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****Research Article****

Social Media in the Popular Turkish Newspapers*

Mine Gencil Bek**

Abstract

This article focuses on how social media is represented in newspapers by analyzing two popular Turkish newspapers in the last decade, from 2013 to 2021. The news was examined with qualitative content analysis supported by MAXQDA software which is used to generate codings from the text while reading each news item. The article first reviews the literature on social media and the news. Afterward, the findings of the textual analysis are shared with diagrams and in an organized way around the themes. Some chosen examples are discussed with a special focus on the visuals and the headlines which are translated. The article reveals that social media, starting as the mobilizing force during the Gezi protests, over the years, gained new meanings in the news. In conclusion, it is suggested to categorize the following represented themes from 2013 to 2021 under the two frames as negative and positive. While the first includes the themes of disinformation and harm, crime, and access problems, the positive frame consists of the themes of new apps, services and technology, publicity, and using social media campaigns for good causes.

The article argues how the newspapers, with the content of the news as these themes and with the form of the news with short, superficial, and under-investigated reporting as shown in the examples, in accordance with the context, amplify primarily authoritarianism and commercialism and ends with the suggestions.

Keywords: Social media, the news, journalism, Turkey.

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****Araştırma Makalesi******Popüler Türkçe Gazetelerde Sosyal Medya*****Mine Gencil Bek******Öz**

Bu makale, iki popüler gazetenin analizi aracılığıyla, 2013-2021 yılları arasında sosyal medyanın gazetelerde nasıl temsil edildiği meselesine odaklanmaktadır. Araştırma örneklemindeki haberler, her bir haber okunurken kodlar geliştirmek için kullanılan MAXQDA yazılımı tarafından desteklenen nitel içerik analizi ile incelenmiştir. Makalede öncelikle sosyal medya ve haber ilişkisine dair literatür gözden geçirilmektedir. Daha sonra, metin analizinin bulguları, temalar ekseninde organize edilerek diyagramlarla aktarılmaktadır. Seçilen bazı örnekler, kullanılan görseller ve tercüme edilen manşetlere özellikle odaklanılarak tartışılmaktadır. Makale, Gezi protestolarında önemli bir harekete geçirici güç olan sosyal medyanın zaman içinde haberlerde kazandığı yeni anlamları ortaya koymaktadır. Sonuç olarak, 2013-2021 yılları arasında yayınlanan haberlerde temsil edilen temaların “olumsuz” ve “olumlu” olarak iki çerçeveye ayrılarak kategorize edilebilecekleri önerilmektedir. Buna göre, olumsuz çerçeve içinde sosyal medya dezenformasyon, zarar, suç, erişim problemleri temaları ile haberlerde yer alırken, olumlu çerçevede yeni uygulamalar, hizmetler, teknoloji, tanıtım ve iyi amaçlar için sosyal medyayı kampanyalarda kullanma temaları bulunmaktadır.

Makale, gazetelerin bu temalar ekseninde içerik olarak ve kısa, yüzeysel, fazla araştırmaya dayanmayan haber tarzıyla biçimsel olarak, bağlamla uyumlu biçimde, öncelikle otoriterliği ve ticarileşmeyi nasıl güçlendirdiğini tartışmakta ve önerilerle sona ermektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Sosyal medya, haberler, gazetecilik, Türkiye.

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Social Media in the Popular Turkish Newspapers¹

Introduction

This article focuses on how social media is represented in newspapers by analyzing two popular Turkish newspapers in the last decade, from 2013 to 2021. The year 2013 was the time when the Gezi Park uprising started. During the Gezi uprisings, the activists used Internet media whose actions could not find space in the mainstream press. AKP's policy towards social media, especially Twitter, was reactionary initially. The Prime Minister in that period, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, attributed Twitter as “trouble”, a medium of “lie”, “terrorizing society”² while describing the people who tweet about those who were killed in Gezi are hundreds of fascists³. At the beginning of the last decade, the AKP government tried to control the oppositional press more and established and strengthened a pro-AKP news media. Later, the potential of social media and Twitter specifically were discovered, as we see in the employment and deployment of pro-AKP trolls and the establishment of the Communications Directorate. In a way, the AKP government is aware of the importance of the old and new media in sustaining their autocratic regime, different from the tendency of populist leaders to bypass news media to construct and speak to their public (Broersma and Eldridge, 2019: 195).

Since the development of the Internet and social media, journalism literature concentrates on how the new media affects the old media, as seen in the discussions of the future of journalism in the Internet era (Downie and Schudson, 2009). The instability of the identity of journalism has been discussed, as Mancini argues (2013: 44): “The old certitudes are disappearing and new ones are not yet defined.” Bardoel (1996) states that “journalism does not seem adequately equipped to deal with this new task” (297). News organizations' decreasing role and power (Sambrook, 2006) have been another aspect in the debates regarding the future or survival of news media. By describing current journalism as network journalism, Heinrich (2011: 229) suggests that news organizations need to adapt to the emerging structures of

¹ Funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation)—SFB 1472 “Transformations of the Popular”

I would like to thank to my colleague Luca Hammer for supporting me to access the news.

² “Gündem Twitter.” *Hürriyet*. 3 June 2013.

³ “Kışla yapılacak, gaza bakılacak.” *Hürriyet*. 2 June 2013.

network journalism to avoid facing the risk of perishing. Allan (2006: 169) warns that “radical change must be embraced if [news] organizations are to survive, let alone prosper, in the digital universe opening up before them.”

I intend to do the opposite in this article, searching how the new is constructed in the old and asking how Turkish news media assign claims or refer to social media and Twitter, the most widely used platform for political issues. As Hermida (2013) argues, Twitter is also a hybrid space resulting in the hybridity of old and new frames, values, and approaches (295). The empirical focus is directed at the most popular newspapers, *Hürriyet* and *Sözcü*. In the first step, a historical corpus was developed with the help of the Internet Archive. The news was examined with qualitative content analysis supported by MAXQDA software which is used to generate codings from the text while reading. The article first reviews the literature on social media and the news. Afterward, the findings of the textual analysis will be shared in an organized way around the themes and some diagrams. Some examples will be shown with the visuals. The article ends with the conclusion section, which also suggests further work.

Social media and the news

When the research literature on the relationship between social media and the news is reviewed, it is seen that most literature concentrates on impacts and developing reactions, from journalism vis a vis changing social media and technology. Pavlik and Bridges (2013) list the transformation at the levels of working practices and routines; business practices and models of organizations; the relationship with the public; and notions and models of news and media content and storytelling. Diana Bossio (2017) approaches the relationship from the angles of practitioners, organizations, and institutions. She frames the issue under the titles of journalism practice; social media audience; newsroom with new relationships, policies, and practices; shifting values and norms, and the changing profession of journalism and news and post-truth. Terry Flew (2018), in his article, approaches the issue from a broader scope, beyond journalism, by considering cultural and creative industries projects about three scenarios in terms of social media's impact: as an amplifier, as means of expanding engagement, as a disrupter, for traditional media and business models and as a transformer, for the emergence of new types. Seeth C. Lewis and Logan Molyneux

(2018), in parallel with social media developments, question the assumptions of social media and journalism studies focusing on change. These assumptions are that social media would be net positive, social media reflects reality, and social media matters over and above other factors. They are concerned that not every change will be better for journalism, as seen through many forms of harassment on social media, including echo chamber and filter bubble effects and the performance of identities.

The dialectic of journalism and social media are not only considered with the destructive impact of technology on journalism but also the potential to transform into more complex, interactive, dynamic, diverse forms and formats (Anderson, 2012: 3; Kaul, 2013: 134-5; Ryfe, 2012: 184). Besides these discussions, which either announce the challenges or the positive potential for the future of journalism studies, others try to go beyond the dichotomy. One source of not putting old and new media in dichotomy can be found in the earlier discussions of the hybridity of media systems. Andrew Chadwick (2017) shows how social media and traditional mass media together through hybrid assemblages impact political communication in case studies from Britain and the United States:

I have shown how newer media practices in the interpenetrated fields of media and politics adapt and integrate the logics of older media practices in those fields; and, conversely, how older media practices in the fields of media and politics adapt and integrate the logics of newer media practices. There is complexity and there is mess (185).

Similarly, Hermida (2010), by describing "ambient journalism" on Twitter, argues that the report and views from journalists, institutions, and the public are intermingled. The news and journalism operate on Twitter (Hermida, 2016). Journalists use social media and Twitter.

Social media does not only affect journalism and the news. It has become the topic of the news as well. It is striking that the literature on the representation of social media in the news as a subject is not developed, even though the issue of representation has a history of several decades in media studies and cultural studies. According to Stuart Hall, the leading theorist from cultural studies (1997), "representation connects meaning and language to culture" (15): He argued that the media represent the social reality and construct or produce and share meanings

rather than reflecting as a mirror. “The relation between ‘things’, concepts and signs lies at the heart of the production of meaning in language. The process which links these three elements together is what we call ‘representation’” (19). According to Hall, the meaning which is constructed by the system of representation changes according to context, usage, or historical circumstances. They are not simply the outcome, but they construct. Jen Webb, in her book titled *Understanding Representation*, also states that “the processes of representation do not simply make connections, relationships, and identities visible: they actually make those connections, relationships and identities” (Webb, 2009, 10). We often see that the issue of representation has been addressed by critical media studies scholars in analyzing the representation of Others as ethnic, racial, gender, or sexual minorities (Fürsich, 2010). In a relatively recent book on representation, Jenny Kidd (2016) also touches upon how many groups, communities, and individuals consider themselves under-represented or dangerously misrepresented in the media. Kidd herself looks at representation from five perspectives: representation and reality; representation and myth; representation and visual culture; representation and persuasion; and representation and identity politics.

When we go back to summarize the somewhat underdeveloped literature on the representation of social media in the news, it is possible to state that they are mostly conducted in the last decade. For example, Steve Paulussen and Raymond A. Harder (2014) investigate how Belgian newspapers use social media as a source by analyzing the articles between 2006 and 2013 in the two quality newspapers and conclude that social media refers mainly to ordinary citizens, celebrities, and sports people. Yet the research shows that in the Belgian quality press case, social media does not dominate the newspaper content as a news source. Christine Develotte (et al. 2021) analyze the social media at free daily Metro in three European countries (Finland, Greece, and France) from a discourse analytical perspective from 2007 to 2011. Their analysis aims to reveal the tension and articulation between global and local media discourses. Depending on specific socio-historical contexts, they show how the discourses can change over the years in the Metro dailies of the three countries. We will come back to this and other research through the article.

Research

Our analysis covered the news published in the popular newspapers Hürriyet and Sözcü mentioning social media or Twitter during the Gezi events in 2013 and every year, the same week (27 May-3 June), including 2021. Sözcü newspaper is known for its anti-AKP stance. Hürriyet ownership change on 22 March 2018, and the pro-AKP Demirören group purchasing the newspaper from Doğan group also is important for our work in terms of tracing the effects of the ownership change. After reaching an enormous quantity of data, around 31282 news items (nearly two-thirds are from Hürriyet), I read all 31282 items, separated that news which mainly focuses on social media, and worked on a total of 523 news items closely by using MAXQDA software. In accordance with Chao-Chen's (2013) research which shows that new media are frequently used as news sources, thousands of the news mentioning social media in our sample was using as news source. As a result of the codings of the 523 news stories, these seven themes appeared on the news regarding social media:

Social media, civic actions, and mobilization (52)

Social media, disinformation, and harm (138)

Social media and crime (80)

Access (problems) (63)

Social media new apps, services and technology (95)

Social media, PR, branding and publicity (28)

Social media campaigns for good causes (52)

Other (24)

These are as shown on the figure 1 at below:

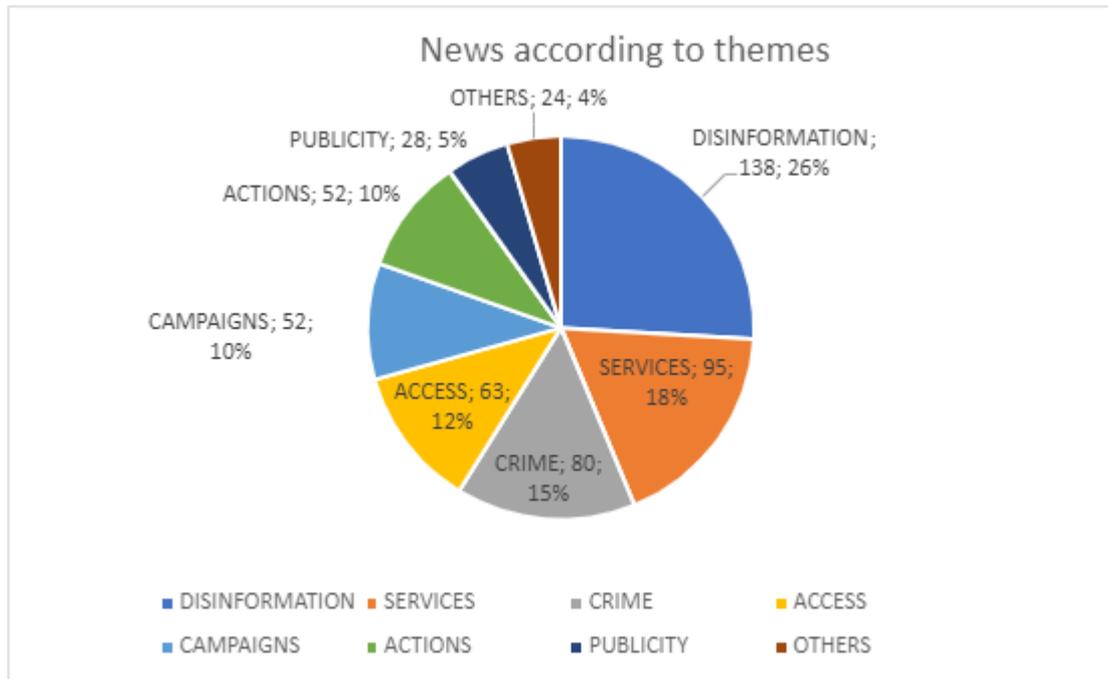


Figure 1. News according to themes

When we look at the findings in the diagram, it is possible to see the major themes clearly: According to that, a quarter of the whole sample is about disinformation and harm. New services and technology follow that. Crime and access (problems) also are major themes which get more than ten percent.

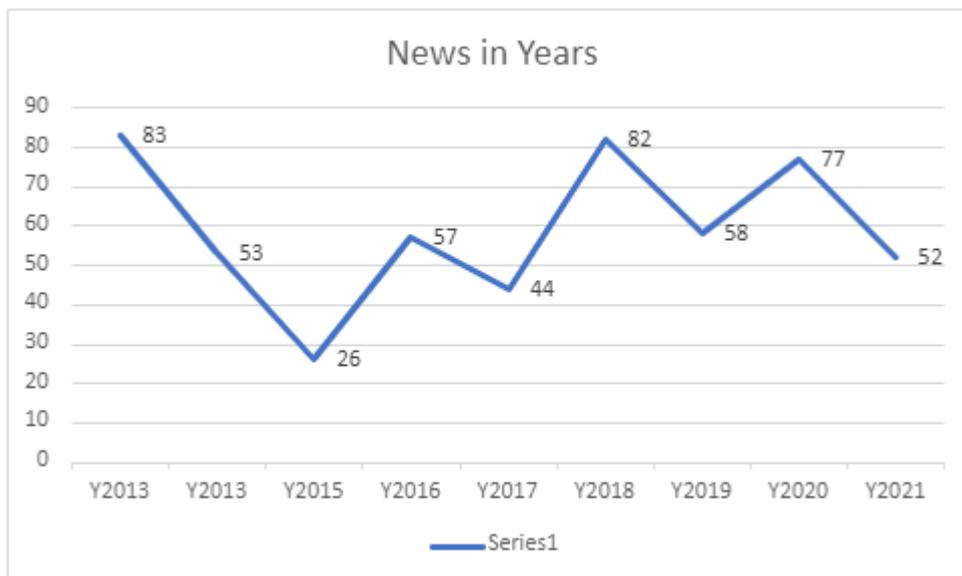


Figure 2. News in Years

Almost all news on the publicity theme is found in Hürriyet, while very low in Sözcü. Similarly, social media campaigns are found more in Hürriyet compared to Sözcü. Sözcü has more news on social media, civic actions, and mobilization than Hürriyet. The sample starting in 2013 has the biggest coverage, with the domination of action and mobilization news. This theme has never become the news again except for the few anniversary declarations by the opposition party CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, while the theme of access increases the following year, as well as other themes such as crime and disinformation. Through the years, we have witnessed new themes, such as applications and services of social media; the use of social media for good causes.

Social Media, Civic Actions, and Mobilization

In this theme, we see the report on social media and especially Twitter, and the Gezi uprising. Even though Sözcü in general, has less news than Hürriyet in general, Sözcü differently has more news on this theme of social media, civic actions, and mobilization.

Both Hürriyet and Sözcü report the angry statements of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in 2014, similar to those declared through the Gezi protests in 2013, as we mentioned in the introduction. Here what we see is the reports providing an amplifier to this angry populism rather than making a detailed, critical, and interrogative reporting by including many other actors and considering different issues and perspectives. For example, Hürriyet report informs that Erdoğan urges not to be slaves of Twitter, Facebook, and Youtube and not to surrender to the visual craziness of cyber relations since what those on computer boards with dirty aims on youth can do at the expense of lives of people.⁴ The same declarations and the same type of reporting can be found in the report by Sözcü as well, with Erdoğan requesting not to allow the Internet and computer to ruin young people's national and moral emotions and pollute their cleanest souls.⁵

Sözcü used the word resistance more than Hürriyet, which reported the actions with a more distant language regarding the protestors. The reports of Sözcü are about how the public organized, asked for help and support, showed solidarity or

⁴ "Geziciler var ya Geziciler fikri olmayanlar". *Hürriyet*. 31 May 2014.

⁵ "İşte bu geziciler var ya geziciler". *Sözcü*. 30 May 2014

shared, and reacted to police violence towards protestors through social media in Istanbul and other cities during 2013. In the *Sözcü* newspaper, there are also reports on the lack of coverage of Gezi protests in the mainstream TV channels.

Here in this news of *Sözcü*, it is possible to see how the reports and social media are interlinked; social media was used as a news source and opened a space for readers and activists: "Seconds of resistance moments! Resistance videos from the citizen camcorder" titled report positioned this as a reactionary approach following the censorship of the pro-government media. The readers are invited to send videos to the addresses given:

"While the government ally media continue to apply censorship on the actions all over the country, we continue to publish the videos sent by our readers to our Facebook and Twitter accounts. You can send your video as a message to our Facebook page or mention your video's link on Twitter and share it with us." ⁶ The report documents some citizen videos labeling them as working almost as "voluntary correspondents" from the big cities of Ankara, İstanbul, and İzmir under the titles including pepper spray to homes, how to protect from the pepper spray, horrible moments at Metro, police violence at Beşiktaş, screams at İzmir: "Adana, İzmir, Ankara and the others... Hundreds are injured. Hundreds are taken into custody." ⁷

Celebrities' participation has become essential, especially in the *Sözcü* newspaper. For example, a report collects tweets from celebrities who support Gezi and criticize the government. Interestingly, it is from a celebrity page, in a way we see the politicized celebrities:

Celebrities who have been supporting the actions since the beginning preferred to announce their happiness following the withdrawing of police and achieved success. Here are the tweets of that celebrities regarding the Gezi Park victory.⁸ (Karataş and Gencil Bek, 2023).

The focus in this article is not to discuss the evolution of Gezi and its representation on social media, which was used actively for the organization of Gezi. In earlier work, it was found a similar trend, police violence and celebrities being the main themes on social media.

⁶ "Saniye saniye direniş anları". *Sözcü*. 3 June 2013.

⁷ "Saniye saniye direniş anları". *Sözcü*. 3 June 2013.

⁸ "Birleşince böyle oluyoruz". *Sözcü*. 1 June 2013 .

Disinformation and Harm

One of the sources of disinformation and harm theme have been Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and AKP politicians following the Gezi actions, as mentioned in the introduction and the first theme above. The way Sözcü reports has been mocking, such as the report which summarizes Bilal Erdoğan's tweets arguing that social media is becoming a medium of provocation⁹. After the ownership change in 2018, Aydın Doğan sold the newspaper to the pro-AKP capital Demirören group; we see more dramatic emphasis changes in Hürriyet newspaper. Alarming news about social media is on the rise:

- "Never fall into this trap on Instagram!".¹⁰
- "A very important warning: Be careful if this information from social media, messages, or emails."¹¹
- "Last minute: Attention! Never open these messages... 4 millioned haul in dark internet".¹²

This news from Hürriyet also seems striking. It connects the holy festival of Muslim Ramadan with digital cleaning, "Digital cleaning time before Ramadan festival."¹³. It is a common practice to do a deep cleaning of houses before inviting guests to frequent visits during Ramadan. Somehow, normally two irrelevant themes, such as the Ramadan festival and digital risks, are linked. This report from a technology page does not mention any source. Some advice for the Ramadan holiday in "serenity" is listed to social media users, such as password change, using a backup file, updating, and using an anti-virus program. In a way, it is not a piece of ordinary technology news but contextualized in the AKP era. Every opportunity is used to remind the AKP's conservative İslamist frame after the ownership changes.

⁹ Padişah sustu şehzadesi tepki gösterdi! 'Sözcü. 1 June 2013.

¹⁰ Instagram'da bu tuzağa sakın düşmeyin! 'Hürriyet. 29 May 2018

¹¹ "Çok önemli uyarı: Sosyal medyadan, mesajlardan, maillerden bu bilgi gelirse dikkat!"Hürriyet. 1 June 2019.

¹² Son dakika: Aman dikkat! Bu mesajları sakın açmayın... Karanlık internetten 4 milyonluk vurgun'. Hürriyet. 31 May 2021.

¹³ Ramazan bayramı öncesi dijital temizlik zamanı'. Hürriyet. 30 May 2019.



Photo 1. "Digital cleaning time before Ramadan festival." *Hürriyet*. 30 May 2019.

However, it should be stated that even before the ownership change, *Hürriyet* newspaper did not have a critical perspective but remained rather mainstream. Earlier, reactive responses from the government, AKP, and Erdoğan were amplified, while later, these have been a more direct platform for the AKP capital to voice their projects more comfortably.

Disinformation, as has been used in Turkish with direct translation, sometimes as information pollution, is not only limited to hackers, pirates, and hauls but also a political phenomenon. Again pronounced as "dirty", *Hürriyet* reports that the dirty game of FETÖ (abbreviation of Fetullahist Terror Organization) on social media has been revealed:

It has been revealed how FETÖ's follows a roadmap and conducts disinformation and black propaganda through influencing masses on social media to establish chaos in Turkey¹⁴.

Disinformation, then, is often implemented by others such as the Gezi protestors or FETÖ. Sözcü also shares a similar perspective on "FETÖ" news even though it differs from *Hürriyet* with less news and also reports the misinformation campaigns against CHP mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu.

Crime and Criminalization

In this category, we can see the news at the intersection of social media and crime. For *Hürriyet*, the reports under this category are about how social media is used in

¹⁴ FETÖ'nün sosyal medyadaki kirli oyunu ortaya çıktı' *Hürriyet*. 28 May 2020.

fraud and theft or to provoke crime, fight, or as evidence to catch thieves and robbers, robbery, drug use, and trade.

Some headlines:

- "Quarrel started on social media turned into an armed fight. There are injured people."¹⁵
- "Beaten and shared on social media."¹⁶

Besides these "individual" criminal offenses, we see a series of news that reports "insulting Erdoğan" cases; interrogation reports are not critical, just mentioning the court's verdict. The language of criminalization is maintained without any questions in the reports as well. We see criminalizing political activities regarding social media use. These activities are linked with existing criminal terrorists such as PKK and FETÖ. Some headlines from *Hürriyet*:

- "Imprisonment punishment to university student because of PKK propaganda"¹⁷.
- "6 taken into custody in Eskişehir of PKK propaganda"¹⁸.
- "Cyber blow to FETÖists in Adana"¹⁹
- "Operation in Ankara"²⁰

Examples from *Sözcü* are similar. Again the explanations made by official accredited sources are given directly in the report without questioning and without adding other explanations from other sources. The report titled "Many channels which are not compatible with general moral values shutdown"²¹ announces the elimination of criminal content from social media because of the negative impact on the psychosocial development of children as well as ruining "our family and society structure," incompatible with general moral rules and sexual harassment of children. The report also adds that Turkish police cyber-patrolling activity continues on the basis of 7/24 to guarantee that children and young people are away from this kind of

¹⁵ Sosyal medyada başlayan tartışma silahlı kavgaya döndü: Yaralılar var'. *Hürriyet*. 29 May 2019.

¹⁶ Dövüp sosyal medyadan paylaşmışlardı' *Hürriyet*. 28 May 2020..

¹⁷ "Üniversite öğrencisine PKK propagandasından hapis cezası". *Hürriyet*. 31 May 2018.

¹⁸ "Eskişehir'de PKK propagandasına 6 gözaltı". *Hürriyet*. 30 May 2018.

¹⁹ "Adana'da FETÖ'cülere siber darbe" *Hürriyet*. 30 May. 2018.

²⁰ "Ankara'da operasyon" *Hürriyet*. 28 May. 2021.

²¹ "EGM: Sosyal medyada genel ahlak kurallarına aykırı birçok kanal kapatıldı". *Sözcü*. 1 June 2020.

content. A more investigative kind of reporting could be realized by asking for and analyzing more data on which social media and content were at issue and what cyber-patrolling activity of Turkish police forces involved.

The claimed criminal offenses are also reported from the world of art and popular culture figures who are known for their anti-AKP, critical attitude, such as rap singer Ezhel and actress Ezgi Mola. While Ezhel is known for his anti-AKP attitude and has become the news with his judiciary process claiming to stimulate drug use. Ezgi Mola's case is also interesting, as seen in the alerting "last minute" report. Ezgi Mola is criminalized just because of her critical remarks about a criminal case, a Kurdish woman who killed herself following a rape by an ex-army officer Musa Orhan. Following Mola's critical tweets, Mola was sued. The headline in *Hürriyet* regarding that is this:

"Last minute: Musa Orhan's lawyer acts. Ezgi Mola is sued with a demand of imprisonment." ²² What is foregrounded in the report is not the claims of rape about an ex-army officer but the insult of the actress through social media with the hashtag #MusaOrhanTutuklansin (which can be translated as #ArrestMusaOrhan), and the case is opened to her. The statement of the soldier's lawyer against Mola and accusation of her of "lynching culture" finds ample space in the news with direct quotations with the threat that Mola can be a victim of another lynching culture.

Access (Problems)

The reports on access problems are covered with the words such as ban or censorship from Turkey and other countries such as Iran, China, and Thailand, as well as the Trump case with Twitter in the US. Access issues in Turkey are framed mainly as a technical matter, not political, and approached rather indirectly and not as an investigative reporting topic in the newspapers analyzed. During the Gezi protests, while *Hürriyet*²³ framed access to Twitter as a technical problem, *Sözcü* seems to develop a report by allocating space to "claims" of access problems in order to obstruct social media use in mobilizing protests. In general, the report ends with the declarations of the public bodies that there is no intervention in limiting the

²² "Son dakika: Musa Orhanın avukatı harekete geçti. Ezgi Mola hakkında hapis istemiyle dava" *Hürriyet*. 2 June 2021.

²³ "Twitter'a bir süre ulaşılamadı". *Hürriyet*. 4 June 2013.

access, but possibly that is an outcome of overuse and therefore slowing down the services. Sözcü news²⁴ with a "flash, flash" visual, and the headline "They Closed Down Twitter" announces that Twitter can not be accessed for a while. Without mentioning the real cause directly, it quotes Erdoğan's statement that Twitter is trouble and updates that the service is back after 45 minutes. In 2014, Sözcü reports the Youtube ban and the Constitution Court applications using a report by the newspaper Cumhuriyet; however, without taking a directly critical, interrogating stance or developing the report, instead only with humor and sensation. It even reveals that even making a joke about this is severely punished. Thus AKP control is disseminated through this news.²⁵

In this news category in Hürriyet, we also see that social media platforms' increasing power and criticism is linked with security, privacy, and regulation issues. Platforms increasing power is reported not only concerning citizens but also regarding national security issues. The news on the regulatory attempts includes countries such as Trump's US, Uganda, and China to struggle against the dissemination of gossip and lies. Earlier, Hürriyet reports that a cleaning operation starts to identify harmful content in order to obstruct the infiltration of internal and external enemies in China.²⁶ Another Hürriyet news in more recent years is directly about Turkey: It asks whether the state should control citizens' social media activities by relying on research and quotes that, according to the report, 38 percent of the consumers in Turkey are supportive of the state controlling social media for the security of citizens.²⁷

New Apps, Services, and Technology

These reports are generally positive, almost advertisement-like news regarding global platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Tik Tok, and Snapchat and the alliance of global and national business partners (such as Turkcell), the budget details of the projects and technological aspects, innovations, new features, investments such as robots, virtual assistant, future predictions and possibilities based on projects. Besides these, ready social media messages, visuals,

²⁴ "Twitter'ı kapattılar". *Sözcü*. 3 June 2013.

²⁵ "Nihat Sırdar'a 'Hamster' cezası". *Sözcü*. 28 May, 2014.

²⁶ "Çin sosyal ağlarını temizleyecek" *Hürriyet*. 28 May 2014.

²⁷ "Devlet, vatandaşın sosyal medya faaliyetlerini denetlemeli mi?" *Hürriyet*. 29 May 2020

and apps to be shared as Muslim holiday and Friday greetings are introduced in both newspapers. The added new emojis being announced on the Twitter page are reported on several occasions by the newspapers analyzed. That is an example of the local and global interaction as the researchers discuss in relation to Metro newspaper: Develotte, Christine, et al. 2021 show similarly in their discourse analysis of Metro dailies in three countries how the news presented Facebook as an agent, as actively doing something mostly without implying that they were enterprises. This reporting was more positive news, especially in earlier years (76). In our case, the language used in this news is very commercialized, like advertisement language. For example, Sözcü news titled “Facebook renew emojis.”²⁸ with the visuals accompanied:

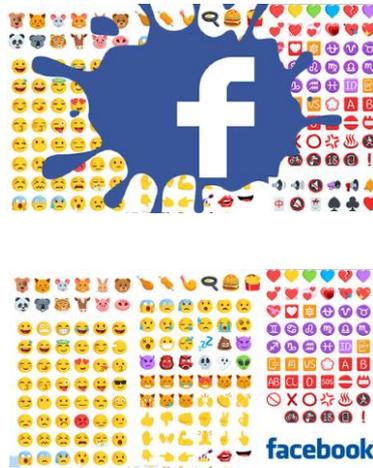


Photo 2.”Facebook emojiilerini yeniledi.” Sözcü. 3 June 2016.

Hürriyet has already been positioned earlier in this digital transformation as we see in “Hürriyet social news” , “Hürriyet social is a revolution.”²⁹ titled news refers to the section called Hürriyet social, which started two weeks ago as a participatory site that allows the readers to make a selection of the news to read, summarizes the speech of Hürriyet newspaper board director Vuslat Doğan Sabancı at Media Summit 2014 in Istanbul. Her speech making a correlation between Gezi events and social media is taken to subtitle as “Lesson drawn from Gezi.” Her words underlined the importance of participation as a value: “There are some moments in life after that nothing could be as it was earlier. The voice that arose on social media at Gezi

²⁸ “Facebook emojiilerini yeniledi.” Sözcü. 3 June 2016.

²⁹ “Hürriyet sosyal bir devrimdir.” Hürriyet. 28 May 2014.

events told us, conventional media, that if we do not include and listen to the reader, we can not remain as powerful as we were before... The reader does not read the news and leave anymore. The reader participates in the news and even makes it continue. The reader can establish his or her pages or interact and share with their friend.”

Social Media Campaigns for Good Causes

In this category, we have seen the use of social media for small-scale campaigns on health, rare diseases or donors, animals in the shelter and street animals or missing animals, disability, education, local scale initiatives on forming a library for poor or in need due to a catastrophe and so on. These seem like “good” and “harmless” actions rather than protests. These can also re-address the tasks and duties of the state over citizens.

For example, *Hürriyet* reports blood donor campaigns started by the theatre actors from Ankara municipality's youth center in order to speed up an urgent blood need. Voluntary social media users wrote their blood group next to their name on the project website³⁰. Another report³¹ from İstanbul informs about a fundraising campaign with the support of sports people, actors and actresses for the treatment of a 2.5 years old child and bringing expensive medicine from the US since it was not covered by Turkish health insurance with SMA disease.

Despite all, these local reports can also have a transformative potential on underestimated issues such as animal rights or animal needs. The news reports a campaign to raise awareness and lead changes on a small scale. A *Sözcü* report³² informs the developments in treating a child with leukemia following the stem cell campaigns her mother organized actively on social media. The campaign did not only support this little girl but increased hope among patients with similar diseases as well as sensitivity and participation of the public to be a donor. Another report³³ informs that a fashion designer from İzmir with small enterprise purchases and locates water corners with ice blocks during the hot summer times for the street animals with the money she earns from selling her designed shirts through social media.

³⁰ "Haydi sen de yaz." *Hürriyet*. 1 June 2014.

³¹ "SMA hastası Ece için spor camiası da seferber oldu." *Hürriyet*. 29 May 2017.

³² "Öykü Arın ilik savaşında 1 yılı geride bıraktı." *Sözcü*. 2 June 2020.

³³ "Tasarladığı Tişörtlerle Hayvanları Serinletiyor." *Hürriyet* 3 June 2018.

Branding, PR, and Publicity

Under this title, we categorized the news on public and private alliances at local (such as publicity attempts of a touristic city and using the social media often initiated by the city public authorities), national, and international levels. Unlike the negative coverage of social media and criminalization, we see how social media is used positively for the economy and trade. The actors are the private sector and CEO, as well as politicians. What is striking here is the similarity of discourses in a local commercial enterprise and a state organ. An example to local can be given as Governor Balkanlıoğlu's move to publicize the city of Ordu on social media³⁴. An example of a company is the report of the social media prize given to Jolly Tour tourism company.³⁵ There is also brandization of politics as seen in the *Hürriyet* report titled "Campaign video AKP published" to use in election campaigns³⁶ with a photo of Erdoğan, whose hand is on his heart with a Turkey flag, summarizes the campaign by stating that "say neither you nor me, we know how to be we" giving the link to a Twitter page "türkiyevakti."



Photo 3. "AK Parti'nin kampanya videosu yayınlandı." *Hürriyet*, 1 June 2018.

Another news using the word "publicity."³⁷ reports and attaches a video shared by gendarmerie headquarters in their social media video. Its music is rap music, the anti-terrorism operations of the branches of gendarmerie such as JÖH and JÖAK are introduced as "7/24 on duty working with love", "hidden heroes" as well as their

³⁴ "Vali Balkanlıoğlu'nun sosyal medyada Ordu'ya tanıtım atağı." *Hürriyet*. 31 May 2017.

³⁵ "Jolly Tur'a sosyal medya ödülü." *Hürriyet*. 3 June 2017.

³⁶ "AK Parti'nin kampanya videosu yayınlandı." *Hürriyet*, 1 June 2018.

³⁷ "Jandarmadan 'Rap'li klip." *Hürriyet*. 31 May 2017.

messages on the video being quoted: “The nightmare of terror organizations, the dearest of our nation, the pride of our gendarmerie, heroes JÖH... strong, reliable, ready.” As seen here, Hürriyet adopts a nationalist and statist perspective even before the ownership change. However, after the ownership change, there are more changes regarding articulating the capital beyond the borders. For example, this report below also shows how the countries are taken as references changed after ownership and many others. Hürriyet report titled "Turkey campaign from 3 countries" accompanied by a visual of a map ³⁸.



Photo 4. "3 ülkeden Türkiye kampanyası". Hürriyet. 28 May, 2018.

The report announces the social media campaign initiated by activists living in the Middle East from Katar, Kuwait, and Umman in order to support tourism in Turkey during the summer in Arabic with hashtags “Our holiday is more beautiful in Turkey” with photographs from different regions of Turkey and comments. It implies that activism can be used for publicity here. Also, it shows the world and culture with whom Turkey is ideally connected. Besides the quoted views from the tweets mentioning how Turkey is great in terms of nature, history, and shopping, similar to a European country, it is also mentioned how beautiful the call to prayer is as well as Muslim identity and Muslim country, with no problem for Gulf region citizens regarding food, clothing, and prayer. That symbolizes the change from 2013 when social media activism was represented with Gezi protests towards the end of the decade when so-called activists from the Middle East organized a publicity campaign for Turkey's tourism.

³⁸ "3 ülkeden Türkiye kampanyası." *Hürriyet* 28 May, 2018

Conclusion

We started the article by reviewing the literature on social media and the news. As Broersma and Eldridge (2019: 194) discuss, the intersection of social media and journalism is not universal. Yet the representation of social media in the news in Turkish newspapers is a topic that has not been addressed so far. The article showed how representation can evolve depending on context and time, specifically by relying on an analysis of the two popular newspapers. Social media, starting as the mobilizing force in Gezi resistance, over the years, gained new meanings. Categorizing the following represented themes from 2013 to 2021 under two frames as “negative” and “positive” is possible. While the first includes disinformation and harm, crime, and access problems, the positive frame consists of the new services and technology, publicity, and using social media campaigns for good causes. Overall, most of the “bad” news was about disinformation, harm, and crime, while most of the “good” news was on the new services and apps. As the examples from different years over almost a decade shows, this representation of the "new" media in the "old" media is consistent with the "New Turkey" (Yılmaz, 2018) project of AKP, where every kind of critical civic actions was denigrated and criminalized while the use of social media for commercial profits and maintaining autocratic rule gain a sacred value. For our focus regarding the role of the news, it is possible to say that not only the content of the news but the form of the news also serve these purposes: The direct advocate of government is clearly seen after the change of the ownership of Hürriyet newspaper as the voice of the populism. Yet, before the ownership change and even for the Sözcü newspaper, it is hard to claim they managed to show critical and qualitative reporting. It seems that not only digital platforms or social media but commercial news values are associated with populism and reproduce populism, as Sorensen argues (2021:200), with sensational and superficial reporting with titles such as “flash flash” announcing the “last minute development” as our examples showed. Rather than reporting individual social media input or aggregation of social media input superficially, what is needed is a critical and investigative, and long form of journalism.

It seems that the themes and frames on social media in the news will continue to be represented in ways according to the continuities and changes in the politics and the media spheres. This issue also has the potential to contribute to the literature

that emphasizes that studying "new" and "old" media in connection with similarities and differences and how these are articulated is essential in understanding the evolving media archeologies and ecologies. Further research can focus on this relational aspect in other spheres beyond the news and beyond the media texts.

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