et al., 2014). Life stage's importance for the understanding of different mobile user trends have been shown in different studies. (David-Barrett et al., 2016; Sujon et al., 2018, Matassi, et al., 2019; Deniz & Tutgun-Önal, 2019; van der Broeck, 2015, Fernández-Ardèvol, 2019)

Because of all technological developments happened in a very short period, older adults of today had to reinvent themselves to keep up in this always changing ecosystem more than any other generation ever did (Quan-Haase et al., 2016) and this aspect makes it more interesting to understand their experiences with technology. As a term 'older adults' doesn't have a one established definition. The age range changes according to different cultures and countries and with new developments which increase the life expectancy and healthcare services (WHO 2018). Research on older adults take different age ranges. In the table below, age ranges are presented from different research studies concerning older adults and digital media studies.

Table 4.1 Age range examples from different older adult and digital media studies

Age Range	Research Subject	Authors
49-73	Domestication of digital games	De Schutter et al. (2015)
61-84	ICT usage	Quan-Haase et al. (2016)
over 60	User experience	Baranseli et al. (2018)
over 55	User interface	Chang et al. (2019)
55-79	Digital mobile practices	Fernández-Ardèvol et al. (2019)

Unless the generation does not specify in the title of the research, studies that focus on elderly's relation to information and communication technologies do not pay attention to generations. The importance of understanding older adults' experiences with ICTs mostly signified with the fact that population of elderlies increases very fast accordingly with the level of welfare. Everything changes with time and each generation is going through different phases in their life which effects the way they think about the world. As children of today does not experience the same things as the children of thirty years ago, elderlies of future will act differently than what today's do. Therefore, I believe that a study on older adults of today cannot be generalized towards the future ones and without the consideration of generational specialties it would be deficient for understanding the reasons behind their behaviors. To collect meaningful data related to the aim of this thesis, the generation of Baby Boomers is chosen for data collection. Born between 1946 and 1964, this generation today covers the significant part of older adults who are still actively participating the social life.

4.1 Baby Boomers Generation (1946 – 1964)

In each society, historical events that happened during the growing time of individuals shapes their perceptions and behaviors differently. (Howe & Strauss, 1991; Birkland & Kaarst-Brown, 2010). For that matter people that were born in the same time period might show typical and characteristic perceptions and behaviors through their lifetime. Social, political, cultural, and economic changes affect their identities according to the specific time period they were born and raised.

Significant part of older adults of today belongs to the "baby boomers" generation. The name of this generation refers to the instant increase in the baby population after Second World War. Most important events that occurred in this period is moon landing and emerging civil and women right movements (Pekçetaş & Gündüz, 2018). This generation in the world is raised under the certain lines between East and West and they shaped the '68 generation' in Turkey (Erden Ayhün, 2013). This generation is also known as 'cold war generation' (Adıgüzel et al., 2014) and 'transition period children' (Pekçetaş & Gündüz, 2018). University events in Turkey, left-right conflicts and economic troubles are the primary highlights that shaped their growing environment.

The most important phenomenon that this generation in Turkey witnessed is the coming of televisions into domestic life and the start of one channel TV broadcasting. Because of growing up with it, they are the first generation that realized the impact of television on effective communication (Altuntuğ, 2012). Loyalty and respect to authority are the most highlighted characteristics of this generation (Howe & Strauss, 1991). They witnessed significant changes in their lifetime more than any other generation ever did and they had to gain new skills in each period (Pekçetaş & Gündüz, 2018) especially after the pervasion of digital technologies into every part of daily life. Another way to address this age cohort is *sandwich generation*. As Kuran (2018) explains in her book this generation, in Turkey, is probably the last representatives of big and crowded families living together. First they took care of their children and then they took care of their parents and, as she suggests, probably because of this they are the generation that can get along with other generations the best (Kuran, 2018, p.60) This suggestion is interesting when thinking in the context of their relation with mobile technologies which they adopted mostly because of maintaining their relationships with their younger family members.

Baby Boomers with computer technologies in their adult life and mostly started to use computers in their work environment before digital technologies started to spread in all areas of everyday life. They were used to handle tasks without the help of most of digital technologies which now became almost mandatory even for small things in our daily lives. As the time changes, smartphone and applications became an indivisible part of the everyday life. Nowadays, it is an obligation to possess some level of ICTs in order to maintain connected to the world outside. As the baby boomer generation goes further in their senior life stage, the population of older adults that engages with digital technologies also increases.

Research made in Turkey about generations tend to adopt western age classifications and Baby Boomers generation in Turkey is also evaluated according to those criteria. Besides generational social media research that includes Baby Boomers (Erendağ Sümer, 2017; Deniz & Tutgun-Ünal, 2017) in Turkey, this generation is mostly studied

on the context of work life, management, and leadership with comparisons to younger generations. (Özer et al., 2013; Adıgüzel, 2014; Pekçetaş & Gündüz, 2018)

4.2 Related Old Age Discussions

4.2.1 Digital Divide

People who grew up surrounding by digital technologies are referred as digital natives and they tend to be more open towards technological devices and it is easier for them to adapt to new technological developments. On the other hand, digital immigrants are found to be shown more resistance towards new technologies because they have met with digital technologies later in their lives (Hoffmann et al., 2015). Surrounding ICT environment causes digital natives to experience a distinct way of digital socialization which result in characteristic cognitive and behavioral patterns. (Tapscott, 2009) Even though digital immigrants show tendency to keep their old habits to socialize, they are still affected by new developments and had to find a common ground for themselves to maintain their relationships with others.

Marc Prensky draws a strict line and defines digital natives as people who were born after 1980 and everyone that were born before as digital immigrants. This kind of division seems logical when considering that pervasion of internet technologies began in 1980's but binary view that divides people strictly cause prejudices because not every user's appropriation and usage level is the same.

4.2.2 Third Age

Third age begins with the retirement when the working life ends. This is the stage of life where people still have the energy before getting into the old age and with all the free time and money, it is mostly the time of personal development and fulfillment by pursuing new experiences and learning new skills. (Laslett, 1991)

Rather than isolating themselves from the society, in this age, people become more willingly to get into interesting activities to evaluate all the free time they have now

after retirement. As the baby boomer's generation moves into the third age, the need to understand their use, adoption and knowledge of ICTs increases (Quan-Haase et al. 2016)

4.2.3 Socio-emotional Selective Theory

According to socio-emotional selective theory (Cartensen et al., 1999) older adult's perception of time motivates them to seek out more positive experiences and emotions. Prioritizing positive emotions and well-being eventually leads them to focus more on close tie relationships while reducing weak ties. (English & Cartensen, 2014) Based on this theory, because of their motivation to fulfill the need to belong, older adults' communication is more purposeful to sustain quality relationships (Chan, 2018).

4.3 Older Adults and ICT

Mobile applications significance in everyday life rises each year and comparing new and old habits gives us hints about how its future is going to be. Rising popularity of WhatsApp around the world, proves that it deserves equal attention as other social media services. (Garimella & Tyson, 2018) Older adults are the least studied group in ICT studies. To understand a social phenomenon, it is crucial to involve every part of the population. The distant position of older adults towards certain technologies and new media platforms is not only about digital literacy.

> Older individuals, rather than being passive users of (digital) technology, play an active role by domesticating reconfiguring, modifying or rejecting it in their everyday life. - not using a given technology is one way that older individuals articulate their expertise about their own lives, in the same way that attribute new meaning to those technologies they decide to use. (Fernández-Ardèvol et al., 2019, p.48)

Studies that examine age related differences in ICT and social media usage habits tend to cover age groups below 65. Van den Broeck et al. (2015) tries to find if life stage of users affects their privacy concerns especially on Facebook, but they don't add older adults to the study above 65. They highlight the importance of including older age

groups into research, but because they use Erikson's (1980) life stages, which needs an update according to present situation of age groups, they exclude users over 65 years old from the list of adulthood. They evaluate the impact of generational differences, but all generations taken into consideration in these studies have met with these digital technologies in a particularly young age comparing to the generation of "Baby Boomers". Even so their results shows that the oldest age group they studied shows lower self-disclosure levels. Even though they have more privacy concerns than younger age groups, they are less informed about privacy settings on Facebook (Van den Broeck et al. 2015). A study on WhatsApp groups in Turkey (Koçak & Vergiveren, 2019) covers X, millennials and Z generations which shows different behaviors in group communication, but they all belong to the group of digital natives who grew with ICTs. On the other hand, research that acknowledges Baby Boomers shows more value-based differences rather than behavioral changes. (Sümer, 2017; Deniz & Tutgun-Ünal, 2019)

4.3.1 Older Adults' WhatsApp Experiences

Social media platforms direct human socialization in order to gain profit. In this regard WhatsApp group communication seems more similar to real life because it allows real-time conversations with intended people. Because everyone is already part of offline groups (Ersöz, 2019) there are still certain norms that users expect from other members to follow. It gives a flexible space for users to shape as they want with new additions of digital opportunities to enhance their communication. The platform enables users to exchange various contents such as video, photograph, audio and also supports group or face-to-face communication. WhatsApp usage differentiates according to age groups of users. How they communicate or even how they fill their status (Sánchez-Moya & Cruz-Moya, 2015) varies because of age and generation related factors.

Each day a new platform emerges. What this thesis aims to reveal is not strictly dependent on WhatsApp. Recently changes in WhatsApp's usage policy have already caused a significant amount of withdrawal by users because of privacy concerns. Without forgetting the high possibility of a change in the platforms that people prefer for privacy preservation, I strongly believe that the rising popularity of encrypted

group-based communication will have disruptive effects on new media socialization. "Communication in groups, constitutes an emerging communication paradigm" (Seufert et al., 2016, p.541) which is expected to have more influence in the near future.

Erendağ Sümer (2017) revealed the popularity of Facebook among Baby Boomers in Turkey. Older adults who use Facebook tend to connect with their actual friends and they prefer to keep their digital networks in small amounts (Chang et al., 2015). Considering Facebook's associations with negative effects such as privacy concerns (Van den Broeck et al., 2015) or content fatigue (Karapanos et al., 2016), older adults can prefer to get together in a more private platform which suits their values and privacy needs better. O'Hara et al. (2014) examine the upcoming possibilities of WhatsApp groups which stems from the intimacy of members who have already past encounters and knowledge to get together in the future. These possibilities are also beneficial for older adults who are ready to adopt technologies which are beneficial to their way of life. (Quan-Haase, 2016) Since it's a private platform new research studies are still needed in order to reveal their motivations and personal experiences. This study focuses on a very limited part of users, yet I believe that highlighting minor user groups' experiences that stays under the radar is crucial to understand social media for today and for the future.

5. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Various theories are utilized by scholars for studies on mobile communication and social media usage. Two of these theories seemed appropriate for this study besides domestication theory (DT) at the beginning of the decision phase. Other considered theories are diffusion of innovation theory (DOI) and uses and gratification theory (UG) which are the most used theories in mobile communication research (Kim et al., 2017).

Diffusions of innovation theory aims to explain how new technologies and new ideas are spreading by rating the level of adoption according to five categories proposed by Everett Rogers (2003): innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards. How DOI categorizes the adoption process resembles the appropriation phase of domestication theory, it is still limited and does not go beyond the adoption phase to explore how the adopter and the object shape each other in the usage as domestication theory does.

Uses and Gratifications theory argues that people are actively seeking the media and the technology they need. This theory is about what people do with the media rather than how the media influences them. Even though it was firstly developed for traditional media, in many studies the theory is successfully applied to social media. (Göncü, 2018; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010) Domestication theory reaches beyond the adoption and motivations and concerns how technologies are incorporated into our lives and how this interaction opens new directions for the future use by including unique experiences and usages. The domestication concept shifted the attention of current media studies of its time away from texts and reception and into the practices of use. (Hynes & Richardson, 2009)

5.1 Domestication Theory

Original framework is developed in the United Kingdom at the beginning of 1990s in order to understand the dynamic process of acquiring ICTs and bringing home into the domestic culture of households. To understand the process of adoption and use of ICTs in the household context, the approach aims to reveal what these technologies means to

people and what role they play in people's daily lives in addition to how people experience ICTs. (Silverstone et al., 1992) Domestication literature has two major stands. First one is from the British media studies concerning the process of 'bringing home' of media technologies and making them one's own (Hartmann, 2013). The other is from Norwegian science and technology studies which adopts a broader sense with the appropriation of these technologies in diverse settings such as by companies or the government unrelated to the household context.

Routinization of daily activities of social life gives people a sense of trust or as Giddens (1984) describes 'ontological security'. By using the concept of 'moral economy of the household' Silverstone et al. (1992) emphasize on the importance of maintaining ontological security in daily life and how ICTs threatens it by their doubly articulated nature as bringing media -the public- into private life of households. This struggle shows itself in rising moral panic around new media objects and contents which leads to negotiations and regulations by the household. Thus, domestication process of new ICTs into daily life becomes crucial in order to maintain 'ontological security'. (Silverstone et al., 1992)

Even though the approach takes its roots back from older studies on objects in use, a new model acknowledging ICTs unique characteristics and their effects on people's life had to be conducted. ICTs differentiates from other objects used in houses as they provide connection between household members with the world outside. Because of this unique feature as being both a technological object and a media, there was a need for a new theory that acknowledges their nature as being doubly articulated into public and private cultures. (Silverstone et al., 1992) Certain meanings are already attached to ICTs through advertisement, design intentions and media discourses about them before they enter the house but once they came into the house, individuals add their own significance to ICTs. (Haddon, 2003) Arrival of ICTs change people's daily routines and perceptions also lead them to do things differently such as how they interact with others. (Haddon, 2003)

The metaphor of domestication is coming from the term 'taming the wild'. (Berker et al., 2006; Haddon, 2011) Referring to wild animals being domesticated, ICTs also need to be adopted into the domestic life of households passing through certain phases in order to find themselves a suitable place in the daily life of people. According to Hynes & Richardson (2009) individuals also need to find the middle point to co-exist and correspond with these technologies coming to their daily life.

Once these technologies come into the domestic culture through appropriation, their meanings are redefined according to the household's own values and interests. ICTs pass through different stages in use and gain specific meanings attached to them by their users. This dynamic process of ICTs are defined in four phases; appropriation, objectification, incorporation and conversion.

The first phase of the domestication theory is **appropriation** indicates the possession of ICTs. It starts at the point the technology as an object is sold and leaves the commodity world and owned by an individual or a household into the private life. (Silverstone et al., 1992) ICT provides various activities to consumers which doesn't have to be possessed by the user at purchase. Features attached to smartphones such as camera, GPS, applications might start to be used later. As Silverstone et al. (1992) mentioned the appropriation is not only signified to the material object. Ownership of a media content or a computer software is also an important part of the dynamic process of the appropriation. Appropriation also focuses on intentions to bringing ICTs into home. Reasons could be for entertainment, education or curiosity. (Haddon, 1992) Finally, the meaning transforms to fit in with the self-image of the user. Through ownership the object contains both socially assigned and personal meaning.

After they enter the house or the individual's possession, **objectification** phase begins. Objectification is expressed in usage and also the spatial environment the object is displayed. This stage also shows individuals expectations on how the object will fit into their life. (Ling, 2004) Necessity for the spatial exhibition has changed after the emergence of tangible technologies domesticated. New versions of domestication

research acknowledge the fact that for mobile technologies and applications physical space is not necessary. With this fact virtual space involves into discussions.

The third phase **incorporation** focuses on how ICTs embedded into daily routines of people. Whereas objectification phase identifies the spatial aspects, incorporation focuses on temporalities. (Silverstone et al., 1992) Ling (2004) defines them as two sides to the same coin. While objectification is related to the 'sense of self', incorporation describes functions that are not just defined by manufacturers but including all functionalities applied to the technology by users. (Ling, 2004)

Final phase is **conversion**, which deals with how individuals mobilize these technologies as a part of their identity and self-expression. (Haddon, 2011) Conversion only exists if there is form of public display that includes competences, literacy and skills. Discussions around the technological artifact happens in this phase. It could involve sharing of the pride ownership as well as the frustration stems from it. Conversion involves resistance and refusal and transformation to a point where cultural expectations and social resources meet challenges of technology, system and content. (Silverstone, 2006) Considering all new outcomes emerged from this phase with usage or non-usage, this phase also affects the future of construction of that technology to reach more potential users.

Rising of mobile communication technologies opened a new field of study to understand its placement in the everyday life and its social consequences. (Campbell et al. 2014) "The arrival of the mobile phone prompted an interest in further extending the domestication approach out of the home." (Haddon, 2003, p.49) With all new functions converging in the device such as camera and internet access, studies focused on mobile phones started to see it as a platform rather than an object. (Haddon, 2011) Accordingly the focus of more domestication studies started to shift away from material objects (such as smartphones, laptops, or TV) and focused more into the tangible technologies. Domestication of electronic communication or social networking sites became an issue. (Haddon, 2011)

Hartmann (2013) defines the missing part in domestication studies on mobile media as the mobility. The occurrence of this new challenged for the concept tried to be solved in further studies with new addings to the approach. de Reuver at al. (2016) asserted that three specifications are required to be acknowledged in order to apply domestication theory into smartphones. These devices are generally used by individuals not households and their usage are not limited to physical boundaries of the house and specifically it transcends temporal and spatial limitations and they argued that by considering these new features four phases of the domestication approach must be revised. Individual usage and mobility also emphasized by other scholars (Bakardijieva, 2011, Campbell et al., 2014; Morley, 2006). Matassi et al. (2019) summarizes the convenience of domestication approach for WhatsApp studies as this: "The perceived intimacy and lack of interference from unknown sources of messages, as well as continuity with everyday offline patterns of sociability, make WhatsApp a unique window to inquire into the interaction between domestication and life stages" (p.5).

Number of research on domesticating of tangible technologies and applications increased in recent years accordingly new trends emerged on digital social life of people. Domestication approached is applied to various topics including domestication of digital games by older adults (De Schutter et al., 2015), Facebook (Sujon et al., 2018), WhatsApp (Matassi et al., 2019) and recently re-domestication of WeChat (2020). A significant common point of all these research studies is that all of them place a particular importance to the life stage's effect on domestication process. Ahad and Lim (2014) used domestication theory to examine the convenience of WhatsApp in young users' everyday life and they found that WhatsApp is beneficial for them in terms of study-related matters besides their daily social life. This study is important for examining WhatsApp with domestication theory but gathering data from online questionnaire limits the voice of users and restricts their opinions into predesigned answers of researchers. Limited especially for understanding 'objectification and conversion' phases.

Silverstone et al. (1992) uses the notion of moral economy to describe the dynamic engagement of households with the meanings pre-attached to the commodity they

appropriate and "they are incorporated and redefined in different terms, in accordance with the household's own values and interests." (p.14). The household left its place to individuals as a part of this transactional system with the emergence of personalized technologies such as smartphones and applications which is not dependent on the physical placement of the home. Therefore, in this paper the term 'user' is used instead of 'household'. New ICTs can threaten users' sense of trust into the world as they know it, which is described as 'ontological security' by Anthony Giddens (1984). For that reason, their domestication process involves several transformations of meanings through the users' personal perceptions and commodities.

6. RESEARCH

6.1 Research Design

The study's target group is the 'baby boomers' generation born between 1946 - 1964. Semi-structured interviews with 15 participants have been conducted in Ankara during March of 2020. Nine women and six men attended the study. Because of the pandemic restrictions, most of the interviews couldn't be done face-to-face. Ten interviews had to be conducted on the phone. One participant preferred to use e-mail and one participant preferred to answer questions by texting on WhatsApp. Conducting interviews on the phone, e-mail and WhatsApp caused some restrictions to the researcher. The intended duration for a face-to-face interview was 30-40 minutes but the distance and lack of nonverbal expressions affected the communication between researcher and participants negatively and most of phone calls took between 10-20 minutes. As an inexperienced interviewer, the obligation to pursue interviews on the phone caused difficulties deepening people's experiences with follow-up questions. For that reason, the researcher recontacted with participants after the first examination of transcripts to get more information on parts remained unclear at first interview.

This study is concerned with the everyday life experiences of participants. Due to global pandemic everyone around the world experiences significant differences in their everyday life. In order to add their new experiences in consideration after six months into the pandemic, with willing participants same questions reconsidered on the phone to understand how the new situation affected their WhatsApp Groups usage.

6.1.1 Participants

All participants live in Ankara. Demographics of participants shows that most of them have high level of education. It should be noted that this sample doesn't represent the general of older adults in Turkey. The sample shows a very small percentage of the concerned population in Turkey but because of their education level and social circles,

they are coherent to the general of "baby boomers" who have met with computer technologies in their work life.

Table 6.1 Demographics of Participants

Participants	Pseudonyms	Gender	Age	Profession
P1	Gülay	W	67	Retired Judge
P2	Rıfat	M	56	Healthcare Personnel
P3	Sevil	W	68	Retired Judge
P4	Meliha	W	64	Social Services
P5	Türkan	W	67	Retired Doctor
P6	Emine	W	64	Housewife
P7	Leyla	W	67	Retired Judge
P8	Oya	W	64	Housewife
P9	Haydar	M	68	Retired Teacher
P10	Orhan	M	69	Academician
P11	Füsun	W	62	Academician
P12	Mehmet	M	63	Finance Officer
P13	Aydan	W	73	Retired Journalist
P14	Adnan	M	72	Retired Banker
P15	Hasan	M	71	Retired Pharmacist

6.2 Findings

Data gathered from the interviews are categorized and analyzed according to four phases of domestication theory which are appropriation, objectification, incorporation, and conversion. Four phases of the theory examined with related emerging topics in interviews. Objectification phase shows user's negotiation process between their own values with meanings came with the commodity. Because this thesis concerned with a

specific age cohort's domestication process, this phase expanded with participants general opinions about digital privacy and misinformation to better understand their behaviors in the platform and how they manage these 'new threats' came to their life with new media.

6.2.1 Appropriation

Appropriation refers to the phase of acquisition of the technology. All participants admitted starting to use WhatsApp Groups because of close relatives. 9 participants said that they were included to groups by their friends at first and 5 participants were introduced to the group feature by their family. Only Adnan's first introduction was with the group of the management of the site he lives in. The centrality of WhatsApp Groups stems mostly from family and close friends first and then expands to groups that gathered around different purposes related to different parts of their lives such as event organizations, association memberships, old friends from high school or university, sport classes, game classes or groups that are constructed by building complex and summerhouse site managements.

Even though WhatsApp Groups are not the essential way of social life of interviewees, they admitted that using WhatsApp groups have positive effects as a support of their physical social life. Easiness of usage and accessibility, low costs of communication, fastened connection, providing various contents and ability to reach out to everyone at once are the essential points that leads to acquisition.

We used to use Facebook frequently when it first got out but not that much anymore. Especially after WhatsApp came we started to use it too much. Free messaging, I can make calls from there and also face-to-face calls. It's much more advantageous. (Rıfat)

As most of participants Rıfat didn't start to use WhatsApp for group feature. It was a better alternative for both Facebook and SMS with advanced features for him in the beginning.

Old Friends, New Connections

A new unique future that WhatsApp Groups add to participants' life is the opportunity stay in touch with old friends even from forty years ago and build a social space. This is a new value for their life because it wasn't possible before to gather 50 or 70 people that knows each other from school that they attended forty years ago and put them into a group where they can communicate daily.

> I studied in a boarding high school for girls. A friend of mine called and said that with friends from boarding school we would create and message through WhatsApp. She asked my permission, and I gave it and became a part of the group. At first our number was three five, now it came to sixty-nine and maybe more. It was very nice. At first, we put our pictures from the age of seventeen. We heard about each other's children, later we started to organize trips and attend them together. We organize all of it on WhatsApp. In mornings we say 'good morning' to each other. We send beautiful messages to each other; we get sad together on bad news and get happy together with good news. I'm very happy with WhatsApp. (Gülay)

Friends that live in other cities or countries could have a daily conversation together because of WhatsApp Groups.

> We can see pictures of my relatives and their children's families, kids and get their news. It is enough for me to be able to do that. (Aydan)

Differences From other Social Media Platforms

As much as adopting, appropriation phase is also about the refusal of a certain technology. In this case participants are selected for their use of WhatsApp Groups. Because this research is about the digital socialization of the target group, their acceptance and refusal towards other social media platforms are also asked in the interview to better understand what makes WhatsApp Groups preferable to them. 7 participants said they never used any social media platform for several reasons and to the ones that use explained how WhatsApp groups differentiates from others.

Users of other platforms

8 participants said that they used or continue using at least one other social media platform. When they are asked to compare WhatsApp Groups to other platforms several highlights noted. Even though they have accounts, their usage is mostly limited to reading others posts.

> I use Facebook but not in detail. Like only for reading coming news, information from friends. I just look at those, or else I don't share anything. WhatsApp is more with friends that I get along one-to-one. We all like have health issues to communicate between friends. We discuss those more comfortably but on Facebook groups other member's sharings concerns you or not you just look at them compulsorily. (Hasan)

Social media platforms provided new opportunities to socialize but also might cause stress due to wide audience and context collapse. Aydan joined Facebook to experience benefits of digital socialization, but challenges surpassed benefits for her eventually:

> I got into Facebook for some time because of curiosity but I left it. At first it seemed interesting to meet with old friends but suddenly friend requests reached out to distant relatives and being exposed to all those personal sharings made me feel uncomfortable. It would make me to spend all my day. Besides most of sharings had a content that I didn't like and accepted. The only advantage of Facebook was the ability to communicate through short message easily which WhatsApp also provides. Besides, I thought that on WhatsApp we have full control on choosing the group and maintaining the frequency of communication. No need for accepting or rejecting friend requests. (Aydan)

Because WhatsApp provided what she needs without all the frustration that stems from Facebook she switched. Closed private groups with all benefits of digital communication made WhatsApp Groups adoption easier for users:

> I use Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Firstly, because people in WhatsApp groups are acquaintances, I feel safer. Facebook is more open to unwanted communication. Communicating in WhatsApp is easier. You have the chance to communicate simultaneously without the other groups know about it. (Ramiz)

Non-users

Possible negative side-effects of using social media can cause users to stay outside and it mostly related to stranger eyes on social media. Because of a lawsuit involving her close relatives, Türkan tries to be extra careful about her disclosures in general and this concern keeps her away from digital public spaces:

> I don't like to share publicly and also, I'm afraid of something bad happening to a family member because of my sharings. I don't like to share an information with people when it is recorded. (Türkan)

Similar to Türkan, Mehmet also stays away from social media because of a bad personal experience. After witnessing a family conflict led someone to write bad things to his son's wall on Facebook, he developed negative feelings towards social media and never used it to protect himself from negative feelings:

> Mehmet: I just run away from Twitter and Facebook.
> Interviewer: Why?
> Mehmet: I don't know maybe for satisfaction or something there are so many psychopaths and things like that. Some comments that they make hurts me and makes me sad.

Orhan was introduced to the group feature after his friends added him to one. When groups multiplied, he started to actively decide if he wants to stay or left a group and this ability was important for his appropriation process and also the reason for his refusal to use other social media. He expresses how he feels about social media with his personal observations:

> WhatsApp is more target-based, direct to the related person but others, like Twitter, you throw a word into the middle and like there is nothing there. It appears to me like masses make gossip in-between and you also say something to the middle. It's not something I like because your word stays in the air. Someone's gonna answer and then you also have to I don't have time for that. It's too much time consuming. But in here (WhatsApp) it is so specific. I'm looking at it if I like I follow. Messages come to me. I can't turn back to them instantly but when I look if I like

sometimes, I even sent them to others. Easy to transmit. So, WhatsApp is very easy to use for me. (Orhan)

Gülay links her preference to not-use to her generation's perceptions:

I specifically don't use Facebook. I don't like it. I don't like that everything is public. No Twitter no Instagram. I don't know maybe it is because of our occupation. So, it is because of our personal structure I don't like publicity. (Gülay)

Leyla tries to limit all digital connections that doesn't feel familiar to her by referring to her generation's habits.

I don't really like electronic stuff actually. We are not that generation. We were the generation that played on streets who didn't had any toys. We were a different kind of a team we grew up and faced this. (Leyla)

6.2.2 Objectification

Objectification refers to the spatial exhibition on the usage of the object. After mobile and tangible technologies got into consideration this phase has changed accordingly. Physical space lost its importance when talking about applications. To understand this phase, WhatsApp Groups should be acknowledged as a place itself. With this opportunity physical distance ceases to be a barrier for daily communication. Friends from different cities or countries gains the ability to construct a daily social life together.

It contributed to our communication very well. There are people in different cities or abroad. WhatsApp is much cheaper than the phone and nice to communicate with it. (Oya)

I already have a social life where I life. It doesn't affect it that much. The best part of this WhatsApp groups for me is the opportunity to meet with friends outside the area you live. (Gülay)

Interviews show that WhatsApp groups are mostly used as spaces for organization and coordination between friends. Different groups also provide a space for sharing common interests and memories. Old friends, sports and game classes not just use

WhatsApp for organizing events, various contents are also shared in these groups daily such as poetry, music, videos, news or writings.

> What I share changes according to people. With some I only share special day celebrations, with some more like funny contents, I have some friends that only sends colorful good morning messages. I have friends that share their daily life and problems. There are people that I share about books and movies. Everyone has different interests. Beautiful quotes or animal videos that reflect love, beautiful nature landscapes are shared more. (Aydan)

Discussions are made in these groups even though it is not preferred to avoid any conflict between members. WhatsApp Groups' ability to provide a space for people that physically away from each other is not only limited to friends. Different kinds of associations also use WhatsApp to create a space to inform all members at once.

> "Associations also send messages from there. WhatsApp becomes a thing to reduce costs, all sharings happens in WhatsApp. So associations, cooperatives or even our summerhouse site management have a group. They are sending messages all the time from there such as we repaired this done that etc." (Mehmet)

Recent news about a subject can be shared with every member at once without an extra cost. Variability of contents that WhatsApp supports also can be used to enrich the statement.

> "My summerhouse's site management informs the group in any little incident like 'the power pole fell off', 'roof is leaking' or couple of friends send a video." (Haydar)

Different kind of groups can have certain rules about their members according to their context. Mehmet tells his experience with a group which his wife got in his phone:

> My wife used to didn't have WhatsApp in her phone and I had. She was going to something, a community about Qur'an. She joined their WhatsApp group through my phone. Once I wrote something on her behalf and they panicked like who's that man. They got me out. (Mehmet)

This group maintains their rules about their physical gatherings. They don't accept men to WhatsApp groups as they wouldn't do when they meet physically in a house.

Exploring Features and Possibilities

Even though daily content sharing wasn't a part of their appropriation phase, eventually it became an essential part of groups' daily conversations. Contents shared in groups are variable. News, jokes, music, videos, photographs can be shared according to group context. Contents can be purposed to be informative, entertaining, or emotional. Having conversation in WhatsApp is not the same as a physical one. Text-based communication in WhatsApp can be instantaneous but also having much more time before answering to the other side can be advantageous as Ramiz finds it to be:

> In real life you make your position according to the other side's behaviors, in WhatsApp you can give a more comprehensive answer after making a research about it and having knowledge. (Ramiz)

The habit of sharing daily contents in WhatsApp or only looking at what other's shared as most participants do became a part of their daily life. Participants try to avoid any kind of conflict in groups because they tend to use this space for daily positivity. A newness in older adult users' life. They tend to share positive content that would help others pass the day better and also beneficial information.

Homophily

The ability to control the audience in close groups eventually leads to homophily. Participants prefer to interact with people they already know from their daily life which means they are already familiar with the other side's opinions. The tendence to engage with people that share similar opinions is mostly criticized in social media research under the term *echo chambers*. For platforms like Facebook and Twitter, this situation can lead to a false perception like believing that a certain opinion is the majority and counter ideas cannot be reached. But for close group communication it is normal to prefer to talk to people with similar ideas. This situation also helps the maintaining of a positive environment in groups away from conflicts and disputes.

> You make groups with people that you see close to yourself in the context of values, thoughts. I mean ones that collect in thinking, ideology, political view makes a group. (Mehmet)

All of them belongs to the same social status, our worldview is usually the same. Our reactions towards happenings are same. I mean when I see a sad incident and write it to WhatsApp group, I see the same reaction from my friends too. We don't have much different thinkers. It's probably because of this. We already don't make friends with people think differently than us usually. We become distant. Probably this is the reason. But we remain tolerant. But some of us that reacts to hard can leave the group. (Gülay)

No Stranger

It's the most common point. Everyone is very strict about not interacting with strangers. I observed that each member gave a strong reaction to this question and accentuated that they know every other member and would never be in a group with strangers by using strong words like 'never', 'absolutely not'.

I know everyone in my WhatsApp but couple of times they made some separate groups and added me without my knowledge. Of course, I left them all. I mean someone who doesn't know you invites you to a group without asking. I reject them because I am against it and then I delete them. I leave those groups. (Rıfat)

Absolutely and besides knowing them I have also face-to-face communication with them. (Füsun)

The ability to control the audience in different groups gives more power to the user to shape their communication:

Because all are people that I already know in real life, it is in my control to distance, relationship and communication according to our intimacy level. (Aydan)

Referrable usage is with no strangers, but this can be impossible for certain groups such as associations, site managements and college year groups. Participants with groups including people they don't know personally, expressed problems because of this situation:

There is a group with folks from the university times in 70s 80s whit people that cast in their lots with and there are some people in there that I never met. Of course, if you talk certain things with people you don't know, it's obvious how it would end. Trust issue. Someone can criticize a policy or someone. Even if they are wrong, it can be tolerated between friends or you can say that what you say is wrong but with strangers you can't see where the conversation is going. (Mehmet)

Orhan shares his experience about accidentally creating a group with people that don't know each other and this situation shows a possible consequence that could emerge if many strangers gather in a WhatsApp Group:

Once I tried to send a message for a blessed night to a large number of friends separately as it happens in SMS but accidentally I made a group. I sent it thinking it was a message. Then everyone started to fight there. Then I said I thought I sent this separately to 50-60 people. Then I took everyone out of the group. This time some of them called me and said why did you take me out. I said I didn't do this on purpose. Then some others also called to ask if I'm upset with them. (Orhan)

No Politics

Avoiding political debates is a common rule for every participant. They all express their discomfort because of political sharings in groups.

What bothers me is political stuff mostly and also fake news. They are mostly stuff that would cause panic. I prefer to be more comfortable and to share more relaxing things. Both for my side and for others. (Meliha)

I don't like political sharings as a form of imposition and also, I don't like religious sharings. I think that these are private and not supposed to be in these groups. I think people should live everything inside themselves. Specially in religious subjects. (Leyla)

They ground their preference on their personal perceptions. Talking about politics and religion is not just off limits for WhatsApp Groups, it is also relevant to their daily social life. A possible reason for this is that because they objectify WhatsApp Groups as a social space supporting daily positivity. How they explain it shows that it is to avoid

any conflict between members. Everyone knows each other and any kind of negativity might have real life consequences. Members don't want negativity in the group.

> It's not good to make political discussions too much in WhatsApp groups. I mean people can hurt each other; you can get hurt even by your friends. For that reason, I'm not into political side. (Hasan)

Ramiz is not completely against political debates in WhatsApp but he prefers to have it in certain friend groups that share similar political opinions.

> I don't like it when someone in a group, that I don't know very well and I don't approve as a person, shares a political or religious content. It bothers me when an opinion is shared which is against the political view that I believe and unverifiable. Therefore, it is nature when this situation causes a conflict. (Ramiz)

The Moral Economy of the User

Objectification phase includes how users' display their own values through the way they use that certain technology. What Silverstone et al. (1992) described as the moral economy of the household leaves its place to the individual's moral economy with the emergence of personalized technologies such as smartphones and applications. To better understand the negotiation process of the users' identity with the meanings attached to commodities, participants' privacy concerns and attitudes towards misinformation in digital environments also included to the objectification part of the study. Privacy violation and misinformation come as new threats to their 'ontological security' (Giddens, 1984) and how they manage to deal with them richens the understanding of their unique behaviors which are also related to their generational perceptions as this thesis concerns about. Because objectification is the phase that shows how users express their own values and perceptions through their using behaviors, this part is expanded with participants general concerns and solutions about digital privacy and misinformation. This part about their general concerns is aimed to contribute to the understanding of their common behaviors in WhatsApp groups which are examined above.

Privacy Concerns

All participants admitted their concerns about digital environments related to privacy issues. Not sharing as a way of protection is common between participants:

> Of course I have concerns and I try to protect myself. I delete messages daily. Important things of course, although I don't know how much it keeps secret. If there is something necessary, I take a not to someplace else and delete those messages immediately. (Meliha)

> I don't take any precaution. I don't write anything that I think it's private and don't tell either. In general so I don't have any concern. (Sevil)

To avoid risks of privacy violations and related concerns they have, participants tries to minimize sharings and they mostly use social media and crowded WhatsApp groups to only look at what others shared. Many times, participants compare their usage to young generations to explain themselves in terms of privacy protection.

> I'm trying to avoid social media. My biggest son uses it too much. I always warn him to be careful, to not share anything about they don't know and not to interact with anyone they don't know. (Mehmet)

Misinformation

Fake news is a serious problem for social media platforms which cannot be restrained completely. Especially in messaging application like WhatsApp, the problem gets bigger because all contents are coming from people that know each other. The intimacy could make it harder for people to detect fake news. In its recent updates WhatsApp tried to minimize the flow of fake news in different groups by restraining the repost option (WhatsApp Blog) but still the problem continues. The concerned age group of this research is known as vulnerable to fake news (Loos & Nijenhuis, 2020) and for that reason their perceptions towards circulating news in groups also asked:

> There are so many fake news yes unfortunately but I don't believe any of them. I tell my friends nicely to not believe them, to stay calm. They never effect me but very bad things are coming especially in this period too many negative things come. Absurd things come and someone else disproves it fortunately. I mean they still makes you worried. (Oya)

> Most of them are leading people to panic. Group members tries to correct each other's sharings even though it sometimes causes tension. Some members fact-checks from other sources. Some doesn't believe anything other than TV news. Some try to avoid negative news without looking at them at all. (Füsun)

Negative news makes group members worry even if they are known to be false so most of members doesn't like these kinds of contents that disrupts the positive atmosphere of groups. To evaluate fake news most users apply to their own logic first but more common method, that seems more reliable to them, is fact checking TV or newspapers. They tend to trust official sources.

> I mean they (fake news) seems unlogical at some point to you. We are educated people. At least we listen to the news from various TV channels. So fake news gets noticed. If you are someone that follows daily news, these fake news becomes detectable. (Haydar)

Participants admit their vulnerability against fake news but most common opinion is that the responsibility is on government. They believe that they cannot do anything to solve these problems and there needs to be regulations.

> This is a completely technical issue. Everyone write something to the internet. The level of truth of all these things should be inspected by authorized units. They should take the ownership. Or else, on our own, how could I know if it is a lie, a fake news. (Gülay)

6.2.3 Incorporation

How a certain technology became a part of daily routines is the concern of incorporation phase. New media communication channels provide a connection that never ends. WhatsApp Groups are always online, and a message can come anytime which is not something this generation is used to in their daily life. Continuous

connection brings both advantages and disadvantages. How participants manage the notion of being always available through WhatsApp groups and how they arrange their daily life accordingly is the concern of the incorporation phase.

Always Online

Data shows that the new notion of being 'always on' and 'always available' might cause anxiety and annoyance on older users. I believe that this phase highlights generational differences at most. Being online all the time normalized especially after 2000's with the expansion of mobile technologies. Interviews show that late adults are still struggling with this feature of new media. Users are trying to deal with the time related issues with WhatsApp Groups in different ways.

> "Some of our friends sends messages in inappropriate hours and it beeps and beeps. Although I found the easy way for it. When it is my bedtime I turn off the internet and get no messages. I open it in the morning … Messages must not to be send in any hour." (Gülay)

> Because my phone is off when I go to bed I am not affected by late or early messages. (Aydan)

To gain back the control of the time, Gülay cuts herself off that endless connection for nights but shutting off the internet is not a caution that everyone would take and it is a personal solution. When someone sends a message in an inappropriate time, other members could also choose to remind them 'social norms':

> "Sometimes this happens, and others warn them. At one in the night 'have a blessed Friday'. What does it mean at that time of the night, write it in a normal time. Or he sends it at two in the night. You get worried when a message comes at that hour. Your heartbeat increases. Even sometimes a friend says 'please make this kind of sharing between 8 a.m. and 10 p.m. and after that hour do not post anything unless there is an extraordinary situation." (Sevil)

Daily Rituals of Groups

Participants found it too much time consuming. For that reason, they might restrict their usage into specific hours. Group members develops daily habits like greeting others.

They start with such 'good mornings' every morning. Fifty 'good mornings' in different groups or like Fridays start with 'have a blessed Friday' I mean this kind of meaningless chit chats bothers me a lot. These are the downsizes, I think that this shouldn't be done. Each day writing to fifty other 'good morning', 'good morning', 'have a blessed Friday' etc. These tense me a lot. I don't write it. (Leyla)

6.2.4 Conversion

After a negotiation process the artifact finds its place in the daily life of the user and gains new meanings in a broader social context. Membership in WhatsApp groups creates new demands and responsibilities for users and which over all produces a sense of togetherness. It's a common habit in most of groups to write 'good morning' and 'good evening' every day. In special days like holidays users also tend to celebrate it in groups. For condolences and similar situations that users are expected to react, WhatsApp groups gives them the chance to express their feelings in front of everyone related to the context at once.

In WhatsApp Groups, the communication never ends. This new feature that brings to our lives with new media technologies doesn't always come with challenges. Sometimes, especially for this research's participants, this new continuous connection brought users' life the sense of togetherness. Some users find it unnecessary yet some of them likes the sense of togetherness with this kind of salutations.

"You feel their breathing, their good mornings and good evenings. In that way I feel them by my side." (Türkan)

Hearing about each other's life and commenting on recent events together become a daily routine for many groups. Participants admitted that WhatsApp groups also encourages more physical interaction.

"Sometimes seeing your friends doesn't even come to your mind. Or to ask about them but when you see a message 'she sent this, she experienced some event' then you feel the urge to call her but if that message wouldn't come maybe you wouldn't even think about her at all." (Gülay)

A new experience that came into user's everyday life is developed around the variety of contents in WhatsApp Groups. Differently than sending personal pictures and videos, they started to share contents such as music, poetry, writings, videos about arts, animals, etc. In a way that it wasn't possible before this new media environment older adults that participated to this research commonly uses WhatsApp Groups as way of positive support for each other. To make each other's day better is a common motivation source for users to actively participate into groups by sharing positive thoughts, videos, texts.

> "I like to see humoristic stuff. Sometimes such messages come that you smile even in the most stressful moment … there are contents that makes you relax." (Orhan)

During the Pandemic

Conversion process shows itself in the relationship between the household and the outside world. Since the pandemic caused everyone to stay in their home, and minimize any physical interaction with others, WhatsApp groups' meaning as becoming a social space got stronger and now for participants, it turned into the almost only public space for social groups to get together.

> In this pandemic period, I joined more WhatsApp groups to avoid the sense of loneliness since we spend much more time in our houses. Some new groups that I joined now is to get information about long distant acquaintances. I started to share more about my hobbies. (Ramiz)

> In the pandemic period sharings are increased and richened. Meal recipes, book, and movie suggestions and health suggestions got more. Daily updates about the pandemic is shared instantly. Holidays, special days causes more enthusiastic communication. Not being able to see each other increased the interest to messaging, even developed addiction to messages. The cutdown of relations with the world outside, the new small world created in the house caused people to look for the attention, love and care they need in WhatsApp. (Aydan)

Gülay describes the new position of WhatsApp as 'a social coffeehouse':

> Maybe because we get bored too much, we talk about everything. I mean those WhatsApp groups turned into a social coffeehouse. The amount of communication increased fairly. It helps really, otherwise you would feel alone completely. If there is nothing to talk, friends tell each other their vaccine appointments, challenges of getting an appointment, they tell every process. It's like were all together in an atmosphere of chatting. (Gülay)

For most of participants including Gülay, WhatsApp was used to be an organization place for trips and meetings. Now in close groups they share their memories together to feel nostalgic about times before pandemic. Gülay says that because the end of this period is unknown organization planning stopped and conversations became more about that day:

> We used to say that let's do something in June, let's go there or else. Now you can't make any plans, you just live the day. You cannot plan the day after because you don't know what's is going to happen. (Gülay)

> We used to go dinners, lunches but now nothing. Now conversations are about the vaccination appointment, 'we are about to get crazy', 'we are bored, frustrated' things like that. (Sevil)

Current situations effect the meaning users give to WhatsApp groups. Rıfat also observes a similar situation in his groups:

> We started to use it more often when face-to-face meetings decreased. We can't go outside anymore and see each other. Mostly funny videos, jokes. To spend time of course. When one comes to someone, he sends it to others. (Rıfat)

Oya says that communication in her sport or game groups also changed. Even though these groups have lost their purpose during quarantines, members decided to keep them for socialization.

> We can't get together anymore. We can't do cooncan or yoga anymore, but we still talk there to ask about each other's well-being. We send each other good contents. That's it. (Oya)

Groups that were made to arrange physical classes did not vanish and they became social groups like other friend groups. As the data shows the conversion phase is an ongoing phase. The usage is always transforming according changes in the life of users.

7. CONCLUSION

The everyday lives of people worldwide got into an ongoing change after the emergence of digital media. Even to pursue mundane activities of daily life, some level of digital literacy became obligatory. Each generation witnessed certain events that affected their perspective of life. Today's older adults lived a significant part of their lives in a different world. They have seen the change of daily life around the world in a short period. After the digital revolution changed the world they know, they had to learn new skills to keep up with digital technologies. Their experiences with new media technologies are different than younger generations who were born into this world. Unlike digital natives, they are going through a more profound negotiation process when they face new digital technologies in their life which can result in adoption or the refusal of that technology. Research on new media tends to disregard the existence of older age groups. They don't always show the same behaviors as younger generations on the internet, but this doesn't mean they are not there. Mobile messaging applications like WhatsApp provides its users private digital spaces to socialize. This hidden part of digital communication cannot be observed from the outside, and there is a need for research that reveals users' unique experiences with their own voices.

The main argument that initiated this research was the idea that older adults are using WhatsApp groups as an alternative social media platform that fit better to their social needs. It is a convenient enough mix of traditional and digital socialization for the "baby boomers" generation. There is a high amount of people that prefers to stay away from strangers' eyes while using new media platforms for socialization and self-expression. "Baby boomers" generation is only one of those various groups and I believe that in the future, there will be more platforms designed according to meet these people's privacy expectations better.

Domestication theory is used in this research to examine the negotiation process of older adults with WhatsApp group communication. Differently from the original approach, the moral economy of the household is used as the moral economy of the user

in this research since mobile technologies are personal unlike first ICTs like TV and radio. Their experiences were examined under four elements of domestication theory. Participants' usage or refusal of other social media platforms included in this part to reveal their motivations to use WhatsApp groups. Objectification phase is expanded with participants personal views on privacy and misinformation. This phase shows how they behave after negotiating the technology according to their own perceptions. Incorporation phase is about how users added the technology into their everyday life routines. It's seen that participants are still having trouble with being online all the time. Conversion is the last phase of the theory, but it continues as long as the technology is in use. Changes in participants' lives effects meanings they give to WhatsApp groups as the data gathered during COVID-19 shows.

WhatsApp Groups are seen as a cheap alternative for communication and easy organization. The platform is easy to use and contains different features of social media and SMS. It provides users the ability to control the audience and privacy. Participants started to use WhatsApp groups to maintain their close circle relationships and as a support to their daily social life but when they realized new features and possibilities, they developed new daily habits such as sharing various contents like photos, videos, music or news. In time WhatsApp groups turned into a new social space for participants and the pandemic period also turned groups with a purpose to organize physical meetings into social spaces.

Older users are willing to use a technology if its beneficial for them (Fernández-Ardèvol et al., 2019). Findings show that participants in general started to use WhatsApp Groups with a motivation stems from communication needs but later they turned it into a social space, beyond just getting news about relatives and acquaintances, by utilizing new features that the platform provides. WhatsApp groups is not just a facilitator of communication and socialization. Each WhatsApp group as itself is a new social space convenient to the definition of Nouwens et al. (2017) as idiosyncratic communication places. The ability to separate different social groups in the platforms helps users to avoid context collapse and makes the communication environment more natural to them.

WhatsApp provides the ability to be online all the time which sometimes could cause frustration. The notion of personal space and time weakens with the existence of mobile phones because even if they choose to shut it down for a while, they could face the consequences like being unaware of urgent situations which is examined further in the incorporation phase. Being always reachable to others adds another level of intimacy, that is the reason they feel concerned if a stranger can come this close to them via WhatsApp. They must compromise from their personal values to benefit mobile technologies but still they construct their digital experience according to themselves as groups. As interviews show participants are still struggling with the management of private and social time and group members try to regulate appropriate times for socializing by reminding others real life norms.

At first, they were using the platform mainly to get information from acquaintances but after exploring platforms' features, they started to develop daily habits which contribute to their daily positive emotions. They try to avoid any kind of conflict that would affect their WhatsApp groups experience negative. It's a common behavior to avoid any kind of situation that would cause negative emotions in groups. Not talking about politics is a common preference for participants. Because they know all members in groups a conflict between them would reflect to the other parts of their life. The tendency for homophily helps to maintain positivity. Besides getting information from others and organizing efficiently through the platform, a significant reason for them to keep using WhatsApp groups is the positivity they add to their daily life and the sense of being togetherness.

All participants mentioned their disturbance with fake news because it causes panic among group members. They believe that the responsibility should be on authorized units and the government. To fact check they mostly use their logic. If there are specialists in the group about false information, they warn others. In general, they trust TV and newspapers as reliable sources and also official, governmental sources.

Even users that claimed they belong to a different world as a generation and try to stay away as much as possible from digital technologies, still domesticated WhatsApp Groups into their lives. They are still trying to limit their usage according to their personal perceptions but the placement of WhatsApp groups in their daily life became undeniable. Their usage is still changing with time as the pandemic period results shows, which means they are still negotiating with the platform according to their life changings.

This study is limited to a small amount of the focus group. Even though the research reveals commonalities of different participants experiences, more research on people's experiences is still needed. Domestication process continues till the object is in use. The changing experiences of participants during the pandemic proves the importance of long-time research on this area. This research is unique for studying baby boomers generation's domestication process of WhatsApp groups in Turkey. Further research should be done to investigate different factors that affect domestication, such as gender, education level, and culture. Social media trends are changing with time, and I believe that we will witness the rise of platforms that provide private spaces for people with privacy concerns about today's social media environments. More research is needed to understand hidden alternative experiences of people in new media, which covers different groups of people with their own voices.

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APPENDIX A

A.1 Interview Questions

1. How did you started to use WhatsApp Groups? Who introduced it to you?

2. Do you use other social media platforms? If no – why not? If yes – What differs WhatsApp groups' communication environment from other platforms?

3. What do you think about today's communication environments?

4. What changes emerged after you involved into WhatsApp Groups?

5. Would leaving groups effect social relations in your daily life?

6. Do you have any privacy concerns about digital environments? How do you protect your privacy?

7. Do you know other members in your groups? How are WhatsApp groups shaping?

8. What kind of contents are shared in different groups?

9. What are the differences of WhatsApp groups' communication environment from your social environments in real life?

10. What do you think about fake news on internet? What kind of measures can be made?

11. What do you think about information and news sharings in groups? Do you ever feel the need to fact check them?

12. What are the good and bad sights of WhatsApp groups?

13. How many times do you check your groups in a day?

14. What kind of contents do you share in groups? What do you see the most in groups?

15. What kind of contents do you like to see in groups?

16. Is there anything bothering you in WhatsApp groups? What would you want from others to change?

17. Do you have any final comments?

CURRICULUM VITAE

Personal Information

Name and Surname	:	Esra Özgür

Academic Background

Bachelor's Degree Education	:	Bilkent University, Communication and Design
Post Graduate Education	:	Kadir Has University, New Media
Foreign Languages	:	English, French

Work Experience

Organizations / Dates	:	Ankara University (2021 – Current)