



## Factors Influencing Customers' Attention and Decision on Instagram of Education Agencies in Istanbul: A Qualitative In-Depth Interview Study

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**ABSTRACT:** This study aimed to identify the factors that influence customers' attention and decision-making on Instagram for education agencies in Istanbul. In these days, social media is one of the strongest approaches to promoting or selling services. People are browsing social media daily on public transportation and during their leisure time. This is a great opportunity for those agencies to reach the potential customers they are looking for through ads. The researchers gathered primary qualitative data using in-depth interviews. Ten students from Africa and the Middle East who currently live and study in Istanbul were the study's target sample. The findings show that the interviewees open social media platforms from 1 to 2 times daily, and the average usage duration is between 2 and 3 hours. The main factors that encourage the interviewees to follow business pages on Instagram are content, the brand's quality, word-of-mouth, price, and the most important one is the page's content, including the content in Arabic. Also, including a contact number will increase the chances of the ad being opened. Other factors include the number of offered services, the year of establishment, the number of followers, website availability, contact information availability, the number of users or customers, content, price, face-to-face services, and achievements by these companies (success stories, content in English and Arabic, physical address, information about the company's team, design, and creativity). Regarding the trust factor in terms of education agencies, word-of-mouth and the number of followers are considered the main keys. A possible improvement for education agencies from a customer perspective is increasing the number of ads targeting international students, including videos and pictures. Also, these agencies need to list their team members' details to increase trust, and professional customer service is required to improve the performance of these agencies, including clarity and honesty.

**KEYWORDS:** Consumer Behaviour, Consumer Decision Making, Consumer Attention, Word-Of-Mouth (WOM), Education Agencies, Turkey.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In Turkey, there are 208 universities divided between private (foundation) and government (state) universities (YÖK, 2022). Number of private universities are 75 (Istatistik, 2022). Private universities are working in partnership with agencies to assist and register students in those universities. The agencies provide extra services to help the students, such as: resident permit file preparation, health insurance, transportation, translation, etc. Because of that, those agencies use social media to reach as many students as possible.

Firstly, education agencies are integral to the international education industry, and to the many dimensions of the student experience. In this rapidly changing and evolving world, a steady flux of international students to Turkish higher education has been increasing. The number of international students studying in Turkish universities in 2021-2022 is 224.053 students (studyinturkey, 2022).

Secondly, education agencies act on behalf of education providers; this means they are responsible for advising students about the functions and amenities, including student support services, of those providers. As the first contact many students have in the process of choosing a study destination, and as the individuals who assist in interpreting documents, advise on study choices, and provide pre departure information, education agencies might be seen as natural allies to international student advisers.

Thirdly, education agencies are not just active at the point of enquiry and application; many take an interest in and responsibility for liaison with students and families to protect student welfare and offer ongoing support. Furthermore, social media has become an integral part of our daily routine in our era, and it continues to have an influence on our lives. Social activities, without a doubt, are unknowingly involved in and impact our actions, which include shopping, product consumption, learning, and a variety of other activities. The fact that individuals are evolving and adapting to spend more and more time on social media is exciting for businesses, as these habits can be used to produce significant marketing and financial benefits (Bilgin, 2018).



Among the younger age, Instagram is one of the most popular social media networks. Because of the application's simplicity, people are using it to exhibit their lifestyle through photographs published to the account page. This activity is not confined only to personal use. Companies have also started to create profiles on social media platforms to reach a broader audience (Huang & Su, 2018). For companies, social media has evolved into a valuable tool (Viřelar, 2019). Many companies, such as education agencies in Istanbul, utilize social media platforms to sell their services, and the number of social media users is growing since social media and online communities have become a way of life for many people these days. In this research we are going to give answers for the questions on the factors that attracts consumer's attention in Instagram business pages, also why do people decide to follow business pages on Instagram, and the factors influence consumers' decisions to choose between educational agencies based on their Instagram pages.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the invention of the Internet, significant developments have occurred that have had an impact on people's lives on a social, economic, or personal level (Haythornthwaite, 2005). This development has affected not just people but also the corporate sector, which has had to adjust to new ways of doing business (Saura et al., 2019). To increase efficacy and profitability, businesses must adapt the way they interact with their consumers, do business, or use various technology tools (Martnez-Naval3n et al., 2020). Marketing has been one of the areas of the business that has been most impacted by these developments (Lagrosen, 2005). Companies were required to use digital marketing to advertise their services online. Due to organizations' increased investment in digital marketing at the expense of traditional marketing, traditional marketing has been impacted in most situations.

According to Morozan et al. (2009), digital marketing makes it feasible to advertise goods and services using digital distribution channels to reach consumers effectively and affordably. As a result, digital marketing offers far greater flexibility and comprehensive client service. Digital marketing also offers instant purchases, more client involvement, and clear information about products and services (Yasmin et al., 2015). Therefore, businesses should try to learn what their consumers want and need through digital channels, since this is directly tied to customer happiness and trust in the product and services (Gelashvili et al., 2021).

Thus, strategies and tools to communicate with consumers have changed significantly with the evolution of consumer-generated media, which referred to social media (Mangold & Faulds 2009). Social media are digital platforms that allow people, companies, and organizations, which are the users, to interact, engage, communicate, and build a community that will allow them to generate easy-to-access content (McCay-peat & Quan-Haase, 2017) and a strong relationship with consumers (Mersey et al., 2010). Trusov et al. (2009) agreed that social media platforms are networks for interaction in a professional or social way between friends. Moreover, social media are online platforms and applications that make interaction and content sharing easier (Qiu, Lin, Leung & Tov, 2012).

To promote their products and services, businesses can use social media to create inexpensive marketing campaigns that generate viral marketing and virtual word-of-mouth advertising. Moran & Gossieaux (2010) argue that to conceive a successful social media strategy, one must first understand consumer conversations and their characteristics. A key aspect of social media strategies is their ability to foster relationships between consumers and companies. Consumer response to a social media campaign is likely to be boosted by interaction and helping others (Moran & Gossieaux 2010). Moreover, social media platforms can influence customers' purchasing decisions and behaviours emotionally (Goldsmith & Lafferty, 2002).

Bernard (2016) emphasizes the importance of marketing professionals knowing what and who is reaching them through social media channels, and how they can adapt to meet those needs. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2010) state that Facebook allows businesses to target specific audiences and engage them through a two-way communication process. Approximately 50% of Facebook users believe that a brand's Facebook page is more useful than its official website, according to research done by Abuljadail et al. (2015). A Facebook brand's page and ads can be used to increase brand awareness (Castronovo and Huang, 2012).

One of the most important social media platforms is Instagram. Instagram currently have more than one billion members, with 200 million of them viewing business profiles each day (statista, 2022). Instagram has become one of the most popular social media platforms, according to Kallio (2015). It has been found that 80% of Instagram users decide whether to buy items or services through the platform; 50% follow at least one brand; and Instagram users interact four times more frequently than Facebook users (Mohsin, 2021). Additionally, Instagram offers free advertising of products as well as insights into what companies are doing (Kallio 2015).

In a time when business owners are striving to increase profits and market share, social media marketing is one of the most effective ways to boost sales and customer satisfaction (Ismail, 2016). Atwong (2015) states that social media marketing allows business owners direct interaction with consumers through technology. According to Maurer & Wiegmann (2011). Marketing through social



media should not be seen as passive consumption of advertisements, but rather as a direct two-way dialogue between brands and customers. With it, consumers can find out more about brands, products, and offers. Advertisements in social media are among the major reasons why users follow brand pages on social media (Bashar, Ahmad & Wasiq, 2012). Social media also allows consumers to provide feedback to an organization or about a product, which increases the feeling of engagement with the organization (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Dean (2019) observes that social media marketing has increasingly focused on engaging customers over a longer period from the point of posting consumer enticements. A company must also develop and implement an effective social media strategy to obtain a larger market share (Bashar, Ahmad & Wasiq, 2012). Creating content that stimulates users to share it with their social networks, which relies primarily on word of mouth, aims to increase audiences' reach and company exposure to new consumers (Siddiqui et al., 2021). A company's message is spread virally by online consumers, as opposed to traditional marketing (Lee et al. 2014). Through social media, today's consumers can access information on products and services from each other, so they aren't solely reliant on what organizations provide (Charlesworth, 2009; Chung & Buhalis, 2008). In addition, business leaders use social media to improve customer service (Dean, 2019). The success of organizations depends on the business owners' ability to use the most effective medium for promoting their products and services (Sherbaniuk, 2014). A study by Yun, Pamuksuz & Duff (2019) discovered that social media ads can target specific segments by focusing on the similarities between the brand's personality and its audiences' personalities. In a highly competitive market, Dean (2019) suggests that social media has evolved into a powerful tool business can use to acquire more customers, get real-time feedback, and improve their marketing efforts.

Nowadays, consumers want to learn more about a product or service before making a decision. Therefore, social media platforms can influence a consumer's decision-making and provide more information about a product or service than any other marketing tool (Bashar, Ahmad, & Wasiq, 2012) and influence a consumer's purchase intention emotionally (Goldsmith & Lafferty, 2002). Moreover, Mangold & Faulds (2009) stated that social media is becoming a key factor that affects consumer behaviour like their awareness of the product and the need for information, their purchase and post-purchase behaviour, and their evaluation, which may lead to a negative post-purchase behaviour of dissatisfaction. Consumers use social media more frequently to gather information and make purchasing decisions (Vollmer & Precourt, 2008). In the world of social media, consumers rely heavily on other people's opinions and experiences before making a purchasing decision. (Charlesworth, 2009; Chung & Buhalis, 2008). According to Kallio (2015), social media and word of mouth play an important role in the buying decision-making process.

If the marketing strategy was designed to satisfy the consumer's expectations and perception, following a brand on social media can be followed up with either online purchases from the brand or in-store purchases motivated by its social media page activities (Bashar, Ahmad & Wasiq, 2012). Promoting the company or products through social media and creating useful content in an honest, ethical, and right way will increase consumer loyalty, improve brand image, and build trust between consumers and the company (Divya & Regi, 2014). Afzal et al. (2010) found that consumers' experiences when viewing a company's website are influenced by the structure, appearance, and condition of a site. Tucker (2014) found that social media marketing strategies result in increased customer engagement and revenue for small businesses.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, a qualitative technique was applied. The researchers gathered primary qualitative data using in-depth interviews 'Open-ended Questions' between Jan 2022 and April 2022. They lasted 22–35 minutes. Students from Middle East and Africa who currently live and study in turkey were the study's target sample and audiences. A convenience sample method was used to acquire data. Ten interviews were sufficient for the research purpose. Data were analysed through gathering the interviews' answers and interpret them according to the research questions.

#### 3.1. Description of the Data

10 semi-structured interviews were conducted with overseas students studying in different universities of Turkey. The interview participants had different demographic characteristics in terms of their gender, regional background/country, age, and educational profile. Table 1 below is exhibiting the details of the demographic characteristics of the participants.



**Table 1:** Demographic Characteristics of Interview Participants.

#	Participant Name	Nationality	Education Level	Gender	Age
1	Yazeed	Yemen	Bachelor’s degree	Male	22
2	Youmna	Syria	Master’s degree	Female	33
3	Baraa	Syria	Bachelor’s degree	Male	21
4	Mouja	Algeria	Master’s degree	Female	28
5	Mohammed	Jordan	Bachelor’s degree	Male	23
6	Noor	Syria	Master’s degree	Female	26
7	Marwa	Uzbekistan	Master’s degree	Female	24
8	Abdulrahman	Syria	Bachelor’s degree	Male	20
9	Ayman	Tunisia	Doctorate degree	Male	28
10	Emad	Libya	Bachelor’s degree	Male	20

To get initial familiarity with the interview responses, a word frequency query of 50 most repeating words was run in the Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) i.e., NVivo. Figure 1 below is giving an overview of the word frequencies in all 10 interview responses.



**Figure 1:** Word cloud of 50 most repeating words in the interview responses.

**3.2. Findings of Thematic Analysis**

This research was conducted to investigate the factors that attract consumers’ attention to Instagram business pages, also why people decide to follow business pages on Instagram, and the factors that influence consumers’ decisions to choose between educational agencies based on their Instagram pages. The analysis of the interviews helped to get the answers to the following research questions: RQ1: What are the factors that attract consumers’ attention to Instagram business pages? RQ2: What are the factors which influence consumers’ decisions to choose between educational agencies based on their Instagram pages?

The interview responses were imported, arranged, and coded into Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) i.e., NVivo. The six-step thematic analysis process by Braun and Clarke (2006) was followed which entails familiarizing oneself with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report, which was used for the analysis of the data.



The research study follows a qualitative method (generally inductive) of analysis that complies with the interpretivism (constructivism) epistemology along with subjectivism ontology. Themes or patterns in the data can be identified, associated, and analysed in one of two primary ways in thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), namely an inductive or ‘bottom-up approach (Frith & Gleeson, 2004), or via the help of theoretical or deductive or ‘top-down approach (Boyatzis, 1998; Hayes, 1997). An inductive approach implies that the themes that have been identified during the analysis are strongly related to the data or more specifically emerge from the data themselves (Patton, 1990), implying a strong correlation to the grounded theory approach of qualitative research. This kind of research aims to let the data talk for it rather than trying to fit the data to the preconceived notions existing in the researcher’s mind or making it conformable to the pre-existing coding framework. Nevertheless, it is essential to mention here that the researchers can’t liberate themselves of their epistemological and theoretical commitments, and in no way, it means that the data has been coded in an epistemological vacuum (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This research study followed the hybrid approach of deduction and induction in terms of relating the initial and axial codes with the research questions and research objectives.

Initial codes (level-1 themes) were generated with the help of line-by-line coding of the interview responses. Once the initial coding of all the interview responses was done, homogenous initial codes were identified, related, and grouped into thirteen axial codes (level-2 themes). Later, these thirteen axial codes were categorized into three broad themes/categories (level-3 themes) which were labelled based on the research questions (table 2). Under the initial codes, responses or quotes were discussed together with justification. In each of the code, various homogenous information from the respondents were obtained.

**Table 2:** Themes hierarchy table exhibiting Themes and their relevant axial codes.

RQs	Name	Sources	References
RQ1	1. Usage of social media	10	90
	1.1. Types of social media platforms being used	10	41
	1.2 Time spent on social media	10	29
	1.3 Frequency of opening social media platforms	10	20
	2. Reasons for following Instagram business pages	10	177
	2.1 Types of business pages being followed	10	23
	2.2 Factors motivating consumer’s attention on Instagram business pages	10	28
	2.3 Types of products bought on social media pages	10	38
	2.4 Reasons of trusting and buying through Instagram	9	16
	2.5 Thinking about educational service providers	10	20
	2.6 Types of Instagram ads of educational services providers	10	28
	2.7 Factors attracting Instagram ads of educational services providers	10	24
	RQ2	3. Consumer’s choices of educational services	10
3.1 Factors influencing the selection of ESC		10	57
3.2 Factors of trust on ESC's Instagram pages		10	52
3.3 Suggestions to improve Instagram pages		6	12

Figure 2 below is visualizing the coding frequency of all themes, sub-themes, and codes. Since the theme “Reasons for following Instagram business pages” has the highest coding frequency i.e., 177 with the largest box in orange colour. The second largest theme w.r.t coding frequency is “Consumer’s choices of educational services” with coding frequency of 121 references and the theme “Usage of social media” has the lowest coding frequency of 90 references.

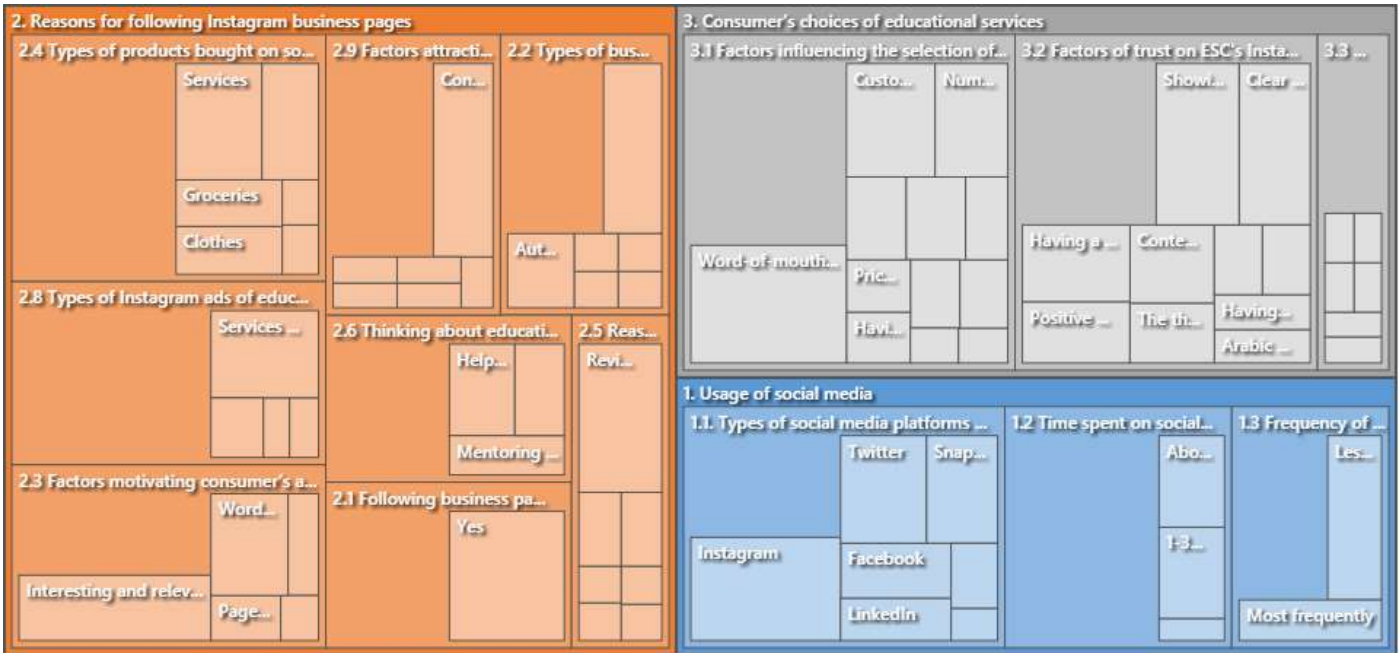


Figure 2: Code hierarchy chart of all interview's responses.

3.3. Usage of Social Media

The first theme was labelled as Usage of social media which was made up of three sub-themes which are: Types of social media platforms being used, Time spent on social media, and Frequency of opening social media platforms. Each of the sub-theme is being explained below with all relevant codes associated with them.

3.3.1. Types of social media platforms being used.

When the participants were asked about the types of social platforms being used them, variety of platforms were reported from them. Their type is being shown in the figure 3 below.

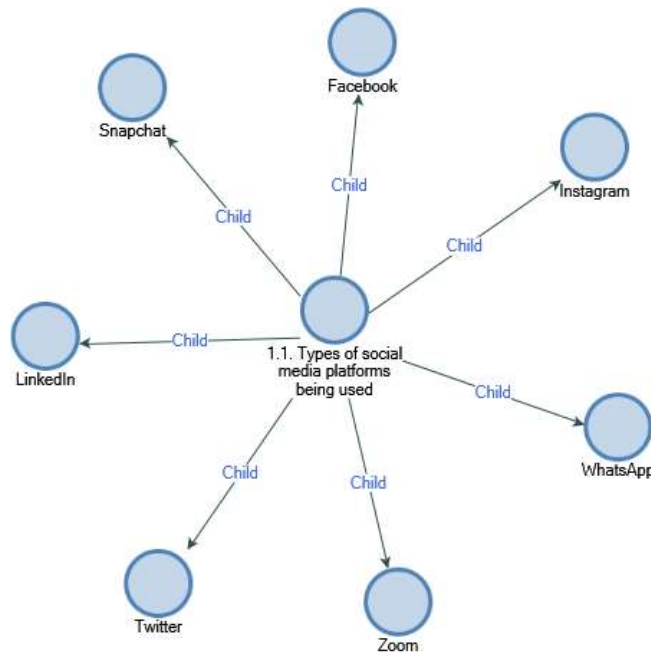


Figure 3: Types of social media platforms being used with associated codes.

Figure 4 below is providing an overview of the percentages of social media platforms being used by the interview participants. It was revealed that Instagram is the platform which is mostly used by them with 32%. While WhatsApp was the least used platforms with 7% and some of them also considered an online meeting tool i.e., Zoom as a social media platform with 3%.

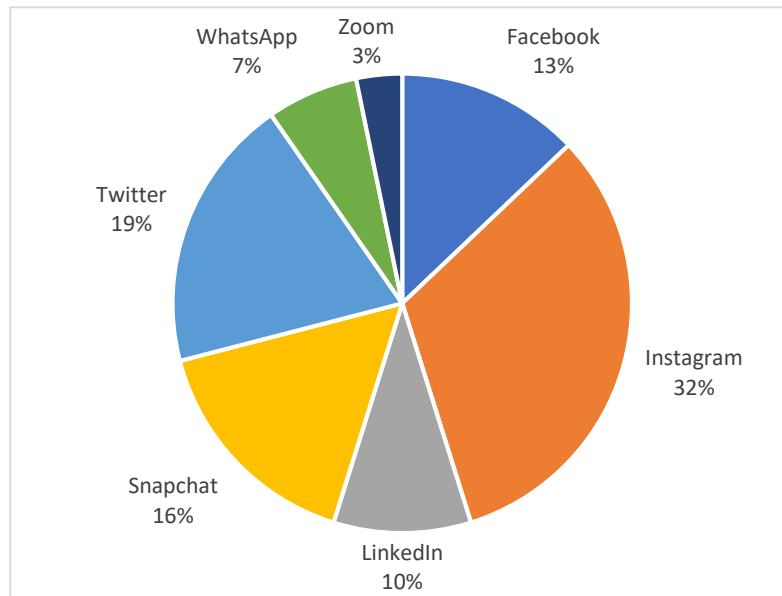


Figure 4: Percentage of social media platforms being used.

### 3.3.2. Time Spent on Social Media

How much time the partisans spend on social media daily was categorized as: less than one hour, 1-3 hours, and Above 3 hours. Figure 5 is visualizing this relationship.

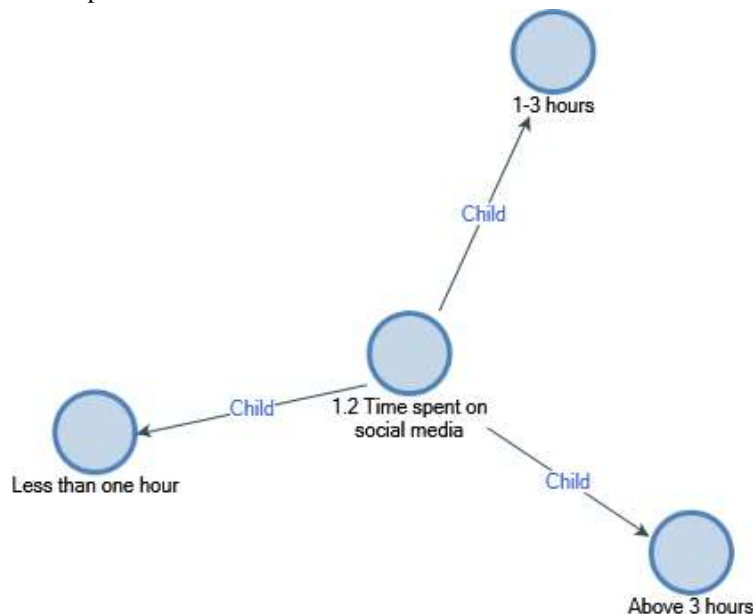


Figure 5: Time spent on social media with associated codes.

The findings of the data described that 45% of the participants use social media more than 1-3 hours per day while, 44% above 3 hours, and 11% less than one hour. So, it implies that 89% of the participants use social media more than one hour per day.

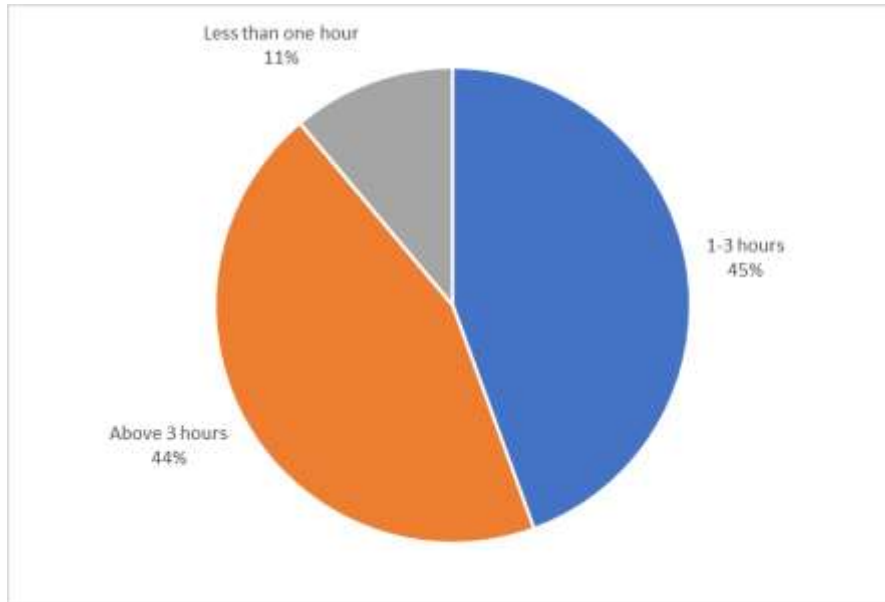


Figure 6: Percentages of social media usage per day

3.3.3. Frequency of opening social media platforms

Frequency of opening social media platforms was categorized as opening it less frequently and most frequently i.e., Figure 7.

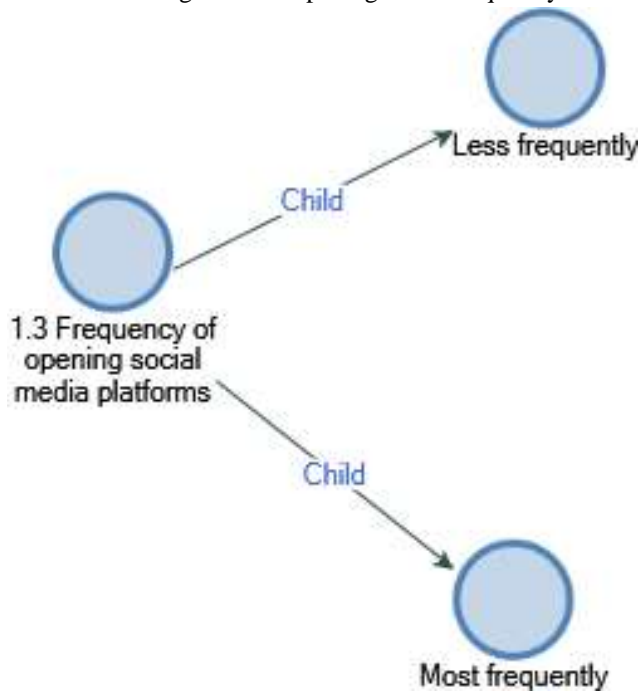


Figure 7: Frequency of opening social media platforms with associated codes.



Figure 8 below is exhibiting that 60% of the participants less frequently open the social media platforms and are less addicted to it.

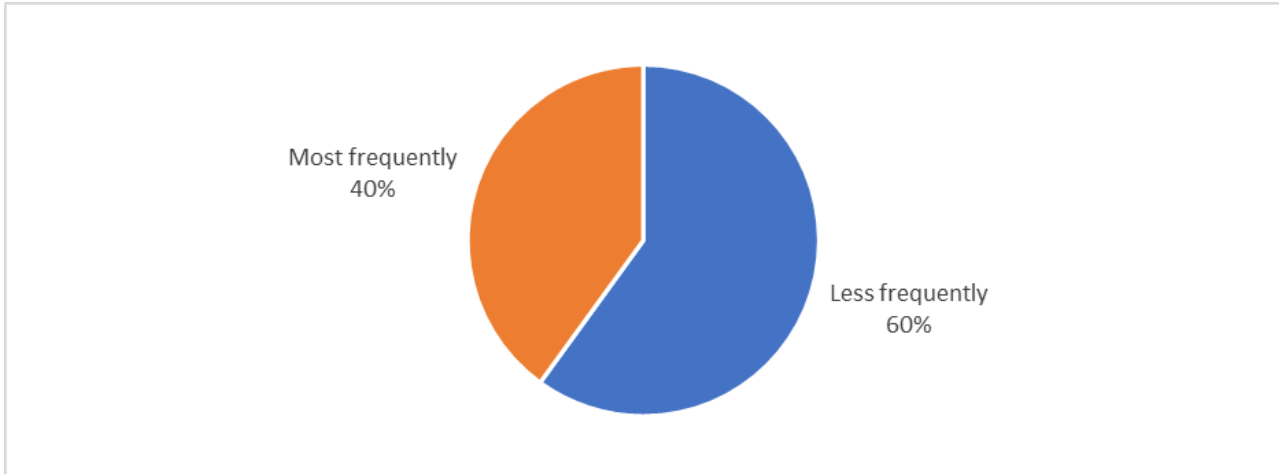


Figure 8: Frequency of opening social media platforms.

### 3.4. Reasons for following Instagram business pages

The second theme was named as “Reasons for following Instagram business pages” which was made up of seven sub-themes i.e., Types of business pages being followed, Factors motivating consumer’s attention on Instagram business pages, Types of products bought on social media pages, Reasons of trusting and buying through Instagram, Thinking about educational service providers, Types of Instagram ads of educational services providers, and Factors attracting Instagram ads of educational services providers. Each of the sub-theme is explained below with all relevant codes associated with them.

#### 3.4.1. Types of business pages being followed.

The participants informed that they follow different types of business pages on Instagram. these types include apparel, cosmetics, and fashion, automobiles, educational pages, skill development, sports accessories, and technology related pages.

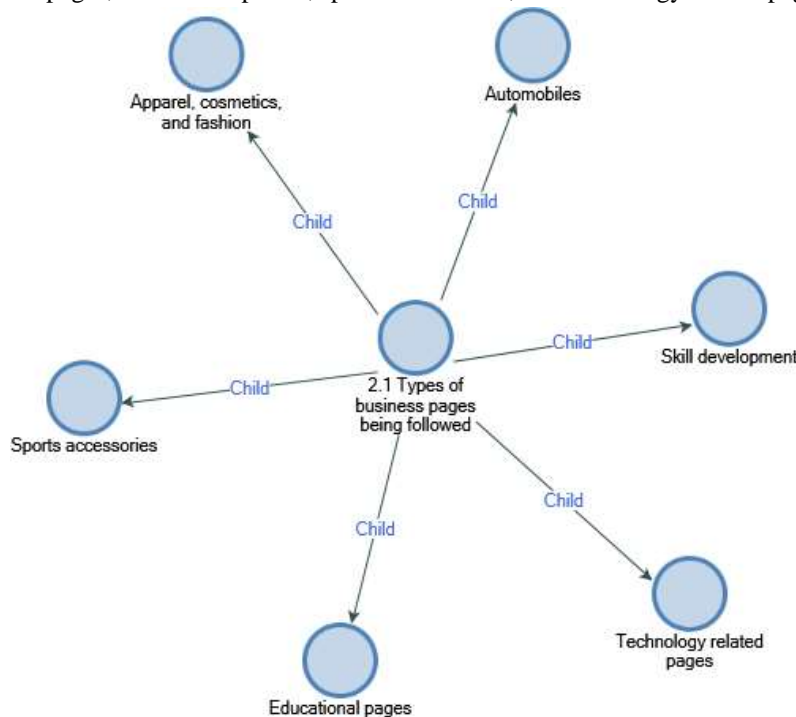


Figure 9: Types of business pages being followed with associated codes.

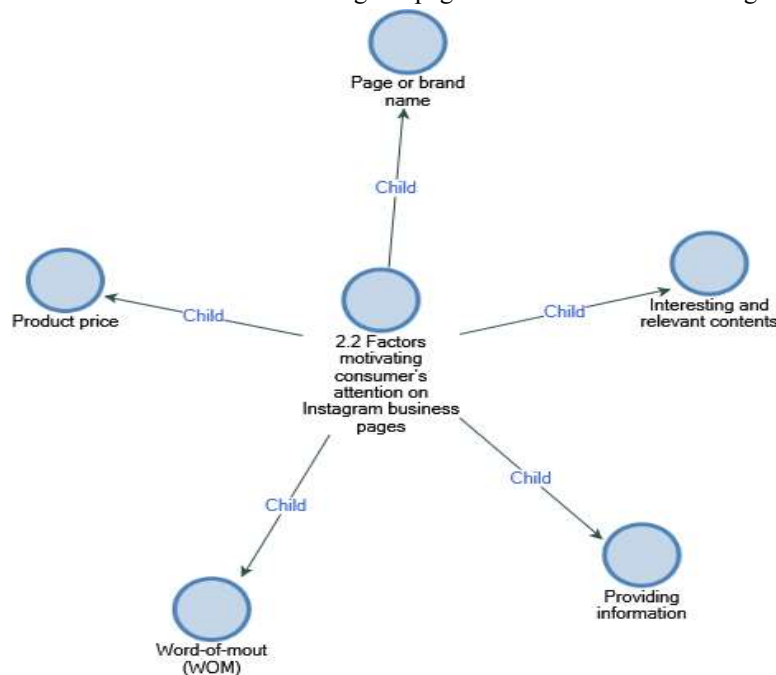


**Table 3:** Types of business pages being followed with associated codes.

Codes	References
Apparel, cosmetics, and Fashion	Depend on the things I need and want in the current time. Any page I like I follow it usually. Usually, I follow pages that present clothes, accessories, and pages that are related to my hobbies
Automobiles	Depending on the things that I have interest in recently. If it's related to my hobbies or what I care about in life. For example, clothes and cars pages in the present time
Educational Pages	Educational pages
Skill development	According to what I'm currently working on or interest me. for example, recently I follow graphic design pages because they are one of my current interests
Sports Accessoires	Pages that are related to my interests. For example, football, clothes
Technology related Pages	Technologic pages, pages related to my specialty (electrical based pages)

**3.4.2. Factors Motivating Consumer’s Attention on Instagram Business Pages**

There are various factors i.e., Interesting, and relevant contents, page or brand name, product price, providing information, and word-of-mouth (WOM) which motivate consumer’s attention on Instagram pages. These are exhibited in figure 10.



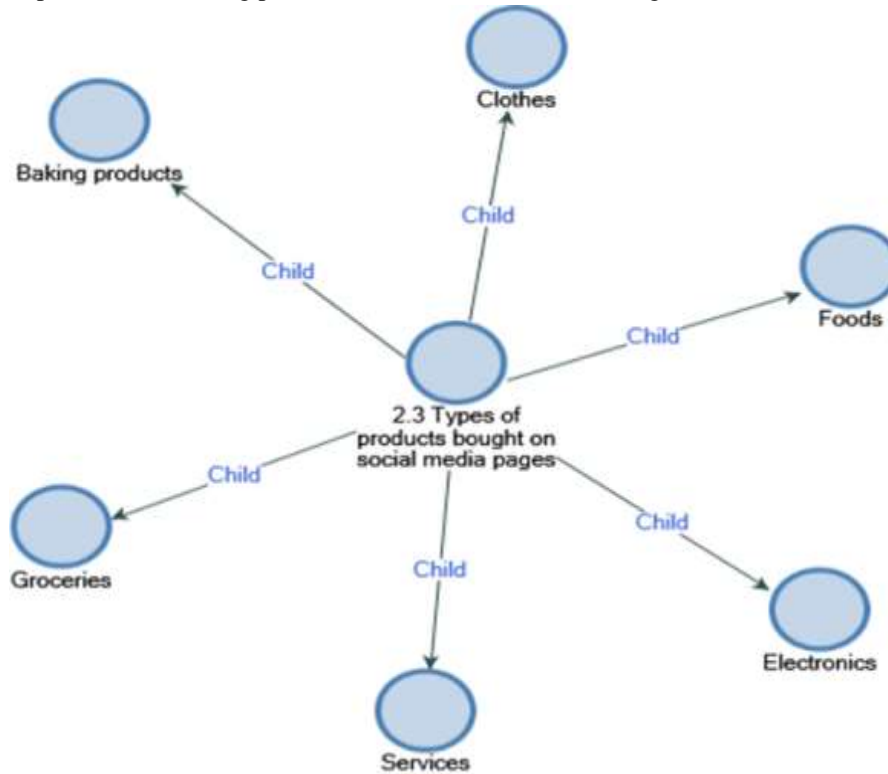
**Figure 10:** Factors motivating consumer’s attention on Instagram business pages with associated codes.

**Table 4:** Factors motivating consumer’s attention on Instagram business pages with associated codes.

Codes	References
Interesting and relevant content	When the page is related to my interest it attracts me and makes me follow it and attract me to look through the page more
The page or brand name	The name (brand), the content within the page and WOM
Product price	Next comes the price of the product or service
Providing information	A content that will help me and give me important information
Word-of-mouth (WOM)	I trust pages that my friends and people I know advise me about them (WOM is Positive), when I see positive comments from people also about these pages and high ranking this makes me trust to follow them and sometimes deal with or buy something from them

**3.4.3. Types Of Products Bought on Social Media Pages**

People buy various types of products like baking products, clothes, electronics, foods, groceries, and services on social media pages.



**Figure 11:** Types of products bought on social media pages with associated codes.

**Table 5:** Types of products bought on social media pages with associated codes.

Codes	References
Baking products	<i>Cake</i>
Clothes	<i>Clothes</i>
Electronics	<i>Electronics</i>
Foods	<i>I buy food online</i>
Groceries	<i>Groceries</i>
Services	<i>Everything services the most of course</i>

**3.4.4. Reasons For Trusting and Buying Through Instagram.**

The participants described multiple reasons of their trust and buying through Instagram pages. These reasons were identified as Authorization by authorities, Interaction and response from page admins, Number of followers, Presence on other online platforms, Price, Product quality, and Reviews and word-of-mouth (WOM).

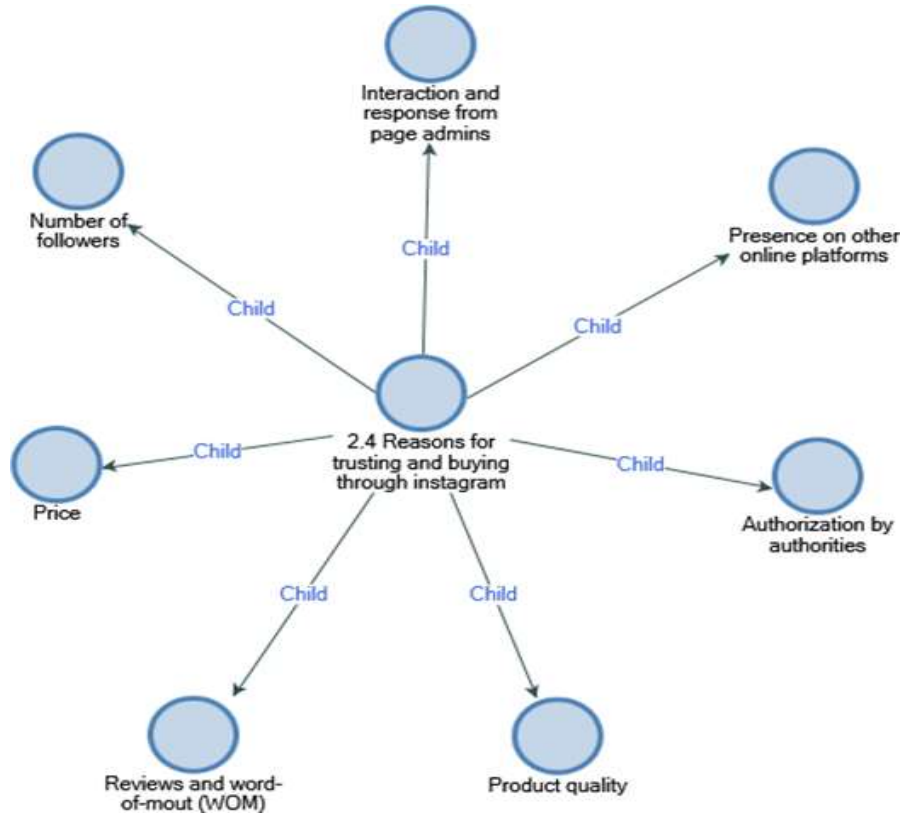


Figure 12: Reasons for trusting and buying through Instagram with associated codes.

Table 6: Reasons for trusting and buying through Instagram with associated codes.

Codes	References
Authorization by authorities	For example, Trendyol is authorized by Turkish trade site, so their pages are trusted, and I trust them
Interaction and response from page admins	How they interacted with me, it's very important for me how they respond to me and give me information's and the speed of the respond
Number of followers	First, if they have a lot of followers
Presence on other online platforms	I search about them in google and see the reviews if they are good, see their website, website is very important for me. See if they have pages on other platforms. I make deep search about them
Price	Next comes the price of the product or service
Product quality	Then the quality of the product and service
Reviews and word-of-mouth (WOM)	I trust pages that my friends and people I know advise me about them (WOM is Positive), when I see positive comments from people also about these pages and high ranking this makes me trust to follow them and sometimes deal or buy something from them

3.4.5. Thinking About Educational Service Providers

The participants had multiple thoughts about educational services providers. Some of them said that they are helpful for foreigners in terms of getting educational visas for overseas students. Moreover, they also provide mentoring to overseas student about the requirements and admission criteria of universities in Turkey. So, they are useful source of information.

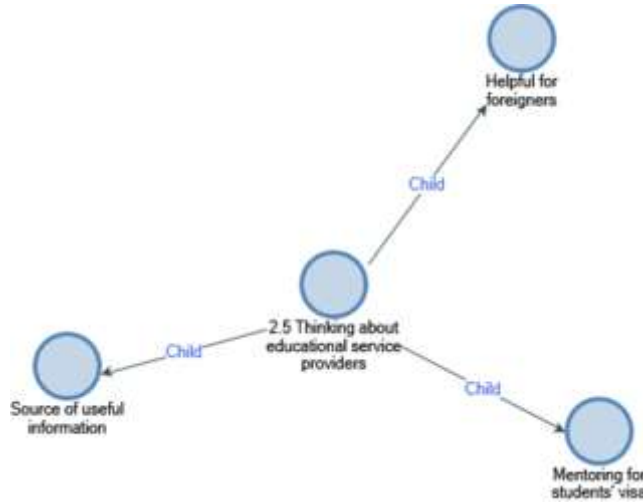


Figure 13: Thinking about educational service providers with associated codes.

Table 7: Thinking about educational service providers with associated codes.

Codes	References
Helpful for foreigners	<i>I think these companies are very useful and helpful. They direct new people that come to turkey, not necessary students, they help people that don't know the country and its language. They do for them many inquiries and direct them</i>
Mentoring for students' visa	<i>Before I come to study in turkey all these companies were offering the same promotions and I didn't know which one to choose or which one is the best. I tried to ask my friends on turkey about them, but they didn't know them. At the end I didn't trust to deal with them and didn't contact any of them</i>
Source of useful information	<i>I think these companies provide very useful contents for students especially that are willing to study in turkey and are new in the country. From my opinion I see them very helpful</i>

3.4.6. Types Of Instagram Ads of Educational Services Providers

Participants said that they see a variety of ads of educational services companies in terms of, business related courses, helping students in getting accommodation, services to help international students, and Turkish language courses.

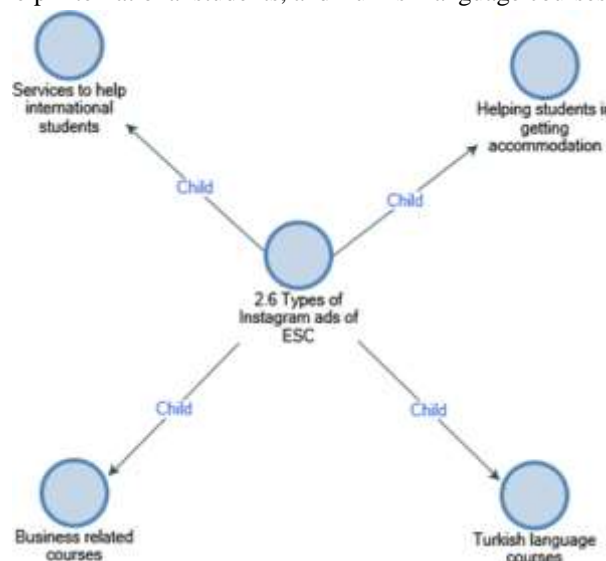


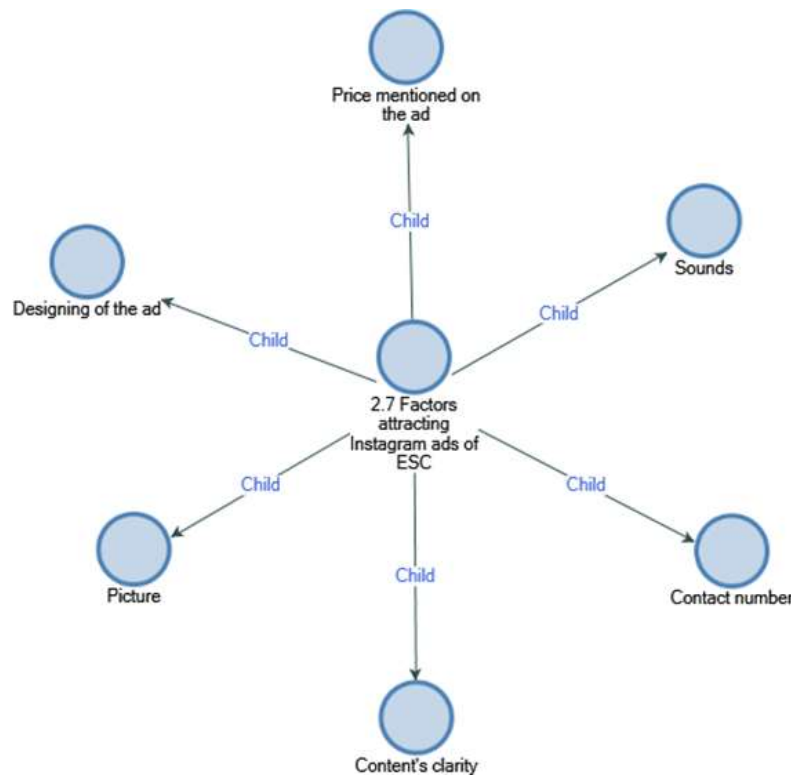
Figure 14: Types of Instagram ads of educational services companies (ESC) with associated codes

**Table 8:** Types of Instagram ads of educational services companies (ESC) with associated codes

Codes	References
Business related courses	It was about business related courses to register for
Helping students in getting accommodation	It was about an educational company that introduce its services to the new students that need help in their accommodation transaction
Services to help international students	It was about an introduction to the services provided by a company that help international students in turkey
Turkish language courses	It was about courses for teaching turkey

**3.4.7. Factors Attracting Instagram Ads Of ESC**

What triggers people to notice Instagram ads of ESC is the contact number, content's clarity, designing of the ad, pictures, price mentioned on the ad, and sounds etc.



**Figure 15:** Factors attracting Instagram ads of educational services companies (ESC) with associated codes.

**Table 9:** Factors attracting Instagram ads of educational services companies (ESC) with associated codes.

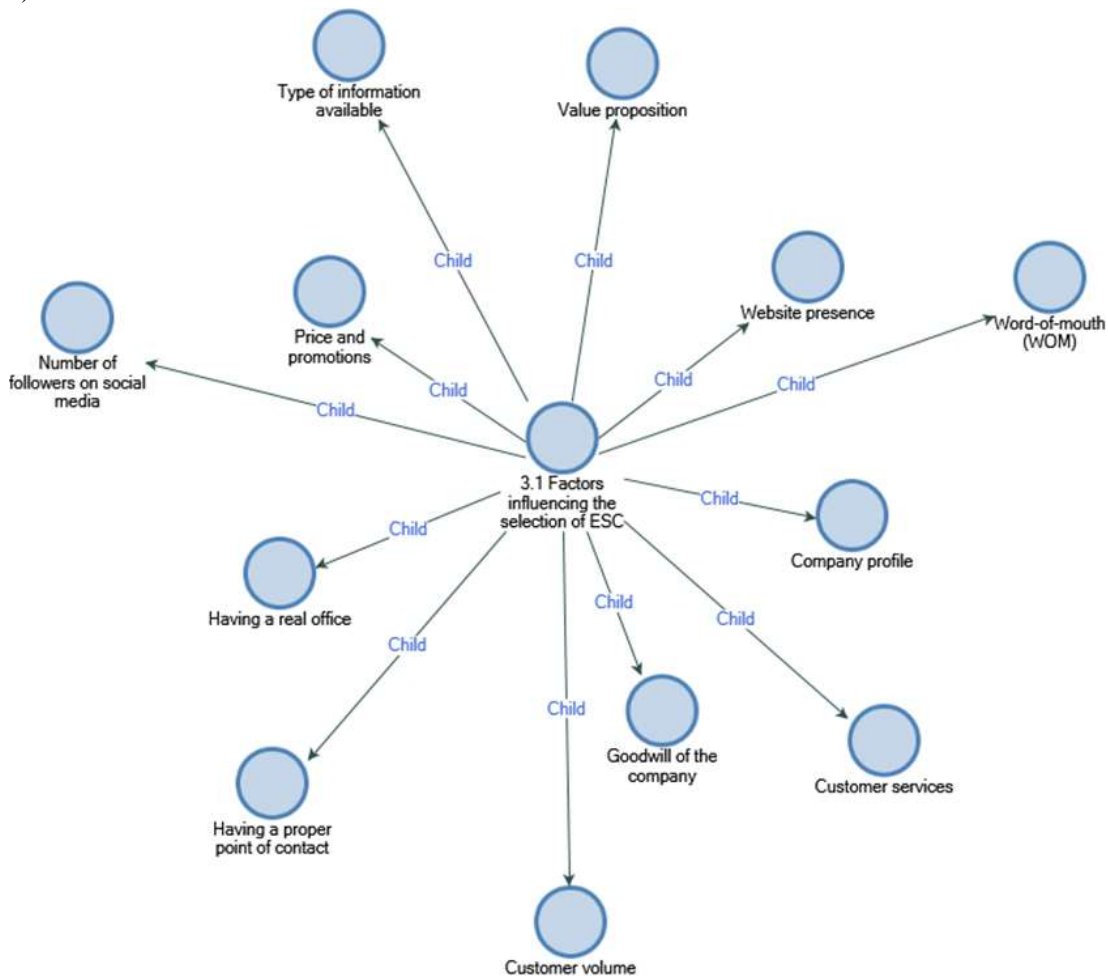
Codes	References
Contact number	When there is a contact number
Content's clarity	I didn't care about the ad, but I think that the content was clear
Designing of the ad	The design of the ad may interact me also, but the content is more important
Picture	The picture of the ad attracted me
Price mentioned on the ad	The price they put on the ad was lower than other companies that provide the same service (promotion)
Sounds	I wasn't attracted to it, but usually I'm attracted to the unison company ads in YouTube because they put sounds in their ads that attracts me

**3.5. Consumer’s Choices of Educational Services**

Consumer’s choices of educational services were comprised of three sub-themes i.e., Factors influencing the selection of ESC, Factors of trust on ESC's Instagram pages, and Suggestions to improve Instagram pages. Each of the sub-themes along with their relevant codes is explained below.

**3.5.1. Factors Influencing the Selection Of ESC**

The customers have different benchmarks and criteria which drive them in the selection of ESC. These criteria were coded as company profile, customer services, customer volume, goodwill of the company, having a proper point of contact, having a real office, number of followers on social media, price and promotions, type of information available, value proposition, website presence, and the word-of-mouth (WOM) about ESCs.



**Figure 16:** Factors influencing the selection of ESC with associated codes.

**Table 10:** Factors influencing the selection of ESC with associated codes.

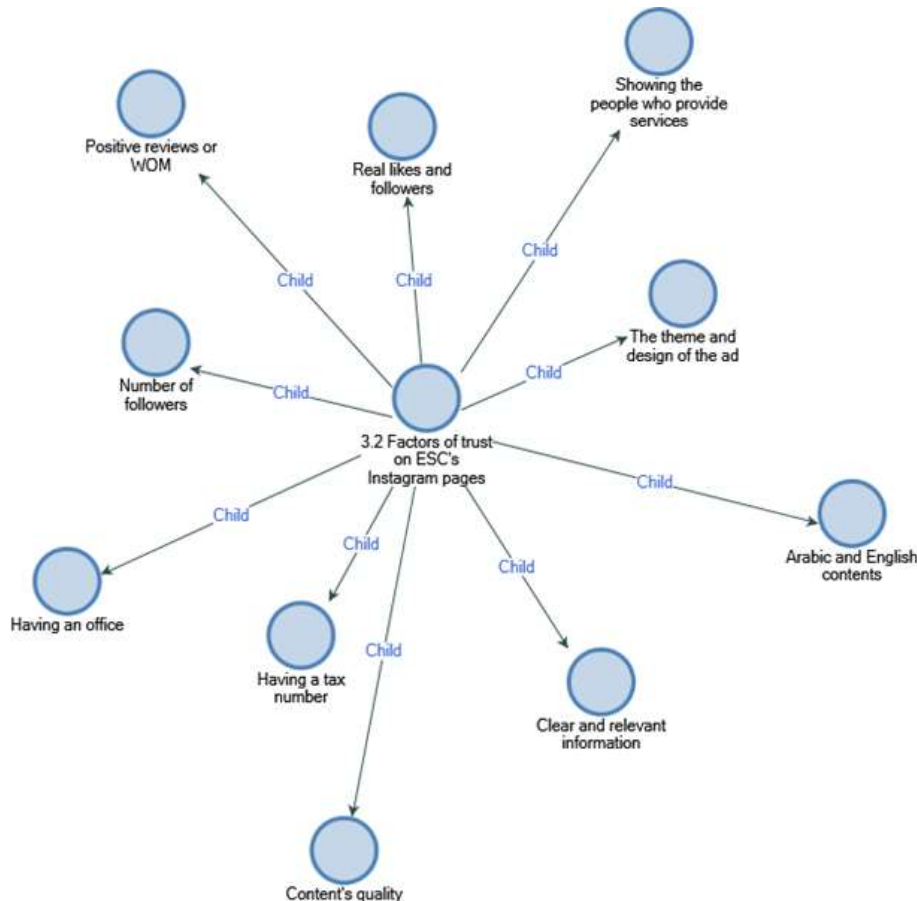
Codes	References
Company profile	<i>Highlights in the page introducing the company, team and what they offer</i>
Customer services	<i>next comes how they treat me, customers’ service is very important for me. The skills they have of convincing people influence me to choose one of their services even if its online. I prefer to deal with the company that offering for me a service face to face, but if they were very convincible it doesn’t matter to me to deal with them face to face</i>



<b>Customer volume</b>	<i>If I had to choose between several companies, I will choose the most professional one, the one that people interacted with it the most.</i>
<b>Goodwill of the company</b>	<i>I prefer the older companies and the ones that have too many followers.</i>
<b>Having a proper point of contact</b>	<i>I go for companies that have website, number, and someone to contact</i>
<b>Having a real office</b>	<i>If they had a real office would affect my decision and make me trust them more</i>
<b>Number of followers on social media</b>	<i>The number of followers also would be important for me, because it means that a lot of people like them and deal with them.</i>
<b>Price and promotions</b>	<i>Yes, the promotions they give would make them more selective for me.</i>
<b>Type of information available</b>	<i>I see their Instagram page and what information's they have in their page.</i>
<b>Value proposition</b>	<i>What they offer</i>
<b>Website presence</b>	<i>To have a website is very important for me, it means that they are professional and trustable</i>
<b>Word-of-mouth (WOM)</b>	<i>Yes, by seeing the reviews and comments about them. I don't care about the colours they use or the design. What is important for me the most is the WOM, what other people say about them</i>

**3.5.2. Factors Of Trust on ESC’s Instagram Pages**

What establishes people’s trust on Instagram pages of ESCs? There are multiple factors which play a key role in this regard. these factors include Arabic and English contents, clear and relevant information, content's quality, having a tax number, having an office, number of followers, positive reviews or WOM, real likes and followers, showing the people who provide services, and the theme and design of the ad.



**Figure 17:** Factors of trust on ESC’s Instagram pages with associated codes



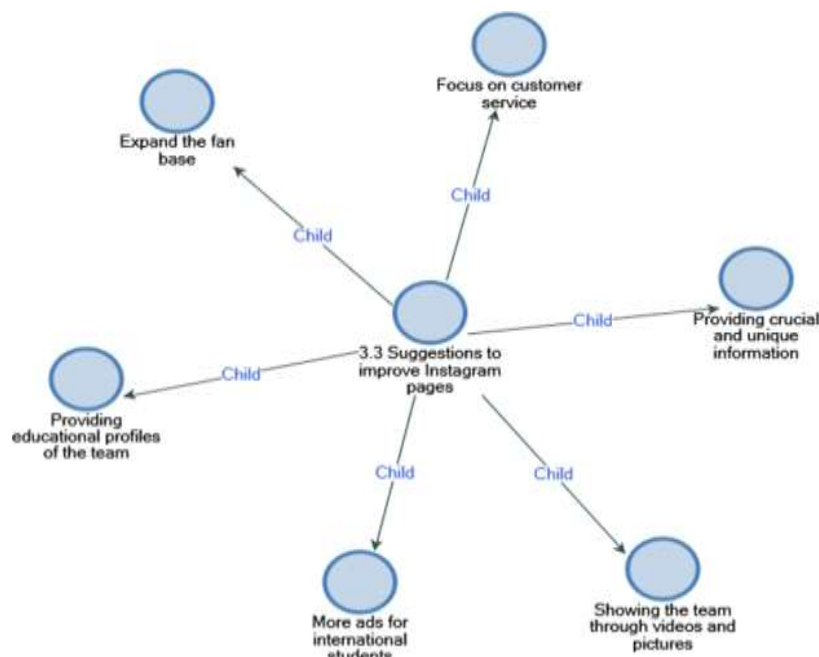


**Table 11:** Factors of trust on ESC’s Instagram pages with associated codes

Codes	References
Arabic and English contents	<i>The contents to be in Arabic and English</i>
Clear and relevant information	<i>Yes, if their page on Instagram has highlight this could make an effect on me but not too much</i>
Content's quality	<i>Number of followers is not important for me. The content is what matter for me.</i>
Having a tax number	<i>Yes, it's very important for me. It makes me more comfortable especially when I'm outside the country and not in Turkey</i>
Having an office	<i>When they have an office, this show me that they are legal</i>
Number of followers	<i>Then the number of followers make me trust them more, if they have a lot of followers this mean a lot of people like them and have experience with them.</i>
Positive reviews or WOM	<i>The positive reviews on their page from people that have interacted with them before.</i>
Real likes and followers	<i>Followers are very important and make me trust the page more, but of a page have too many followers and vey less interaction on the page, this makes a doubt for me that there is manipulation and make me not trust them</i>
Showing the people who provide services	<i>Video that introduces the company and its services and the appearance of the people that deliver the services in a video or post also make the company more trustable for me</i>
The theme and design of the ad	<i>The colour, design of the page. Colours that interact a person (red, green, and blue). The font and the size of font as well</i>

**3.5.3. Suggestions To Improve Instagram Pages**

Participants also gave valuables suggestions to improve the Instagram pages of ESCc. They suggested that educational services companies should Expand the fan base, focus on customer service, post More ads for international students, provide crucial and unique information, provide educational profiles of the team, and showing the team through videos and pictures so that people believe that the company is real.



**Figure 18:** Suggestions to improve Instagram pages with associated codes.



**Table 12:** Suggestions to improve Instagram pages with associated codes.

<b>Codes</b>	<b>References</b>
<b>Expand the fan base</b>	<i>To expand and gain a fan base</i>
<b>Focus on customer service</b>	<i>To focus on customer service. It's very important the way the company communicate with the customer. Always treat your followers as persons and not as clients. Be very honest with the person"</i>
<b>More ads for international students</b>	<i>Making more ads for international students to be aware of them</i>
<b>Providing crucial and unique information</b>	<i>Providing information's that is hard to find them in another companies</i>
<b>Providing educational profiles of the team</b>	<i>It's very important that through their highlights or posts to introduce the people behind the screen, their education level and information's about them to win the trust of people</i>
<b>Showing the team through videos and pictures</b>	<i>Yes, it's very important that these companies provide video or pictures on their pages in social media platforms about the people and team behind the screen to be more trustful and everything obvious</i>

#### 4. FINDINGS

Based on the analysis conducted, it is essential to glance at the targeted interviewees' most used social media platform. The results indicate that all interviewees use Instagram, unlike other social media platforms, which are not used with all targeted individuals. This shows that Instagram successfully attracted the youth group, mainly as the sample includes undergraduate and graduate youth. This also strengthens this research as it is focused on Instagram business pages.

Furthermore, seven out of ten interviewees do not spend much time on social media. This can be justified as they are students and are fully occupied by their academic workload and other life commitments. This is somewhat surprising as the expectation is that they are spending so much time on social media as this is the trend of this generation. However, this can be a subjective assessment by the interviewees as they might not accept that they are spending so much time using social media. About the interviewees' frequency and duration of opening social media platforms, it seems that the interviewees either open social media platforms from 1 to 2 times or even more depending on their free time. At the same time, the average usage duration is between 2 to 3 hours.

As the focus is the business pages or brands on Instagram, all interviewees happened to be following either business pages or brands on Instagram, which supported the research's ultimate findings. This also proves the effectiveness of these types of pages. The main categories of the business or brands that interviewees usually follow-on Instagram are as follows: clothes and accessories, cars, sports, education, marketing business, technology. Most importantly, the main factors that encourage the interviewees to follow a brand or business page on Instagram are content, the brand's quality, WOM, and price. However, the main factor for encouraging people to follow such pages is the page's content. This means that the page's content is a key success factor in attracting people's attention.

Regarding the trust factors, all interviewees except one trust in purchasing through social media platforms. The purchasing items mainly include but are not limited to clothes, food, groceries, flight and hotel tickets, services, including booking apportionments. One of the trusted platforms is Trendyol, authorized by the Turkish trade site. The main reasons for attaining such trust are WOM, reputation, number of followers, price, quality, and content. However, the most common reasons for achieving confidence are the page's WOM and content.

To be more specific with the purpose of this research, it is essential to investigate the factors influencing consumers' decisions to choose between educational services providers based on their Instagram pages. Based on the analysis findings, it seems that there is effective reach by the educational services companies in Turkey towards their targeted customers. As the interviewees either heard of such companies or even dealt with them. All the interviewees indicated that such companies are helpful because they speed up the admission process and help with the logistics of settling in Turkey for newcomers. The WOM played a vital role in increasing the positive impression for such services and determining which one to approach. Hence, not all of these companies are trusted, as the referral approach is the main determining factor for trust. As it seems, some of these companies do some manipulations. Besides, many of these companies are active in social media marketing, as indicated by interviewees who have seen the ad by such companies, especially on Instagram.



These ads focused on supporting students with all steps to study in Turkey. Such ads promoted the taught courses in Turkey as well. Also, the ad focused on accommodation facilitating. Besides, the ads included essential information for potential international students and newcomers. Overall, they reflect how they can assist students in studying in Turkey step by step. The main feature of these ads and promotions is the value proposition delivered by these companies when contracting with them. They emphasize the smoothness of the process when students approach them. There is also highlighting of the competitive prices among these companies in their ads. The design and creativity are among the features that attract attention and help potential customers to make their choices. Again, the content is among the essential success factors for these ads, including the offering Arabic language. It is necessary to mention that including a contact number will increase the chances of opening the ad.

The main factor in choosing an education services company is the WOM which includes customer feedback. Other factors include the number of offered services, the year of establishment, number of followers, website availability, contact information availability, number of users or customers, content, price, face to face services, achievements by these companies (success stories, content in English and Arabic, physical address, information about the company's team, design, and creativity).

Regarding the trust factor in terms of educational services companies, WOM is considered the main key driver. Also, the number of followers is among the key drivers along. Besides, the page content includes listing detailed information about the company's team members and design and creativity, including visual features. A physical address and quick response can be critical factors for attaining trust and prices. At the same time, the availability of tax numbers is not always a factor for achieving trust towards these companies by customers.

A possible improvement for educational services companies from a customer perspective is by increasing the number of ads targeting international students and videos and pictures. Also, these companies need to list their team members' details to increase trust. Professional customer service is required to improve the performance of these companies, including clarity and honesty. The success stories documentation is also needed to increase loyal customers—the more information exposed, the better for the company as it increases transparency.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The researchers gathered primary qualitative data using in-depth interviews. Ten students from Middle East and Africa who currently live in Istanbul were the study's target sample and audiences.

As illustrated in the findings all interviewees use Instagram. Furthermore, seven out of ten interviewees do not spend much time on social media. The interviewees either open social media platforms from 1 to 2 times or even more depending on their free time and the average usage duration is between 2 to 3 hours. All interviewees following either business pages or brands on Instagram. The main factors that encourage the interviewees to follow a brand or business page on Instagram are content, the brand's quality, WOM, and price. However, the main factor for encouraging people to follow such pages is the page's content. Regarding the trust factors, 9 out of 10 interviewees trust in purchasing through social media platforms.

Also, based on the analysis findings, it seems that there is effective reach by the educational services companies in Turkey towards their targeted customers. All the interviewees indicated that such companies are helpful because they speed up the admission process and help with the logistics of settling in Istanbul for newcomers. The WOM played a vital role in increasing the positive impression for such services. Hence, not all these companies are trusted, as the referral approach is the main determining factor for trust. As it seems, some of these companies do some manipulations. Besides, many of these companies are active in social media marketing, as indicated by interviewees who have seen the ad by such companies, especially on Instagram. These ads focused on how they can assist students in studying in Turkey step by step. The main feature of these ads and promotions is the value proposition delivered by these companies when contracting with them. The design and creativity are among the features that attract attention and help potential customers to make their choices.

Again, the content is among the essential success factors for these ads, including the offering Arabic language. It is necessary to mention that including a contact number will increase the chances of opening the ad. Other factors include the number of offered services, the year of establishment, number of followers, website availability, contact information availability, number of users or customers, content, price, face to face services, achievements by these companies (success stories, content in English and Arabic, physical address, information about the company's team, design, and creativity).



Regarding the trust factor in terms of educational services companies, WOM is considered the main key driver. Also, the number of followers is among the key drivers along. Besides, the page content includes listing detailed information about the company's team members and design and creativity, including visual features. A physical address and quick response can be critical factors for attaining trust and prices. At the same time, the availability of tax numbers is not always a factor for achieving trust towards these companies by customers.

To overcome the first research limitation future studies are recommended to expand the study for other field of companies and different times to reach generable conclusions. Also, future studies are recommended to consider other social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and YouTube. Also, this research mainly focuses on students from middle east who currently live-in turkey and studying in private universities. It is recommended that the sample be expanded and that students of foreign nationalities who's studying in public universities be studied.

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## APPENDIX: MAIN INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Ask about: Name, Nationality, Education Level, Gender, Age.

Q1: Which social media platforms do you use?

- Q2:
- ① Do you spend long time on social media?
  - ② How many times do you open social media platforms during the day?
  - ③ How much time do you spend on them?

- Q3:
- ① Do you follow business pages or brands on Instagram?
  - ② what kind of businesses/ brands do you usually follow-on Instagram?
  - ③ What makes You follow a brand or business page on Instagram? What attracts you? What encourages you to do that?

- Q4:
- ① In general do you consider yourself as a person who would buy something or trust a company from its social media?
  - ② what kind of things/ companies?
  - ③ what makes you trust them?

- Q5:
- ① Have you heard about companies in turkey that provide educational services to international students? Have you ever used any of their services?
  - ② What do you think about educational service companies in turkey?

- Q6: Have you seen any ad in Instagram from an educational services company?
- ① Did you like it?
  - ② Describe it more?
  - ③ What attracted your attention in it?

- Q7: Imagine that you are looking for an educational services company to register for you or to help you with you Residence permit for example.
- ① How would you choose between different companies available in turkey?
  - ② What are the factors that would affect your decision?

Q8: Do you think that the Instagram page of educational services companies would affect your decision? How?

Q9: What would make you trust an educational services company from their Instagram page?