

The Gender Gap in Online Shopping in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this study is to explore the gender gap in online shopping in the Turkish population. The gender gap in internet use and online shopping was investigated using the results of annual national surveys on information and communication technology (ICT) usage in households and by individuals by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat). The study results reveal that females in Turkey tend to be on the wrong side of the digital divide. Even though internet use has increased over the years in the Turkish population, there remains a significant and persistent gap between females and males in internet use and online shopping. It is also found that there are differences between females and males in the purpose of internet use and the type of goods purchased online.

KEYWORDS

Gender, Gender Digital Divide, Gender Gap, Internet Use, Online Shopping, Turkey

INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have become an essential part of modern societies. The use of these technologies has become indispensable in many aspects of modern life, from communication and education to healthcare and business. ICTs have dramatically transformed economies and societies around the world. As ICTs, especially the internet, have become increasingly widespread in the recent decades, a gap has also begun to emerge between users and non-users. This worldwide phenomenon is named as the digital divide.

The digital divide has economic, educational, sociocultural, and political background (Ragnedda, 2019). Studies about this important issue show that older people, people with low education, people with low occupations or being unemployed, often females, racial/ethnic minorities and people live in rural areas and developing countries have less likely to access and use ICTs and therefore at the “wrong side” of the digital divide (van Dijk, 2020). The digital divide has important consequences as it can deepen existing inequalities within society. Even though ICTs provide new and wide range of opportunities in many areas of our lives, these technologies are also accepted as one of major drivers of economic and social inequalities between different economic and social groups (Moghaddam, 2010). New forms of inequality have arisen along with longstanding forms of inequality as the information society has evolved (Robinson et al., 2015). Therefore, the digital divide has attracted the attention of policy makers and non-governmental organizations as well as researchers in different disciplines.

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Information and knowledge are accepted as power, and people who do not have access to the internet are increasingly being labeled as “information poor” (Morris, 2007). While developed countries benefit greatly from ICTs, people in developing countries have difficulties in accessing and using these technologies (Acilar, 2011). However, the digital divide is not only concern for developing parts of the world (Acilar, 2011). Even in developed countries, many economically disadvantaged or traditionally underrepresented segments of the population lack access to digital resources and the skills to use them effectively (Robinson et al., 2015).

As information and services have been increasingly started to be delivered online in social, political, cultural, health, and economic domains, the internet has become a vital medium and resource for society and it is expected to be used by all society members (van Deursen & van Dijk, 2014). While digital inclusion has many wide-ranging benefits for individuals, economy, and society, being digitally disengaged has crucial social, educational, health, and economic disadvantages (Olphert & Damodaran, 2013; Siren & Knudsen, 2017; Craig, 2017). ICTs offer new mediums and opportunities of development for everyone, and women, without exception, should receive the same benefits as males from these technological advancements (Bala & Singhal, 2018). Digital technologies have potential to empower women socially and economically, and help women make their voices heard (World Bank, 2016, p. 134).

In the last century, important social, technological, and economic developments have significantly affected our lives. The transformation of the social role of women is one of the most major changes among these developments (Gargallo-Castel et al., 2010). There have been significant changes in the social role of women around the world; women’s participation in the daily life and workplace has been considerably raised, particularly in developed countries (Gargallo-Castel et al., 2010). Despite improvements in women’s rights and social status in the last decades, some women still face discrimination based on their ethnicity, nationality, religion, age, health status, disability, marital status, socioeconomic status, and education (United Nations, 2014). Gender-based inequalities still exist as a major sociocultural problem, especially in developing countries (Chang et al., 2012). An overwhelming majority of women live in developing countries, and they face more gender-based discrimination and bias in a variety of social areas, including work, income, education, and political participation than women living in developed countries (Hilbert, 2011; Chang et al., 2012).

It is widely recognized that gender inequality and gender-related issues are serious worldwide problems. Gender equality is a basic human right and a prerequisite for a sustainable, prosperous, and peaceful world (United Nations, 2021; OECD, 2018). The United Nations listed gender equality and women’s empowerment as the 5th goal in the Sustainable Development Goals and the 3rd goal in the Millennium Development Goals. ICT has the potentials to help developing countries in addressing long-standing gender inequalities in areas including employment, income, education, and health care (Hilbert, 2011). It is not possible to reach gender equality goals without women’s meaningful participation in the information society (Gurung, 2018). In addition, gender diversity in workplace can provide several important social and economic benefits for organizations such as social responsibility, reduced business costs, enhanced team performance, improved financial performance, better reflection of and service to customers, diverse and supportive culture attracts the best talent (Annabi & Pels, 2016). Organizations that are not gender-diverse loses the opportunity access and benefit from talents (Cooper, 2006; Annabi & Pels, 2016; Shannon et al., 2019). Because men benefit disproportionately from technological advancements, we risk losing the contributions of women to science, technology, and the arts (Cooper, 2006). With a growing reliance on information technology for economic and academic success, any gap in interest or skill that is related to gender is a concern for society (Cooper, 2006). It is argued that ICTs have a crucial role in achieving gender equality and empowering women by allowing them access to information and involving them as actors in economic social, and environmental development (Kerras et al., 2020).

Although ICT access and use have increased dramatically around the world, significant challenges remain to be overcome to ensure that women are included in the transition to a digital society

(Mariscal et al., 2019). Women tend to use fewer digital services than men and have less confidence in using the internet (OECD, 2018). Results from existing studies reveal that female populations in developing countries are less likely to access and use ICTs (Codoban, 2005; Hilbert, 2011; Alozie & Akpan-Obong, 2017). Women in developing countries are more at risk of being on the wrong side of the digital divide. Females generally have less computer and internet knowledge and experience than males and tend to use these technologies less (Codoban, 2005). Also, men present a higher frequency of ICT use, and they are more intensive internet users than women (Gargallo-Castel et al., 2010). Gender inequalities in ICT access and use can also be observed in developed countries. The omnipresence of digital technologies in everyday life makes it even more important to understand the extent of digital inequality in order to develop strategies ensuring that participation in the information society in the Digital Age is inclusive (Zilian & Zilian, 2020).

The present paper addresses the gender gap in online shopping in a developing country, Turkey. In addition, the study explores gender gap in internet use in the Turkish population. Thus, this study will contribute to the understanding of the extent of gender digital inequality in Turkey.

The following section gives a brief review of the existing literature. Specifically, the gender digital divide is discussed. This is followed by the study methodology and discussion of the results of surveys on ICT Usage in Households and by Individuals. The paper ends with a conclusion.

RELATED LITERATURE

The Gender Digital Divide

The gender digital divide refers to the inequalities between females and males in terms of accessing and using ICT. Gender is an important and common demographic variable in the digital divide literature (Scheerder et al., 2017). Previous studies reveal that gender is one of the significant demographic factors associated with ICT adoption and use in addition to age, education level, socioeconomic status, and race/ethnicity. Studies show that while males tend to be the first to use newly developed technologies and use these technologies more than females, there are less female ICT users and ICT employees than men (Gargallo-Castel et al., 2010).

The gender digital divide is a worldwide phenomenon. Globally, only 57 percent of women used the internet, compared to 62 percent of men in 2020, according to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). Gender gap in internet use varies from 1 percent in developed countries, to 12 percent in least developed countries (ITU, 2021).

In many parts of the world, specifically in developing countries, a significant number of women have not opportunities to effectively use and benefit from ICT (Mariscal et al., 2019). If not adequately addressed, the gender digital divide can widen gender inequalities in many areas in life, such as education and employment (Mariscal et al., 2019). The gender digital divide can have severe consequences for both women and society. The gender digital divide is hindering opportunities and it has the potential to exacerbate inequalities between women and men (Deganis et al., 2021). Inequalities in society preventing females from accessing and using ICT can create a vicious circle causing digital exclusion, low income, unemployment, and lacking education (Hilbert, 2011).

The gender digital divide is one of the most important inequalities and concerns all social and income groups (Primo, 2003). Despite the substantial increase in access to and use of ICT worldwide, there remain significant challenges in ensuring that women are included in the transformation into a digitally enabled society (Mariscal et al., 2019). As many areas of daily life and basic services are provided through the internet and other digital technologies, people falling behind in digital society, such as women in many parts of the world and other disadvantaged groups, are at risk that they will not be able to benefit from the digital society opportunities, from having access to improved private and public services as well as from establishing and communicating social networks (Mariscal et al., 2019; van Dijk, 2020).

The digital divide is not just a matter of internet access, it is also an issue of obstacles to internet use (Kennedy et al., 2003). Even if men and women have equal access to the internet at home, work or school, women may not have opportunities to use the internet as men do (Kennedy et al., 2003). There exist gender differences in ICT access and use (Gray et al., 2017). It has been well documented that women have less opportunities than men to access and use ICT in many parts of the world, especially in developing countries (Acilar, 2011; Antonio & Tuffley, 2014; Abu-Shanab & Al-Jamal, 2015; Acilar, 2020). A considerable number of women have difficulties in participating the today's increasingly digitalized society. As a result, they are at risk of being excluded. In today's world, the most striking aspect of the digital divide is the difference in ICT access and use between women and men in developing countries (Singh, 2017). OECD reported that the gender digital divide is not diminishing, on the contrary widening. Although the global gender digital gap in internet use stayed nearly constant at around 11 percent between 2013 and 2017, the gap between developing and developed countries widened (OECD, 2018, p13). Even though gender gap in ICT access and use has narrowed considerably in developed countries, the gender digital divide still remains in developing countries (Robinson et al., 2020). The use of information technology has increased in developing countries, but gender gaps persist in ICT access and quality of access, as well as differences in internet use due to cultural and social roles (Gray et al., 2017).

There are several reasons for the existence of the gender digital divide. In the literature, various sociocultural, economic, and educational factors have been reported as being associated with the gender digital divide phenomenon (Acilar & Sæbø, 2021). Among these factors, sociocultural norms and women's role in society play a significant role in ICT access and use by girls and women, especially in the less-developed part of the world (Acilar & Sæbø, 2021).

The gender digital divide has the potential to worsen existing gender-related inequalities in society. With the Covid-19 pandemic, this risk has increased even more. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact worldwide, and the long-term side-effects will likely last for years to come (van Jaarsveld, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic has not only significantly affected our lives, but also impacted the existing inequalities within society. Inequalities in society are being exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, exposing vulnerabilities in social, political, and economic systems, which further amplify the impacts of the pandemic (United Nations, 2020). As the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the pace of digital transformation, it has also exacerbated the risk of increased inequalities and digital exclusion (Deganis et al., 2021).

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted using the results from the annual surveys on ICT Usage in Households and by Individuals by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat). TurkStat conducts the survey on ICT Usage in Households and by Individuals every year to obtain information related to ICT equipment and their usage in households and by individuals in Turkey. The survey has been carried out since 2004 (except 2006), and it is the primary data source on ICT usage by individuals in Turkey.

In this study, descriptive methodology and simple statistical analysis were used to explore the gender gap in online shopping in the Turkish population. Gender differences according to the type of goods purchased online were also investigated. In addition, gender differences in internet use were explored among different age groups and education levels.

Gender and Online Shopping in the Turkish Population

The total population of Turkey in 2020 was reported 83.6 million, with 49.9 percent female, by TurkStat. Women in Turkey have been struggling with inequalities and cultural barriers in society. Turkish society is dominated by patriarchal and conservative values (World Bank, 2018). Male dominance in Turkish society can be observed in the various institutions from family and workplace to the parliament. According to TurkStat, the employment rate (in 15+ age) was 28.7 percent for

females and 63.1 percent for males in 2019, and females received lower wages than males at all educational levels (according to the 2018 statistics). Historically, women in Turkey are significantly underrepresented in municipalities, parliament, and government. Turkey is ranked 117th out of 192 countries in terms of the ratio of women deputies in the parliament. After the last parliamentary election in 2018, the female representation rate became only 17 percent in Turkey (BBC News Türkçe, 2018). Only three percent of the mayors elected in the last local elections in 2019 were women (Kaşıkırık et al., 2020). Turkey is ranked 130th out of 150 on the Global Gender Gap Report 2020 (The World Economic Forum, 2020) and 59th in the United Nations Gender Inequality Index in 2018.

The proportion of internet users in Turkey has increased from 18.8 percent in 2004 to 82.6 percent in 2021. The use of the internet has increased significantly among both women and men between 2004 and 2021. However, while the proportion of men using the internet has increased from 25.7 percent in 2004 to 87.7 percent in 2021, internet usage rate has increased from 12.1 percent to 77.5 percent among women, during this period.

Despite the increase in the number of internet users in Turkey, there has been a significant gender gap in internet use over the years. As Figure 1 shows, a higher proportion of males than females use the internet. The gender gap in internet use in Turkey is much greater than in Europe. In Europe, in 2020, the proportion of women using the internet was 83 percent, compared to 87 percent of men (ITU, 2021). The results of the annual surveys on ICT Usage in Households and by Individuals conducted between 2004 and 2021 by TurkStat show a significant gap between men and women in terms of internet use. The gender gap in internet use has been very apparent and significant over the years. The gender gap in internet use has narrowed slightly over the past five years but remains high enough. Figure 1 presents the gender gap in internet use in Turkey between 2004 and 2021.

Table 1 presents the proportions of individuals who use the internet in the last three months by gender and age groups. The gap in internet use between men and women persists across all age groups. Women in Turkey tend to lag behind men in internet use across all age groups. In 2021, the gender gap in internet use was higher than 10 percent among middle-aged and older people (45-54, 55-64 and 65-74 age groups). In 2021, in the age group of 16-24 years, the proportions of internet use among females and males were 94.1 percent and 97.2 percent, respectively. However, in the 65-74 age group, the proportion of women using the internet was 25.9 percent, compared to 40.0 percent of

Figure 1. Internet use by gender (%), 2004-2021

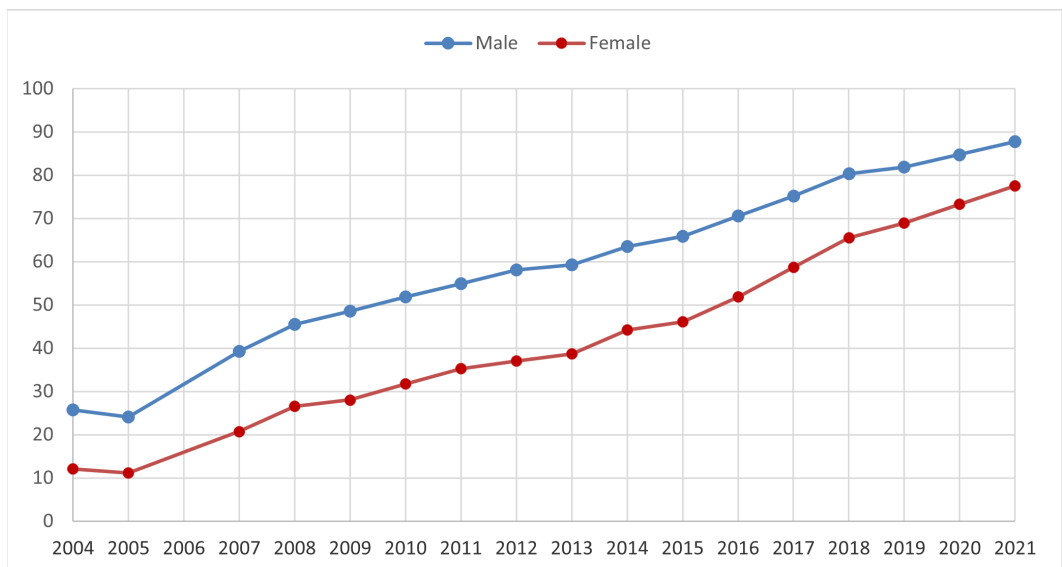


Table 1. Internet use among individuals in the last three months by gender and age groups (%)

| Year | Age Group | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|-----------|------|---------|------|---------|------|---------|------|---------|------|---------|------|
| | 16 - 24 | | 25 - 34 | | 35 - 44 | | 45 - 54 | | 55 - 64 | | 65 - 74 | |
| | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M |
| 2011 | 55.9 | 76.5 | 44.9 | 65.4 | 28.9 | 50.4 | 13.2 | 32.1 | 5.0 | 16.0 | 1.2 | 4.5 |
| 2012 | 55.4 | 80.6 | 47.2 | 69.6 | 31.8 | 53.3 | 16.2 | 34.8 | 5.6 | 18.5 | 1.3 | 6.4 |
| 2013 | 57.5 | 80.1 | 48.4 | 69.1 | 34.4 | 56.7 | 15.1 | 34.7 | 5.7 | 16.8 | 1.5 | 7.5 |
| 2014 | 63.2 | 82.8 | 57.4 | 76.8 | 40.2 | 63.7 | 20.0 | 40.7 | 9.3 | 21.5 | 1.8 | 8.8 |
| 2015 | 68.9 | 85.1 | 62.0 | 81.3 | 41.7 | 69.0 | 24.2 | 43.7 | 11.6 | 22.9 | 2.8 | 8.8 |
| 2016 | 76.5 | 92.0 | 70.7 | 86.7 | 53.5 | 77.2 | 30.6 | 51.8 | 13.3 | 28.9 | 5.8 | 12.5 |
| 2017 | 82.9 | 91.5 | 78.7 | 92.6 | 63.8 | 84.0 | 40.9 | 62.5 | 19.8 | 34.9 | 7.5 | 15.6 |
| 2018 | 86.5 | 94.7 | 85.6 | 94.5 | 73.0 | 88.3 | 51.1 | 71.8 | 30.8 | 47.8 | 11.9 | 23.0 |
| 2019 | 86.6 | 94.8 | 88.2 | 95.2 | 79.9 | 91.9 | 59.6 | 77.3 | 33.2 | 52.2 | 15.0 | 25.3 |
| 2020 | 89.7 | 93.8 | 90.7 | 96.3 | 83.6 | 94.6 | 66.8 | 82.7 | 42.8 | 59.2 | 20.4 | 34.9 |
| 2021 | 94.1 | 97.2 | 93.7 | 98.0 | 86.1 | 95.7 | 73.0 | 87.3 | 50.9 | 66.4 | 25.9 | 40.0 |

Source: TurkStat (F: Female, M: Male)

men. The gender gap in internet use was smaller among younger people (<35 age) than older people (>54 age). It is encouraging that the gender gap in internet use has been decreasing among younger generations over the last years.

Table 2 shows the proportions of individuals using the internet in the last three months by gender and education level. The results of the survey reveal that there is a positive correlation between education level and internet use. The rate of internet use increases as the education level increases,

Table 2. Internet use among individuals in the last three months by gender and education level (%)

| Year | Literate without a diploma | | Primary school | | Secondary and vocational secondary school | | High and vocational high school | | Higher education | |
|------|----------------------------|------|----------------|------|---|------|---------------------------------|------|------------------|------|
| | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M |
| 2011 | 1.6 | 6.8 | 11.5 | 20.0 | 49.7 | 63.8 | 70.2 | 75.6 | 90.3 | 91.5 |
| 2012 | 1.6 | 10.0 | 13.5 | 22.0 | 49.4 | 63.8 | 71.3 | 79.7 | 92.8 | 93.1 |
| 2013 | 1.5 | 6.1 | 13.4 | 22.5 | 50.7 | 65.9 | 71.6 | 76.5 | 91.4 | 91.9 |
| 2014 | 1.6 | 9.0 | 17.0 | 28.2 | 58.1 | 69.0 | 76.7 | 81.1 | 93.5 | 93.7 |
| 2015 | 4.6 | 11.7 | 20.9 | 31.2 | 58.9 | 73.5 | 78.8 | 81.7 | 94.3 | 94.0 |
| 2016 | 5.6 | 14.1 | 29.3 | 40.1 | 70.5 | 79.9 | 85.9 | 86.8 | 95.7 | 95.6 |
| 2017 | 10.0 | 19.6 | 39.8 | 46.5 | 79.1 | 84.2 | 89.0 | 90.3 | 97.3 | 96.9 |
| 2018 | 13.6 | 25.4 | 50.9 | 57.3 | 84.9 | 87.6 | 93.2 | 91.7 | 98.0 | 97.6 |
| 2019 | 17.0 | 25.3 | 57.8 | 60.2 | 85.1 | 88.9 | 94.6 | 94.5 | 98.7 | 97.5 |
| 2020 | 19.7 | 31.6 | 61.9 | 66.4 | 87.8 | 89.8 | 94.8 | 94.8 | 99.2 | 98.2 |
| 2021 | 27.0 | 37.4 | 65.8 | 69.3 | 90.8 | 93.3 | 97.0 | 95.9 | 99.4 | 98.8 |

Source: TurkStat (F: Female, M: Male)

and the gender digital gap also decreases. Among people with higher education levels, the rate of internet use for females has been higher than that of males in the last seven years.

Table 3 presents the proportions of internet use for private purposes in the last three months by gender in 2021. For both genders, “using instant messaging” was the most reported purpose for internet use, and “taking part in on-line consultations or voting to define civic or political issues” was the least reported purpose among internet users. For ten of the twelve activities listed in Table 3, males were found to have higher rates of internet use than females. Especially for activities such as “internet banking” and “sending/receiving e-mails”, a higher proportion of men than women used the internet. Only the rates of internet use for “making calls over the internet” and “seeking health-related information”, were higher for females than for males. The highest difference was seen between females and males in internet banking, where males were more likely to use it.

Table 4 shows the proportions of internet users who bought or ordered goods or services for private use. The rate of online shopping in Turkey has quintupled over the past decade. In 2021, TurkStat reported that 44.3 percent of internet users (16-74 years old) bought or ordered goods over the internet for private purposes. Compared to 2020, the rate of online shopping has increased by more than 20 percent in 2021 for both women and men.

The proportion of internet users who shopped online was reported in 2021 by TurkStat as 40.3 percent for females and 48.3 percent for males. These numbers show that the gender digital divide in Turkey also exists in online shopping. Women were outnumbered by men in using the internet and online shopping. Despite the increase in the number of internet users and online shoppers, the proportion of online shoppers in Turkey is still quite low for both genders, compared to the European Union. Eurostat reported that 73 percent of internet users (16-74 years old) in the European Union (27 countries) had bought or ordered goods or services for private use in 2020 (73 percent of men and 72 percent of women shopped online in the previous 12 months).

The frequency of online shopping in Turkey has increased. The results of the TurkStat surveys conducted in 2019, 2020 and 2021 show that women shopped online relatively more frequently than

Table 3. Internet use for private purposes in the last three months by gender (%), 2021

| Purposes | Total | Female | Male |
|--|-------|--------|------|
| Using instant messaging | 93.0 | 92.9 | 93.0 |
| Telephoning over the internet/video calls (via webcam) over the internet | 90.0 | 92.4 | 88.0 |
| Participating in social networks (creating user profile, posting messages or other contributions) | 73.8 | 71.2 | 76.2 |
| Seeking health-related information (e.g. injury, disease, nutrition, improving health, etc.) | 69.6 | 71.7 | 67.7 |
| Reading online news | 65.9 | 61.3 | 70.0 |
| Finding information about goods or services | 59.2 | 54.7 | 63.1 |
| Internet banking | 56.5 | 42.4 | 69.0 |
| Sending/receiving e-mails | 44.5 | 38.5 | 49.8 |
| Posting opinions on civic or political issues via websites (e.g. blogs, social networks, etc.) | 12.4 | 9.7 | 14.9 |
| Selling of goods or services, e.g. via auctions | 11.1 | 8.3 | 13.5 |
| Looking for a job or sending a job application | 11.0 | 9.8 | 12.1 |
| Taking part in on-line consultations or voting to define civic or political issues (e.g. urban planning, signing a petition) | 3.5 | 2.7 | 4.2 |

Source: TurkStat

Table 4. Internet users who bought or ordered goods or services for private use, by gender (%), 2011-2021

| Year | Total | Female | Male |
|------|-------|--------|------|
| 2011 | 8.4 | 5.8 | 11.0 |
| 2012 | 10.3 | 8.1 | 12.6 |
| 2013 | 11.8 | 8.7 | 14.9 |
| 2014 | 16.6 | 12.5 | 20.6 |
| 2015 | 18.4 | 15.0 | 21.8 |
| 2016 | 20.9 | 17.1 | 24.7 |
| 2017 | 24.9 | 20.9 | 29.0 |
| 2018 | 29.3 | 25.0 | 33.6 |
| 2019 | 34.1 | 29.9 | 38.3 |
| 2020 | 36.5 | 32.7 | 40.2 |
| 2021 | 44.3 | 40.3 | 48.3 |

Source: TurkStat

men in last two years (Table 5). In 2021, among people who purchased over the internet in the last 3 months, 19.0 percent of women shopped more than ten times online, compared to 16.0 percent of men. In addition, 13.5 percent of women and 12.6 percent of men shopped online 6-10 times during this period (Table 5).

Table 6 presents the proportions of individuals who shopped online in the last 3 months for private use by type of goods and by gender. According to the results of the ICT Usage in Households and by Individuals by TurkStat, the most popular type of goods purchased online in Turkey were clothes, shoes or accessories (70.7 percent) for both females (77.8 percent) and males (64.1 percent) in 2021. For seven of the listed sixteen types of goods ordered/bought over the internet in Table 6, the proportion of males making online purchases was higher than that of females. The highest difference between females and males was in cosmetics, beauty, or wellness products, in favor of females.

Table 7 shows the reasons for not buying anything online in the last three months by gender in 2021. According to the results of TurkStat survey, 49.0 percent of the participants (45.0 percent of females and 53.1 percent of males) have not shopped online in the last three months. The main reason that people don't buy online is that they prefer to shop in person with 34.8 percent (31.6 percent for females and 38.0 percent for males). The survey results show that the reasons for not purchasing online are similar for women and men.

Table 5. Individuals who purchased over the internet in the last 3 months by frequency and by gender (%), 2019-2021

| Number of purchases | 2019 | | | 2020 | | | 2021 | | |
|---------------------|-------|--------|------|-------|--------|------|-------|--------|------|
| | Total | Female | Male | Total | Female | Male | Total | Female | Male |
| 1 - 2 t i m e s | 46.0 | 45.3 | 46.5 | 45.6 | 45.0 | 46.1 | 37.2 | 35.1 | 39.2 |
| 3 - 5 t i m e s | 31.4 | 32.4 | 30.6 | 30.3 | 30.0 | 30.5 | 32.3 | 32.4 | 32.3 |
| 6 - 1 0 t i m e s | 12.9 | 12.7 | 13.0 | 12.9 | 13.6 | 12.3 | 13.0 | 13.5 | 12.6 |
| More than 10 times | 9.7 | 9.6 | 9.9 | 11.2 | 11.3 | 11.1 | 17.4 | 19.0 | 16.0 |

Source: TurkStat

Table 6. Internet purchases by individuals in the last 3 months for private use by type of goods and by gender (%), 2021

| Type of goods | Total | Female | Male |
|--|-------|--------|------|
| Clothes (including sport clothing), shoes or accessories (e.g. bags, jewellery) | 70.7 | 77.8 | 64.1 |
| Sports goods (excluding sport clothing) | 13.8 | 10.3 | 17.0 |
| Children toys or childcare items | 16.8 | 18.5 | 15.3 |
| Furniture, home accessories (e.g. carpets or curtains) or gardening products (e.g. tools, plants) | 21.7 | 22.9 | 20.6 |
| Music as CDs, vinyls etc. | 2.4 | 2.0 | 2.7 |
| Films or series as DVDs, Blu-ray etc. | 1.8 | 1.2 | 2.2 |
| Printed books, magazines or newspapers | 27.7 | 31.6 | 23.9 |
| Computers, tablets, mobile phones or accessories | 18.3 | 11.5 | 24.7 |
| Consumer electronics (e.g. TV-sets, stereos, cameras) or household appliances (e.g. washing machines) | 14.5 | 9.1 | 19.6 |
| Medicine or dietary supplements such as vitamins (online renewal of prescriptions is not included) | 13.3 | 15.0 | 11.7 |
| Deliveries from restaurants, fast-food chains, catering services | 40.8 | 38.8 | 42.7 |
| Food or beverages from stores or from meal-kits providers | 33.4 | 33.4 | 33.4 |
| Cosmetics, beauty, or wellness products | 28.7 | 40.6 | 17.6 |
| Cleaning products or personal hygiene products (e.g. toothbrushes, handkerchiefs, washing detergents, cleaning cloths) | 27.6 | 33.2 | 22.4 |
| Bicycles, mopeds, cars, or other vehicles or their spare parts | 5.3 | 1.4 | 9.0 |
| Other physical goods | 2.5 | 1.6 | 3.3 |

Source: TurkStat

Table 7. Reasons for not buying anything via website or app in the last three months by gender (%), 2021

| Reasons for not buying | Total | Female | Male |
|---|-------|--------|------|
| Prefer to shop in person, like to see product, loyalty to shops, force of habit | 34.8 | 31.6 | 38.0 |
| Perceived difficulty of ordering online (concerns about sufficiency of skills) | 16.3 | 16.6 | 16.0 |
| Concerns about cost of delivery of goods | 14.5 | 12.4 | 16.6 |
| Concerns about reliability or speed of delivery | 22.0 | 18.8 | 25.1 |
| Payment security or privacy concerns | 19.6 | 16.9 | 22.3 |
| Concerns about returning goods, complaints/reimbursement | 16.5 | 16.4 | 16.5 |
| There was no need to buy online in the last 3 months | 28.8 | 28.8 | 28.9 |
| Other | 4.2 | 4.2 | 4.2 |

Source: TurkStat

CONCLUSION

The objective of this study was to explore the gender gap in online shopping in Turkey. The study results reveal that there is a significant gender digital divide in Turkey, and women are underrepresented among the internet users in the Turkish population. Although the number of internet users has increased in the Turkish population over the years, there is still a significant gap between women and men when

it comes to internet use and online shopping. It seems that women tend to be on the wrong side of the digital divide in Turkey, and many women are at risk of being excluded and missing out on the potential benefits of the internet. If it is not properly addressed, the gender gap in internet use is likely to exacerbate existing inequalities against women in Turkish society.

The gender digital divide is evident in internet use as well as online shopping in the Turkish population. Females lag behind males in internet use across all age groups, but the gender gap in internet use is smaller among younger people than among older people. The results of surveys reveal that the rate of internet use increases with education. People with higher education are more likely to use the internet. As the education level increases, the rate of internet use increases, and the gender digital gap also decreases. Education has positive effects on bridging the digital divide.

Despite the significant increase over the years, online shopping rate is still low for both males and females, and there is a significant gender gap in online shopping. In addition, the results of the survey indicate that the digital gap between males and females will not disappear soon in Turkey. The pace of change may be slow in a male-dominated culture, especially if the change is related to women's role in society.

The rapid digital transformation that was already taking place prior to the Covid-19 has accelerated during the pandemic (Deganis et al., 2021). Covid-19 pandemic has impacted our shopping behaviors as well as our daily life (Grashuis, Skevas, & Segovia, 2020; Roggeveen & Sethuraman, 2020). Further research should be carried out to explore the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the gender gap in internet use and online shopping.

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