

## AN OUTLOOK TO THE SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIES FOR AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY IN TURKEY

*Zeki YÜKSEKBİLGİLİ\**

*Mehmet BAĞKUR*

### Abstract

In today's world, traditional media models are withering and social media started to affect the several industries. The automotive industry is one of the industries, which affected and influenced by social media up to a significant amount. Turkish Automotive consumers' attention have quickly transitioned to social media as well. Thus, the Turkish Automotive brands have recognize this new phenomenon and adopt their strategies accordingly. This study discuss the effectiveness of social media and Facebook strategies of Turkish Automotive brands for the brands with considering the automotive social media audience' behaviors. The study also propose insights and a model for the automotive brands to increase their performance within social media platform.

**Keywords:** Social media, Turkey, Automotive Industry, Marketing

### 1. Introduction

Social media is the one of the emerging trends in the today's world; it turned into a dynamic for entertainment, recommendations, discovery and interaction. There are more than 2.307 billion active social media accounts by January 2016 (Kemp, 2016) and the number of social accounts have a growth about %12 per year since 2011. This popularity make social media a platform where people share what they like, discover new things and make recommendations.

The popularity in social media have also changed the people as well. In today's world consumers require on-demand and immediate access to data at their own convenience at anytime. (Rashtchy et al., 2007). Consumers interests turning away from marketing tools like television, newspaper and magazines and consistently demand more control over their media consumption (Vollmer, C., & Precourt, G., 2008). The brands adopt this change as well and many of the brands use social media as a tool to directly communicate with their consumers and cherish their loyalty.

Social media, not only make brands to communicate with their consumers but also enabling customers to talk to one another, which is an extension of traditional word-of-mouth communication (Ramsey, 2016). As Vincent Ferrari mentioned 'instead of telling a few friends, consumers now have the ability to tell hundreds or thousands of other people with a few keystrokes!' (Mangold & Faulds, 2008). At this point, brands must be very consistent on every single action on social media to leverage their brand's value (Ramsey, 2016).

The desire of humans to communicate with each other is not something new and it coded in our DNA's, as it is how we built relations with other people. The human behaviour within social media have the same popularity in Turkey 46.28 million social media accounts in Turkey, which is %49 of the population (Kemp, 2016). Turkish people have different interest within social media where the top five popular areas are as below:

This usage and popularity of social media makes it one of the best tools for customer engagements and lead generation (Hendricks, 2015) as well which also increase the importance of social media sites like Facebook, a very important marketing tool for the industries. As mentioned above, people use social media to express themselves and share the things they love which makes the cars a natural fit into the social media because people always love cars for 125 years

---

\* Nişantaşı Üniversitesi, Yrd.Doç.Dr.yuksekbilgili@gmail.com

.All these parameters make auto industry brands to have a firm interest to use the most popular social platform Facebook as a social marketing tool.

Overall, it is long been acknowledged in marketing management that a successful social media strategy is necessary for a successful marketing strategy. In addition, Marketing management are agree that social media is necessary to clearly reflect the values articulated in an organization's mission statement and contribute to the fulfillment of the organization's performance goals (Glynn, Mangold, & Faulds, 2008). This study focus on social media usage for Turkish Automotive sector and their social media strategies and targets to propose a model for an effective social media strategy

### **1.1. An Outlook To The Automotive Industry**

For about 125 years, auto industry is evolving the new trends of the changing world and continue to the same in 21<sup>st</sup> century where the number of changes are a lot more to the other centuries. Years ago, in the start of the digitalization, it was enough to have a website and connect with the consumers but in today's world, the trend is the social media platforms like Facebook (Lempert, 2008). Today, many auto manufacturers have already in era of transforming to the digital and huge amount of resources already allocated within the businesses (Vollmer & Precourt, 2008). Social media have a big portion in the digitalisation process as consumers spent most of their time in social media. It is clear that the companies who do not adopt to this new epoch will be outstripped within the market as the will be behind their competitors.

CMO 2014 report (2014), for the social marketing within auto industry, clearly shows importance of the social marketing tools for car consumers:

38% of consumers say they will consult social media in making their next car purchase.

23% of car buyers say they use social media to communicate their purchase experience.

84% of automotive shoppers are on Facebook, and 24% of them have used Facebook as a resource for making their vehicle purchase.

40% of new car purchases over the next 10 years will be made by millennials

94% of millennial car buyers gather information online.

Clicks on auto ads on Facebook climbed from 16% to 39% between October 2012 and April 2013.

As seen from the report, people not only engaged with their cars but also with social media where the Facebook is the premier platform. As the social media is very important for the marketing strategies, the brands must have a consistent social media strategy so they must trace and track themselves in social media.

Social media together with the social intelligence can provide great insights to marketing, sales, aftersales and designers. Furthermore, businesses can be assure that they informed of their consumer's ideas thus, they could be sure that their answering their consumer needs. In addition, social media allow the companies to see a view of their consumers' future directions. For example, Mercedes Benz Turkey had already post a video on YouTube for a car they are planning to put on sale in 2025; this video viewed about 10 million times. It is clear that the car buyers shows a great interest on this video so Mercedes Benz Turkey know that they will be answering the consumer expectations for future and also can improve their product according to their comments.

Other than those, there are huge big changes within the industry happening with the cars and lots of the car manufacturer radically decide to adopt those changes. Electrical and self-driving cars are the most two popular changes nowadays and car sharing a mobile handling are sitting on the top of the lots of OEM's future insights. At this point OEM's are wondering how those changes will affect their brands but also they must to consider car buyers' ideas about comfort, safety, style and performance. At this point, social media is a great tool for them to get the car buyers opinions on the cars not only for their own brands but also for their competitor brands cars as well.

Number of big OEMs already engage the social media into their strategies effectively and using it to reach audiences with their posts and able to let people know about their car's, campaigns and their brands. However, it is clear that not

all the OEM's are benefit %100 from social media and social data efficiently and the best way to increase this benefit is to have a solid social media strategy.

In conclusion, social media and social data supports the OEM's business in number of ways from designing to the selling and allow them to make sure that they are aware of their consumers and their changing preferences. Social media and social data already become an important tool for car producers and the research shows that the importance and the benefits of the social media for the OEM's will continuously increase in the next 10 years.

## **2. Aim and Methodology**

In today's world the traditional advertising methods are crushing as they are neither cheap nor gets consumers high attention as consumers attention have migrated to the digital platforms where they can get information more quickly at anywhere (Rashtchy et al., 2007; Vollmer & Precourt, 2008). In addition, they can easily can share their shopping experiences easily by photos, texts, videos. At this point the a solid social media strategy for automotive companies becomes a thumbnail for their values

This paper aims to show how effective Turkish automotive brands are in their social media strategy, the automotive audience in Turkey and advise a transformed vision on social media strategy for automotive brands

In this study, the research started with gathering social data for the Automotive Facebook users in Turkey and 38 Turkish Automotive Brands' official Facebook pages for the dates January 2016 to July 2016. In order to normalise the data set, we excluded all tracked brands with less than 1 million fans in chapter 4, other than that all the data used belongs to all automotive users and brands within Facebook.

There are lots of metrics and data that counts for the social media strategy which can be seen from our bird's eye view however we keen on to observe the observant ones and focus on the ones which stuff more. Not all the data in Facebook is open to public on a fan page basis and those data gathered for all automotive users in Turkey.

During the study, in order to gain a deeper understanding of brand's social media strategy and automotive social media, analysis are completed in 3 sections

**Automotive Social Index in Turkey** : Focus on 5 key factors for Automotive brands to see how their strategy performs

**Audience and Automotive Brand Relation:** Focus on how the Brands communicate with the audience within their social media strategy

**Automotive audience** : Focus on the audience, age, sex, activity, professions of automotive audience in social media to include demographics into strategy

### **2.1. Data Collection Method**

Social intelligence techniques used to gather the data from internet and brand's Facebook pages. During the data collection, Facebook Graph API and Facebook Query Language, which provided by Facebook Developer's platform on Facebook, and Google Visualisation API Query language, which is provided by Google on Google Analytics platform, had been used.

Facebook Query Language is a [query language](#) that allows querying [Facebook](#) user data by using a [SQL](#)-style interface,<sup>[1]</sup> avoiding the need to use the [Facebook Platform](#) Graph [API](#).<sup>[2]</sup> Data returned from an FQL query is in [JSON](#) format by default. Data returned from an FQL query is in [JSON](#) format by default.

Unfortunately, the Facebook Query Language is not supported by Facebook after 7 August 2016 so the data belongs after of 7 August is gathered by Graph API, which is provided by Facebook as well.

**The Facebook Graph API** is a low-level HTTP-based API that you can use to query data, post new stories, manage ads, upload photos and a variety of other tasks that an app might need to do. (Facebook Developers, 2016)

Data related with Automotive companies are gathered from brands official Facebook pages and monitor the number of likes, comments, shares of brands from their Facebook pages which allows to calculate brands' posts 'People talking about this rate' and 'Post engagement Rate's.

The biggest limitation of the data gathering is the limited time for the data and the permissions of Facebook. Another limitation about the study is the Volkswagen Facebook page. Volkswagen Turkey is using the global Facebook page so the Volkswagen Turkey Facebook page is not included at all within this study.

In conclusion, Facebook API platform is the muchly used tool in this study to gather data from Facebook where all the data gathered from official page's for different times. At the points, where data restriction stop to get data from official pages, we get the data From Facebook IQ platform on industry base and complete all the study with using this data.

### **3. Automotive Social Index in Turkey**

#### **3.1. Explanation of social index in detail**

Social index can measured with number of parameters but in this study select: Applause rate of the content, likes, the number of people the post reached and how the content echoes with the audience.

In this study, we track and monitor, the number of likes, comments, shares of brands from their Facebook pages and also calculate their posts 'People talking about this rate' and 'Post engagement Rate's' which gives us a mature result for social index of the Facebook pages.

Five specific attributes selected to calculate the social media index of automotive brands in Turkey.

**Number of fans:** Shows the number of communications OEM's started from Facebook

**Growth:** Shows the growth of the followers of the OEM' Facebook page. The growth rates shown in this study is the average weekly rate for the last 2 years

**People talking about this rate:** Shows all the interactions about the Facebook fan page within Facebook

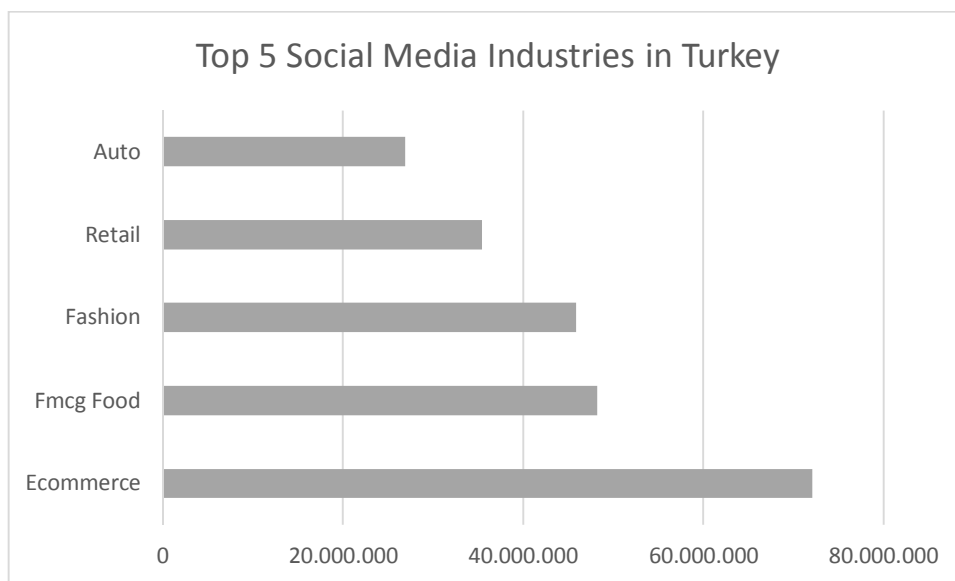
**Social Engagement Rate:** Shows the interactions done by the fans the engagement rate calculated with the formula below:

Engagement Rate = (Likes Comments+ Shares on give day/Own Posts on given day) X (100/fans)

#### **3.2. Automotive Social Index in Turkey**

Automotive industry have an increasing trend on the Facebook since 2011 and it is in the top 10 industries in in the average Facebook fans.

**Figure 3.1:Top Social Media Industries in Turkey**



The number of fans of automotive industry showed an increased trend since 2011 and in 2016, there are about 25 million social media accounts who are at least fan of a page, which operates in automotive industry. The automotive brands in Turkey, started to open Facebook pages years ago and nowadays exactly all the brands have their own Facebook fan pages.

In this chapter, in order to evaluate the automotive social index in Turkey, data gathered and analysed from 32 brand's Facebook pages across four attributes for August 2016. It is also important to mentioned that the data is belongs to median values.

**Table 3.1: Automotive Brand's Turkey Social Index Attributes (data shows average rates between May-August 2016, Excluding VW)**

BRAND	Fans	PTAT	WG	ER (%)
Renault Turkey	2.071.792	62.483	-0,03%	0,86%
Mercedes-Benz Turkey	1.836.153	75.624	0,81%	0,39%
Hyundai Turkey	1.264.056	55.918	0,65%	1,46%
Honda Turkey	1.247.835	46.465	1,21%	0,71%
BMW Turkey	1.157.163	43.379	0,07%	0,53%
Audi Turkey	1.124.825	28.429	0,38%	1,87%
FIAT Turkey	1.036.402	11.927	-0,07%	0,33%
Dacia Turkey Turkey	742.726	1.138	-0,17%	0,13%
KIA Turkey	738.212	30.153	0,59%	1,05%
Ford Turkey	636.885	35.078	-0,01%	0,13%
Mercedes-Benz Hafız Ticari	620.836	7.268	0,21%	0,81%
Skoda Turkey	426.551	6.835	-0,03%	0,15%
SEAT Turkey	358.306	6.532	0,55%	0,40%
Toyota Turkey	321.108	5.262	0,62%	0,06%
Mondial	254.871	6.281	1,91%	0,24%
Ford Trucks	240.605	3.197	0,12%	0,35%
BMW Motorrad Turkey	230.063	6.238	1,69%	0,88%
Volvo Car Turkey	196.795	3.444	2,43%	0,20%
FIAT Ticari Araçlar	161.973	2.046	0,95%	0,73%
Alfa Romeo Turkey	154.234	1.990	0,86%	0,79%
TVS Turkey	152.293	955	0,79%	0,06%
Mazda Turkey	151.442	2.875	3,17%	2,25%
Scania Turkey	151.171	9.755	0,10%	0,44%
SsangYong Turkey - Şahsuvaroğlu	148.304	5.178	0,08%	0,60%
Yamaha Motor Turkey	141.088	38.661	0,52%	0,52%
Borusan Otomotiv	136.674	1.684	-0,11%	0,91%
Jeep Turkey	116.602	3.085	-0,15%	0,33%
Mitsubishi Motors Turkey	106.757	3.386	0,28%	0,05%
Avek Otomotiv	100.724	5.391	-0,03%	0,39%
Porsche Turkey	97.042	3.482	0,07%	1,40%
Suzuki Türkiye	89.342	966	2,93%	0,23%
Maserati Turkey	88.251	1.184	5,54%	1,94%
Otomol	87.846	1.133	1,42%	0,04%
Otokoç	80.225	344	0,92%	0,08%
Medos Fiat	74.741	280	-0,08%	0,35%

It is clear that the brands who operates more for passenger car's seems to be more popular and the top five companies in the above table have more than a million fans which clearly shows that they have a better social media strategy compared to others and investing within social media.

According to the table 3.1 , Renault is the leading brand with more than 2 million fans on the Facebook which shows that they have more than double fans compared to its competitors( except 4 brands). On the other hand, when we look at the sales numbers in 2016, the Renault has the highest sales as well compared to its competitors and again its sales numbers are about double of lots of its competitors.

Mercedes Benz Turkey have the highest "People talking about this rate"(PTAT) across all of the other companies with 75.624 interactions which clearly shows that people like to talk about Mercedes which shows that people in Turkey have more interest to the brand in the first quarter of 2016. On the other hand, Mercedes Benz Turkey have a lower score on the engagement rate compared to the other brands in August. This shows us that Mercedes Benz Turkey fan page tremendously growth in June compared to the previous months. This growth rate shows about 80.000 people started to follow Mercedes Benz Turkey fan page and this increase effects the PTAT rate as well which can related with the new E- Series advertisements on social media. On the other hand, the engagement rate of Mercedes Benz Turkey is 0.39% in July, which is an average rate within other companies. This infographic shows us that people are interesting in the Mercedes Benz Turkey more than other brands but not interested in the posts by shared by Mercedes Benz.

Honda Turkey has a %1.21 weekly growth rate and %0.71 growth rate in the first half of the 2016. When we look to the growth numbers, we can see that the number of fans following Honda Turkey Facebook page have increased from 900.000 is to 1.2 million in 6 months. This increase shows that Honda's social media strategy altered within last few years and nominated by the automotive consumers. This strategical change also consistent with the sales numbers as well, where the number of sales made by Honda has a growth about %19.45 compared to the 2015 first half (AUTOMOTIVE DISTRIBUTERS ASSOCIATION, 2016).

We can clearly see from Table 3.1 that the companies like Ford, Toyota Turkey, Opel Turkey, Dacia Turkey who are in the top 10 for the sales in 2015 and first half of 2016, do not have the same performance in the Facebook and in their social media strategy. Especially Ford Turkey had sold about 60,000 vehicles in the first half of the year, which is about 3 times bigger than the Mercedes Benz Turkey sold vehicles, but the Mercedes Benz Turkey fans have increased the number of fans 3 times more than Ford on Facebook. On the other hand, when we look at the passenger car sales in the first half, Mercedes Benz Turkey have a growth about %6.74 where Ford sales decreased about %16 compared to the previous year. This performance in the sales cannot be %100 related with social media but can say that it has a big effect.

Overall, Renault Turkey have the highest number of fans within the social and Honda have the highest growth trend in the first half. In addition, Audi and Hyundai have the one of the highest engagement rates within the industry, which shows that they are good at their social media posts strategy. Mercedes Benz Turkey have the highest PTAT rate across the others as well, which makes it the most popular brand within the Facebook but on the other hand Mercedes Benz Turkey not able to show this performance in engagement. Instead of BMW TURKEY, has one of the highest fans between its competitors, has a very low growth rate in 2016 which is also consistent with sales as well where decreased about %11 compared to 2015.

In conclusion, the top 6 companies in the table 3.1 seems to have a more mature social media strategy compared to others with more than a million fans. It is clear that they are able to leverage their social media with their sales operation, as especially the fan growth numbers are proportional to growth in sales. On the other hand, the companies with highest sales like Toyota Turkey, Ford Turkey, Kia Turkey, and Dacia Turkey do not have a mature social media strategy compared to their competitors

#### **4. Brand Audience Relationship**

The biggest difference between social media and traditional media is that, in social media, the publisher receives positive and negative reactions from their audience. This makes brands every single action on social media to focus on to make the audience to interact on the posts on brands page. This makes Facebook a platform where the brands can directly communicate with their consumers and cherish their loyalty and build more strong reputation on their audiences thus , the manufacturer's must be reliable with the posts and the responses . In addition, the social media strategy with the posts will affect the reach and the loyalty of consumers but to do so the sales as well.

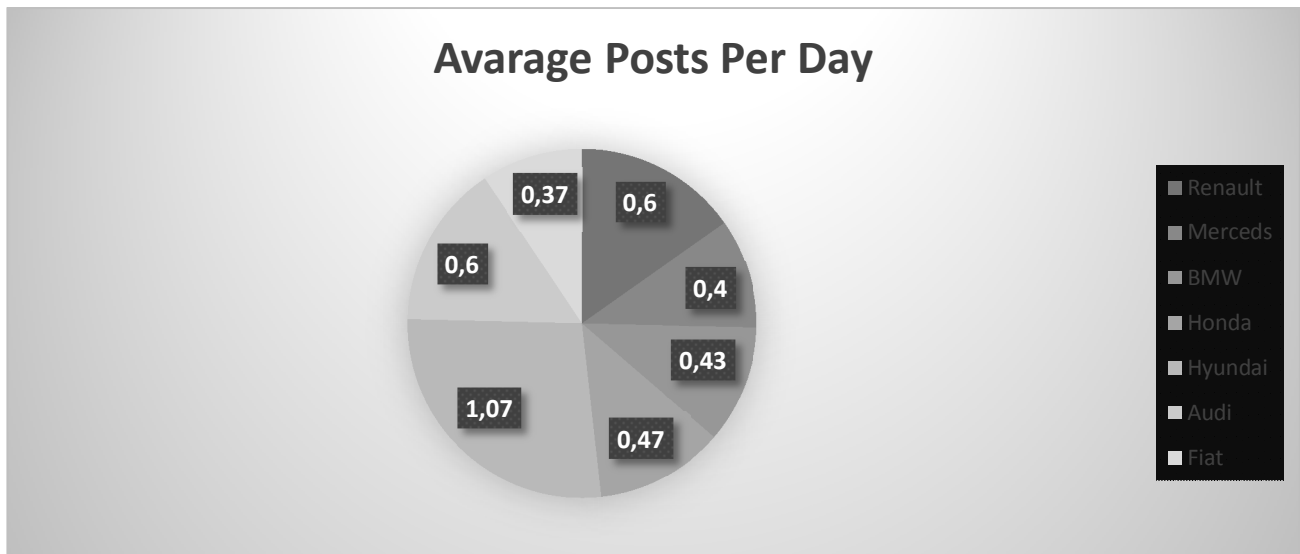
In this chapter , the brands with more than million Facebook pages fans are analysed in detail to evaluate how they shape their social media strategy in communicating with their audience's.



#### 4.1. Brand Activities on Facebook

As the Facebook turned into a platform where the brands interconnect with their customers, their activities on their Facebook page will directly effects the company's reputation among their fans but to do so , brands must have a solid social media strategy and also related actions accordingly. The activities on the Facebook page makes a big part of the company's social media strategy and directly effects the numbers of people and success in communicating audiences. The communication way in Facebook based on the posts and brands can reach all of their fans with a post they made from their Facebook page.

**Figure 4.1: Average Posts per Day (Data belongs to dates between 21.7.2016 – 21.8.2016)**

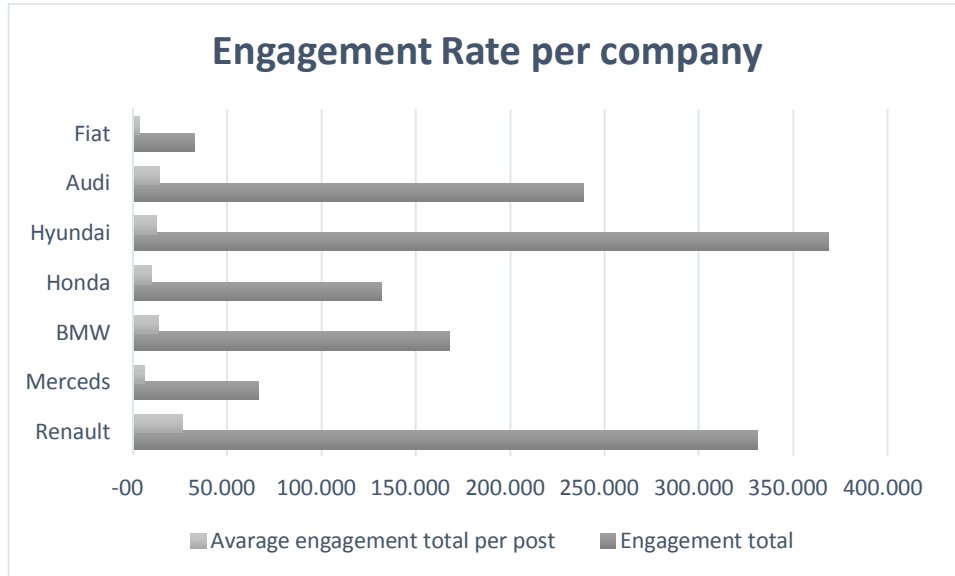


Renault has the highest number of posts within Facebook with 1.07 posts per day followed by Hyundai, Audi and Fiat has the lowest post where shares a post once in 3 days.

The industry average for posts is about 0.5, which shows that Renault has double posts compared to the other companies and have something to say its audience everyday through Facebook.

Engagement rate is the one of the best metrics, which shows the performance of the posts and the audience's interactions.

**Figure 4.1 : (data belongs to 21.7.2016- 21.8.2016)**



The above graph, summarise the average engagement rate and total engagements for post between 21.7.2016 to 21.8.2016 dates. Hyundai is the brand which able to engage highest number of people and able to communicate with highest numbers of audience on Facebook. Hyundai is followed by Renault, which has the highest number of fans and still able to communicate with big percentage of audience in the mentioned period with highest engagement rate (%1.23)

Mercedes Benz Turkey, which has highest PTAT, has a low engagement rate compared to its competitors. This shows that some of the posts shared by Mercedes Benz Turkey have high attraction and some get very little attraction by fans, which shows that Mercedes Benz Turkey posts are differentiate from each other with either content or type.

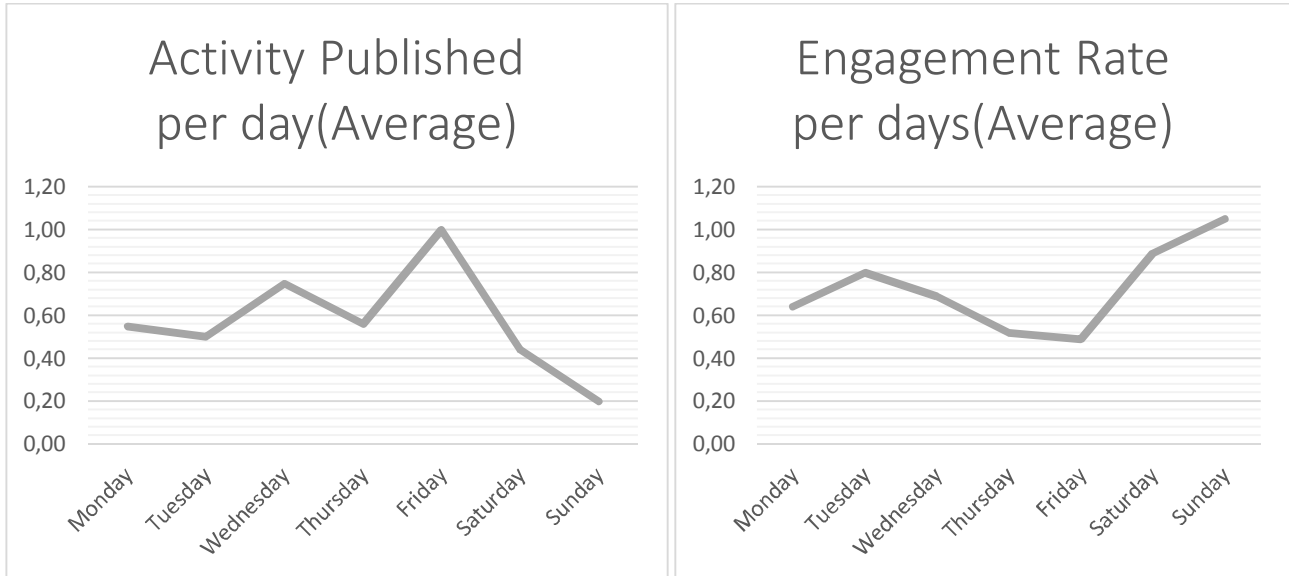
In conclusion, Hyundai and Renault is vastly effective in engaging with their consumers where Fiat is lacking with engaging with its customers through Facebook. BMW TURKEY, Honda and Audi are above industry averages with engagement and Mercedes is lacking a smooth performance where some of the posts are lacking engagement with audience's instead some are effective.

#### **4.2. Timing of the Manufacturer's and Audiences**

It is accepted by lots of business leaders that timing is very important in business even sometimes, it is more important than the content. Same as the business, in the social media, the timing is very important as well. Being active on the times when the audience are online, increase the chance to noticed and responded. In addition to that , timing of the responses is very important as well where brands will have the opportunity to show their customers that they are always available and in contact with them.



**Figure 4.3: Average Activity and Average Engagement rate on daily basis: Data belongs (Data belongs to 1.1.2016 – 31.6.2016)**

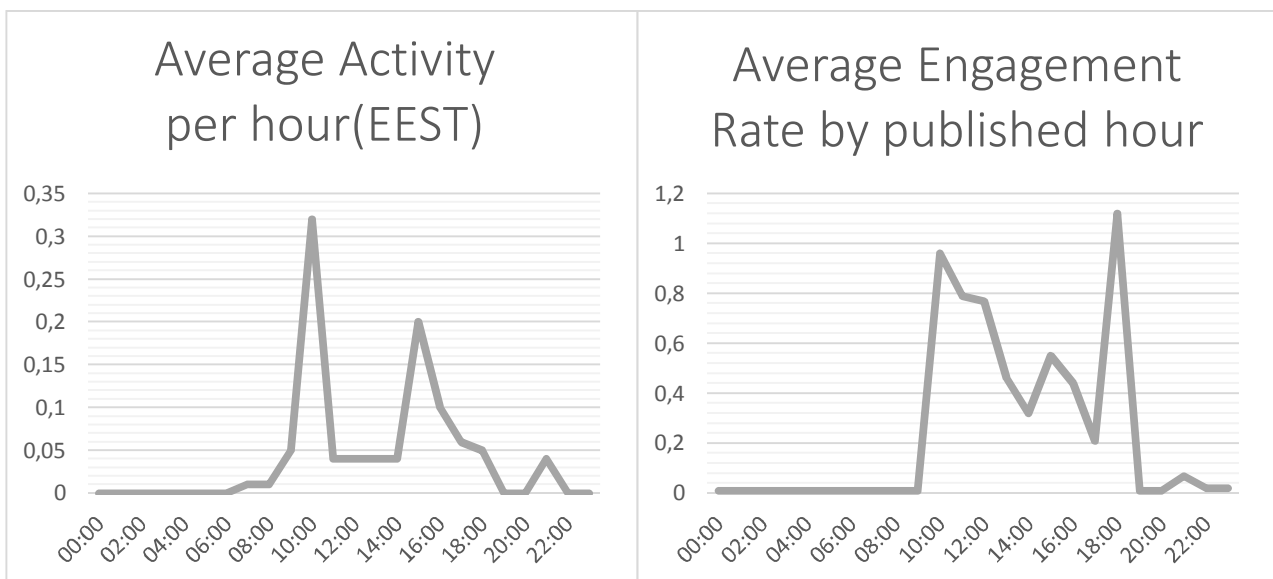


Initially, the brand's activity on the Facebook shows a slight decrease at start of the week and shows an increase in the middle of the week. The brand's posts reach a peak point on Fridays and dramatically decreases within the weekends and we can say that only few brands are slightly active in the weekends.

When we look to the engagement rates for the audiences with the brand's post, we can easily see that there is a tremendous increase after Friday and the highest engagement is on Sundays, which means that the audiences are much more action on the brand's post in the weekends especially on Sundays

Overall, it will be clever for the brands to have posts on the days, which the audience engagement rates are high; however just few of the brands have posts in the weekends where the engagement rates are highest

**Figure 4.4: Average Activity and Average engagement rate on hourly basis (Data belongs to 1.1.2016 – 31.6.2016)**



When we look at the hourly activity of the brands and the audiences, there is a two peak points for the engagement of the audiences, which are at 09:00 and 19:00, which is out of working hours. In the morning session, the brands have their posts where the activity is the highest but there are fewer posts by brands around 20:00, which can be accepted as most suitable time.

The data also shows that, Hyundai takes in account the timing in their social media strategy and have postings during the weekends and outside of the working hours but oppositely Mercedes Benz Turkey is lacking to have any posts during the weekends and around 20:00 in weekdays where the engagement rate is the highest. We can also see the effect of the timings in audience engagement when we look at to the average engagement rate and surely, Hyundai's perfect makes them to get better engagement.

Consequently, automotive brands in turkey are not take into account the timing enough within their strategy. It is important for the brands to recognise that having posts outside the working hours will help them to reach and engage with more audience and brands may loss leads if not have Facebook posts are reply to customer questions during weekends where it will be a good strategy to have social teams working on weekends and outside working hours.

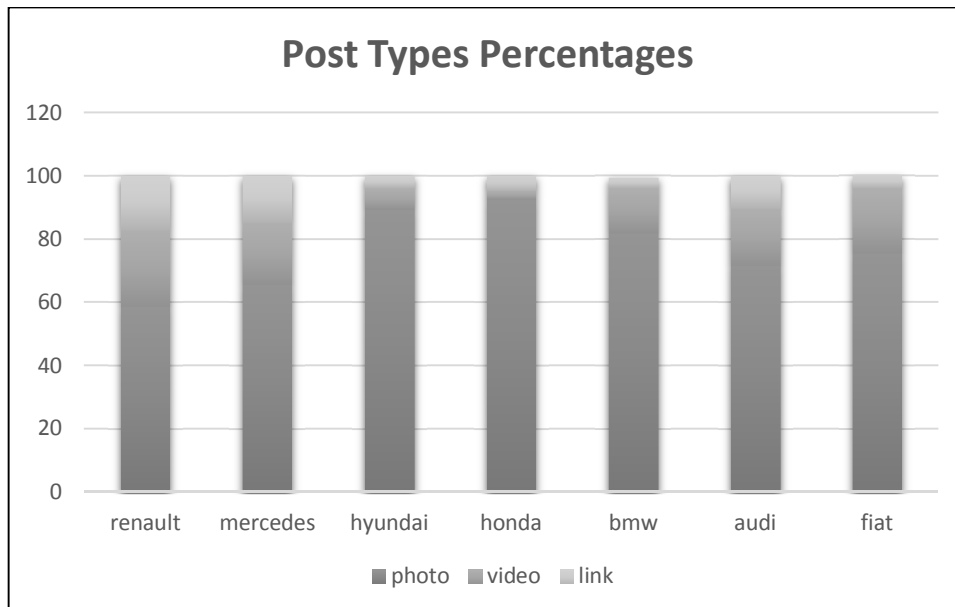
#### **4.3. Brand's Content on Facebook**

The content of the Facebook posts makes a big part of the brands social media strategy and brands should use true content to present their brand's services, products and the brand's reputation in social arena.

Design, style and performance are three most important factors for the automotive industry as the elegance and the performance have a %14 affect during the car purchasing processes (W.Glynn Mangold, David J Faulds, 2008). The presentation of the products within the social media is very important as well as the posts seen in the social media can affect the customers decisions and interests. Another point is that , social applause can affect people .Social effect have a high influence on purchase decisions as lots of people would like to buy cars which have social influence on others.

Lots of the companies social media strategies are much more operated by the photos where %75 of the content shared by the top 6 brands are consistant of the photos where the high quality photos are a good way to present the design and the style of the products.

**Figure 4.5: Post Type Percentages (Data belongs to 1.1.2016 – 31.6.2016)**



Other than the photo's the six brands have also used video's and links where video's has about %18 average and links have a %6 percent average

**Table 4.1: Post Types and Average Engagement Rate**

Post Type	Posts per Day per Company	Engagement Rate / Post
<b>Photo</b>	0.44	<b>0.86%</b>
<b>Video</b>	<b>0.13</b>	<b>0.10%</b>

When we look into the engagement rate's we see the strategy that the companies using for post types is correct as the photo's engagement rates are a lot more than the video's and automotive companies absolutely prefer to post photos

## 5. Automotive Audience in Turkey

Facebook is the most popular social platform and totally, there is 1,481,914,040 users over world (Kemp, 2016). Compared to the country population, Turkey is the third country, which has the highest Facebook usage in the world. This makes Facebook a more important platform for the Turkish market.

**Table 5.1: Top 10 countries who has highest Facebook usage percentage**

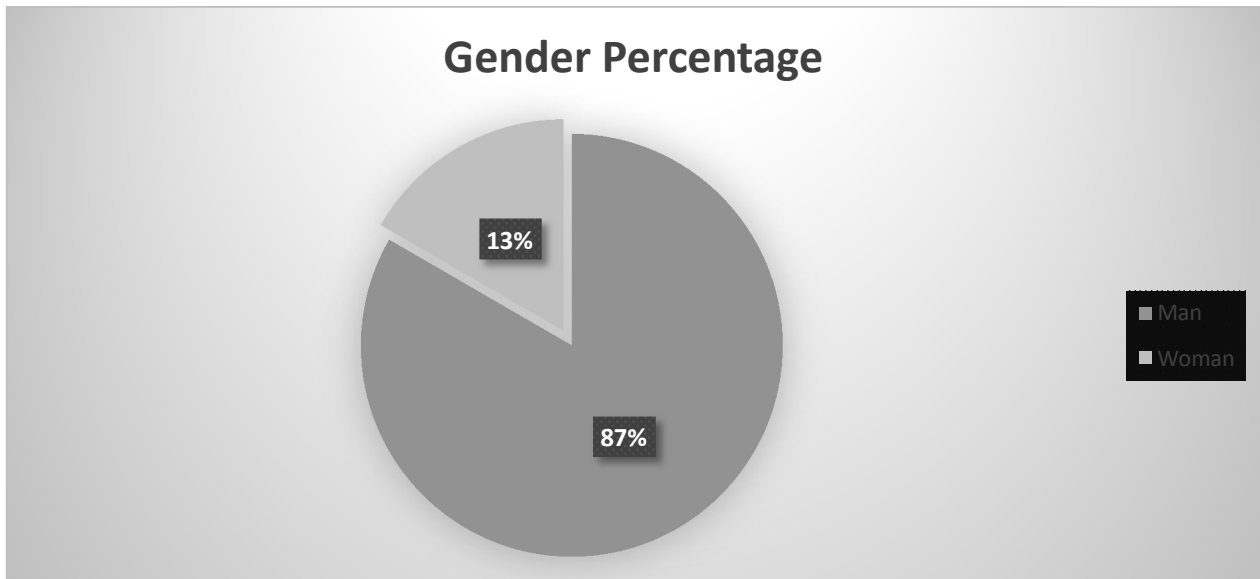
Country	Population Percentage
<b>ABD</b>	62.69
<b>United Kingdom</b>	61.53
<b>Turkey</b>	57.84
<b>Thailand</b>	57.51
<b>Mexico</b>	54.76
<b>Brazil</b>	51.70
<b>Philippines</b>	50.05
<b>Vietnam</b>	39.65
<b>Indonesia</b>	33.23
<b>India</b>	11,37

The Facebook audience in Turkey has interest in different sectors and automotive sector is in the top five Facebook sectors with rank five. According to the Facebook Insights data, there are about 15 million active users who are either interested in Automotive Sector or Automobiles. This audience is exactly the target audience of the automotive brands and sure big part of it is automotive consumers. In this part of this study, we will focus on 10-15 million audience in Turkey and their details.

### 5.1. Demographics of Automotive Audience in Turkey

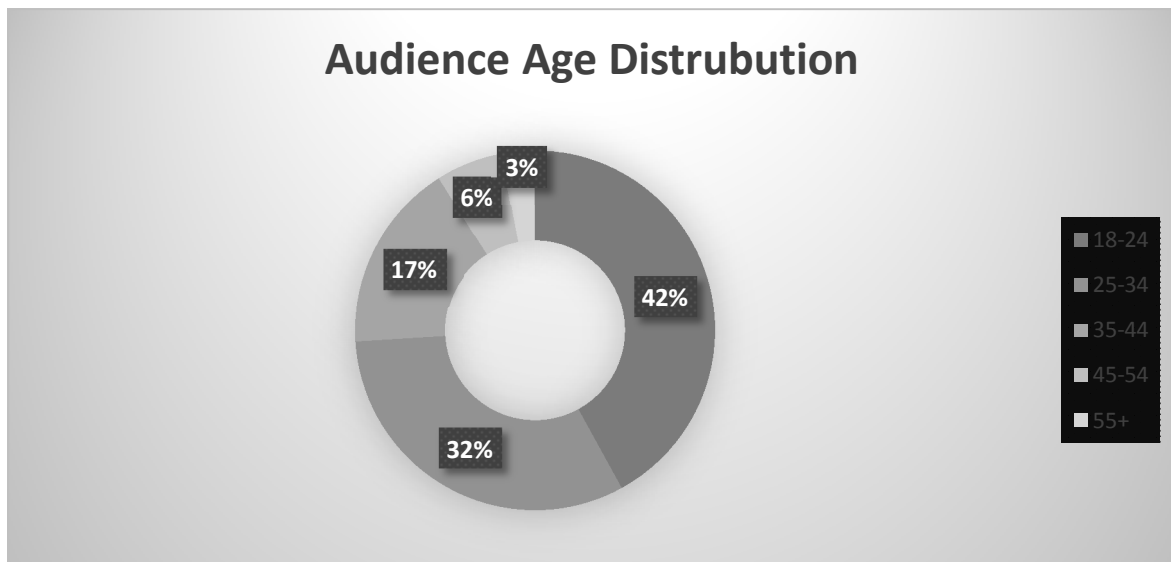
The brands must know the demographics of their audience in social media and act accordingly as the demographics is a great tool to help us to understand the interest, social behaviour of the targeted audience.

**Figure 5.1: Gender distribution of automotive audience in Facebook**



Men dominates the social audience of the Facebook for social media audience with %85 and women are not interested in automotive in social media. Mercedes Benz Turkey has very limited interest from the woman as only %9 of the page fans are women. Renault and Fiat is leading two brands in women interest in social media as %18 of their fans are woman.

**Figure 5.2: Age distribution of Automotive Facebook audience**



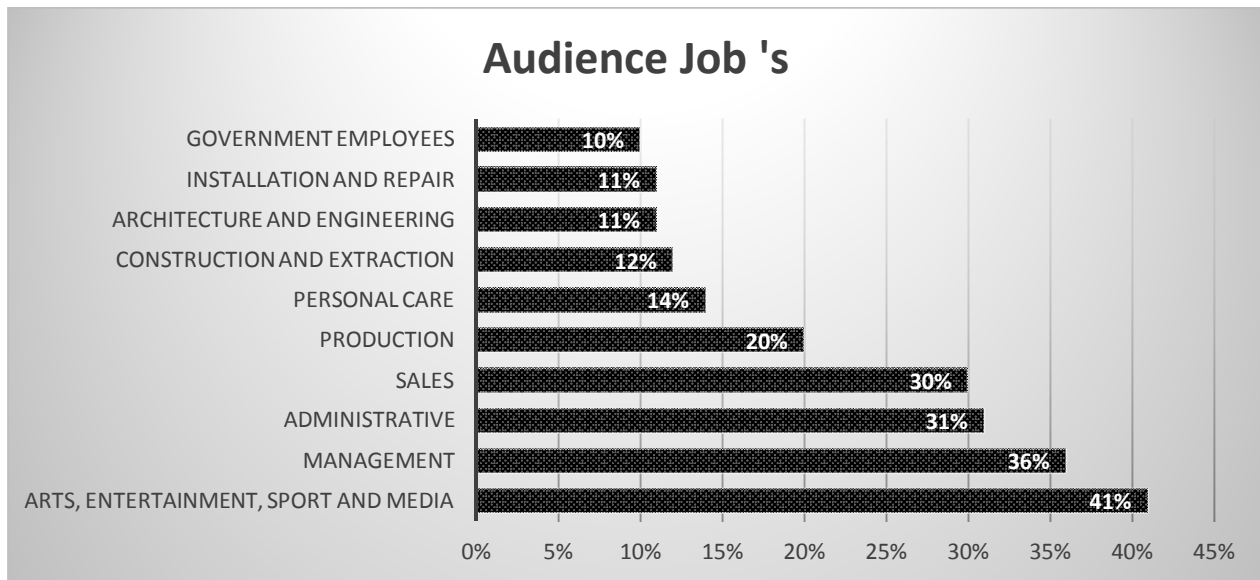
The age is another important demographics and the automotive audience nominated by young people who are between 18-34 years old with a percentage of 74%.

The demographics of the audience is very important in an effective social media strategy as brands able to know their targets and spent their effort accordingly. For example, a social media campaign for retired people on Facebook will not be a good social media strategy as only %10 of the audience may be retired but on the other hand a campaign that target the young professionals will have a great fit into the Facebook

## **5.2. Job and Profession Analysis**

In today's world, many people spent about %33 of their time at their work and naturally, this makes a big effect in their social life and so as in social media. The audience's profession is very important for the automotive brand's social media strategy and this will help them to design both their products and social media strategy accordingly.

**Figure 2: Top job areas of Automotive Audience in Facebook**



A big part of the automotive audience in Facebook belongs to Arts and Entertainments sector and followed by people who are doing management jobs. People who are working at government has the least interest within the automotive brands in social media. People who are working in construction and repair have a limited interest on Automotive sector as well where this seems a big gap in Truck and Van selling Brands as people who work in those sectors use the vans and trucks to operate their jobs.

## **5.3. Interest Analysis**

The audience other interests are also very important as not only shapes the social media strategy but also the product strategy as well. In addition, being aware of the other popular pages, which audience interested in social media, can used to create effective cross-functional sales and campaigns within social media.

**Table 5.1: Top interest areas of automotive audience in Facebook**

Category	Facebook Page
Arts/Entertainment/Nightlife	Cadde Hikayeleri
Transport/Freight	Mercedes-Benz Kamyon
Vitamins/Supplements	HARDLINE
Company	OPET- pirelli
Cars	Mercedes-Benz Türkiye,Honda Türkiye,Renault Türkiye,Hyundai Turkey
Public Figure	Sedat Peker,Köksal Baba
Sports League	UEFA Champions League,UEFA Europa League, Lig Tv
News Personality	Ertem Şener
Website	Tesbihane,Otomobil Dünyam,sahibinden.com,Küfür Sokakta
Computers/Internet	Nesine.com

The top categories who are in the automotive audience is more interested in social media defined in the above table. When linked to the job analysis, it is clear that the art and entertainment sector has a big cross with the automotive industry as people who are working in arts nominating the audience as well. In addition, those infographics can be used as a good tool for the advertisements for example an advertisement film with Ertem Şener or an advertisement for a Europe League match can be preferred to get more interest by audience.

## 6. Key Findings

As outlined in previous chapters, the current car owners and future customers from different interests and profession are using Facebook effectively to get information about cars, voice their ideas and their concerns. On the other hand, automotive brands are using Facebook as well to get in touch with their consumers and achieve their marketing targets.

Especially, Facebook pages with more than a million fans act in social media according to a strategy and able engaged hundred thousands of people weekly. However, the posting times, contents and average engagement rates shows that all the brands have gaps with knowing their audience and shape their content and strategy accordingly.

The brands Toyota Turkey and Opel Turkey who sells about 100 000 vehicles in a year period, have a very limited popularity in Facebook which shows even the car owners of these brands do not a fan of their cars Facebook Page.

In conclusion, there is a huge audience for automotive industry and the brands must alter their social media strategies accordingly, which effect their performance. This study shows that the posting times, content and audience demographics effect the way that brands communicate with their audience and must considered during designing social media strategy

The analyses during this study divided into 3 sections so the findings defined in 3 sections as well.

### 6.1. Automotive Social Index in Turkey

Many of the automotive brands in Turkey increase the number of their fans in Facebook on a consistent basis week to week, which also shows that Facebook is a matured platform for automotive industry. The growth and popularity of the fan pages especially increased on the times when a new product's posts shared by brand. The increase in the growth and PTAT rate followed by an increase in the sales numbers in the analysed cases. It is also find out that, a mature social media strategy really make sense in social media as this supported by the brands Ford and Toyota Turkey instead of they have the highest car owners in Turkey, they have very limited fans on Facebook.

Renault Turkey has the highest number of fans within the Facebook where Mercedes Benz Turkey is the most popular brand within the Facebook Platform. The growth rate and popularity rate of Mercedes Benz Turkey, Honda Turkey and Hyundai Turkey is remarkable and above the Turkey averages which can be achieved with a solid social media strategy.

## **6.2. Brand Audience Relationship**

Automotive Facebook pages get about half million interactions in a week by automotive audience. The audience is more likely to “like” the posts instead of comment or share and %85 of the interactions are likes. The automotive audience is more active at 10:00 am in the mornings and 20:00 pm at nights and weekends are the times where they reach their pike for their interactions in social media.

Brands have average one post in every two days where posting daily performing better. Photos are the most common posts in automotive social media strategies of all brands where brands frequently prefer to post photo's more than other post type. Renault Turkey and Mercedes Turkey are the two brands who also prefer to use videos in their posts more than other brands where the videos more likely to be remembered compared to the photos.

Renault Turkey is the leader of the engagement among all other its competitors and have a great average engagement rate through its all posts. Hyundai Turkey, BMW TURKEY, and Audi are the other brands who follow Renault Turkey in the engagement rate. BMW TURKEY, Renault and Audi are the most consistent brands in the average engagement rate and have a steady engagement rate for all of their posts. As mentioned above Mercedes Benz Turkey is the most popular automotive brand however, the average engagement rate is low compared to others which shows us that Mercedes Benz Turkey not able to get the same interest by users in their all posts where some of them are engaged very well and some poorly. Mercedes Benz Turkey is not the only brand and many of the companies are lacking with having a consistent engagement rate for different posts.

The posts with low engagement rate shared repeatedly with the same content, which shows that the brands are not analyse their post engagement rate effectively. Lacking of content analyse make brands to not alter their posts according to the audience interests and share the content which is not popular often. For example, Mercedes Benz Turkey is using Kitesurf content in their posts, which has a very lower engagement rate than average however the Kitesurf content is still in use by brand in every week.

Interestingly, the brands Toyota and Opel Turkey who sells about 100 000 vehicles in a year period, have a very limited popularity in Facebook when compared the sales numbers.

## **6.3. Automotive Audience**

The males nominate automotive Audience in Facebook where the Male's forms % 87 of the audience. Renault and Fiat have the highest female ratio in automotive brands. The most common profession within the audience is art, entertainment and sports where the people who work for government have least interest to auto industry in Facebook. The young people who are aged between 18-35 forms big part of the audience.

Overall, it is find out that the future car customers make big portion of the automotive dealers and art, sports and media are the sectors, which interested by the automotive audience.

## **7. Insights and Proposed Model for a Successful Social Media Strategy**

As discussed within the study, social media and marketing is very important for the automotive brands to leverage their marketing and sales target. The contribution of social media strategy in brands awareness and intention to purchase discussed in previous chapters. In this chapter, we will provide some insights for a better social media strategy for Turkish Automotive Market and propose a model for automotive brands in Turkey in the light of the findings of the study.

The study has shown that the social media will help the brands to increase their brand awareness, customer loyalty and the sales. In this section, a model proposed for the automotive brands for their social media strategy.

The insights and proposed model will focus on to increase the brand awareness and customer loyalty with the social media and by this way increase the sales.



Brand Loyalty and reputation is very important for brands as they are two important parameters to increase the number of sales and the prices. The brand awareness directly effects the demand and this turns into a higher equilibrium price in supply demand chart.

Insights and proposed model, in order to increase the brand awareness and loyalty we focus on fan growth rates and engagement rates.

### **7.1. Insights for Turkish Automotive Brands**

The insights advised by this study are based on the findings in chapter seven and especially focus on to improve the social media strategy of the Turkish Automotive Brands. According to the findings, the following insights expected to increase the social media performance of the brands in Turkish automotive sector

Share the Posts when the automotive audience is most active which is at 10-12 and 20.00 in the weekdays and make sure to post in the weekends around 10:00

Regularly analyse the content and engagement rates of the post and find which content the audience most interested.

Target to post contents where the people engage more and be sure that do not share the content that is not interested by audience repeatedly. Turkish audience is engaged mostly with the future products and content with performance

Prefer to publish mostly photo's which have highest engagement rate in Turkish market

Boost the audience to action on the posts with not only likes but also with the shares which targets to increase the fan growth. Turkish audience is highly like to share the posts for new products

Work with the social influencers and post the contents they engaged. Ertem Şener is very popular within automotive audience in Turkey and will be a good choice for automotive brands in Turkey to work with

Make sure that to reply all of the questions, nominations and complaints of audiences as quickly as possible and make audiences to feel you are always in touch with them.

Never reply audience with an advise to find their answers in the website

### **7.2. Proposed Model for an Effective Social Media Strategy**

An effective social media strategy requires an effective model. According to the research made a social media, process model and steps defined in this study. The defined model is consist of six steps.



**Figure 7.1: Proposed Social Media Strategy road map**

### **Create a social purpose attached to business strategy**

Every marketing manager accepts that every marketing strategy requires a purpose. Social media is a marketing tool as well and in order to have a strong social media strategy, you must have a purpose.

The social media purpose must aligned with the business targets and aims. In order to define a strong purpose, the model advise to follow the steps below:

Define your limitations as not all the objectives can be achieved with social media

Define your audience

Define your targets

Define your purpose

In conclusion, the model advise to define your limitations, audience and targets in detail before creating your purpose for social media strategy.

### **Define a marketing voice on social media**

The social media voice will be the road to the destination and the tone used will be the car you travel to the destination. Before starting to your journey, it is very important to build the road and decide on the car.

The social media voice will be the tool, which will define the brands personality, relation with the audience and the audience ideas about the brand. When defining your voice you should be stick with your purpose

In the end of this step, adjectives should defined that describes the voice of the brand. Consider that the voice is the road and the tone is car

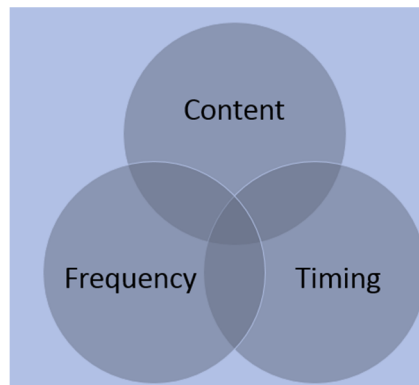
### **Define your posting strategy and engaging content**

Posts are the biggest tool that can be used to engage with customers. There are three important parameters related with the posts:

Content

Timing

Frequency



**Figure 7.2: Posting Strategy**

The model does not advise any strict rules for posting strategy as it differs for different audiences and different voices. The proposed strategy here is to “Just give it a try” to see what is the most effective

### Analyse the social data, test and being agile

As defined in the third step, posting in social media is something individual and there is not any formula for that. The way to find the best recipe is to try. The model advise to analyse the social data on a post basis. The statistics will provide us a view and insights for the best content, timing and frequency.



**Figure 8.4: Iterative process to define posting strategy**

The model advise the steps below to analyse the posts and achieve to the best results

Define the post content , timing and frequency

Set a target

Try it!

Analyse the statistics

Define insights

Iterate

### Streamline and automate your process

The last part of the proposed model advise to have a streamline process for the social media.

The model advise to have a dynamic queue, which includes the posts that will be shared. Every singly post in the queue expected to have a priority and a scheduled post-date. By this way, the postings in social media will automated and become better as times goes by.

On the other hand, it is also very important to know that the social media is a 2-way communication platform so it is not possible to automate your process %100. The model strictly advise to reply to the audience immediately when they talk to you through social media.

## 8. Conclusion

Automotive industry will definitely undertake important changes in the following years driven by new technologies and digitalisation. This changes will affect the design, engineering and business models as well as the way brands communicate with their audiences. Changes will portend the existing strategies but on the other hand will provide new opportunities for the ones who adopt the changes.

As mentioned in the study, today's car buyers are regularly track the automotive brands from social media and voice their concerns, expectations and experiences about cars from social media as well. Thus, automotive brands must adopt the social media in to their business models and must have a solid social media strategy to understand their customers changing needs, and built strong relations with customers

## **REFERENCES**

- Automotive Distributers Association (2016). Passenger Car and Light Commercial Vehicle Market Evaluation
- CMO, 2014. Turning Social Feeds Into Business Leads, basım yeri bilinmiyor: Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) Council.
- Facebook Developers (2016). Facebook. Available at: <https://developers.Facebook.com/docs/graph-api/overview>, Access date: 20-09-2016
- Hendricks, D., 2015. A Look At How Car Brands Are Effectively Using Social Media. Forbes.
- Kemp, S., 2016. Digital in 2016, Available at: <http://wearesocial.com/special-reports/digital-in-2016>, Access date: 20-09-2016
- Lempert, P. (2008). Caught in the Web. Progressive Grocer, p. 18.
- Ramsey, G. (2016). Digital marketing strategies in the age of consumer control, Available at: [www.emarketer.com/Article.aspx?id=1003886&src=article\\_](http://www.emarketer.com/Article.aspx?id=1003886&src=article_), Access date: 20-09-2016
- Rashtchy, F., Kessler, A. M., Bieber, P. J., Shindler, N. H., & Tzeng, 2007. The user revolution: The new advertising ecosystem and the rise of the Internet as a mass medium. Piper Jaffray Investment Research, February.
- Singh, T., Veron-Jackson, L., & Cullinane, J., 2008. A new play in your marketing game plan, Business Horizons.
- Vollmer, C., & Precourt, G., 2008. Always on: Advertising marketing, and media in an era of consumer control. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- W.Glynn Mangold, David J Faulds , 2008. Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix. Business Horizons.