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#IUseTwitterBecause: content analytic study of a trending topic in Twitter

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to propose a robust framework for assessing motivations to use Twitter. Drawing on previous studies, diffusion of innovations, unified theory of acceptance and use of technology, and uses and gratifications frameworks were incorporated to capture the variety in Twitter gratifications.

Design/methodology/approach – This study explored the motivations to use Twitter through data mining and content analysis of #IUseTwitterBecause trending topic in Turkey. The sample was consisted of 4,465 tweets posted by 3,794 unique Twitter persona.

Findings – Findings revealed 13 distinct Twitter gratifications which were grouped under four main categories: content, process, social and technology. Process gratifications were found to be the strongest motives for using Twitter whereas content gratifications were the weakest. The current findings indicated that Turkish users engage with Twitter mostly for self-expression, escapism, and social interaction. Moreover, the study found a novel campaign gratification for using Twitter solely to make political or social agenda visible in the society.

Originality/value – The current study extends the previous literature on motivations in using social networking services from both analytical and methodological perspectives. The naturally occurring data and relatively large sample size in this study provides a deeper look into social media gratifications and yields more generalizable findings. Besides, this study contributes to the alleviation of conceptual confusions among the past social media gratification studies.

Keywords Technology adoption, Social networks, Content analysis, Diffusion theory, Diffusion of innovations, Information society, User satisfaction, Uses and gratifications

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Considering the last two decades, it is possible to assert that society has come across with two major transformations in the communication area. First, the internet and Web 2.0 technology empowered people to create their own content and publish themselves worldwide. Second, interpersonal connectivity through online networks has increased tremendously. Such transformations facilitated the evolution of "a new communication landscape" (Kietzmann *et al.*, 2011) from small-scale bulletin boards to gigantic social network services (SNS) (Shao, 2009). In SNSs, people disclose their personal identity at various levels to a limited or unlimited audience by creating a public profile (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). The connecting mechanics of these services recruit individuals from all over the world and provide swift flow of information and high interactivity among their members.

Along with some other platforms (e.g. Facebook, Instagram), Twitter has become one of the most popular SNSs in the world (PEW, 2014). It is considered as a microblogging service, which blends the essential mechanics of both social networking and blogging environments (Boyd *et al.*, 2010). Twitter decreases users' investment of time significantly by only allowing the input of 140 characters in updates (Java *et al.*, 2009), and promotes social interaction via mentions, retweets, and hashtags. Mentions are used for addressing a Tweet content to particular users. Retweeting a content means amplifying it to a larger audience via followers. Users are also able to bring a particular topic/issue for discussion in Twitter by creating hashtags. When a particular hashtag is discussed more than others at a certain moment, it becomes a trending topic (TT). TTs are listed on the Twitter main page, which draws users' attention to the current hot topics both at local and global levels. With these simple but unique features, Twitter has become a means of real time conversation on current events (Williams *et al.*, 2013). The rise of Twitter in the public space has attracted various scholars to investigate the motives to use it. The following section presents a brief literature review on the motivations for using Twitter and related theoretical constructs.

Literature review

How and why individuals choose a certain media or technology over another has been investigated in the fields of communication and technology through several bodies of literature (Stafford *et al.*, 2004). Diffusion of innovations (DI) (Rogers, 2003), unified theory acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT) (Venkatesh *et al.*, 2003), and uses and gratifications theory (UGT) (Katz, 1959; Ruggiero, 2000), can be considered as some of the influential frameworks on the investigation of adoption and continuous use of media technologies (Ekdale *et al.*, 2015; Gruzd *et al.*, 2012; Peters *et al.*, 2007).

DI

DI theory explicates the diffusion of a new idea or technology from several perspectives such as progress, attributes, networks of the innovation, and adopter characteristics. According to the theory, an essential criterion in the acceptance of an innovation is its relative advantage, which is defined as "the degree to which an innovation is perceived as better than the idea it supersedes" (Rogers, 2003, p. 15). Within this framework, preferring a specific technology over another is the product of one's perception that the chosen one is somehow better than its precursors. The relative advantage offered by a technology might be related to economic advancement, status gain or enjoyment (Rogers, 2003). The dimensions of relative advantage were later conceptualized as convenience, trust and efficacy (Choudhury and Karahanna, 2008). The theory also posits that social influence is important for the technology adoption process (Rogers, 2003; Stafford *et al.*, 2004), meaning that people are persuaded by significant others to accept technological advancements.

UTAUT technology acceptance model

Research on individuals' acceptance and use of information and communication technologies has yielded several competing models explaining technology adoption (Venkatesh *et al.*, 2012). In their study, Venkatesh *et al.* (2003) reviewed eight technology adoption models (theory of reasoned action, motivational model, social cognitive theory, a model combining the technology acceptance model, technology acceptance model, theory of planned behavior, the model of PC utilization and DI) and developed the empirical model of UTAUT. UTAUT model explained direct determinants of intention to use a technology as performance expectancy, effort expectancy and social influence. According to Venkatesh *et al.* (2003), performance expectancy is the users' perception about the usefulness of the technology; effort expectancy is the degree in which an individual assesses that using

the technology will be easy; and social influence is the level of pressure individuals feel from their surroundings to use the technology. The model was later extended to UTAUT2 with the inclusion of hedonic motivation and price value to explain the acceptance of technology at a consumer level (Venkatesh *et al.*, 2012). In UTAUT2, hedonic motivation refers to the perceived level of pleasure and fun derived from using the technology whereas price value is the degree in which consumers find the technology affordable. UTAUT and UTAUT2 have been validated in several technology adoption settings including social media (e.g. Barnes and Böhringer, 2011; Escobar-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2014; Gruzd *et al.*, 2012).

UGT
UGT is a psychological communication paradigm positing that individuals take active role in their adoption of media to satisfy their intrinsic needs (Katz *et al.*, 1974; Rubin, 1994). According to UGT, persistent use of a specific media is dependent on the fulfillment of gratifications sought from it (Palmgreen and Rayburn, 1979). In the UGT literature, gratifications gained from media were grouped into some general categories (Cutler and Danowski, 1980; Liu *et al.*, 2010; Stafford *et al.*, 2004). The first classification of gratifications as content and process gratifications was offered by Cutler and Danowski (1980). Content gratification refers to the actual, intrinsic value of the message conveyed by the media (Cutler and Danowski, 1980). The motives related to seeking or sharing relevant information via media can be seen as content gratification. On the other hand, process gratification shelters the motives that focus on the attainment of extrinsic values through experiencing a particular medium (Cutler and Danowski, 1980). For individuals who seek process gratifications, being involved in the communication is more important than the message content conveyed through the communication (Cutler and Danowski, 1980). For instance, using media to pass time or escape from real-life problems would be an example of a process gratification. Cutler and Danowski (1980)'s categorization dates back in time before the World Wide Web was invented. Considering the unique affordances of internet for interpersonal communication and social interaction, Stafford *et al.* (2004) introduced and validated a social gratification category. Finally, with reference to the technology acceptance models (e.g. Venkatesh *et al.*, 2003), Liu *et al.* (2010) emphasized the importance of perceived convenience and stylish look provided by the information system to its users, and suggested the technology gratification as a distinct UGT category.

Historically, UGT has been a prominent framework to explain the motives of media use, whenever a new media was introduced to the mass communication arena (Elliott and Rosenberg, 1987; Peters *et al.*, 2007; Ruggiero, 2000). Particularly microblogs have been in the spotlight of UGT studies recently.

Microblog uses and gratifications
Majority of the studies regarding the microblog uses and gratifications have focused on Twitter. For example, Liu *et al.* (2010) investigated Twitter gratifications through a survey, and found that social gratification had the highest factor average, followed by technology, process and content gratifications. However, only content and technology gratifications were found to be significant predictors of the continuous intention to use Twitter. In another study, Lee and Oh (2013) developed a gratification scale and surveyed 309 Twitter users in South Korea. The study yielded four gratification factors: self-expression, information seeking, socializing and diversion (pass time or forget real life problems). Among these, self-expression had the highest factor average followed by information seeking, socializing and diversion. Greer and Ferguson (2011) surveyed 212 Twitter users who follow local news personalities in USA, and stated arousal, information, social and companionship as the significant gratifications. A noteworthy finding of the study was that social motivations best explained the use of social media (Greer and Ferguson, 2011). Johnson and Yang (2009)

investigated 212 participants for the role of social (e.g. have fun, relax, pass time, express one's self, communicate easily) and information motives (e.g. learn about facts and news, gain knowledge, receive advice, share information) on the use of Twitter. Information motives were found to be significantly related to continuous Twitter use whereas social motives were not. On the other hand, Han *et al.* (2015) investigated the relationship between social presence, social connection gratification and continuous use of Twitter, and found that social connection gratification significantly predicted Twitter use. Further, social connection was predicted by need for immediacy, intimacy and feelings of privacy through the mediation of social presence.

Several qualitative studies have been conducted on Twitter gratifications as well. For example, Whiting and Williams (2013) conducted in-depth interviews with 25 Twitter users and reported their Twitter use motivations from the most to least intense as social interaction, information seeking, pass time, entertainment, self-expression, communication, convenience, sharing information and surveillance of other people. In another qualitative study, Quan-Haase *et al.* (2015) interviewed 25 academics to investigate their Twitter gratifications. The findings revealed receiving information and socializing as the two main gratifications among the scholars.

The studies on microblog gratifications are not limited to Twitter. For example, Xiong (2014) investigated the gratifications gained on Weibo, a Chinese microblog platform, with 547 participants through a survey. Sharing ideas, keeping in touch with others, and expressing care for the others were the gratifications found in the study. Mo and Leung (2015) also investigated the relationship between various Weibo gratifications, and interpersonal relationships in China. Their results showed that content and social gratifications were significantly related with the intensity of Weibo use. Moreover, content and social gratifications were significantly related with bridging social capital whereas convenience gratification was related with bonding social capital.

Rather than focusing solely on microblogs, several studies in the literature compared the gratifications sought from Twitter and other SNSs. For example, Buehler (2014) compared the gratifications gained from Facebook and Twitter in four categories: content, process, social, and technology. According to the study, Facebook users gained higher levels of social and content gratifications than the Twitter users, whereas process and technology gratifications of Twitter users were higher. In a recent study, Phua *et al.* (2017) compared various gratifications sought from Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter and Instagram. In their study, Snapchat users scored the highest on passing time, improving social knowledge and sharing problems gratifications, whereas Instagram users scored highest on showing affection, demonstrating sociability and following fashion gratifications. Twitter users scored the lowest in showing affection, sharing problems, sociability and following fashion gratifications.

Some studies have addressed the prominence of various Twitter gratifications in cultural contexts other than the Western world. For example, Kim *et al.* (2016) investigated Korean journalists' Twitter use motivations. Information source, self-fulfillment, influence seeking and work efficiency gratifications were significantly related with the general and job-related use of Twitter. In a mixed methodology study, Aladwani (2015) listed Kuwaiti individuals' motives for Twitter use as self-expression, instant communication, influence seeking, affiliation, sharing content and entertainment. In another study, Pentina *et al.* (2016) compared the motivations of Twitter use in Ukraine and USA. The study found that individuals in both countries use Twitter for professional advancement, entertainment, maintaining status in the society, and social interaction.

Only few studies investigated Twitter motivations in relation with technology adoption frameworks. For example, Coursaris *et al.* (2013) investigated the motivations to use Twitter using DI and UGT frameworks. In their study, Twitter gratifications listed from the most to

Johnson and Yang, 2009; Lee and Oh, 2013; Liu *et al.*, 2010; Xiong, 2014), making it difficult to generalize their findings. Such limitations have also been mentioned in the other media gratification studies (Ruggiero, 2000; Turow, 2011) Hence, studies with alternative methods and representative samples are necessary to better understand the Twitter and other SNS gratifications (Coursaris *et al.*, 2013; Orchard *et al.*, 2014). The current study employed a novel data mining approach to collect countrywide data and reached out higher amounts of Twitter users compared with the past studies. Thus, the current study contributed to the current literature with more generalizable findings.

Third, UGT has also been criticized for assuming that people are active and goal-directed in their media use and thus, the use of a specific media is initiated by an individual (Katz, 1987; Ruggiero, 2000; Wimmer and Dominick, 1994). In this regard, UGT can be considered too individualistic (Elliott, 1974). However, it has been well documented that social influence (Rogers, 2003; Venkatesh *et al.*, 2003, 2012) plays a critical role on technology adoption and media use as well. Thus it can be concurred that individuals might be also passive adopters of media rather than active consumers in several situations. Besides, relative advantage offered by a medium (Rogers, 2003) has been also linked with individuals' acceptance and use of technology. Nevertheless, except for few scholars (e.g. Coursaris *et al.*, 2013; Curras-Perez *et al.*, 2014; Liu *et al.*, 2010; Stafford *et al.*, 2004) media studies including Twitter have not paid much attention to the enhancement of media gratification categories with technology adoption frameworks. Therefore, the current study updates and elaborates typologies of Twitter motivations through incorporating DI and UTAUT with UGT.

Fourth, the main means of data collection have been surveys and in-depth interviews in media gratification studies (Dunne *et al.*, 2010; Xiong, 2014). Although self-report surveys and interviews are valid and reliable ways of collecting data in many aspects, they also bear several limitations. For example, survey studies have been criticized for lacking depth and detail, and suffering from the possibility that participants may give socially desirable or distorted responses (Bryman, 2008). On the other hand, interview studies have been found to be time consuming, expensive, having small sample size, and dependent on the interviewer skills (Newton, 2010). Considering such limitations, the examination of naturally occurring data may be useful instead. Investigating the authentic contents produced in SNS environments might provide valuable insights on the motivations of use that are not limited by the scope of survey and interview questions. Considering the limitations of survey and interview studies, the existing study followed a different path to collect data. That is utilizing a data-mining software and gathering data from a Twitter hashtag (i.e. #IUseTwitterBecause) and inferring Twitter motivations through qualitative analysis of this naturally occurring data.

Methodology
Sampling
On January 17, and April 14, 2015 #IuseTwitterBecause (#TwitterKullanıyorumÇünkü) hashtag became a TT in Turkey without any interference from the authors. The TT periods lasted for 23 hours on January 17 and 8 hours on April 14, 2015 (Starmetre, 2015). A total of 85,647 Tweets and 44,428 retweets were posted by 39,014 unique Twitter accounts under this hashtag during its TT periods (Starmetre, 2015). The authors, who are frequent Twitter users, came across with the hashtag in the TT list when they were checking the latest updates in their network and a brief look into the tweets including the hashtag inspired them to initiate the current study. A data mining software (import.io) was utilized to capture the tweets containing #IuseTwitterBecause hashtag on the TT dates. Because Twitter Application Program Interface allows to access a limited amount of tweets, the import.io software was utilized to capture the tweets posted under the #IuseTwitterBecause hashtag from a third party website (www.topsy.com) that recorded all tweets. The website allowed

the software to download a maximum 300 tweets per each TT hour. Therefore, researchers could capture a total of 7,622 tweets containing original tweets, retweets, spams and commercials. Since tweets involving spams and commercials were not related to the research topic, and as the act of retweeting carries various meanings and purposes (Boyd *et al.*, 2010) that are beyond the scope of this study, such tweets were removed from the data set. In total, 4,465 original tweets posted by 3,794 unique Twitter accounts remained for the analysis. All tweets investigated in the current study were in Turkish language.

Content analysis
In the current study, a quantitative content analysis was applied on the tweet contents under the #IuseTwitterBecause hashtag. Content analysis is a systematic and replicable method that uses a set of explicit procedures to draw valid conclusions from text (Krippendorff, 2012; Weber, 1990). The analysis began with the (re)conceptualization of the gratification categories stated by Liu *et al.* (2010) with reference to the existing literature, and emergent gratifications during the trial coding. These gratifications are provided in Table I.

In their study, Liu *et al.* (2010) defined technology gratifications as fashion and convenience. Both fashion (Currás-Pérez *et al.*, 2013; Ku *et al.*, 2013; Quan-Haase and Young, 2010; Smock *et al.*, 2011), and convenience (Buehler, 2014; Ha *et al.*, 2015; Langstedt, 2013; Whiting and Williams, 2013) have been utilized as distinct gratifications in previous SNS studies. However, it may be problematic to consider fashion as a universal gratification obtained from Twitter technology, which is almost a decade old. Further, the trial coding process revealed that individuals were using Twitter to comply with social pressure rather than fashion, which is in line with both DI and UTAUT frameworks. Therefore, we reconceptualised fashion gratification as social compliance in the current study.

The second technology gratification in Liu *et al.*'s (2010) model was convenience. Previous studies investigating convenience gratification usually consider convenience as better affordances of communication provided by one medium rather than its alternative(s) (Langstedt, 2013; Papacharissi and Rubin, 2000; Whiting and Williams, 2013). The comparative stance in defining the convenience gratification actually implies relative advantage component in DI (Rogers, 2003): a perception that a new technology is better than its opponents. Moreover, DI posits convenience is a dimension of relative advantage (Choudhury and Karahanna, 2008). Also, considering that performance expectancy and effort expectancy determinants were referred as perceived advantage in UTAUT studies (Escobar-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2014), we resorted to relative advantage gratification in the current study.

In addition to updating technology category, several gratifications such as information seeking (Ancu and Cozma, 2009; Shi *et al.*, 2010), status seeking (Chiang and Hsiao, 2015; Currás-Pérez *et al.*, 2013), escape (Dunne *et al.*, 2010; Lee and Oh, 2013), and habit (Langstedt, 2013; Smock *et al.*, 2011) were added to the Liu *et al.*'s (2010) model to better capture the variety of Twitter gratifications. Moreover, a campaigning gratification category was discovered during trial coding. Campaigning was not reported as a gratification category in the previous UGT literature. However, studies showed that the utilization of SNSs

Category	Gratifications
Content	Self-documentation, information sharing, information seeking
Process	Self- expression, entertainment, pass time, escape, habit, campaign
Social	Social interaction, status seeking
Technology	Social compliance, relative advantage

Table I.
Twitter gratifications investigated in the current study

worldwide for civic and political purposes has been on the rise in the recent years (e.g. Bekafigo and McBride, 2013; Boulianne, 2015; Larsson and Moe, 2012; Park, 2013; Varnali and Gorgulu, 2015). Based on such findings and insights from the trial coding, we included campaigning as a distinct gratification category into our coding scheme. The gratifications explored in the current study, their definitions and references for each definition are presented in Table II.

Two rounds of trial coding on first 111 and then 215 randomly chosen tweets from the data set were conducted. First round allowed authors to update Liu *et al*.'s (2010) model, and the second round enabled the development of reliable coding definitions. For the actual analysis, the authors, who are native speakers of Turkish language, coded the whole data set independently in Turkish. The unit of analysis was taken as words in each tweet. ReCal2 web-based software was used to calculate the inter-rater reliability. Inter-rater reliability analyses for each category are presented in Table III. At the final stage of analysis, researchers discussed all the remaining disagreements in the data set to reach agreement for their categorization.

Results

The content analysis of the Tweet contents of the hashtag #IuseTwitterBecause showed that gratifications obtained from Twitter were mostly process gratifications (68.38 percent),

Category	Gratification	Definition	References
Content	Information sharing	Providing others information on any topic	Liu *et al*. (2010), Papacharissi (2002)
	Information seeking	Seeking awareness and knowledge	Shao (2009), Yoo (2011)
	Self-documentation	Documenting and keeping a record of one's own life	Liu *et al*. (2010)
Process	Entertainment	Having entertaining, joyful, funny or pleasant experiences	Papacharissi (2002), Van der Heijden (2004)
	Pass time	Avoiding boredom or loneliness through occupying time, especially when there is nothing else to do or no one to interact with	LaRose and Eastin (2004), Papacharissi (2002), Vincent and Basil (1997), Yoo (2011)
	Escape	Getting away from people, school, work, or other things outside Twitter	Haridakis and Hanson (2009), LaRose and Eastin (2004), Vincent and Basil (1997)
	Habit	Seeing Twitter as a natural part of one's daily routines; cannot help not using it	LaRose and Eastin (2004), Stafford and Stafford (1996), Venkatesh *et al*. (2012)
	Campaign	Using Twitter to support a certain political view, or to gain public attention on an issue	Authors
	Self-expression	Presenting one's personal identity to others, telling about one's self, stating one's personal opinions	Papacharissi (2002), Shao (2009)
Social	Social interaction	Communicating with people who have similar or different interests	Haridakis and Hanson (2009), Papacharissi (2002) Yoo (2011)
	Status seeking	Having a high profile; gaining approval, acceptance or adoration from others	Brown and Venkatesh (2005), Lee and Ma (2012)
Technology	Social compliance	Complying with influence or pressure coming from significant others such as friends, family, or colleagues	Rogers (2003), Venkatesh *et al*. (2003)
	Relative advantage	Perceiving Twitter as better than other media for a certain or any purpose	Rogers (2003), Venkatesh *et al*. (2003)

Table II.
Definitions of gratifications

	Percent agreement	Scott's π	Cohen's κ	Krippendorf's α
Information sharing	99.4	0.750	0.750	0.750
Information seeking	97.6	0.807	0.807	0.807
Self-documentation	99.8	0.878	0.878	0.878
Entertainment	95.9	0.698	0.698	0.698
Pass time	98.0	0.772	0.772	0.772
Escape	92.7	0.704	0.705	0.704
Habit	99.4	0.740	0.740	0.740
Self-expression	88.1	0.757	0.758	0.757
Social interaction	93.7	0.740	0.740	0.740
Status seeking	99.8	0.768	0.768	0.768
Social compliance	99.7	0.693	0.693	0.693
Relative advantage	95.3	0.712	0.713	0.712

Table III. Inter-rater reliability scores

followed by social (12.91 percent), technology (10.79 percent) and content (7.92 percent). Table IV presents an overview of the results, and Figure 1 lists the gratifications according to their frequencies. The representative tweet examples presented in the following paragraphs were translated to English by the authors.

As seen in Table IV and Figure 1, people were mostly fulfilling their self-expression needs through the use of Twitter. There were various means of expressing one's self in Twitter. Individuals reported using Twitter to perform their personalities ("#IUseTwitterBecause I am tough, harsh, relentless, and polite too. I dance well and I insist. That's it.," "#IUseTwitterBecause I like to talk non-sense"), tell about their feelings ("#IUseTwitterBecause I need something to poor out my heart," "#IUseTwitterBecause I am angry!"), share their opinions ("#IUseTwitterBecause the realities about […] [Party (political) name removed] makes me feel like throwing up," "#IUseTwitterBecause I can share all my opinions and feelings"), share quotes ("#IUseTwitterBecause sharing Sagopa Kajmer quotes makes me feel relieved," "#IUseTwitterBecause a decent man always stays a kid. Socrates"), express themselves freely ("#IUseTwitterBecause freedom of expression costs only 140 characters," "#IUseTwitterBecause I can drool freely"). Moreover, Twitter was regarded as an environment to criticize other people in a covert but public way with the intention that the target person might be aware of the criticism ("#IUseTwitterBecause how could we curse at our ex-girlfriends otherwise?," "#IUseTwitterBecause you drop innuendos here, and someone from the other side of the world takes it personally").

Category (%)	Gratification	f	%
Content (7.92)	Information seeking	326	6.31
	Information sharing	48	0.93
	Self-documentation	35	0.68
Process (68.38)	Entertainment	353	6.83
	Pass time	219	4.24
	Escape	678	13.13
	Habit	59	1.14
	Self-expression	1,782	34.50
	Campaign	441	8.54
Social (12.91)	Social interaction	643	12.45
	Status seeking	24	0.46
Technology (10.79)	Relative advantage	443	8.58
	Social compliance	114	2.21

Table IV. Coding results
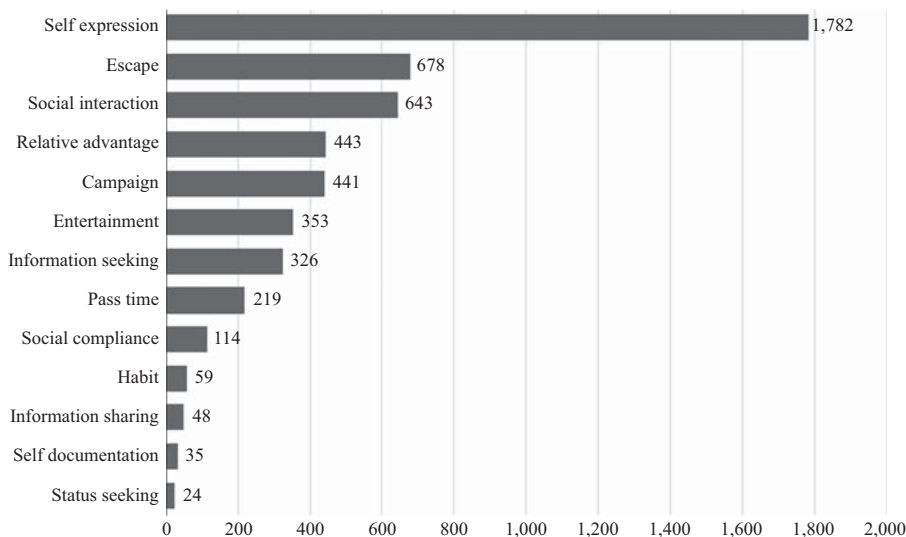
Figure 1.
Gratifications sorted
by their frequencies

The current study revealed escape as the second most popular gratification. For a significant amount of users, Twitter was a platform free from their relatives ("#IUseTwitterBecause my relatives are not here," "#IUseTwitterBecause this is the only social ground my mom and dad haven't learned about yet"). In Turkish culture, social ties between the relatives are traditionally strong and hierarchical with certain etiquette rules of communication when elders are present (Sunar and Fisek, 2005). Hence, for Turkish users, Twitter is an environment to escape from their relatives and express themselves with no constraints of etiquette ("#IUseTwitterBecause I write every sh*t here. There is mom, dad, uncle, aunt in Face :D"). In addition, Twitter was also seen as an escape point from bothering members of other SNSs ("#IUseTwitterBecause instagram is the fantasy world of people who want to satisfy their ego and do not care about their country," "#IuseTwitterBecause facebook is full of 44 years old teenagers"). Other salient escape factors were to get away from real life issues ("#IUseTwitterBecause here is better than my real world," "#IUseTwitterBecause what else can we do? die from miseries?:)"), relieve stress and relax ("#IUseTwitterBecause it is the best place to let yourself go, get the stress out of you," "#IUseTwitterBecause I find peace and happiness here").

The third most popular Twitter gratification was the social interaction gratification. Individuals stated using Twitter to interact with friends ("#IUseTwitterBecause it is good to pull @[user name removed] chain," "#IUseTwitterBecause @[user name removed] is a good boy"), meet with people who have similar interests ("#IUseTwitterBecause there are many people with whom I have similar thoughts," "#IUseTwitterBecause the people who understand me are here"), reach out celebrities ("#IUseTwitterBecause we can talk with @[user name removed] easily," "#IUseTwitterBecause for @[user name removed]"), and go on a date ("#IUseTwitterBecause there are many women here").

Relative advantage was another salient gratification present in the Tweets. Several users mentioned that Twitter was better than other SNSs in general ("#IUseTwitterBecause There is no better than here," "#IUseTwitterBecause for now it is the best"). On the other hand, some users stated specific Twitter mechanics such as character limit ("#IUseTwitterBecause everything is short and concise here," "#IUseTwitterBecause I am lazy to read or write something longer than 140 characters"), no games ("#IUseTwitterBecause there are no game invitations here"), speed ("#IUseTwitterBecause I can access to more people, and faster,"

"#IUseTwitterBecause it is the fastest means of communication"), and little data download ("#IUseTwitterBecause it eats up less data from the (internet) package"). Besides, some users stated detest with other SNSs in order to explain Twitter's relative advantage ("#IUseTwitterBecause Facebook is like a deserted village," "#IUseTwitterBecause Facebook's sh*t has come out").

The findings of the current study revealed campaign gratification as a strong motivation to use Twitter. Significant amount of users was tweeting stereotyped and often insulting content to show their support for the political front they resist or belong to ("#IUseTwitterBecause not to leave this place to the enemies of the religion," "#IUseTwitterBecause we shouldn't leave this place to dogs [slang call of a political group], looters [slang call of a political group], and assassins [slang call of a political group]"). Besides, several organized groups were identified who were attacking specific people such as political figures with inflammatory or mocking tweets. However, not all organized groups were carrying political objectives. Some groups were campaigning with the aim of directing government's attention to several social issues. For example, university graduates (e.g. teachers, engineers, technicians, police officers) were asking government to hire new employees ("#IUseTwitterBecause We teachers want 40 thousand new positions"), pensioners were expecting government to improve their social rights ("#IUseTwitterBecause of my retirement rights #pensionerstuckofagelimit"), and another group of tweeters were asking a general pardon for the prison inmates ("#IUseTwitterBecause #freedom, abate to the inmates […]"). In addition to these, one group of users was solely tweeting to carry a hashtag to the TT list without any political or social change aspiration. For instance, it was observed that #IUseTwitterBecause hashtag became a TT through collective efforts of mostly teenagers grouped around a popular Twitter persona.

The findings of current study also indicated that entertainment was another strong gratification to use Twitter ("#IUseTwitterBecause it is cool," "#IUseTwitterBecause I have lots of fun"). Some users reported that they obtained pleasure by sharing thoughts and feelings ("#IUseTwitterBecause I enjoy sharing my thoughts"), following debates ("#IUseTwitterBecause I like following wrangles"), reading funny content ("#IUseTwitterBecause I can't find the wits told here anywhere else"), and getting involved in quarrels ("#IUseTwitterBecause here there are partisans, ar*e kissers, illiterates and ignoramus. It is so fun to mock them").

A noteworthy portion of users stated that Twitter fulfilled their need for information seeking. These users explicated Twitter as an alternative, even better news medium, "#IUseTwitterBecause I don't trust TV channels!," "#IUseTwitterBecause I can access the true news instantly"). According to several users, Twitter is more up to date ("#IUseTwitterBecause anything that happens in the country or the world is here immediately"), uncensored ("#IUseTwitterBecause censoring doesn't work here"), free ("#IUseTwitterBecause […] free media is at @twitter"), and provide different perspectives on the same issue ("#IUseTwitterBecause in here, I can follow how a particular event is reported in different ways"). On the other hand, a small group of users also stated using Twitter for the surveillance of other people ("#IUseTwitterBecause I can learn who is doing what instantly," "#IUseTwitterBecause I am curious about celebrities, I dont wanna lie, I use it for that"), and accessing to knowledge ("#IUseTwitterBecause I learn a thousand and one things from a thousand and one people," "#IUseTwitterBecause I follow scientific advancements in the world from here").

Individuals who were using Twitter to pass time stated that they were either unemployed ("#IUseTwitterBecause I am heavily unemployed," #IUseTwitterBecause I am a professional jobless for three years'), bored ("#IUseTwitterBecause I am bored and can't get rid of it"), have nothing else to do ("#IUseTwitterBecause there is nothing to do in the morning,"

"#IUseTwitterBecause I have a sleep problem, so I hang out here"), or looking for procrastination ("#IUseTwitterBecause I am looking for ways not to study," "#IUseTwitterBecause this is the best thing you can do during courses").

The tweets grouped under the social compliance category revealed that individuals were convinced to use Twitter either through their personal observations of others ("#IUseTwitterBecause everyone is using it. I said why wouldn't I use too :)," "#IUseTwitterBecause why would I fall behind (others)?"), or due to pressure coming from people close to them ("#IUseTwitterBecause my friend insisted a lot. :D," "#IUseTwitterBecause I couldn't resist the pressure of @[user name removed] :D").

The least frequent gratifications were habit, information sharing, self-documentation, and status seeking gratifications. Users who tweeted for habit gratification stated different levels of dependency on Twitter ("#IUseTwitterBecause it is a habit :D," "#IUseTwitterBecause it is indispensable," "#IUseTwitterBecause I am addicted to it," "#IUseTwitterBecause I am crazy for iiiiiit. THATS IT…"). Tweeters who were after the information sharing gratification reported that they were in Twitter to share information about mainly political news ("#IUseTwitterBecause I want everyone to know the outlaws, thieves, shameless, liars, looters," "#IUseTwitterBecause government purchased majority of journalists. The news business has been left to us"). Some tweeters were also sharing international news ("#IUseTwitterBecause In China, exams are done outdoors to avoid cheating [a photo about the information]," "#IUseTwitterBecause [name of a famous fashion brand removed] burns the unsold items to prevent discount sales"). Another small minority of users reported using Twitter for documenting their lives online ("#IUseTwitterBecause this is my modern diary," "#IUseTwitterBecause I can write everything I come through to there"). Finally, the least popular Twitter gratification among the users was the status seeking ("#IUseTwitterBecause you need me," "#IUseTwitterBecause so that I'll be a legend :)").

Discussion

This study explored the motivations to use Twitter through content analysis of tweets posted under the #IUseTwitterBecause hashtag in Turkey. Previous SNS uses and gratification studies resorted to data produced with either surveys or semi-structured interviews with small sample sizes (Orchard *et al.*, 2014; Xiong, 2014). We believe, the naturally occurring data in the current study provides an alternative and thorough look into gratifications obtained from social media, specifically Twitter. Besides, it is highly possible that the relatively high sample size in this study yields more generalizable outcomes. Our findings extend the existing literature from several perspectives.

First, previous studies (Cutler and Danowski, 1980; Liu *et al.*, 2010; Stafford *et al.*, 2004) classified gratifications into four distinct categories as content, process, social and technology gratifications. The existing study draws from DI, UTAUT and UGT in order to extend this categorization. Our findings indicated that technology gratifications category was best explained with relative advantage and social compliance rather than convenience and fashion (Liu *et al.*, 2010) in Twitter context. In the SNSs landscape, a vast amount of SNSs are competing with each other to fulfill any particular gratification desired by an individual. For example, users can seek entertainment in Youtube (i.e. Haridakis and Hanson, 2009), Facebook (Raacke and Bonds-Raacke, 2008), Twitter (Buehler, 2014; Coursaris *et al.*, 2013), Qzone (Apaolaza *et al.*, 2014), and Bebo (Dunne *et al.*, 2010). The current findings showed that individuals actively assess advantages and disadvantages of available SNSs, and choose the relatively advantageous one in order to fulfill a particular gratification. Moreover, we have found that individuals also start using Twitter based on their observations of others or to comply with the pressure coming from around. With this regard, we propose that DI (Rogers, 2003), and UTAUT (Venkatesh *et al.*, 2003; Venkatesh *et al.*, 2012) frameworks can be integrated with UGT theory in order to elicit technology gratifications obtained from Twitter.

Second, the existing study supported previous findings (Buehler, 2014; Liu *et al.*, 2010) that found content as the weakest Twitter gratification category. On the other hand, our findings do not hold with Liu *et al.* (2010) who reported the social category being the strongest gratification category. In line with Buehler (2014), we have found that the strongest category was the process gratifications among Twitter users. These findings suggest that Twitter users favored extrinsic value more than the content of the tweets. In line with the current results, previous studies showed that majority of Twitter users were focused on posting about themselves and their daily routine rather information sharing (Java *et al.*, 2007; Naaman *et al.*, 2010). It was also found that individuals tend to be more self-focused when interacting with larger audiences (Barasch and Berger, 2014). Thus, it can be concluded that for many people Twitter might be a stage for self-representation in the online public sphere rather than being a venue to access or share of information.

Third, several previous studies underlined the self-expression as an important Twitter process gratification (Coursaris *et al.*, 2013; Lee and Oh, 2013; Xiong, 2014). Some of these studies stated self-expression as the strongest gratification (Lee and Oh, 2013; Xiong, 2014). The existing study confirmed that self-expression gratification carries utmost importance for the Twitter users. Besides, the current findings revealed several dimensions of self-expression in Twitter. These dimensions were performing of personality, sharing opinions, and freedom of expression, and make innuendo. The first three dimensions have been well documented in the literature (i.e. Coursaris *et al.*, 2013; Johnson and Yang, 2009; Langstedt, 2013; Liu *et al.*, 2010). However, making innuendo was a unique dimension discovered in this study.

The individuals who mentioned making innuendo explicated two target audiences for such tweeting. The first target group was the past romantic partners. Studies showed that recovering from a dissolved romantic relationship can be a stressful and long-lasting process (Fox *et al.*, 2014). In this regard, SNSs have found to be important facilitators of sustaining connections between ex-partners after a split up (Elphinston and Noller, 2011; Tong, 2013). Findings further revealed that people continue tracking their former partners in SNSs for a certain period of time (Marshall, 2012). Supporting these findings, the current study revealed that people post sentiments or comments about their past relationships with the expectation that their ex-partners will check their Twitter profile and read them. Unless intentionally hidden by the users, all posts in Twitter are open to public. Therefore, Twitter seems to be a suitable environment for individuals to pass untold words or current feelings to the former romantic partner they are not in direct contact anymore. The second target group of innuendo was the people tweeters were still in contact (possibly a follower in Twitter). The aim in such tweeting toward the second target group was to discomfort them with covert criticism embedded in the tweet. Unfortunately, the limited data in the tweets did not allow researchers to disclose the profile of the second target group of innuendo.

Fourth, escape gratification has been mostly addressed as getting away from people and problems of real life, relieving stress and relaxing in the past SNS studies (Dunne *et al.*, 2010; Lee and Oh, 2013; Smock *et al.*, 2011). However, our findings showed that a significant amount of people were using Twitter to get away from people who were present in other SNSs they have been using. These people were mostly mentioned as relatives by the Turkish Twitter users. The current findings suggest that if an SNSs becomes too mainstream (i.e. Facebook), individuals might be obliged to the communication norms present in their real life. This might lead people to leave the SNS for another one in order to claim back their autonomy.

Fifth, this study revealed a novel campaigning gratification for the Twitter context. Previously, it has been well documented that Twitter has become a prevalent medium for political and civic participation (Tufekci and Wilson, 2012; Varnali and Gorgulu, 2015). According to PEW (2014), Turkey was among the top countries in which Twitter was a means of expressing thoughts about social and political issues. Although the role of Twitter

on political and civic engagement has been investigated extensively, campaigning was not regarded a distinct gratification category in the previous studies on Twitter motivations. The current study validated campaigning as a significant Twitter motivation and further revealed that there is a significant amount of individuals using Twitter beyond expressing their political views. For them, Twitter is a battleground of rival political views. Several seemingly organized groups from different political backgrounds were tweeting against each other's frontier figures by posting certain templates of messages. For these groups, it was observed that chanting together with the companions was the main objective rather than expression of ideology through authentic tweets. The campaigners in the current study were not limited to crusaders of political arena. Several apolitical groups were also running campaigns to convince government to take action on several issues. The disclosure of campaign gratification in the current study confirms previous findings stating that social media allows individuals to come up with their personalized politics (Bennett, 2012), and empowers them to take collective action (Wolfsfeld *et al.*, 2013). Such affordances might have facilitated the emergence of campaigning motivation to use Twitter use, which was not existent in the previous UGT studies.

Sixth, the strongest content gratification was found to be the information seeking in the current study. However, except than the Johnson and Yang (2009), previous Twitter studies investigating content gratifications did not address information seeking gratification (Buehler, 2014; Coursaris *et al.*, 2013; Liu *et al.*, 2010). In their survey study, Johnson and Yang (2009) probed into information seeking gratification as surveillance of others, learning interesting things, and getting information on facts, links, news, knowledge and ideas. Our findings indicated that accessing the news is the dominant dimension of information seeking gratification for Twitter usage in Turkey. The perception of Twitter as a news medium was expressed as being up to date, uncensored, free, and presenting diverse views. Surveillance of other people and accessing to general knowledge dimensions were found as less important dimensions of information seeking. The other content gratifications, information sharing and self-documentation were among the weakest gratifications reported by the users in the current study. Considering the limited amount of current data on the issue, further studies are necessary to unfold the reasons for not using Twitter o share information and self-document one's self.

Seventh, similar to the previous studies (Coursaris *et al.*, 2013; Gan and Wang, 2015; Johnson and Yang, 2009; Langstedt, 2013; Liu *et al.*, 2010), our findings stated that individuals were using microblogs to obtain social gratifications through interacting with their friends, people on similar interests, and with celebrities. On the other hand, status-seeking gratification was found as the least frequent gratification among all the gratifications investigated in this study. Previously, status seeking has been found to be a significant gratification for general SNS use (Currás-Pérez *et al.*, 2013) and for Facebook (Basak and Calisir, 2015). However, these survey studies measured status seeking with items (e.g. "to be up to date," "I feel peer pressure to participate"), which were explored under different gratifications in the current study. Hence, comparing the current findings with other SNS investigations is challenging due to the various conceptualizations used.

Finally, the existing study shed light into the technology gratifications. The essentials of relative advantage gratification in Twitter were found to be character limit, non-allowance of unwanted invitations, speed of updates, and little data use for mobile phones. Social compliance gratifications were the second technology gratification investigated in the study. Our findings revealed that individuals are urged to use Twitter for two reasons as stated by DI (Rogers, 2003), and UTAUT (Venkatesh *et al.*, 2003; Venkatesh *et al.*, 2012). Either they are convinced to use Twitter by observing people who are already using it, or due to the pressure coming from friends or other significant others.

Implications

Theoretical implications

An important implication of this study is that it provided a new, broader view of Twitter motivations. Majority of research on media gratifications including SNSs has focused on a group of gratifications rather than capturing the whole variety of motivations in a specific media. Unfortunately, the piecemeal studying of media gratifications in past studies has led to several contradictory and confusing conceptualizations in terms of defining the gratification categories. The unique data set in the current study allowed us to go through past (mis) conceptions of media gratifications and to develop a Twitter motivations framework with concise definitions of gratification categories. With its solid theoretical ground, the current framework can be also applied to other SNSs with convenient adjustments.

Second, our findings showed that a significant amount of individuals search for better options among the alternative mediums in order to fulfill their specific needs. However, this motivation to find a better media has been neglected in the previous research on media uses and gratifications. In addition, our findings revealed that individuals might be also motivated to use SNSs because of social influence. This finding does not hold with the basic assumption of UGT claiming that individuals carry an active role in selecting a certain media type (Katz *et al.*, 1974). Rather, people might start using a specific media to conform to their social surroundings. Therefore, drawing on UTAUT and DI, the current study introduced relative advantage and social compliance as distinct Twitter motivation categories. In this regard, this study proposes to extend UGT with relevant technology adoption frameworks to discover underexplored motivations of media use.

Practical implications

Our findings revealed that individuals evaluate both advantages and disadvantages of SNSs in terms of fulfilling certain gratifications. Therefore, we suggest SNS providers should take their quality of service into consideration as much as user gratifications when developing their services. In order to increase user loyalty, SNSs should offer innovative features that afford satisfaction of gratifications with ease. Otherwise, they might lose their target audience to their competitors as found in this study. Moreover, SNSs might target specific gratifications in order to attract particular audiences. In our study, a significant amount of users reported that they used Twitter because their relatives and family members were not present there. Thus, Twitter was a ground for fulfilling escapism gratification for them. In this regard, future SNSs might focus on offering specific gratifications that are not satisfied well in mainstream SNSs to draw in new users.

In our study, we have found that several organized groups were posting under the #IUseTwitterBecause hashtag, and asking government to take action on a variety of civic and political issues. These findings support previous studies stating that SNSs have become important venues of civic and political participation in the society (Boulianne, 2015; Gil de Zúñiga *et al.*, 2012; Park, 2013). With this regard, state authorities should pay attention to citizens' voices in Twitter for a better governance. The real-time flow of data in Twitter can be used by the governments to collect information about public tensions, sentiments and expectations. In this regard, future studies are necessary to explore ways of employing SNSs for the improvement of governmental transparency and public negotiation, specifically in transitional democracies.

Some scholars claim that Twitter is more an information stream than a social medium (Kwak *et al.*, 2010). A significant portion of individuals in this study reported Twitter as a valuable news resource providing uncensored information about what is going on in the country. Nevertheless, we have also found that several seemingly organized groups were posting news links or propaganda messages either against or in favor of the political parties or figures of the country. Thus, it is questionable to which extend information that is

disseminated through Twitter is objective or crafted for mass manipulation of the society. In this regard, the existing study draws attention to the fragile nature of openness and freedom in SNSs and calls for initiatives to democratize information access through SNSs. Otherwise, SNSs might become convenient playgrounds for the privileged to regulate public opinion.

Finally, the strongest motivation for Twitter use was found as the self-expression in the current study. Online worlds provide unique opportunities for individuals to present themselves in various ways (McKenna *et al.*, 2002). Previous studies revealed that expression of one's self might be driven by different outcome expectations such as self-affirmation, clarification of identity, relief, social validation, enhancement of social network, and gaining popularity (Bazarova and Choi, 2014; Christofides *et al.*, 2009; Toma and Hancock, 2013; Utz *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, the prominence of self-expression in the current study might reflect an aggregation of different reward expectations that are not mentioned explicitly. For example, several studies found that self-disclosure in social media was related to increased social contacts and friendships (Hargittai and Hsieh, 2010; Nosko *et al.*, 2010; Subrahmanyam *et al.*, 2008; Steinfield *et al.*, 2008; Trepte and Reinecke, 2013). Therefore, although an individual stated the reason to use Twitter as self-expression, the implicit drive to tweet might be actually related with enhancement of his/her social network in Twitter. We call for future qualitative studies to unearth the outcome expectations for self-expression in Twitter.

Limitations and future studies
The current study has made novel contributions to the communication field in terms of capturing the variety of Twitter gratifications. On the other hand, it bears several limitations, which should be taken into account before reaching general conclusions. The data used in this study outnumbers majority of SNS uses and gratification studies in terms of sample size. However, sampling of current data carries some significant limitations. First of all, the data mining software utilized in this study was not able to record the geographical location of the Tweets. Moreover, the tweets analyzed in this study do not constitute a random sample of all tweets using the specified hashtag. Hence, it is not possible to generalize our findings nation-wide. Capturing the geographical location of the Tweets in future studies might be useful to assess the sampling scope of the data. Another limitation of the study was that the software was not able to record any data about the demographics of the participants except than their account name. The limited information about participants did not allow researchers to conduct a social network analysis, which would provide in depth information about the interactions and relationships among the Twitter users. Such an analysis would conceive the interaction structures specifically in campaigning groups.

This study points out several venues for future studies. For instance, in depth interviews with individuals who were using Twitter for campaigning can elucidate the backstage structures of keeping political views visible in SNSs. Another future study might focus on the users who tweet to express their feelings to their past lovers. Such an initiative would help us to understand whether Twitter has any role in rebuilding a broken relationship or just helps to tell untold sentiments. Similarly, the current study identified a group of tweeters who were dropping innuendo. Future studies might shed a light on the targets of such tweeting, and the expectations of tweeters for behaving in such a manner. Another interesting topic would be to investigate the users who were running away to Twitter from other SNSs in pursuit of autonomy. It could also be examined whether there are any other SNSs than Twitter that keeps a user distant from widespread SNSs. Moreover, participants of the current study also mentioned that they were mostly bothered with their relatives in other SNSs. However, further studies are necessary to conclude whether getting away from relatives is present in other cultural contexts. Lastly, technology gratification category has been updated in the existing study. The validation of such transformation is dependent on further investigations probing into both Twitter and other SNSs.

Conclusions

The current study investigated the motivations of Twitter use through content analysis of tweets posted with the #IUseTwitterBecause hashtag. Past studies on the issue mostly addressed specific gratification categories and thus provided a partial view on the variety of gratifications sought from Twitter and other SNSs. On the other hand, the combination of a theory-based and data-driven approach in the current study provided a broader picture of Twitter motivations. That is, integration of UGT, DI and UTAUT frameworks in the current study facilitated the discussion of confusing past conceptions of Twitter gratifications and provided a concise framework of Twitter motivations. The framework presented in the existing study lays ground for future studies on holistic investigation of SNS motivations. Further, our findings underpin the importance of SNSs for self-expression, information access, civic and political participation in addition to their social affordances.

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