

Research Article

New Media Income Sources and Digital Media in Turkey: Business Models, Issues and Suggestions

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Abstract

In Turkey, the commercial press is faced with problems both economically and politically. Besides, the decline in sales and advertising revenues due to the influence of internet has led journalists to turn to the new fields. Many journalists lost their job in the commercial media organizations, have turned to the new field of production that digital media makes possible, consequently new different media organizations have started to operate. The goal is to find new models for production, distribution and consumption of content that show public good characteristics. Crowdfunding is also a viable option for financing non-profit media. In addition to creating income, reducing the expenses of journalism is also among the applied models. A small editorial staff, web designer and citizen journalists can distribute the content over the internet. Since the public support has been used in favor of governmental preferences, the press has often been punished for criticizing the government. Not being able to get a share of the advertisements distributed by the Press Advertisement Agency as well as the official advertisements of the state institutions are some of the main fines. In this context, state support, which is applied for the outside of the main stream media in other countries, seems difficult in Turkey. There are also donations made by national and international foundations and non-governmental organizations and some other resources. Therefore, the aim of this study is to examine the sources and expansions of digital newspapers and news sites such as T24, Bianet, P24, Diken, and Medyascope. For this purpose, the ownership structures and income sources of these organizations and the business models they apply will be discussed.

Keywords: Media Income Sources, Business Models, Digital Newspaper.

Araştırma Makalesi

Yeni Medya Gelir Kaynakları ve Türkiye’de Dijital Medya: İş Modelleri, Sorunlar ve Öneriler

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Öz

Türkiye’de basın gerek ekonomik gerekse siyasi nedenlerle bir süredir sorunlarla karşı karşıya bulunmaktadır. Bunun yanı sıra internet çağının getirdiği satış ve reklam gelirlerindeki düşüş, gazetecilerin yeni mecralara yönelmesine yol açmıştır. Ticarî medya kuruluşlarında işlerini kaybeden birçok gazeteci, dijital ortamın mümkün kıldığı yeni üretim alanına yönelmiş ve böylece farklı medya kuruluşları faaliyete geçmiştir. Amaç kamusal yarar özellikleri gösteren içeriğin üretimi, dağıtımı ve tüketimi içiniyen modeller bulmaktır. Kitlesele fonlama da kâr amacı gütmeyen medyanın finansmanı bir için uygun seçenektir. Gelir yaratmanın yanı sıra gazeteciliğin giderlerinin azaltılması da uygulanan modeller arasında bulunmaktadır. İçerik, küçük bir editörlük kadrosu, web tasarımcısı ve vatandaş gazeteciler yoluyla internet üzerinden dağıtılabilir. Devlet desteği hükümetin tercihleri yönünde kullanıldığından hükümeti eleştiren basın sıklıkla cezalandırılmaktadır. Basın İlan Kurumu tarafından gazetelele dağıtılan resmi ilanların yanı sıra devletin kurumlarına ait reklamlardan pay alamamak bu cezaların başında gelmektedir. Bu bağlamda, diğer ülkelerde ana akımın dışında medyaya uygulanan devlet desteği, Türkiye’de zor görünmektedir. Dijital medyaya, ulusal ve uluslararası vakıflar ve hükümet dışı örgütler ve diğer bazı kuruluşlar tarafından yapılan bağışlar da bulunmaktadır. Bu nedenle, bu çalışmanın amacı T24, Bianet, P24, Diken ve Medyascope gibi dijital gazete ve haber sitelerinin gelir kaynaklarını ve gelişmelerini incelemektir. Bu amaçla, bu kuruluşların mülkiyet yapıları, gelir kaynakları ve uyguladıkları iş modelleri ele alınacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Medyanın Gelir Kaynakları, İş Modelleri, Dijital Gazete.

Introduction

The revenue stream of media has changed. According to Picard (2010) as we are bombarded with too much news one can not create economic value. The commodified and same news make it difficult to get people pay for the news. Therefore news organizations have to produce news with the higher quality, reliable and unique which were not reviously exit. Otherwise they can no longer maintain large organizational structures and financial arrangements. Yet it is important for the media organizations that serve the public are financed in a stable manner in order to be effective and productive.

Since these organizations would prefer to operate away from the control of the market and the government they have to find and maintain the necessary support that can protect their independence. In essence, journalism, which has a public good feature, needs public support and policies as health, education and security services. However, historically, public support has not yielded the desired results in every country, whether directly or indirectly. Hence there are different applications for digital media organizations in different countries. The goal is to find new models for production, distribution and consumption of content that show public good characteristics. Crowdfunding is also a viable option for financing non-profit media. Media organizations that also operate in the form of co-operatives have a sense of crowdfunding and provide income for the necessary expenditure. In addition to creating income, reducing the expenses of journalism is also among the applied models. A small editorial staff, web designer and citizen journalists can distribute the content over the internet (Picard, 2011, 13).

After 1990, Turkey has begun to experience rapid changes in the media market along with the concentration of media ownership. These structural changes, seen as a result of neoliberalism, also accompanied the internet and digitalization. Thus, it was inevitable that news and ads would be moved from print to the internet or mobile platforms. The fact that journalism is always under the direct and indirect supervision of political power in Turkey restricts public support options in opposing media. Since the public support has been used in favor of governmental preferences, the press has often been punished for criticizing the government. In this context, state support, which is applied for the outside of the main stream media in other countries, seems difficult in Turkey. With the digital period, new financing options are being sought. There are also donations made by national and international foundations and non-governmental organizations and some other resources.

In the face of new developments, news organizations are trying to sustain themselves and find new business models. Publishers mostly concentrate on a "a more user-, consumer-centric business model" due to the beating advertisement revenues by a good margin (WAN-IFRA's World Press Report, 2018). However, they disagree over a new model to overcome their financial difficulties due to the different cultures and set of visions and goals. Therefore, the aim of this study is to examine the sources and expansions of digital newspapers and news sites such as T24, Bianet, P24, Diken, and Medyascope. For this purpose, the ownership structures and income sources of these organizations and the business models they apply will be discussed.

Forcing Change on Journalism

Since all kinds of news are easily reached in the digital age, the news is no longer a scarce resource. According to Danish scholar Thomas Pettitt (Viner, 2013), these new technologies are returning us to the age of communication before Gutenberg invented the printing press. Twitter's CEO likewise exemplified ancient Greece and mentioned that today's information is similar to the spread of unfiltered information coming from different directions in the agora, just after having a lunch. In the face of these developments most journalists have commodified the news. With commodification, it is understood here that the news can not be distinguished from each other (Washington Post, 2006). Similar news and photos, as well as repetitive news and press releases, create "sameness". Nick Davies, in his book, "Flat Earth News, written in 2009, 80% of the qualified British press was not original and only 12% were created by reporters" (Viner, 2013, 4). This is partly due to the way of routine journalism along with the consequences of economic pressures. However, nobody wants to pay any money for the news that does not have a different sound, or have a different expertise than others. Indeed, Picard (2009) states in his article titled "why journalists deserve a low wage," journalists doing their jobs in a traditional manner no longer create economic value. The economic value was generated by the fact that only journalists and news organizations reached the information and resources effectively, and transmitted the news to the reader / viewer is rapidly decreasing. New communication technologies ensure that everyone can access information quickly. Even sometimes readers / viewers have more information than professional journalists and they share it instantly in the virtual environment. Therefore, the skills and activities that are unique to journalists are carried out by ordinary people, destroying their professionalism, eroding the value of their labor and causing them to earn less. Picard (2009) also mentioned that since the economic value of labor depends not only on the value that they contribute to the employer but also on the added value to the process, those who have unique skills, talents and knowledge may be well paid.

According to Banner (2013, 198) though journalists seemed to be opposed to the ideas being commodified, they still get benefit from commodification. For instance, the pricing of newspapers and magazines, and the copyright infringement of the media industry is rarely removed and also publishers do not refuse advertisements.

As it can be seen, the increasing, diversifying, spreading and easily accessing of information have led to the use of different meanings and discussions of commoditification. Noam (2001), also indicates that there is not only a single description of commoditification. First of all, it is believed that when the information is being mass-produced, the quality decreases. Secondly, as mentioned above, Noam has stated that commodification indicates sameness of information. Thirdly, commodification refers to the cheapness of information. The fact that more information is produced and distributed, but not consumed at the same rate, has led to its cheaper price. As the increasing distribution channels compete to attract the attention of readers/users, profit margins falls. Fourthly, the commodification of information emphasizes the trade of information, in other words, its commercialization. Noting that the commodification of information did not begin with digitization, it has existed for centuries (Noam, 2001). To support this view, Noam (2001) stated that Gutenberg's purpose of reproducing religious books was

not religion but for profit, or as another example of how the Globe Theater in London could make money from Shakespeare's plays or sell Rembrandt's paintings to others. Fifth, the commodification of information has enabled the control of major media companies. Noam (2001) pointed to the main economic problem that the reproduction of the first production of the information is very low, requiring high cost. For this reason, media companies have been able to resist market competition by concentrating and growing. Sixth, the commodification of information has enabled the expansion of intellectual property rights. In other words, the ideas and commons of public spheres have been commercialized with patents, copyrights and trademarks for the benefit of the company. Perelman (2002) has also pointed out that as the economy is getting more information-dependent, the adaptation of traditional intellectual property rights to information becomes a major obstacle to development. This leads to negative externalities in the negative sense.

Along with the political economy meaning of commodification is usually critically used. It is emphasized that though information is a public good it has led to the expansion of markets within the capitalist system as capitalism enters into the non-commodity areas and becomes a private commodity by commodification. From an economic point of view, if the information had remained as a public good, there would be no price and ultimately its production would not be economically meaningful. For this reason, the scarcer information resources are, the higher the price and the incentive to produce is. Whereas Perelman (2002), states that the economy concerned with the distribution of scarce resources has invalidated its laws by applying it to non-scarce information. According to the economic theory, no matter how much market-oriented it is, pricing in a way that will make non-scarce information a private good or artificially scarce by copyright, creates a contradiction to the basic concepts of the economy.

Since the information based on journalism is being collected and distributed easily due to new communication technologies it is not a scarce resource anymore. According to Başaran (2010), this change threatens the traditional film, newspaper, television, and music channels. Picard (2010) also said that news organizations can do good journalism and good work only when they provide unique, reliable, specialized, knowledge-based analysis and provides news that is applicable to the lives of readers / listeners. Today's problem starts from the print to the open air that people are under too much news bombardment and can not create value. Eric Beecher (quoted in Funnell, 2016), a digital media owner, also said that the journalism in the Western world and the media industry are in the middle of a tsunami, and that no weather forecast has shown that this tsunami will immediately end. The revenue of digital journalism falls as the number of digital news platforms increases because fewer advertising companies want to pay for advertising. That Google and Facebook have the lion's share of advertising revenue seems the main problem (Funnell, 2016). David Levy, the director of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford, has mentioned that social media is rapidly becoming the main source of people's access to the news. According to "Institution's 2016 report, which carried out a survey, more than 50,000 news consumers across 26 countries, around 51 per cent of respondents used social media to access news content, as around 12 per cent used social media as their main source of news. In the 18-24 age groups this rate reaches to 28 percent" (Funnell, 2016).

This trend has also affected the older people between the age of 55-64 whose news consumption in print has declined 5 percent and they moved to the mobile according to WAN-IFRA's World Press Report, 2018. However, this creates a dilemma for news organizations. Social media allows access to a large number of readers, causes loss of control over distribution, which leads to the loss of consumer loyalty. As a matter of fact, fewer than half of those who use social media in 26 countries remember the name or original source of the original news organization. However, many writers draw attention to the democratic potential of similar media technologies and while these technologies undermine the nature of commercial news, a more participatory, egalitarian and democratic media environment will be provided (Nielsen and Levy, 2010, 13 quoted Hindman 2008). Therefore, readers with adequate and well-informed information tend to complement news consumption with online resources (Wunsch-Vincent, 2010).

In fact, all these developments pose a risk to democratic societies. Due to the fact that the sense of the fourth power, which positions journalism as the guardian of the people against the state and as the neutral transmitter of truth, applies to neither Google nor Twitter. These technology companies, which are actually platforms, have no relevance to the content, nor to the journalism nor to the editorial values. Their main interest is the sale of their advertisements with the number of clicks that indicate the pleasure and preferences of the users (Sambrooke quoted Funnell, 2016). Therefore, it is necessary to create and sustain a quality media that will be responsible for the society, and represent the whole society equally, and provide enough information for the people to make decisions. New and different finance models are required for this. As Downie and Schudson point out, the news media is better with the support of readers/audiences, or with advertisements than the government finances. Otherwise, the state will either directly or indirectly influence the news institution. Only the BBC is shown as a good example financed by the public. The state has not had any serious intervention in the last 40-50 years. However, better ways should be found for selling journalism than relying on state funds. These ways must be non-profit supporting, non-avoiding of describing the society and sustainable (Lyod, 2010).

Business Models in Media Companies

Business models reveal how media companies make money and generate value through their products and services, and their operational requirements and the relationship between their customers and their partners (Picard, 2011, 7). Digital content industries are experiencing many business models. Some of them are examples of offline models, as others are new models. According to Johnson and colleagues (2008), while a business model creates value for the customer, it also creates value for the business itself. The main resources required for the customer value proposition to be forwarded to the target group are people, technology, products, facilities, equipment, channels and brands. Successful businesses effectively repeat this value proposition through both operational and managerial processes and can increase according to the scale (Koller, 2016). A higher customer value proposition is achieved when the customer provides better information and reliable content. However, with digitalization, the key sources and processes of the publisher have changed. As readers / users are involved in content production, this content is distributed through various platforms and tools. This offers a variety of

options to place ads for advertisers but puts publishers in difficulty both in terms of customers and revenues. As a result, advertising companies continue to play a major role in new business models (Koller, 2017). However, publishers must ensure that advertisers should not have an effect on the content, and also must regulate the power of advertisers in multiple collaborations. Furthermore, publishers should make sure that personal user data is not passed on to advertisers except the target groups and specific topics.

Though business models and business model innovation are defined with various numbers of components by the existing literature (Kolner, 2017, 78 quoted from n (Amit & Zott, 2001; Chesbrough, 2003; Christensen, 2008; Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010), there are three to four significant core elements such as value proposition, revenue stream, key resources and key processes. In this study the eight business models are focused which are theorized by Marc Andressen. The reason these models are preferred because while monopolistic and oligopolistic news market collapse the exclusive control of traditional media on process of collection, preparation and dissemination of news decrease. Moreover the advertising market is getting more complicated and affecting the value of contents badly so people are less willing to pay for the journalistic product (Marino, 2014; ICF, 2017). According to Andressen “the most obvious eight business models” concerning the media are: **1.** Quality journalism for high-quality ads. **2.** Succeeding in making readers subscribe and pay for value products. **3.** *Premium* content worth buying. **4.** Relying on live conferences and events. **5.** Investing across multiple channels. **6.** Crowdfunding **7.** Offering Bitcoin for micropayments. **8.** *philanthropy* (Marino, 2014; ICF, 2017).

For the first business model, publishers must have similar thoughts and higher ideas in order to compete with the successful duopoly of Facebook and Google in the digital ad market. For this, they must understand the users better and help the customers to solve their problems (Havens, 2017). Advertising has been the primary source of revenue for news providers from the early days of the web. Most online news providers offer free news to their audience and then sell them to advertisers. Thus, online providers try to get a share of growing online advertising expenditure. Secondly, the subscription business model is seen as an advantageous model because it guarantees repeating transactions. Generally, subscription fees are low. For example “a single issue of New Yorker costs \$6, while the annual subscription fee is \$ 70 with a 77% discount for 52 issues”. (Premium vs Freemium vs Subscription, 2013). However, this may not be the same for all businesses. Amazon only offers a 15% discount on certain household items (Premium vs Freemium vs Subscription, 2013). Some kind of subscription business model “freemium” is spreading especially among Internet start-ups and apps. In this model, users access some basic services or features for free but they pay subscription fees for richer functions. The paywall strategy, a variation of the model, is used by the New York Times. However “freemium” is still not well understood despite its popularity and clear benefits, it still has some difficulties. For that reason, according to Vineet Kumar (2014) who is working on this subject, the following six questions are needed to be answered: “a) which features should be free? b) are customers aware of the free service offered to them? c) what is the target conversion rate? d) how long the conversion rate can be sustained? e) might users be able to contribute to the product go viral? f) should they be committed to ongoing innovations?”

While the third business model is “premium content to buy”, there is usually limited use. This business model works unless there is a lot of competition to decrease prices and besides, if there is a strong demand for the content or apps. As a matter of fact if the content / application is trusted and has a strong brand, users volunteer to pay for it (Premium vs Freemium vs Subscription, 2013). The fourth business model includes conferences in which most media organizations agree to meet cash requirements. As Cindy Gallop (Froelich, 2013) notes, “The economics of a conference is astounding and people will pay every fee to be there when something extraordinary. For instance, thousands of people are waiting for TED as people pay \$ 7,500”. Though, it is not a new phenomenon, this conference industry has increased tenfolds and it is not an exaggeration to say that it has exploded according to David Adler, founder of BizBash. Almost every magazine, newspaper and website wants to organize these kinds of events, but they are not as successful as TED, All Things D and Founders Conference. These three conferences are regarded as excellent events by those involved in the industry and invite only interesting, innovative and exclusive persons. As the fifth business model, “investing in more than one channel” is considered to be one of the ways to earn money in the digital arena where there is a big competition. For this purpose, it is necessary to reach the target audience with more interactive apps in their channels they prefer besides adding the digital versions to the mobile apps. In a sense, which digital content is to be included in which digital channels should be planned. As content is traditionally being produced for a single platform for a specific audience with digitalization the broadcasters should ensure that the content will be distributed across multiple channels and in different formats in different web content management systems. This requires additional investment along with the operational cost (Nehanarendra, 2017).

The sixth business model is “crowdfunding”, which provides great opportunities for investigating journalism in particular (Marino, 2014). It is necessary to elaborate the following five strategic considerations before applying this model, which often requires many people who are ready to support an idea with money. First of all, how much money will be charged. Established platforms can collect this. Yet, if the target cannot be reached there will be outcome. Secondly, editorial independence is important. Editorial voice should know the meaning of communal ownership. Communities may revolt or cut off their support if they do not like the content. Thirdly, the security of the work should be ensured. In other words being able to convert consumers into long- term funders. While longterm membership requires more editor control and flexibility, motivation, the fourth strategy for funding, comes to the forefront as a valuable asset. Fifthly, it should be careful about the geographical size of the community. In this context, their interest is vital in terms of long-term relationships (Radcliffe, 2015). Since traditional payment methods cause transaction costs for micropayments, in the seventh business model, the BitCoin is offered as a payment option. With bit monies, payments between the parties can be easily handled over the internet. Because it is free and easy to install, it allows publishers to sell their content a- la- carte or through time-metered access (Monetize your content with bitcoin micropayments, 2013). Philanthropy has been taken as the last business model. Some philanthropists have tried to finance investigative journalism, which focuses on the public interests. One of the philanthropic organisations established by eBay founder Pierre Mr Omidyar has

contributed \$100m to support investigative journalism, fight against hate speech and misinformation around the World (Sullivan, 2017).

Non-profit organizations also support media. Digital newspapers that are financed by organizations such as national, regional and international foundations, associations, have become an alternative to the mainstream media in the possession of holdings. According to Baron (2014), capital is now available to publish newspapers, and journalists can also be entrepreneurs. Therefore, it is an important indication that some of the traditional media workers are starting to publish their own digital newspapers by leaving the legacy organizations.

News Rooms (ICFJ, 2017), news portals / sites revenue is generated from advertisements, sponsors and subscriber revenues, respectively. A noteworthy point here is that digital-only platforms are getting different from the traditional channels in terms of revenue sources. Though they are still using traditional methods of generating revenue, such as advertising and news subscription fees, they have to innovate novel approaches and techniques. Today more newsrooms are generating revenue from sponsored content (44%) compared to paid subscriptions (31%).

This study will focus on the digital media in Turkey and their necessary sources of revenue to maintain their presence. The above mentioned business models can provide better understanding of how digital newspapers and portals survive in Turkey.

Income Sources of Digital Newspapers in Turkey

In Turkey as well as all over the world, advertising based journalism is also tried to be sustained in digital journalism. Indeed, a content study involving 12 digital newspapers in 2015 revealed that a wide variety of internet advertising was used in digital journalism (Bulut & Karlıdağ, 2015). All newspapers use ad types like banners, posters, rich ads, content sponsorships, search engines. Some newspapers prefer advertising, known as pop-ups, while others use video ads more often. Besides these possibilities, the mainstream media benefits from the announcements of the Press Advertising Agency (PAA/BİK) and some other opportunities. The alternative media, which is getting more and more widespread, try to innovate many strategies or models to survive. Before analyzing them it will be useful to look briefly at the development of alternative media in Turkey.

In the 1990's, the conglomeration that Turkey experienced in the field of media ownership and the capital structure have led to major changes. Many values in journalism have been upset by the fact that many owners who do not have journalism background bring the huge capital they earn from different fields. According to Reporters Without Borders and Bianet Report (2016) most of the partners of companies that own the top 40 media outlets, are business people. This prevents the reflection of independent and pluralist ideas in the media. Indeed, in recent years, the media of large capitalists have shown that they cannot go beyond the voices of power; they either remain silent or react insufficiently in response to many important social events (Çoban and Ataman, 2015). In a sense, the mainstream media, increasingly commercialized and exposed to the government's economic support or oppression, have shown most of the negative features concerning the commodification mentioned above. The decrease in the quality of the content, the

publication of the news with the same title and content, the control of the news are all examples made by the media organization or the owner. Distribution channels are increasing, but the content is not getting varied to the same extent.

Therefore, those who want to hear different voices are using alternative channels. These alternative news channels, housed in many experienced journalists and academics, supply people with current news and corner articles. Financial sustainability is a big problem for these channels. While paying low wages to employees no copyright fees are paid to voluntary employees who send news, photos and videos to news sites. There might be different purposes behind the digital news portals that continue their publications by making use of some financial resources (Özdemir, 2016). For this reason, information under the heading of "About Us" in the news portals and the knowledge in their colophon are important. This knowledge includes the purpose of the portal, the owner and/or with whom it is operated such as general editorial staff, editorial directors and editors besides which news are covered.

The newspapers are holding most of the advertising revenue after televisions. A significant portion of the revenues of print media organizations is also financed by official advertisements distributed by the Press Advertising Agency (BİK), a government entity. However, it is a controversial issue whether these advertisements are fairly distributed. No response was received from the BİK related to advertising handed out to newspapers in the past 12 months when asked for information in the context of freedom of information (Bianet and Reporters Without Borders, 2016).

When the mainstream media is under complete control because of the economic dependency on power, It is clear that the alternative media that oppose them will not receive any financial support from the government. Apart from the government, private sector organizations either hesitate or never give advertising to alternative media. The contradiction between the ads and the political stances of the advertisers is an important key (Işıklı, 2017).

The system widely used in the West is not very prevalent in Turkey. Inadequate transportation network during the printing press period in addition to the unwillingness of readers' pre payment prevented the subscription system in Turkey. However, subscription provides loyalty. Today, political stance seems to be a hindrance to the subscription that is not already settled as well as the advertising. Since the subscription system is not widespread, the application of paywall that develops over it is not related to the Turkish media either. This system, which allows users read a certain number of articles was first initiated by the New York Times in March 2011, as mentioned earlier. When well implemented this system can put even advertising revenue into the shades might take place in future scenarios in Turkey.

Alternative forms are having trouble to sustain their publishing life due to the financial difficulties they face. They are often forced to use social media as the portals cost are usually met with money achieved from Google adds. Thence, alternative media focuses on the models that can finance itself. These models can be different from business models because the goal is not profit.

Method

This study is based on the question of what are the business models of digital newspapers. A large number of newspapers and news portal were launched in digital environment due to the relative reduction in printing and distribution cost of new communication technologies. The universe of the study represents all of these broadcasts. It is not possible to examine all the digital newspapers and news portals in the universe in the scope of this study. Therefore, 35 digital newspapers and news portal were determined by purposive sampling in accordance with the following research criteria. The study aims to answer these descriptive questions. What are the revenue sources of newspaper and news portals that broadcast in digital media? Is advertising still the most important source of income? Which business models are appropriate for the digital newspapers and news portals in Turkey? The data were collected with the different techniques such as literature review, web page analysis of publications.

The following criteria were taken into consideration while selecting these newspaper/news portals:

- Newspapers that do not belong to big holdings,
- Those who represent different publication policies
- The newspapers, published both in print and digitally
- Those who broadcast in the form of a news site or portal
- In addition to all these, those that show alternative features both ideologically and printed publication type.

The data on the income sources of the websites (Table 1 and Table 2) of 35 digital newspapers and news portals determined on the basis of the above criteria were collected and analyzed as follows.

Analysis

Most of the alternative digital newspapers and news portals are set up as a joint stock company but they are not profit-oriented in their activities. These media organizations that are not affiliated with any capital group in terms of ownership and any interest or relationship with the state. That means that they are independent of any ideology except pluralist democracy, the rule of law, and basic human rights and freedoms. Such as *Bianet.org* (Independent Communication Network), *Medyascope.tv.com*... However, there are various foundations and associations that support some of these news portals may be considered interest groups.

The income sources of these media organizations are similar. Digital facilities with the lowest cost of distribution and printing make it possible for readers to actively participate in the content production of newspapers. For this reason, the cost of newspapers which are digitally broadcast have relatively decreased. In the alternative media, content production is created by professional employees, “volunteers” / free employees or other news sources (news agencies and news sites). In addition, readers / viewers can contribute to news / information. As an alternative production area, digital technology makes it possible especially for readers / audiences to participate in production. This participation leads them to be active in the sense of financial support. Like *Aydınlık*, *Bianet*¹, *Medyascope*, volunteers are either paid no wages or very low fee, in the production of news, programs, etc.

In some news portals business models such as *Medyascope*, based on free news supported by volunteers, experts, citizen journalists and users, a limited revenue can be achieved.

In this model, from a small community platform to a nationwide public news service, news are offered with high quality to the small or wider masses. In particular, they serve viewers and meet needs that are not fulfilled by other news providers.

Ads as the Primary Source of Revenue for the Media

Though internet and digital technologies reduce the cost of digital newspapers and news portals compared with the printed newspapers, it can be said that traditional methods are still valid and they are continuing as sources of revenue. Therefore ads are the most significant income sources of the majority of digital media organizations. Very few of the digital newspapers/news portals (such as Bianet, Politik Yol, P24 ve Yeşil Gazete) are not placing ads. (Table 2).

A large majority of newspapers and news portals are selling their spaces for private advertisements. Some of them, for instance: Adil Medya, Agos, Aydınlık, Birgün, En Son Haber are publishing direct advertisements of brands. Furthermore, most of the digital newspapers are giving places for the private ads that are distributed by digital adds platforms for instance Google ads, AdMatic, Criteo/AdChoices, Engageya, Ligutus, ReklaStore. Some news portals like Haber3.com, Ensonhaber.com, etc. link to pages of companies such as THY, Gezinomi in their content categories in their web sites. This is an example of direct advertising and sponsorship engagement. (Table 1 and 2).

It is possible to divide the advertisements given to the newspapers by the state. The first one is the official advertisements and advertisements given to printed newspapers that provide certain criteria through the Press Advertisement Authority (BİK). The newspapers such as *Aydınlık, Agos, Birgün, Evrensel, Karar, Objektif Haber*, both published in print and digital, receive official advertisement support (Table 1 and 2). In the second method, distribution of company advertisements belonging to state / public institutions are determined according to the political tendencies/ publishing policies of the newspapers. For instance, state-owned public institution advertisements such as THY, Halkbank and PTTcell are published in the news portal (Haber3.com, Ensonhaber.com, F5haber.com, İnternethaber.com) (Table 1 and 2) in liberal, right or conservative publishing policy.

Subscription, Content Charging and Sponsorship

Media organizations develop a variety of revenue streams that can be adapted to changing market conditions and technological innovations. As a matter of fact, news organizations are restructuring traditional methods of revenue- generating, such as advertising and new subscription fees. They are innovating revenue-generating new approaches such as sponsored content, readers'support, content sales and licensing (Caroll, 2017). Digital news portals are also using these kind of methods for driving revenue streams. In fact there is a growing consensus about the payment of digital news (Gackaite, 2018). Certain contents of newspapers (such as private files, e-newspapers, archives) are priced in the form of subscriptions. For instance, *Agos* sells private files and interviews, e-newspapers and printed newspapers in the form of subscriptions. *Evrensel* also offers e-newsletters and archives to its subscribers (Table 1 and 2). In spite of these examples, content selling model is not widely preferred.

Crowdfunding and Philanthropy Support

The most important source of income for news portals such as *Bianet.org* is the projects supported by the European Union (EU) and national and international foundations (Table 1 and 2). That “independent communication network” maintains its publication life with financing of various projects. It does not benefit from private/ official advertisement revenues. Income generating activities of the foundation are carried out through IPS Communication Foundation Economic Enterprise (<https://bianet.org/bianet/sayfa/ips-iletisim-vakfi>).

Journo.com, and *Sendika.org* are examples of news sites belonging to non-governmental organizations. *Journo* has been designed by the Journalists’ Union of Turkey (TGS for *Türkiye Gazeteciler Sendikası*) with the support of various foundations. *News.com* and *Medyascope.tv.com* are also using sponsorship subsidization in order to sustain their broadcasting/ publication. *Medyascope* which is creating video based journalism demands users’ support and contribution through *Patreon*. In addition, it also gets support for different foundations and associations such as *Açık Toplum Vakfı*, *Chrest Foundation*, *Heinrich Böll Stiftung*, *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung*, *International Media Support (IMS)*, *Sida* and *International Press Institute (IIP)* (Table 2) (<http://medyascope.tv/kunye/>).

On looking into the income sources of *T24.com* (Table 1 and 2), it seems that crowdfunding has been implemented under the name of “reader’s fund”. The amounts can vary between 10 Turkish Lira to 10.000 Turkish Lira. This practice is not a donation or a help, but the support of people to realize a project. With this method, 102,005 Turkish Lira have been gained. When the required financial resource is found, the project commences, and then the names of the contributors and the amount of money spent for the project are transparently shared. *P24.com* (Table 2), which does not publish advertisements, is also cooperating with the EU, *Unesco*, *Niras*² and various media organizations.

Support for Other Activities (Conferences and Event Organizations)

Some of the alternative news sites that do not generate advertising revenue try to make money through different methods. For instance, *Bianet.org* publishes academic books related to journalism as well as workshops.³ *Sendika.org* is one of the major institutions that organize the *International Labor Film Festival*. *Haberler.com* is able to support companies such as fairs, exhibitions and concerts as a press sponsor.

Table 1: Revenue Model

Revenue model	Description	Examples
Advertisement	Direct-serving ads and Google etc. private ads served through intermediaries	<i>Adil Medya.com</i> , <i>Agos.com</i> , <i>Aydınlık.com</i> , <i>Birgün</i> , <i>Diken</i> , <i>Ensonhaber.com</i> , <i>Evrensel</i> , <i>F5Haber</i> , <i>Gazete Duvar.com</i> , <i>Gazete Emek.com</i> , <i>Gazete Manifesto.com</i> , <i>Gercekgundem.com</i> , <i>Haber.com</i> , <i>Haber 3</i> , <i>Haberler</i> , <i>InternetHaber</i> , <i>Karar.com</i> , <i>MedyascopeTV.com</i> , <i>Objektif Haber</i> , <i>Oda TV</i> , <i>Sesonline.net</i> , <i>Son Dakika</i> , <i>Sol Haber</i> , <i>Son Sayfa</i> , <i>SuperHaber</i> , <i>Türkiye Haber Merkezi</i> , <i>T24</i> ,
Voluntary donations	Users can make a donation for content production.	<i>Medyascope.tv.com</i>
Fund/Project	Funds and projects provided by the EU and non-governmental organizations	<i>Bianet.org</i> , <i>Medyascope.tv.com</i> , <i>T24</i>

Paid archive	Free archive service for subscribers	Evrensel
Party or Civil society organ	Directly linked to a political party or civil society organization	Aydınlık, Sol Haber, Sendika.org
Official advertisements	Official advertisements revenue achieved from the state	Aydınlık, Birgün, Evrensel, Karar, Objektif Haber
Sponsorship	Those who accept sponsorship support	Haber.com, Medyascope.tv.com

Table 2: Digital Media and Income

		Ownership	Ad	Google Ad	Criteo/AdChoices	AdMatic	Advertorial	Official Ad	Sponsorship and other activities	Donation	Fund	Project	Paid Archive and Content
1	Adil Medya.com	İnşa Yayıncılık	1	1		1							
2	Agos.com	Agos Yayıncılık Basın Hiz. San. Ve Tic. Ltd. Şti.	1	1									
3	Aydınlık.com	Anadolom Gazetecilik Bas. Yay. San. Ve Tic. A.Ş.	1	1			1						
4	Bianet	Ips İletişim Vakfı						1		1	1		
5	Birgün	Birgün İletişim Ve Yayıncılık Ticaret A.Ş.	1	1	1		1	1		1			
6	Diken	Keskin Kalem Yayıncılık Ve Tic. A.Ş.		1	1								
7	Ensonhaber	Ensonhaber Medya Hizmetleri A.Ş.	1	1	1								
8	Evrensel	Bülten Basın Yayın Reklamcılık Tic. Ltd. Şti	1	1				1					1
9	F5 Haber		1	1		1							
10	Gazete Duvar.com	And Gazetecilik Ve Yayıncılık Sanayi Ve Ticaret A.Ş.		1	1								
11	Gazete Emek.com			1	1								
12	Gazete Karınca.com	Gazete Karınca Adına Necla Demir											
13	Gazete Manifesto.com	Manifesto Medya Basın Yayın Tic. Ltd. Şti. Adına Ünal Bayav		1									
14	Gercekgundem.com	İmtiyaz Sahibi Ve Genel Yayın Yönetmeni Serdar Eroğlu		1	1								
15	Haber.com	Haber.Com İnternet Ve Medya Hizmetleri	1	1				1					

16	Haber 3	Haber 3 Yayın Grubu-Sahibi Serhan Işıl	1	1	1		1							
17	Haberler	Yeni Medya Elektronik Yayıncılık Ltd Şti	1	1			1							
18	Journo.com	Türkiye Gazeteciler Sendikası												
19	InternetHaber	İnternethaber Yayın Grubu		1		1		1	1				1	1
20	Karar.com	Karar Yayıncılık A.Ş.	1	1				1						
21	Medya Günlüğü.com													
22	MedyascopeTV.com	Scope Medya A.Ş.	1	1					1	1	1			
23	Objektif Haber	Objektif Haber Reklam Yayıncılık Programcılık Ltd Şti	1		1			1						
24	Oda TV	İmtiyaz Sahibi Soner Yalçın	1	1	1									
25	P24													
26	Politik Yol		1											1
27	Sendika.org								1					
28	Sesonline.net			1			1							
29	Son Dakika	Melon Reklam Ltd. Şti.	1	1	1									
30	Sol Haber	Gelenek Basım Yayıncılık Ve Ticaret Limited Şirketi			1	1								
31	Son Sayfa			1										
32	SuperHaber	Atlantik Medya Filmcilik Prodüksiyon Reklam Yayın San. Ve Tic. Ltd. Şti.	1					1						
33	Türkiye Haber Merkezi	Uzer Medya Ltd. Şti.	1	1		1								
34	T24		1	1	1		1							1
35	Yeşil Gazete.org													

Conclusion and Evaluation

Journalism practices have been widely changed by the new communication technologies and digital developments. The collection and dissemination of news have changed to a great extent. As media institutions are losing their control over the organization of news, their revenues are continuing downward slide. There is no scarcity in the news market and readers are not willing to pay for information. Advertisers are also unwilling to pay for journalistic products which are not in scarcity. Since Google and Facebook are swallowing up the big part of advertising revenue, the digital news portals/digital newspapers are searching new ways to increase their revenues. In other words, they are trying to create multiple business models for revenue, from digital subscription to sponsored advertising newsletters. They know there is no any magic way and success of the business models change due to conditions. It is important to see the new opportunities and understand the way of consuming news in the digital age.

Though, digital media in Turkey show some characteristics of their own, have experienced similar models. Besides retooling traditional methods such as advertising, they are also innovating new models like crowdfunding, sponsored content, selling private files, e-newspapers, archives and organizing some events. As it is seen in Table 1 and Table 2, majority of the digital media are making money from advertisements either publishing direct advertisements of brands or giving places for Google ads, AdMatic, Criteo/AdChoices. Only six of them are benefitting from the official advertisements. The rest of them are trying to get some revenue from other sources. In contrast to USA, UK and European countries, subscription is not common in Turkey. People do not like pay money for the contents. They like to share news from social media. In fact there is no any sense to subscribe to digital news sites which are fed from the same resources. Therefore digital media try to improve crowdfunding, sponsorship and advertising models in particular. Some of the media institution have made some substantial support from different foundations and associations.

When talking about the suggestions for new sources of revenues it is necessary to seek new innovative models and improve the current ones. Since there is a growing consensus about the payment of digital news, the different payment models can be explored and applied according to the digital newspapers/portals and audiences. Hybrid revenue streams such as freemium, crowdfunding and paywalls can be used. For this payment models it is important for the media institutions to present their goals to serve the public by quality and investigative journalism. Besides to be transparent and honest it is also significant to establish the best relationships with the audiences and include them in the journalistic ideals and practices. Uniqueness and/or specialized content can create loyal audience who are willing to pay for subscription. Dünya digital newspaper about economic news is experiencing this model and they look hopeful. As can be seen there is no one-size-fits-all solution, therefore it is important to evaluate each model case by case.

Notes

¹ See (Karlıdağ and Bulut, 2017).

² International consulting company

³ These books are distributed by Punto Co.

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