




Netiquette: Fundamentals of Etiquette in Digital Communication

Dr. Uğur Oral 

Yaşar University, İzmir, Turkey

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Abstract:

Socialization is an innate human need. The individual finds himself/herself in a social environment as soon as he/she is born. As human beings communicate with those around them, they become aware of the existence of some social regulators such as laws, moral rules, and traditions that regulate the relationships they establish. Among these rules, etiquette rules have a special place. Etiquette rules are the rules of respect and courtesy that should be shown sensitivity in interpersonal relations. Although they do not

have legal sanctions such as the rules of law, when the rules of etiquette are violated, the person is shamed, excluded from society, and left alone. Today, in addition to face-to-face communication, there is a very intense socialization on digital platforms. Interpersonal communication evolved into a different internet-based relationship network. The rules called Netiquette, in the simplest definition, are regulations that beautify and protect social relations established through the internet. Digital platforms are not environments where freedoms are experienced unlimitedly and without rules. It should not be forgotten that only the environment is virtual, but the people are real. In other words, the rules of social behavior that regulate our relationships in our daily lives also apply to the communication we establish through the internet. Acting in a manner sensitive to the rules of etiquette when communicating with others over the Internet will further strengthen social relations, while the opposite situation will lead to the termination of existing relationships.

Keywords: *Communication, digital communication, etiquette, netiquette, social media.*

Introduction

Communication has been one of the most significant and fundamental needs of humanity throughout history. People require communication to create social cohesion, educate younger generations, and express countless emotions, thoughts, and needs. As a result, effective communication has always been at the heart of the characterization of civilized societies (Gallager, 2008). While the world is developing at a dizzying pace and changing radically in every field, communication has perhaps been the largest share of this transformation. With the development of

technology, the impact and development of new communication technologies on social life gradually increased. While the power of communication has evolved to a much higher level, the effect of new media in this rapid change of society became more apparent day by day. As of April 2023, there were 5.18 billion internet users worldwide, which amounted to 64.6 percent of the global population. Of this total, 4.8 billion, or 59.9 percent of the world's population, were social media users (Statista, 2023). Today, as a result of the rapid changes in information and communication technologies, with the widespread use of the internet and its penetration into every aspect of our lives



through smartphones, many new terms such as social media, new media, social networks, digital media, and digital communication entered our lives. These concepts became an integral part of our daily lives and caused a revolution in all areas of social life, including economy, politics, and communication.

New media as a term started to be used after the emergence of television and cyber technologies. The new approach at that time, of course, referred to the older one. Today's new media concept emerged in the second half of the 20th century with the interaction of information and communication technologies and the media. With the emergence of new media, the logic of traditional media has begun to be abandoned. The new media are the users themselves. Each user can produce messages for any other user. Classical categories such as gatekeeper or opinion leader changed and some of them lost their importance and have been replaced by concepts such as blogger and social media manager. Due to the multiplicity of messages and sources, the audience is much more selective. The basic elements of new media also formed digital media technology through platforms, content traffic, and identities (Feher, 2012). New media, unlike traditional media, consists entirely of digital devices and platforms. It is possible to include within the scope of new media all resources offered through digital devices. For example, the internet, blogs, websites, video games, and video-based content can be considered as channels of new media (Çiçek, 2023).

While earlier "analog" forms of communication, such as face-to-face conversations, remain important in everyday life, social media became one of the most powerful and ubiquitous tools through which individuals gather, share, and communicate information with friends, family and the world at large (Stone & Wang, 2019). Digital communication networks are structures that allow people to communicate and exchange data with each other through computers and machines directly with machines through networks (Aktaş, 2023). Digital communication can also be interpreted as the use of online tools such as electronic mail, social media

communication, and instant messaging to share a message or attract the attention of a specific target audience. Based on this definition, even the act of accessing information on a subject on the internet is included in digital communication (Govos, 2023). Digital communication includes many tools that enable the transmission of information, feelings, or thoughts to others by electronic means. This type of communication plays an important role today with the widespread use of the internet. It is not only limited to text-based communication tools but also includes audio and visual media. Digital communication is a powerful tool that makes it easier for people worldwide to connect, share information, and interact. The new order has also had an impact on business life and trade. For example, the fact that all data and outputs can be interpreted and shared is among the advantages of digitalization. Digital transformation is defined as the transformation of business activities and processes to capture and benefit from all opportunities that may be related to digital technology. The aim here is to increase efficiency, make processes more efficient, fast, and effective, and manage risk (Alptekin, 2020).

Digital Communication Culture

Digital media is difficult to define. Although it is constantly changing, digital media in the broadest sense is content that can be transmitted over the internet or computer/telephone networks. Communication using digital technology can be carried out using more than one method. Social media, known as the 'participatory internet', is an important aspect of digital communication (McGloin & Eslami, 2015). While digital communication has created concepts such as new media and social media, it has become an environment where not only people with technical knowledge or expertise in this field but also ordinary users can produce content (Başal, 2018). The opportunities for people to research, learn, and share what they are curious about any subject increased significantly. In the traditional communication process that previously dominated society, the target

audience was passivized and could not intervene in communication. However, every individual who is a user of the new media assumes a role that both consumes and produces information independently of time and space (Boztepe, 2014).

The Internet cannot be considered only as a mass communication tool that offers a level of interaction incomparable to any other tool before it. Today, as its use became widespread, the Internet prepared the environment for the formation of very large virtual networks, virtual masses, and communities. More than that, it created its own culture and has become a way of life (Çamdereli, 2015). People from all over the world, regardless of religion, language, culture, and society, can communicate thanks to the Internet. The new order brought to social life by the Internet led to changes in the working styles of individuals and organizations. The new order called "home office" gave people the chance to work at home. Thanks to portable computers and wireless internet, everyone found the opportunity to do their work on the plane, in the hospital, and on the journey, regardless of the location. Today, the possibilities offered by the Internet have been carried to mobile phones with the 5G system, making portable office-style work a part of everyday life. This paved the way for the reorganization of labor relations in a significant part of society (Güngör, 2018). The Internet profoundly impacted our world and changed the way we communicate, learn, manage our finances, access entertainment, and shop. The Internet, which makes life much easier with the opportunities it offers, will continue to develop and shape our future.

Etiquette and Netiquette

Before moving on to the concept of netiquette, a brief examination of the rules of etiquette that form the essence of the concept will help to understand why these rules are needed in the virtual world. Even in the maxims of the Egyptian vizier Ptahhotep in 2400 BC, the rules of etiquette are emphasized. In other words, the importance of etiquette rules emerged and increased from the moment human beings

became aware of being social creatures. Although the word "rule" evokes the concept of obligation to obey, rules of etiquette emerged as an element that facilitates and beautifies social relations in the historical process. Etiquette rules can change from society to society and can also reposition itself by adapting to changing social structures. For example, before the napkin was invented, people used to wipe their mouths on the tablecloth after eating. With the introduction of the napkin into our lives, this practice has changed its form (İlkses, 2020). Although the forms of application may change, respect and courtesy at the core of etiquette never change.

Etiquette is like a boomerang. The way a person treats those around him/her, he/she is treated in the same way by those around him/her (DHA 2022). Etiquette, in its simplest definition, is the rule of respect and courtesy that should be shown sensitivity in interpersonal relationships (Mavişehir Dergisi, 2023). Etiquette rules are social behavior rules that apply in every aspect of our lives. There are rules of etiquette that we must follow when talking on the phone, eating, sitting, getting up, in short, in every step we take. One of the most basic needs of human beings is to be respected and valued, which is possible by showing sensitivity to the rules of etiquette. Knowing where and how to behave provides self-confidence to the individual. Individuals who respect each other form societies that respect each other (Son Dakika, 2019).

Etiquette is an indication of the respect that people feel for the people they live with. However, even before this, it is an expression of their self-respect for themselves. Attention to the rules of etiquette gives others an idea about a person's level of education and cultural level. Details such as how someone sits and stands up, how he/she talks, and how he/she eats create an impression about him/her within five minutes. For example, if the buttons of the jacket are buttoned incorrectly at a social event if the tie is tied incorrectly if the dress is inappropriate, if the person smacks his/her mouth while eating, or if the glass is held in the wrong hand at a cocktail party, or if the person puts water in the white wine glass at dinner, he/she leaves a negative impression (İlkses, 2020).

While the Internet offers many positive opportunities, it can also cause unwanted situations with the unconscious use of users. Over time, social media has become a place of chaos where many problems such as unconscious sharing, harassing negative comments, untimely desire to communicate, neglect of private life, and lack of protection of privacy are seen. (Pektok, 2019) Today, it is possible to say that social media channels have started to differentiate in terms of different expectations and purposes of users. Different social media channels such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Academia, and Instagram have gained characteristic features by differentiating in terms of user profile and purpose of use. People sometimes make the mistake of perceiving the virtual environment and social media as a platform without rules where freedoms are experienced unlimitedly. However, the rules of social behavior that regulate interpersonal relations in daily life are the same in communication via the Internet. People should not say something that they cannot say to someone's face in real life in a virtual environment. The fact that the environment is virtual does not change or diminish the fact that those who communicate are real people (Milliyet, 2020). Acting sensitively to the rules of etiquette while using the Internet will further strengthen social relations, while the opposite situation may lead to the end of existing relationships. What is written on the internet is not written on ice, it stays there and is seen by many people. This makes it necessary for social media users to show even more respect and care for their relationships in the virtual environment than in daily life (Yaşar, 2020).

Importance of Netiquette

The word Netiquette has emerged by combining the French word "Etiquette", which means good manners, with the "net" of the internet. This word defines the etiquette rules that must be followed to be a part of social life in the virtual world and that are developing day by day (İçel, 2012). More specifically, the term netiquette is defined as the rules of courtesy accepted in

internet-based communication. In the new global internet culture, an effort has been made to determine common and standardized rules of etiquette. Although netiquette violations do not always bring penalties, someone who knows the rules of this new culture will be more advantageous than someone who does not (Scheuermann, & Taylor, 1997).

Cambridge Dictionary defines "netiquette" as "A set of rules for proper behavior/behavior among users in a computer network (the Internet) when exchanging messages" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023). Collins Dictionary defines the same concept as "Netiquette is the set of rules and customs that it is considered polite to follow when you are communicating through email or the internet", while Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines it as "etiquette governing communication on the Internet" (Merriam-Webster, 2023).

Netiquette can be explained as informal rules accepted by Internet users and developed to regulate online behavior. These have been developed over time in various virtual environments and internet applications. These norms of behavior, which constitute the concept of netiquette, are the adaptation of real-life etiquette rules to online technology in the internet environment (Kayany, 2004). According to another interpretation, netiquette is using technology effectively, with knowledge, understanding, and courtesy when communicating with others in both personal and professional contexts. (Kallos, 2004) Netiquette is essential for maintaining a proper online environment in emails, social media, forums, chat rooms, or any other online platform. Following social media etiquette helps create a positive and respectful online environment that encourages positive and respectful interactions between individuals and communities. It promotes effective communication, reduces misunderstandings, and encourages the development of meaningful connections and relationships. Although netiquette, like etiquette, is seen as an "unwritten set of rules" and there are no sanctions, not following these rules is perceived as disrespect (Kozík & Slivová, 2014). Those who are sensitive to netiquette in social

media use strengthen their relationships in the digital world. At the same time, the behaviors that people exhibit online also affect their relationships in the real world.

In face-to-face communication, there is no distance or intermediary, it takes place spontaneously between people. With this feature, it is the most effective and preferred type of communication. The direct interaction of the receiver and the sender allows them to mutually edit or correct their actions and discourses (Goffman, 1959). Verbal communication, for example, a conversation between two people, is temporary in nature. But written communication is permanent. The Internet stores all writings and what is written is also a document. Therefore, special attention should be paid to what is said and written in internet-based communication. On the other hand, one of the most important problems in digital communication, especially in written form, is that the person cannot see his/her interlocutor. (Of course, if camera use and video calling are not possible) Since the facial expressions and gestures of the interlocutor cannot be seen, sometimes communication accidents may occur. People may sometimes unintentionally deviate from the social etiquette rules they follow in face-to-face communication. According to Albert Mehrabian, known for his theories on verbal and non-verbal communication, the words spoken (verbal communication) constitute 7% of the meaning of the message. 38% of the meaning of the message is made up of tone of voice (vocal communication), including factors such as intonation and emphasis. 55% of the message is conveyed through non-verbal elements (visual communication) such as facial expressions, body language, and gestures (Mehrabian, 1971). This theory, also known as the 7/38/55 ratio, emphasizes the importance of people seeing each other and being aware of their body language in communication. This is not possible in digital communication through writing due to the lack of social cues that occur in face-to-face interactions (Morgan, 2006). Since intonation is also lost in electronic communication, the only power a person has is often the words he uses. To compensate for this deficiency, to convey

emotions while writing, small icons such as smiling and crying faces emerged (Oral, 2010).

Email and Netiquette

In 1985, Norman Z. Shapiro and Robert H. Anderson, in their book "Towards an Ethics and Etiquette for Electronic Mail" in which they defined the rules of Internet communication, underlined some basic etiquette rules such as not criticizing third parties without giving them the right to reply, not speaking negatively about them, remembering that what is written is always permanent, and keeping the list of recipients as short as possible (Shapiro & Anderson, 1985). Virginia Shea, the author of "Netiquette", one of the oldest and most influential references on online etiquette, also emphasized some basic points in her book. For example, Shea emphasized the importance of remembering that there is a real person on the other side of the screen, and therefore approaching others online with respect and empathy, just as in face-to-face interactions. She also suggested that people should be sensitive to virtues such as politeness, honesty, and courtesy in online interactions and said that people should not show themselves differently and act as they are. In his book, Shea drew attention to the etiquette of online interaction with warnings such as "Think before you post, be forgiving of other people's mistakes, respect other people's privacy, keep discussions civil and respectful even if you disagree with someone, pay attention to grammar and spelling rules, and how you appear to others" (Shea, 1994).

"Respect" has a special importance in email etiquette. When sending a message, it is important to respect the recipient and especially the recipient's privacy. If an e-mail or message contains private information about the sender or if it is not specifically stated that it can be shared, it is necessary to ask permission from the sender before sharing it with other people. When creating the text of the e-mail, the e-mail always starts with an address. It is not correct to send an e-mail without an address. In the greeting section, when determining the address, it is correct to use the same address in the e-mail as

it is used when talking on the phone or face to face. If the recipient addresses the sender by name, they can respond in the same way, but respect should be shown when addressing women or superiors. An e-mail, a message, or a comment on a post must be replied to. It is rude to leave an email unanswered. An email should be replied to within a day or at the latest within a week. When people send an email, they often expect a response as soon as possible. If an email sender is unable to respond, he or she should inform the addressee about the excuse, indicate when he or she will reply, or use an automated email response system (Kayany, 2004).

Before sending the e-mail, the text should be carefully checked and if there are spelling mistakes, they should be corrected. Reviewing and sending files attached to the e-mail as "attachments" in this context will also prevent possible mistakes. In addition, it should be avoided to use only capital letters in e-mails, as this is perceived as shouting or aggression in Internet language (NTV, 2004).

It is essential to have a professional e-mail address for professional purposes. E-mail addresses that contain sexual connotations, and ethnic, cultural, economic, or social biases should be avoided. The "subject" section of the e-mail must be filled with a short and descriptive statement (Atalay, 2019).

It is not correct to use emojis when writing an official email. The sender's name must be included at the end of the message, just like in a letter. Likewise, contact information should be included at the end of the email. If the recipient wants to use another means of communication to respond, it is a good idea to make it easier for them as a courtesy.

It is not polite to send too many emails with large files and fill up the other person's email account. It is also not polite to call after sending an email and ask if it has been received (Özaltın, 2007). If an email from someone is to be forwarded to someone else, the addresses to which the email was previously sent should be deleted out of respect for the privacy of the people to whom the email was sent. The "Reply All" button should be used carefully. People do not want to

read e-mails that do not concern them. Therefore, the "reply all" button should only be used if everyone on the list needs to read and be informed about the reply. Otherwise, constant messages may annoy people.

If the relationship with the recipient is not on the level of a sincere friend, humor should be avoided. To avoid sending an email to the wrong address, the recipient section must be checked before the email is sent. It would be better to write the message first and select the recipient last to avoid the risk of accidentally sending the email before it is completed. When writing an official email, visual details such as unusual fonts, colors, etc. should be avoided and the classic text form should be preferred.

Email is not a reliable means of communication. Any email can be accidentally sent to the wrong address, it can be read by passers-by while the screen is open, and the email account can be hacked. Because of such security threats, it is not appropriate to send highly confidential and private information electronically. If you are sending an email in a business environment, it is not correct to add managers to the recipients of each email, unless they do not necessarily need to see it. In mass mailings, it is correct to use BCC to respect the privacy of the people on the list so that they do not see each other's addresses. In professional correspondence, if the same email is sent to both subordinates and superiors, it is necessary to list the address of the superiors first and then the subordinates in order of seniority. Writing the phrases 'about', 'concerning', and 'belonging to' in the subject line of an email is not considered correct according to etiquette. In addition, the statement to be written in the subject section should consist of a few words summarizing the content. It is not correct to make abbreviations in the subject section. Choosing a subject heading that contains several details, for example, writing "Budget for 2024" instead of just "Budget" will make it easier to find the email later. When writing the text of the email, words should not be abbreviated.

Sometimes when an email arrives, the sender asks for confirmation that it has been read. In

very special cases, this request may be acceptable, but it is perceived as insecurity to ask for read confirmation after each e-mail. Just as home and cell phone numbers are not shared with others without permission, e-mail addresses deserve the same treatment. It is impolite to send emails such as "Send this email to 10 people, if you don't...", which has become popular recently. It is disrespectful to send an email that supports the political viewpoint you espouse to everyone who is not interested. If an e-mail is to be sent to others or lists, it must be reviewed for its content and suitability (Okur, 2022). If an anomaly is felt in an e-mail, the sender should be called, informed, and warned according to the risk of the virus.

WhatsApp and Netiquette

Text-based communication is one of the popular current interaction modes of the smartphone. Text-based communication, which forms an important part of interpersonal communication with its conveniences and advantages, facilitates instant and fast communication. The fact that everyone nowadays owns a mobile phone makes text messaging extremely accessible. People can send and receive messages as long as there is a signal or internet connection. Unlike phone calls or face-to-face interactions, text messages allow individuals to communicate without disrupting their daily activities or disturbing others. This makes text messaging more attractive for people when responding or verbal communication is not possible (Shalihah, & Winarsih 2023).

WhatsApp is a fast messaging program that uses the Internet to send and receive text messages, documents, pictures, video, audio, etc. to other users via cellular mobile phones. WhatsApp limited the application area of traditional communication tools with new communication tools and negatively affected the effectiveness of message, mail, etc. applications. WhatsApp, which can be defined as a general mix of social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, Viber, Tango, etc., is increasing its usability and the number of its users day by day, and its area of influence and coverage is expanding day by day in the context

of associating micro-structures within virtual communities (Güzel, 2020). Today, WhatsApp is the most widely used instant messaging application with more than 2.7 billion global users and 1.03 billion more users than the second-ranked 'We Chat'. WhatsApp has such a big place in the lives of users that 140 billion messages are exchanged on the platform every day (Ruby, 2023). WhatsApp, an internet-based communication application that allows users to exchange information in different formats such as text, image, video, and voice messages, was first created and introduced to the public in 2009 by Brian Acton and Jan Koum. With the emergence of WhatsApp, which has become very popular in just a few years with the advantages it offers, information has started to spread easily all over the world (Permatasari, Soelistiyowati, & Nugroho, 2022).

As with all digital communication platforms, some courtesy rules regulate communication through WhatsApp. When using WhatsApp and similar instant message applications, it is important to choose the appropriate clock time (Atalay, 2019). When a WhatsApp message arrives (if the sound is not disabled or the phone is not switched on), the user is warned with a signal sound. This sound may be loud enough to wake up someone who is sleeping. Therefore, it is not appropriate to send messages very early in the morning or late at night. Likewise, it is not correct to send WhatsApp messages during lunch or dinner hours. The interlocutor cannot eat while reading the message or writing a reply, and this is also wrong according to etiquette. If a message about work is to be sent, it is better to send it during working days and hours. People who leave the workplace on holidays or at the end of the day may want to stay away from professional issues in their private lives. A message written on WhatsApp outside of working hours can be perceived as impolite.

Especially since WhatsApp groups correspond to a mini-community, the rules of courtesy that regulate society come to the fore even more. One of the things that should never be done in groups is to enter into a mutual polemic with a group member. It is also possible to communicate by writing a private message to the

person with whom dialogue will be established, rather than talking about issues that do not concern other members of the group, in public. Therefore, when sending a message to the group, it should be questioned whether it concerns everyone. Before sending a message to the group, it should be checked once again whether the correct group has been selected. Wrong messages sent to the wrong groups may cause difficult and undesirable situations. It is important to keep the messages short. Sending ten messages on a subject that can be explained in one sentence is an unnecessary occupation of the group and is not welcomed. In group conversations, the person who does not want to speak has no place. And other people can see that the messages have reached someone and that person has even read them. So it can be frustrating for other people to wait for a reply.

Before adding a new person to the group, permission must be requested from other group members and information must be given. Likewise, it is a courtesy to give information before leaving a WhatsApp group (BBC, 2018). It is also rude to add someone to a WhatsApp group without their permission just to increase the number of group members. Before adding people to groups, permission must be requested from them. If the people added to a group leave the group, this decision should be respected.

It is not correct not to forward messages to others, whether the content is correct or not, or who wrote it. If the person contacted does not want to be sent a message, if he/she refuses private correspondence, this decision should be respected. The phone number should not be shared with others without their permission (Whatsapp, 2023) It is not correct according to the rules of digital courtesy for someone to make commercial posts in the group that are irrelevant to the subject of the group without permission, to share the advertisements of the product they constantly sell. Sending videos and images to Whatsapp groups without any explanation is also not pleasant behavior. It is an indication of respect for the group members to indicate why the sharing is made, at least in a word or two. (Habertürk. 2021). It is also not correct to send a voice message unless it is compulsory. If there

is no situation to write a message and the person has to send a voice message, the message recording should not be too long.

Virtual Meeting Etiquette

The continuation of a large part of communication in digital media during the COVID-19 process has caused a change in all our lives. During the social isolation process, social relations in daily life continued in digital environments. Working life, education life, and socialization took place through digital channels. During the pandemic, video chats and meetings through some programs attracted great interest, and a kind of face-to-face communication was established with the use of cameras and microphones. These online meetings and shifts, which were introduced during the pandemic, continued after life returned to normal. Today, members of some professional groups still work from their homes and hold online meetings with their customers. Participants of these digital meetings, which take place through video conferencing programs such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, Skype, etc., also have some etiquette rules to follow. People should not participate in a video call in the same clothes they wear when they sleep at night or, for example, without a beard shave, with unkempt hair, in a state of disrepair, this is disrespectful to others. Similarly, in virtual meetings, it is impolite for other participants to play with their mobile phones, eat something, or correspond with each other while someone is talking. It is polite for meeting participants to greet other participants by saying "hello". At the end of these meetings, it is also important to briefly say 'Goodbye' to the participants instead of suddenly disconnecting (Yaşar, 2020).

It is an important etiquette rule to mute the microphone before attending a meeting. If the manager says "welcome", the microphone is switched on and a response is given, but throughout the meeting, the microphone should be switched off when the person is not speaking. Leaving the microphone on may be a partially tolerated excuse, but it disrupts the harmony of the meeting and may disturb other participants,

especially those who are speaking at the time. Too much movement in a video meeting distracts other participants. Behavior such as walking, jogging, driving, tidying the house, etc. during a meeting without any explanation is not only rude to the meeting participants and organizers but also distracting. Online meetings also require seriousness. Just as it is not possible to eat, drink, chew gum, or smoke during a meeting at work, these are behaviors that should not be done in online meetings (Habertürk, 2021). The same rules of etiquette that apply to other face-to-face meetings also apply to online meetings on digital platforms.

Social Media Etiquette

Social media is a network where internet users can easily join and access information, use the information they access, and easily communicate with the sites thanks to the technology that the internet has reached in recent years (Aziz, 2016). According to another definition, social media are internet-based applications whose ideological and technological base is based on Web 2.0 and allow the production and sharing of content created by users (Başal, 2018).

In the 21st century, which is also called the age of communication, especially as a result of the intense interest of Generation Z (Oral, 2023), the social media network has become so huge that it has turned into an online world that attracts all people like a magnet, with an increasing number of users, almost according to itself. There are 4.8 billion social media users worldwide, representing 59.9 percent of the global population and 92.7 percent of all internet users. Between April 2022 and April 2023, there were 150 million new social media users - an increase of 3.2% year-on-year. This translates to around 410,000 new social media users every day and 4.7 new social media users every second. People use an average of 6.6 different social networks every month. The average time spent on social media per day is 2 hours and 24 minutes. In other words, the world collectively spends 11.5 billion hours a day on social media platforms (Nyst, 2023).

According to 2023 data, social media platforms are listed as follows according to the number of monthly active users: Facebook 3.03 billion, Whatsapp 2.7 billion, YouTube 2.7 billion, Instagram 2.5 billion, WeChat 1.67 billion, TikTok 1.67 billion, Facebook Messenger 988 million, Snapchat 750 million, Telegram 700 million, Douyin 600 million, QQ 574 million, Sina Weibo 573 million, Kuaishou 573 million, Pinterest 450 million, Twitter 450 million, Reddit 430 million, Quora 300 million (Shewale, 2023)

Social media, which is rapidly becoming more popular in society, offers many conveniences to its users in terms of continuous updating and easy accessibility. People can write their thoughts, and share different photos and videos. Social media not only facilitates people's daily communication but also has a significant impact on the business world. Businesses actively use social media to promote their brands, interact with customers, and market their products or services. Social media has a huge place in people's lives in terms of content and form. Social media technologies have found their place in our social life in many different ways, including blogs, microblogs, social networks, corporate social networks, business networks, forums, social bookmarking, social gaming, product/service reviews, photo and video sharing, and virtual worlds (Aichner, & Jacob, 2015). Social media is a platform where all users participate widely due to its advantages such as expressing opinions, commenting, and sharing. Based on issues such as information exchange and cooperation, social media offers numerous opportunities to participants. Since social media develops through dialogue between different users, it allows users to talk to each other as well as share information and content. Social media allows people who share common hobbies, cultures, views, and philosophies of life to come together and form groups. Social media also helps to connect many platforms by linking to different websites and resources (Mayfield, 2008).

Kaplan and Haenlein define social media as "an internet-based group built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, allowing

the creation and sharing of content by the user" (Kaplan, & Haenlein, 2010). Although social media is the center of attention in society with the opportunities it offers and the number of its users is constantly increasing, some disturbances caused by social media have also been discussed, especially in recent years. As Caplan pointed out years ago (Caplan, 2002), those who cannot use this virtual communication environment correctly show psychosocial disorders (Samarraie, Hosam, et al, 2021).

The definition of "user-generated" is the keyword by which the social network is defined by the community. Social media are fundamentally collaborative. It facilitates communication between participants through constantly changing mechanisms and platforms (Spector & Kappel, 2012). When Internet users come together and form cyber communities, the importance of courtesy becomes even more important. Lack of kindness weakens social relationships and even destroys online communities. Online civility is not just nice to have, it is necessary. Today, millions of people flock to these social platforms online. These internet users come from many cultures and lifestyles. They access in different ways using different technologies with different expectations (Preece, 2004). Therefore, social media users need to be in mutual respect and tolerance.

Many rules of etiquette should be considered when using social media. These are not rules produced only for social media. When examined carefully, it will be seen that social media etiquette rules are the internet version of the etiquette rules regulating daily life. We should use elegant expressions such as "thank you", "you are welcome", "I apologise", which we use as an expression of courtesy and respect in our daily life relationships, also in our conversations on social media. For example, in case of a death, it is wrong to express condolences on social media or by sending an e-mail. In cases such as birthdays, promotions, or wedding anniversaries, it may be appropriate to celebrate with a message written on digital platforms, but in case of death, condolences should be conveyed by calling in person (Milliyet, 2020).

If someone else comments on any social media post (unless it is a ridiculous or insulting comment), it is important to respond sincerely to these comments as soon as possible. Comments left unanswered may create the perception that the person who shared the post is insensitive and disrespectful. If there is a time problem, it would be more correct to at least say thank you. Again, if someone's photo is to be shared, it is necessary to ask permission (Altındağ, 2015). No one's photo is shared without permission. No one is tagged in a photo or post without permission. Everyone should respect the privacy of private life.

It is necessary to be tolerant towards other users, especially those who are new to social media. It is not right to react immediately when other users make a mistake, for example when they post something wrong. If someone needs to be warned of a mistake, this should be done directly to him/her in a private message, not in front of everyone in the group. If a work belonging to someone else is added to social media, for example, a photo taken by someone or an article written by someone, it is necessary to obtain permission from the owner if it is to be shared with others or in another environment. This is both courtesy and respect for copyright. In this kind of sharing, the real owner of the work must be indicated (Kayany, 2004).

It is impolite for someone to send a friendship request to someone they have never met or come across before on social networking sites. It is also not right for a social media user to send a friendship request to people whom he/she has met for a few days and with whom he/she has only a business relationship, that is, an official relationship. Perhaps the interlocutor only accepts sincere friends on social media. This situation should be tolerated.

If the person wants to send a friendship request, it is more appropriate to ask for permission by sending a private message to the person to whom the proposal will be sent. When the friendship offer is accepted, the person should thank the person. It is wrong according to social media etiquette to insist someone accept a friendship offer, to constantly send new offers,

and to react if they do not accept the requests or if they have ended the friendship. If you do not want to stay in contact with someone for a long time, one of the rules of etiquette is not to add them in the first place (Hartney, 2023). It is also not polite for a user to pressure his/her friends to like or follow his/her blog, page, or group.

Users who want to share news information and opinions sometimes prefer to hide their identity, remain anonymous, or create a fake profile. This gives an unnecessary sense of trust and may distract the user from ethical and legal rules. It should not be forgotten that the state has monitoring mechanisms that will enable it to access identity information when deemed necessary (Şahin, 2021).

In social media, users determine their identity information such as age, gender, marital status, etc. according to their wishes and this is seen by other users. Therefore, showing oneself as different in the virtual world is equivalent to lying and is wrong according to the rules of etiquette. For example, using a profile photo that is not one's own, and sharing exaggerated and false information is not correct according to social media etiquette. It would be better to keep information about private life confidential (İçel, 2012). A person should ask himself/herself whether it would be a problem for his/her boss, parents, or children to see a photo or an article he/she shares now or in the future. If the answer is yes, the posting should be stopped (Hartney, 2023). It is also impolite for people to constantly take photos of what they eat and drink and share them on their social media accounts.

Each social media platform has its own community rules. It is important to follow these rules. Before sharing something on social media, the content of the post should be carefully reviewed. Content that may be misunderstood or misleading should be avoided. Sometimes false news can be deliberately shared on social media, and unreal aid campaigns can be announced. Sharing and spreading such a post without being sure of its authenticity means both misleading others and sharing the same mistake.

In social media, the lives of individuals are exhibited like a show. In this sense, the act of

sharing a photo taken at a destination on social media and the act of taking a photo to share on social media at a destination are intertwined with each other (Atabey, 2023). Sharing memories on social media should be a tool or a hobby, not a goal, otherwise, after a certain point, social media may take the position of directing rather than coloring lives.

Emoji can be used to show the tone of the message, but it should not be overdone. The main criterion for deciding whether to use emojis should be whether the relationship with the person to be communicated with is formal or informal. The use of emojis should be avoided in professional correspondence.

It is not right to post many selfies, songs, or photos on social media platforms one after the other without a break. It is necessary to spread the posts over time intervals. A social media account that posts too frequently may receive backlash and be muted by followers or followers may unfollow (Atalay, 2019). Likewise, it is not right to share too few posts. If the account posts once a month or once a year, followers may get bored and unfollow the account. Therefore, posts should neither be too many nor too few. If a user is going to comment on the post of a person you do not know, an approach that will keep the distance should be chosen.

Other users should not be disturbed by opening accounts with fake names on social media applications. Users should not be forced to like posts, even if they are close friends.

Before making a video call, permission must be requested from the person to be called. If the person does not want to turn on their camera, they should be understood and not insisted.

Violent and disturbing images should not be shared. It may not be right to enter the conversations of people chatting among themselves. Taking screenshots of personal conversations may constitute a criminal offense. It is also wrong to overdo private conversations in professional groups.

Conclusion

Today, internet-based digital communication channels are making their presence felt more and more in every aspect of our social lives. While the number of social media users is rapidly increasing, interpersonal communication is evolving in a different direction, towards a virtual reality. Although the environment is virtual, those who share this virtual environment are real individuals. Therefore, the issues that people should pay attention to in their relations with others in daily life should also remain valid in the virtual world.

Living together brings certain responsibilities to the individuals who make up the society. Individuals should be aware of the fact that they do not live alone and therefore must abide by certain rules and respect the freedoms, values, and sensitivities of others. In the history of humanity and civilization, there have always been some control mechanisms such as rules of law and traditions that regulate social life. Likewise, the continuation of correct and effective communication between people has been possible thanks to the rules of etiquette for centuries. Although etiquette sometimes differs from culture to culture, its essence, which is identified with respect and courtesy, never changes. Interpersonal communication gains a civilized identity thanks to etiquette.

Especially in the virtual world, whose population has suddenly become crowded with the widespread use of smartphones with internet access, the need to develop a social behavior model to regulate communication between users has been felt and the concept we call "Netiquette" has come to the agenda. The reason for the emergence and mission of netiquette, which regulates virtual world relations, is the same as the reason and vision for the existence of etiquette in daily life. It is not enough just to know the rules of etiquette to communicate effectively. The important thing is to internalize these rules and make them applicable in all areas of life. The same reality and necessity applies to netiquette as well. Therefore, being able to explain the etiquette rules of the virtual world to internet users and ensuring that

they adopt these rules will prepare the environment for digital communication to continue in the light of virtues such as respect, courtesy, and tolerance among individuals in the future. And this will be achieved through education. Etiquette rules must be included in the curriculum as a lesson in primary education. But this is not enough. Again, training on the rules of digital communication at school age, when the individual is still a child, will contribute to the individual becoming a responsible internet user in the future. The concept of media literacy has gained great importance in recent years and training have started to be given on this subject. Likewise, digital media literacy should also be considered important and individuals should be made aware of this issue.

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