CHAPTER 12

DIGITAL PUBLIC RELATIONS AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF IDENTITIES

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ABSTRACT

As digitalization has led to the transformation of many fields, it has also played a key role in the evolution of public relations. In particular, the fact that social media facilitates direct communication with institutions, managers, and other identities without the need for any other intermediary is among the main factors influencing this transformation. Digitalization has changed the target groups. Target groups now have more access to information. The information flowing through many channels has increased the abilities of individuals to question, research, learn the reasons, think critically, challenge, give immediate feedback, and react. The diversity of thoughts that emerges in the face of events has allowed the intensification of comparisons, reasoning and sharing them in all kinds of digital media. Thus, a virtual environment has been created in which individuals can come together and discuss their ideas freely and share their different interpretations or new information immediately. These virtual environments are as effective for communication as the environments where individuals are physically next to each other. At times, they help facilitate the physical gatherings of many people as in the case of popular uprisings in the Middle East and Egypt. Another significant aspect of digital platforms is the assumption that such digital platforms, as well as anything posted on such platforms, have the potential to transform the identity of individuals. Today, individuals tend to define themselves and who they are through knowledge sharing, posts, and feedback, in addition to their standing and attitudes towards an issue on such platforms. What does this mean for public relations? As a matter of course, the first answer to this question is to meet the target groups of these new identities in the right digital platforms and convey the right messages in these environments. Thus, the information needs of target audiences with new identities are met through the right platforms. At the same time, public relations also find the opportunity to reach the symmetrical communication it aims to achieve.

Keywords: Digital public relations, social media, identity, digital communication

1. Introduction

While digitalization has changed many areas, it has affected mostly people and their lifestyle. The ease of access to products and services, the immediate spread of information, and social networks have changed the way people live. Images and perceptions are more important than ever. As explained in the further sections of this study; for individuals, what others think about them, how they treat them, and how one appears in the eyes of others have gained importance.

The development of social media has created an environment where people can express themselves freely. People can easily publish their responses and comments on their social media accounts, although there is a risk that they will be monitored and followed by control mechanisms. They can demonstrate their reactions to any crisis, social issue, and problem with a sense of social responsibility and citizenship. However, this situation is not limited to this.

For example, it is important that new information, a current topic or a joke is first shared and announced by the person in his/her social media groups. Thus, as a person who has shared any subject first, they can gain popularity in social media. This brings admiration to the person and causes him/her to be mentioned more. This means more to people than other needs like interacting with others or establishing relationships. This makes it possible for the person to actually reconstruct and present his/her identity as the first person to try, buy, share his/her first experiences with that product, announce a social issue, or show his/her reaction.

Therefore, digital public relations should consider where and how the target group needs to position themselves in terms of identity. Target groups should consider that they build their own identity while managing a crisis in a digital environment, sharing a social responsibility campaign with their target group through digital platforms.

This study aims to discuss the potential correlation between the transformation of the identity of the individuals during digital processes and digital public relations. In this context, this study was designed as a think piece (Özgen, 2019, p. 16) with an aim to reveal the correlation between digital public relations and identities capable of being reconstructed and represented during the digitalization process.

Within this context, the study aims to develop a perspective on digital public relations and transformation of identities. Qualitative and quantitative research can be conducted on to what extent digital public relations have an impact on the transformation of identities. This study was designed as a preliminary study prior to conducting such types of research (Özgen,

2019, p. 16). In the first section of the study, digital public relations are discussed whereas the second section discusses the definition of identity and how it is formed. In the third section, how identities may evolve through interaction with digital public relations processes and how such identities may be influenced by transfer and sharing of public relations practices on digital platforms are illustrated examples based on the literature review.

2. Digital Public Relations

Social media has enabled individuals to access information more quickly and to share information that they acquire instantly. In addition to accessing and sharing information, it has enabled them to put forward their own comments, attitudes and thoughts, and to pass these on to other people and influence their ideas. Together with the impact of social media, online communities have come together to share their ideas on many topics. These communities both influence each other's ideas and reach out to organizations and brands and take them into their sphere of influence with their attitudes and comments. Therefore, they have become "*new impressors,*" as new stakeholders, and represent groups in which institutions and brands have to communicate (Alikılıç, 2011, pp. 12-14). Web 2.0 has created a space for users to determine their own content. Thus, the "*inventor*" concept was born, meaning producing while consuming (Çankaya, 2010, as cited in Alikılıç, 2011, p. 13).

Consumers influence products through advancing communication technologies and are involved in their creation, design or change processes. This means that, in parallel to the concept of "inventor", they become "*prosumers*" (Köse & Yengin, 2018, p. 101). Therefore, target groups are also active in the design and renewal phase of products and services.

Another important point for public relations practitioners in the digital environment is the content that consumers create themselves. There is no problem with the content when the brand is in favor of the corporation. However, if the content bears negative elements for the corporation and the brand, public relations practitioners should take intervening actions. Otherwise, crises may occur in digital platforms and these messages increase their effect by spreading rapidly. In this case, public relations practitioners can communicate with the owners of the content and transmit information to them and have them delete such content. Another point in digital public relations is blogs. Readers feel closer to blogs and find them more reliable. Since interaction is also intense in blogs, public relations workers should evaluate this highly interactive environment. Practitioners can contact bloggers. Blogs with high and still increasing numbers of followers have created areas practitioners should work on by developing further strategies. In blogs, people can write whatever they want,

independent of any censorship effects, and what they write finds an important reciprocation in readers. Personal, corporate, thematic blogs, community blogs, micro blogs such as Twitter, Instagram, and Foursquare can be given as examples (Aydınalp, 2013, pp. 5-6). Blogs create an environment for public relations practitioners to reach their target group and communicate in a more intimate and sincere tone in a digital environment.

Blogs allow dialogue to be established in the digital world. The language and communication style of bloggers is closer and more sincere than the language used in traditional media. For this reason, many readers attach importance to the opinions and comments of bloggers in line with their areas of interest (Güçdemir, 2015, p. 37). Therefore, it is important for public relations practitioners to follow blogs and bloggers followed by their target groups. Thus, they use the right communication channels to deliver the right messages to their target audience.

Another field of study in digital public relations is to take an interest in corporate blogs to strengthen brand promotion. Information on brands should be accurate, up-to-date and new in order to inform the target groups on the corporate blogs and to establish desired communication with them. In order to keep these pages up to date and fresh, it is beneficial for public relations practitioners to get support from social media experts and work together with them. Another method that has been transformed in the field of public relations together with digitalization is press releases and how they are sent. Press releases should be written and sent in a way that is easily accessible and readable when using search engines. Micro blogs, such as Twitter, ensure the maintenance of customer relations. Practitioners can easily see consumers' ideas about brands, institutions, services, and applications in micro blogs. Thus, it is easier to direct these flows, to exchange ideas and to fix them by intervening quickly if there are problems. It is also possible for institutions to announce and disseminate social responsibility activities through micro blogs (Aydınalp, 2013, pp. 6-7). Although digitalization brings a lot of convenience, it should be noted that false messages or information will easily spread and strategies should be created bearing this in mind.

Other tools used in social media include RSS, wikis, podcasting, social networking, Twitter, Youtube, Flickr, Pinterest, Foursquare, Linkedin, Instagram, and Whatsapp. Information, photos, videos about institutions, brands, products and services can be shared using these tools (Güçdemir, 2015). Target groups focus on these tools in line with their areas of interests. Therefore, institutions use these tools to communicate with their target audiences through the right channels.

Another field of application that is important in public relations activities carried out in the digital environment is crisis communication. Crises are periods that challenge and threaten institutions in terms of time and cost pressure. Therefore, it is important that practitioners share the information needed by the target group accurately and quickly. Strategies to manage the crisis in a virtual environment are gathered in two groups. The first of these is the publication of press releases, holding press conferences, answering questions, and transferring traditional crisis communication practices to the internet on a one-way communication basis. The second is innovative media tactics. Innovative media tactics include engaging in dialogue with target groups through the internet, giving links, setting up a system for transmitting information, using multimedia effects, and providing online chat services (Güçdemir, 2015, pp. 115-116). For institutions, blogs have special importance in times of crisis. Therefore, in times of crisis, practitioners should follow blogs, blog writers and what they are writing, and review and develop strategies. In this respect, it may be useful to compare blog posts in times of crisis. Thus, how blogs handle the topic in times of crisis will become more visible. In this period, it becomes clearer which messages should be given to target audiences. Journalists write based on official sources. Blog writers can create content with their own comments. Therefore, making comparative studies in this sense can contribute to institutions in times of crisis. In addition, blogs announce crises more rapidly, even before other media sources. Therefore, blogs and blog writers should be paid attention to and the correct communication should be established with them so that the right information is included in these blogs (Güçdemir, 2015, pp. 117-119). As can be seen, it is important to transfer the applications and methods in public relations to a virtual environment and to develop strategies and techniques. Failure to do so may result in inadequacy and increased threats and risks.

In reputation management carried out in the digital environment, blogs, folksonomies, wikis, microblogs, and social networks are used. These tools are very important for an institution's reputation management. This is because information is freely written on blogs and experiences are easily shared on microblogs. The opinions and experiences shared on micro blogs, especially the comments coming from experiences about products and services, affect the person. Wikipedia has become a more trusted source than other encyclopedias. The information here is up-to-date and kept constantly updated. The information contained in Wikipedia is also shared and disseminated in areas such as Twitter and Facebook. On social media platforms, people can easily write about their dissatisfaction when they are not satisfied with a service or product. Therefore, customer satisfaction and the management of customer relations put more emphasis on these platforms. These also affect the corporate reputation.

In addition, social bookmarking, for example, is based on people's own experience, allowing individuals to find more and different information than they can find in traditional search engines (Özel & Sert, 2015, pp. 164-169). Therefore, this is a factor affecting the corporate reputation in the virtual environment.

The digital world has changed many things in sales and marketing. Now it is much easier to determine what consumers like, at what price they want to buy something, where they travel, which shelves they look at most, and how they differentiate between products. With digital processes, position, product, price, positioning, promotion, process and people, which are called the "p's of marketing," have become more practical and open to improvement through more accurate applications. For example, it is possible to identify location through GPS, camera, WiFi, and beacons. Thus, who goes where, and how often, are identified and recorded. Price is among the marketing mix elements that the consumer pays attention to most and is important in the purchasing decision. Price calculations are now made according to the demands of consumers, and how much they can pay for which product or service. This is done through "*big data and precise algorithms*" (Aksu, 2018, pp. 174-175). Amazon and Alibaba can be mentioned as examples. Big data and artificial intelligence algorithms will be more dominant in digitizing marketing processes and marketing will continue to develop in this way. For this reason, organizations will need digital marketing experts who are familiar with these algorithms and data, who can build all these systems themselves, and who are good at customer analytics. Digitizing marketing develops e-commerce. It is easily observed in digital environments which places consumers visit, what products are sold there. Target groups are surrounded by smart products such as refrigerators determining needs and placing orders accordingly, or washing machines estimating and delivering the amount of detergent needed when you press on the detergent button called "Single-Button" on the washing machine by Arçelik. "*Applications like Internet of Things (IOT), integration between machines, big data and artificial intelligence*" will further increase in digital marketing and institutions will need digital marketing experts who understand, produce, and use these applications (Aksu, 2018, pp. 177-178). Today, many consumers buy from e-commerce channels such as Hepsiburada, Trendyol, Getir, GittiGidiyor, and sell second-hand goods from places such as Letgo.

Digital public relations use the internet to reach wider audiences. Thus, it exceeds traditional public relations methods and maintains its applications on a digital platform. Digital public relations are used to give current information about institutions and services to stakeholders of the institutions and their target audiences. It uses journalism networks and the internet to provide this information. Thus, digital public relations publish press bulletins

online through journalistic networks and the internet. People looking for content receive this information. They either reuse information when citing sources or give content as it is. People looking for information can frequently access the website of an institution. They can increase the frequency of visits to the website by allowing other people to enter it. So this can bring the institution to the top in search engines. The institution being ranked at the top in the search engine means that it is more visible and recognizable. At this point search engine optimization (SEO) comes into play. Search engine optimization provides a website to be found on search engines and visited more frequently with appropriate keywords. It also directs more users to the website. It is important to use keywords that best promote the institution to get efficient results in the search engine. These keywords should be the words that give information about the institution itself, its products and services. Quality content, appropriate keywords, strong language, internal links on the site, external links to the site are the main components of search engine optimization (Gifford, 2010, pp. 63-64). As it is seen, it is important to use technical applications in digital public relations. For example, it is necessary to know the features of search engine optimization.

The internet has changed the public relations methods of public relations practitioners. Through the internet, practitioners' methods of transmitting information, communicating with target audiences, crisis and issue management have changed. In addition to these, the internet and digital methods have also affected the legal basis of public relations (Hallahan, 2004, pp. 255-256). Digital assets are intangible and non-physical assets of an organization that are stored and distributed through computers. These digital assets include creative content, organizational records, and databases that public relations practitioners produce and distribute online. Digitized data covers the information of an institution's products and services. The point that should be taken into consideration by institutions is that institutions cannot claim rights about public information, because this information is an inexhaustible public domain that can be changed again. Digital data is important because it is the currency of the internet age. These digital data are also important for the protection of organizations. IT managers store the digital assets described above on computers that need to be controlled by the organization. They refer to them as bytes and bits. At this point, there is a difference between data processing managers and public relations practitioners: The purpose of data processing managers is to protect information. The purpose of public relations practitioners is to share information as openly as possible with the target audiences. The important part of this in terms of digital public relations is that public relations practitioners share information in a digital environment as safely as possible. In other words, public relations practitioners should

protect the institution against possible digital risks while sharing the information. People also have expectations and demands regarding organizations in a digital environment. They measure the performance of the institution according to the fulfillment of these expectations and demands. When the institution displays bad attitudes in a digital environment, this situation causes damage to the institution. In the context of digital public relations, public relations practitioners must have knowledge of how to share information securely in a digital environment to protect their institutions (Hallahan, 2004, p. 256).

3. Identity and Transformation

Hall (1990/2015, p. 133), emphasizes that we should not think of identity as a definite, complete structure, and that identity is constantly changing. Roles and identities are different. For example, a person can be a mother, spouse, and employee at the same time. Roles are structured by social institutions according to their rules. Behaviors are also shaped accordingly. Identities, on the other hand, are meaningful and important for individuals themselves. Therefore, they play an important role in the structuring of individualization. In addition, identities are stronger in terms of nurturing meaning and individuation when compared to roles. Identities determine meaning and roles determine functions. Individualism can be included as an element of collective identity if we talk about individualism by excluding it from individual identity (Castells, 2008, p. 13). Castells (2008, pp. 14-15) questions where and by whom identities are formed. He highlights that history, geography, power, collective memory and biology are effective in the formation of identities. According to him, identities are divided into having three origins. The first is legitimate identities. Legitimate identities are created by the dominant institutions in society to make their domination more permanent. The second is the identity of resistance. This identity is developed as a counter-stance to the domination of legitimate identities. Finally, the projected identity reconsiders traditional societal roles, such as the feminist women's identity, which goes beyond the traditional idea that feminist women's identity only focuses on women rights, but is expanded and opposes patriarchy in a more general sense.

Aka (2010, p. 18) emphasizes that social and cultural identity should be clearly defined. Social identity is expressed in terms of the relationships that individuals establish among themselves. In social identity, a person develops, feels and belongs to a group on the basis of these relationships, and at the same time finds meaning in the context of the roles presented to them, pointing to Goffman's (2009) explanations in his study "Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life" (Aka, 2010, p. 18). According to Subaşı (2005, p. 301), cultural identities have

a history. Therefore, they are not constant and are in a state of change. Identities are elements that define different aspects of people and thus enable people to express themselves in relation to a past process (Aka, 2010, p. 18).

Identity refers to the social status and status of individuals in relation to their cultural and social environment. Beliefs, attitudes, and value judgments are also included. Identity is both a personal matter and it is shaped together with the living environment at the same time. Thus, it has a social aspect as well. The individual identities of people distinguish them from others (Güvenç, 1993, pp. 3-5, 28; Yıldız, 2007, pp. 9-10). The identity of the person is positioned based on other people. What a person is not and what he/she does not look like can shape his/her identity. Levi-Strauss said, "*me against others*" (Yıldız, 2007, p. 10). Recognition, identification, and belonging (Güleç, 1992, pp. 14-16) are important elements of identity. Subjectivity, objectivity, individuality and sociality, uniformity and change constitute the dimensions of identity. In addition, these are the images that the individual interacts with during the socialization process and develops against the groups he/she is in and hears about. If there is an inconsistency between these images, then identity problems occur (Güleç, 1992, pp. 14-16; Yıldız, 2007, pp. 9-10).

Taylor (2000, pp. 49-50) says that there was no issue about who an individual was and how he/she was known before modernity. With modernity, societies' relationship styles, the interactions of individuals and sense of belonging began to change. Individuals begin to feel lonely in city life. They tried to address this loneliness through other interactions and belonging. Therefore, as a result, the definition of a person has changed. Globalization has also been influential in identity. Globalization makes societies the same in terms of consumption and lifestyle habits. However, the cultural differences of societies reveal a situation opposed to this similarity. In other words, societies have very different cultural characteristics. However, globalization wants to put all societies in the same mold. (Durdu, 2013, pp. 348-362).

Mass media and consumption culture have been dominant in the transformation of identity along with globalization. With the development of communication technologies, people have easier access to information, products, and services. One important element in shaping identity is the sense of belonging. People want to be members of a group, to feel a sense of belonging, and to change themselves at the same time. In the process of socialization, people try to find a balance between these two desires. One may also want to be part of a group by interacting with a number of encouraging elements. Media is one of the most important encouraging elements. Especially today, celebrities, the brands they use and their lifestyles stand out on social media. People who take celebrities as role models want to use the products they use

and be like them. Thus, people can develop a sense of belonging to a group of people they admire (Kadıoğlu, 2013, pp. 106-107). As has been emphasized, the self-defining methods of an individual who defines himself within structures such as family and family relations have changed in contemporary society.

Consumption culture and conspicuous consumption are noteworthy in the transformation of identity. As has been previously described, identity involves being different from others, and highlighting these differences over and over again. Consumption culture tries to make people feel this difference via brands. It gives them a feeling of being privileged. At this point, the products are purchased not only through the need to function, but also to show that you are privileged and different from others. These forms of distinction can be in the form of social distinction and intellectual distinction. It is possible to purchase and share the brands that contain these details and to share them with others and to make them available to others. At this point, the most important thing is not only the purchase, but the announcement of the purchase to the others. Thus, identities are presented by being shaped through it (Kadıoğlu, 2013, p. 112). As Goffman (2009) emphasizes, through the performance offered to the others, identities are conveyed by being constantly reshaped.

Consumption culture enables individuals to define themselves through the commodities they buy. Thus, identities can be redefined and revealed, and shown to people. On the one hand, in the culture of consumption, one tries to create as many similarities and identities as possible between the members of this class in order not to be separated from the class he/she feels connected to. On the other hand, the consumption system displays a structure based on diversity. The more different the person is from other identities, the more approval and appreciation he/she gets. Therefore, the individual seeks to be as different as possible, to be different and to show it. What makes this possible is the commodities he/she buys. Therefore, gaining status and prestige and emphasizing one's position in society is possible through the purchase of commodities. The social classes in which people are located and their roles in these classes shape their identities and how they lead their lives. One of the manifestations of identity in the culture of consumption is lifestyle. Lifestyle includes leisure activities and demographic characteristics. In consumer culture, unlike traditional lifestyles, people may show that they live other lifestyles (Odabaşı, 2013, p. 145-162). What people do, how they lead their lives, what they support and what they are against (i.e., where they belong and where they do not) constitute an important detail of identity when evaluated as part of lifestyle. Today, we see that all of these are frequently exhibited on social media. Thus, people identify and present themselves to others through repetitive processes bearing these elements.

Another factor in the transformation of identities is the fact that images are replacing reality and people want to reserve a place for themselves in the world of images Fichter (1994, p. 3). emphasizes that today's real interactions, human life, and experiences have been replaced by images. In other words, people live "as if". Relationships and experiences in real social life are now emptied. These are replaced by false experiences or those pretended to be happening (Kahraman, 2004, p. 2). What other people think about a person and how they come up with ideas about him/her have become very important now. There are actions, beliefs, thought structures, and symbols in the concept of images. Symbols also have a significant impact on the way people deal with life. How an individual is dressed or how he/she behaves play a role in this image as well as non-verbal forms of communication. The image of an individual plays an important role in the execution of his/her relationships and the way he/she lives in society. However, as the difference between images and reality grows, this difference begins to carry a risk for a healthy social life and healthy relationships (Kahraman, 2004, pp. 3-14).

4. Transformation of Identities in Digital Public Relations Process

Today, people are building their identities in social networks by shaping their profiles. Individuals want to be active, visible, and noticeable in the social media environment even though they are connected and social in real life. This is because social networks offer people more than just the opportunity to communicate with each other or to be social. This means that people can both stay and engage with the public sphere and stay private in their own private profiles at the same time (Dursun & Barut, 2016, pp. 538-539). Avcıoğlu (2011) states that political views, believes, living area, working, and producing status are important in the construction of identities in virtual environments. According to Şengün (2014) and Rheingold (1993), identities that are formed in the virtual environment and presented to others over and over again are idealized over real ones (Dursun & Barut, 2016, p. 540). Individuals display themselves by sharing content in their profiles, contributing to existing ones with their own ideas, and presenting themselves through communicating with others (Özdemir, 2015, pp. 112-131; Dursun & Barut, 2016, p. 541).

As stated by Bhattacharya & Sen (2003, p. 77), according to social identity theory, individuals do not need intensive communication with other members of the group in order to be able to perceive that they belong to such a group. Based on this theory, individuals are able to create rapport with a group and identify themselves as a member of such a group without extensive communication activities and intensive sense of engagement. In such a

case, individuals form an identity different from their own personal identity through social identity in order to define and present their individuality. Based on a study conducted by Scott & Lane (2000, p. 43-62), individuals are in search of some organizations in order to be able to restructure their identity. Companies and brands as created by such companies use this need to address the need of the target groups for seeking a new identity, and make efforts to establish a bond with such groups in a manner to meet their needs for restructuring such an identity (Atılgan, 2020, p. 1899).

Bauman (2006, p. 44) states that individuals are engaged in the act of consumption in order to restructure their identity, define themselves, and make themselves visible. In the postmodern period, consumers act emotionally. Consumers prefer products to get an image. They are more concerned with the lifestyle and identities the products offer them than the real benefits of the products. Individuals expect such consumer products to provide them with an identity. In this regard, images, symbols, signs, and stories play a crucial role. Consumers surrounded by digital processes of the postmodern period use brands to develop various discourses. In this manner, they create their own stories and similarly contact other individuals. Today, target groups play an active role as consumers and have the power to determine market conditions. In this context, consumers assume various identities with the impact of new communication technologies, digital processes, digital marketing, and means of consumption. Therefore, consumers intend to assume various identities and roles rather than a single identity (Orçan, 2010; Bocock, 1997; Slater, 1997; Odabaşı, 2006; Fırat & Schultz, 2001; Fırat, 1995; Bayazıt Şahinoğlu, 2009, as cited in Hayta, 2014, pp. 11-25).

Birch (2016, p. 84) discusses the cultural transformation of creation, use, and management of an identity today. Shavers (2016: 194) presents the elements of social media, websites, e-mail accounts, photographs posted online, mobility, forums, telecommunication, online storage, and online shopping as the identifiers of digital identity. Aiello, Lodha & Ostrovsky (1998, p. 137) define digital identity as the identity used in various digital platforms such as online shopping, B2B trading, online banking, and intercompany identities (Kavut, 2020, pp. 990-996). Digital identity is associated and intertwined with various areas such as personality, personality traits, types of personality, social media, artificial intelligence, the "Internet of Things (IOT)[1]", image, image management, and reputation management (Kavut, 2020, p. 1001). As previously stated by Shavers (2016, p. 194), online shopping, social media, websites, and forums are among the identifying elements of digital identity.

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1   The concept of "Internet of Things (IOT)" was first used by Kevin Ashton in 1991. It means that many electronic devices are communicating with each other (https://www.oracle.com/tr/internet-of-things/what-is-iot.html, https://proente.com/nesnelerin-interneti-nedir/, 30.09.2020).

The scope of the practice of digital public relations covers providing online shopping, creation and maintenance of corporate websites, utilization of blogs, forums, and social media accounts, management of social responsibility, crisis, image, and reputation through digital platforms (Güçdemir, 2015). In this sense, it is evident that the defining elements of digital identity are also used by digital public relations and digital public relations play a crucial role in the transformation of identities as well as in the evolution of such identities into digital identities.

From another perspective, target groups are now able to easily access the products used by their favorite celebrities and readily own what such celebrities wear or use thanks to digitalization. Marketing activities through digital methods have created platforms to enable such target groups to look like their favorite celebrities. Further, marketing activities allows people to assume the lifestyles and images of such celebrities through the products and brands used by such celebrities. For instance, *"e-commerce featured serials"* can be given as an example to this. While watching FoxPlay, Hepsiburada and 4N1K series called New Beginnings in Turkey, an environment where people can buy the clothes of the actors/ actresses in the series instantly is offered. Thus, the target group is able to access the clothes of the actors/actresses they admire, like, and want to resemble (Shiftdelete.net, 2019). Instant access to the clothes and accessories of the protagonists whom the target audiences identify with, and want to resemble, provides an opportunity for them to look like these people. This affects their identity, presenting themselves to others. Based on the assumption that users share such practices through their own social media accounts, it is evident that digital public relations might play a crucial role through marketing in how target groups build an identity for themselves. As is mentioned above, creating images, identifying and presenting themselves through images constitute an important place in social networks today. Such applications enable the target groups to adapt the images to themselves and share them on social networks through digital public relations techniques.

Another practice announced by public relations using their social media accounts is social responsibility activities. Such activities are announced through different organizations' social media accounts. Therefore, organizations directly contact target groups who intend to express themselves based on particular lifestyles and through various identities embracing such lifestyles. Fairy's campaign in 2017 can be given as an example. In 2017, Fairy collaborated with the Turkish Marine Research Foundation (TUDAV) and organized a social responsibility campaign on the environment. They announced that they extracted the phosphate from their products for the survival of the fish in the sea and organized an exhibition by working with

famous names such as Gonca Vuslateri, Sedef Avcı and Kıvanç Kasabalı. In order to draw attention to the subject, underwater photographs of the celebrities were exhibited. The study was announced via Twitter, on the account of P&G Turkey (Onedio.com, 2017). Today, organizations announce their social responsibility activities through digital platforms and make efforts to ensure that such announcements are shared online as much as possible.

This is because ecological identities get involved in such cases. While conveying information about nature and environment to the society on the one hand, ecological identities reveal differences from other ideas, structures and identities on the other hand. Underlining the difference is one of the most important elements in identity formation. Thus, in order to incorporate more supporters of ecological identities, ecologists specifically emphasize their differences from other groups. Hence, those who have an ecological identity can both see and show themselves differently by being pleased to carry this difference in their daily social lives. In addition to marginalization, identification is also effective in the formation of ecological identity. Ecological identity predicts that nature is central to the completion of the self and its identification with nature (Kılıç & Tok, 2013, pp. 241-243). For these reasons, digital public relations studies shape crisis management and social responsibility activities according to these identities and announce them through digital platforms.

5. Conclusion

Digitalization has changed many concepts. With digitalization, while many things are being redefined, human beings have taken the process of redefining themselves. Photographs, shared content, updates, and ideas used in social media show that humans are reconstructing and presenting themselves to others.

Identities are subject to transformation in the digital era since an individual's self-perception and perception of others as well as self-definition have changed in conjunction with digitalization during the postmodern period. Devices and equipment used, new communication technologies as well as changes to the means of production, relations of production, and means of consumption play a role in the transformation of identities. Digital platforms enable individuals to build various images and create different perceptions. Therefore, individuals are able to rebuild themselves using different identities in the content they post on such digital platforms.

For individuals, what the others think about them and how they appear to others has become more important than ever. Approving and liking of others has gained weight in

defining oneself. At this point, digital public relations discovered the target groups' search for new identities. Reactions, ideas, features, likes, and needs that came into play in the repositioning of the target audiences have been the main area of study and agenda of digital public relations.

When a product or service is marketed to the consumer, the reality on which the consumer defines himself/herself through that product emerges as an undeniable issue in the promotion process. In fact, not only the stage of using, but also the stage of supplying the product serve the purpose of making the consumer different from others.

Now, target groups are questioning institutions' complicity in crises more, wanting to know the reasons, reacting more on social media, and increasing the awareness of others. In addition, access to and sharing of information has become easier. They talk more about the environment, women's rights, animal rights, children's rights, economic injustices, and irregular architectural construction., Through social media people can inform the society and seek solutions. Of course, these issues also point to the new identities of the target groups.

Therefore, digital public relations cannot work independently of all these issues of interest to the target groups. In this process, it is necessary to take into account the new identity constructions of the target groups and to concentrate on the processes of these identity constructions. After the Industrial Revolution, digitalization has been the breaking point that has changed the target groups the most. In this process, where and how identities are located and how people want to define themselves have been an important field of study for digital public relations. For this reason, digital public relations have to expand its application fields through new identity building processes.

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