

Every Now And Then: Journalists and Twitter Use in Turkey

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he introduction of new communication technologies has raised questions about how existing media practices and media work are changing as a result (Lievrouw 2002). Audio, visual, and digital innovations have contributed to the changing way journalists think and practice their profession (Lasorsa, Lewis & Holton, 2011). Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter are transforming journalists from gatekeepers of information into information sharers in public spaces. This study builds on Lasorsa, Lewis & Holton's (2012) work and on a study by The Pew Research Center's Journalism Project (PEW Journalism), *How Mainstream Media Outlets Use Twitter* (2012), and focuses on the behavior of journalists in Turkey on Twitter. It aims to explore what kind of information Turkish journalist share online and how, if and how they engage with fellow users, and how their overall Twitter practice influences and in some cases redefines their role as professional journalists. To answer these research questions a list of the 20 most followed Turkish journalists was compiled. The sample derived for this study includes each journalist's number of followers as of February 2012. Overall this study aims to discover how journalists in Turkey are using Twitter and what it means for a journalist to tweet. On a larger scale this study aims to offer insight into transformations in the practice of journalism in the particular case of Turkey, a country with an appetite for development

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and growth albeit its questionable and notorious track record of freedom of expression and violations in the media. A country where freedom of the press and chronic self-censorship of journalists have been long standing issues of concern.

THE CONTEXT OF JOURNALISM IN TURKEY

Many journalists in Turkey use Twitter to publicize their work, as well as to engage in debate and banter. A newspaper article during February 2012 (Arapkirli, 2012) in Turkey focusing on issues confronting journalists in this new social media space drew attention to how the practice of journalism was being transformed, the ethical obligations of journalists using Twitter, and how Twitter posed to be a murky territory for journalists, and that self monitoring should be key when it came to tweeting. One of the main arguments at the time centered on the professional role of a journalist vis-à-vis social media with particular attention to the overlap between the personal/private and the professional/public. At the time of that said newspaper article many news organizations in Turkey did not have any established guidelines for journalists' social media practices.

Turkey's history is rife with criminal prosecution and jailings of journalists. With its highly repressive laws, authorities have imprisoned journalists on mass scale on terrorism or anti-state charges, launched thousand of other criminal prosecutions on charges denigrating Turkishness or influencing court proceedings, and used pressure tactics to sow self-censorship (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2012: 6).

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) identified 76 journalist imprisoned as of August 2012, of which 61 of them were journalist directly held for their published work (p.6). A similar report by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) puts the number of jailed journalists at 95 (OSCE, 2012). More journalists are imprisoned in Turkey than anywhere else in the world, making the country an "open air prison" for journalists as put forth by many national and international analysts.

The Ethical Journalism Network (EJN) Report (2014) reveals how the Turkish media system is subject to interference from the government and business. According to the Report, it is the structure of media ownership and "*the lack of transparency in the ownership and operations of media and the self serving nature of relations between business and politics*" that contribute to self-censorship in journalism in Turkey (p.1).

Newspapers despite their low circulation figures continue to be an important source of news. Yet, as the Open Society Country Report written by Tunç and Görgülü (2014) points out, "*the press sector suffers from a lack of in-depth news coverage and analysis, [leading] to opinion journalism where columnists are given more credit than correspondents*" (p.21).

Needless to say in such a troubling environment for mainstream journalism practice, many in Turkey have turned to the internet and social media as both a source of information and news and as a platform to share and connect. This was most prominently illustrated in the recent events surrounding the protests at Gezi Park in Istanbul in the summer of 2013. Media silence against government action and brutality is not new in Turkey, but when the media chose to ignore the Gezi Park Protests of June 2013, many turned to social media for news. Social media became a new organizing and information sharing tool. Activists started asking questions and were engaged in public discussion in sometimes bold, and most of the time in inventive ways. When on June 2, 2013 at the height of the protests at Gezi Park, CNN Turk (the Turkish partner of CNN) chose to air a documentary featuring penguins instead of live pictures of the confrontation, the penguin became an iconic image used during the protests to ridicule and spotlight media self-censorship in Turkey. Journalism rather than serving democracy was seen as undermining it (Carrey, 1992).

Just like in many other countries, digitization has transformed existing journalism practices in Turkey as well. Social media platforms have become one of the most effective tools for journalists since 2010; journalists disseminate formal news on Twitter, and also have the opportunity to add personal comment and criticisms to their tweets (Tunç & Görgülü, 2012). Twitter as a journalistic platform is regarded as being more democratic, interactive and transparent in comparison to mainstream media. Many draw attention to the potential social media platforms have to reshape the traditional media structure and bypass partisan editorial decisions in Turkey. Also many are doubtful of this so called potential. Twenty nine Twitter users are on trial for tweeting during the Gezi Park protests for inciting the public to break the law. Columnist Önder Aytaç was sentenced to 10 months in prison for swearing at the Prime Minister of Turkey in a tweet. Similar charges were brought upon the editor of Today's Zaman, Bülent Kele. Mahir Zeynalov, a journalist from Azerbaijan working for Today's Zaman, was deported from Turkey for posting tweets critical of the government.

If the “primary purpose of journalism is to provide citizens with the information they need to be free and self-governing” as Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007: 12) posit, then the rise of the internet and social media platforms make that purpose more relevant. As Marchionni (2013) puts, “professional, mainstream journalism is attempting to reinvent itself for a new age of online sharing and audience participation” (p.133). But in a restricted terrain such as in Turkey is this the case?

Freedom of the press and chronic self-regulation of journalists have been long standing issues of concern in Turkey. Despite the government’s efforts to filter the content to muzzle the critical voices, in recent years Twitter like micro-blogging has surged in Turkey. Even with the restrictive legal environment, the Turkish blogosphere is surprisingly vibrant and diverse (Attikan & Tunç, 2011). This study aims to discover how journalists in Turkey are making use of this new tool. A majority of media outlets in Turkey are a part of conglomerates engaged in business activities other than media making them in a way dependent on the government in terms of economy. The media landscape in Turkey is at best described as suffocated and distinctly lacking in freedom and editorial independence. As many scholars point out fierce censorship and self-censorship are practiced on a daily basis in these big media outlets. It would be of interest to this study to see if journalists on Twitter were exhibiting more editorial freedom.

METHOD

Analysis of journalists’ use of Twitter in Turkey comes from in-depth analysis of 1715 tweets between March 5, 2012 and March 19, 2012. The 20 most followed journalists in Turkey was compiled from TwitTurk (twitturk.com), a Turkish twitter network project that compiles and aggregates together Turkish Twitter users, and also categorizes and tags Twitter users according to their profession. The sample derived for this study included each journalist’s number of followers as of February 2012. At that time Cüneyt Özdemir from *Radikal* newspaper was atop the list with 477,087 followers, while Mehmet Baransu from *Taraf* newspaper was at No. 20 with 87,458 followers. Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton (2012) mentioned in their study, “evidence of Twitter growth and the attraction of users to follow journalists can be seen in the large increase in the maximum number of the followers” (p.28). This can be seen in the Turkish case as well. As of September 2014, Cüneyt Özdemir has 2,337,865 followers and Mehmet Baransu has 720,131.

All of these 20 journalists work for national newspapers and all of them have a daily column. Nine of them also work for national network television broadcast networks. Six of the 20 top followed journalists on Twitter are women. It is also important to note that the journalists in the sample are well established media figures, recognizable by many on the screen as well. 16 have been active on Twitter since mid 2009, with two who opened their account in late 2008, and the other two in 2011.

Every tweet during March 5-19, 2012 published on the main Twitter account of each journalist was captured for this study by two research assistants on a daily basis during this time period and saved in single folders for each journalist. In developing coding categories this study drew on the methodology used by Pew Journalism and Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton’s (2012) study, adapting and expanding it for an analysis of journalists’ Twitter use in Turkey¹. The time period was chosen because it resembled a typical news week in Turkey. In the case of a breaking news event (such as the Gezi Park protests of 2013), it is likely that the Twitter feed of journalists would be different. One of the goals of this study is to look at the use of Twitter by journalists in Turkey during a typical news week not an extraordinary one dominated by a major breaking story.

As put forth by Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton (2012), journalists on Twitter differ from their traditional roles in a number of ways: (1) By expressing personal opinions on subjects they deviate from their roles as nonpartisan information providers; (2) they share their gatekeeping role with the public through posting or tweeting from others on their timeline; (3) through providing links on their timeline to additional material they are offering transparency and accountability to their professional work (p.23).

Thus in order to test these elements for Turkish journalists on Twitter, the following were coded for each tweet: (1) tweet date; (2) journalist; (3) the outlet the journalist worked for; (4) whether the focus of the tweet was one of the “big stories” for that period (big stories are defined here as stories on topics that occur often in news media, featured in multiple news outlets during the time period under study); (5) the geographic focus of the tweet ; and (6) broad story topic; journalists tweets were also coded for the (7) type of tweet- if the tweet was an original post, if it is a “retweet” or not, if it is “in reply to” or not; (8) if the tweet contained an external link or not; (9) tweets were also coded for whether or not it sought information from followers such as seeking quotes or sources for a story, seeking opinion from followers or asking them for a response or feedback; and (10) if it

was a personal anecdote or not'; and also(11) if it contained a hashtag or not.

Kovach and Rosentiel (2007) draw attention to the fact that *"the new journalist is no longer deciding what the public should know-this was the classic role of the gatekeeper. He or she is helping the audiences make order out of it"* (p.19). Thus by considering the type of tweet, and specifically with the retweet code, this study tried to determine if journalists were sharing their gatekeeping role. Retweeting was seen as *"an indication of a journalist's opening gates to allow others to participate in the news process"* (Lasorsa, Lewis & Holton, 2012: 26).

In line with Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton (2012), this study in order to measure accountability and transparency employed the following indicators: (1) Tweets were coded if they contained a personal anecdote or not. The idea of sharing details about one's personal life was regarded as transparency; (2) A discussion between the journalist and another person on Twitter was also regarded as contributing to accountability and transparency. Thus the reply tweet code was used to test this function. Reply tweet codes were coded in two ways in this study:as a reply tweet to another journalist and as a reply tweet to public. In discussions with fellow journalists or with the public, journalists may answer specific questions, engage in job talking, or elaborate on ongoing stories; (3) Each tweet in this study was also coded for big story and topic. Here the attempt was to see if the journalists on Twitter were talking about news topics or more about their personal lives; (4) Linking was also considered as an indicator contributing to transparency and accountability. Each tweet was coded for if it contained a link or not. Additionally each link was coded for it the link was to a news story on the journalist's own news organization, to an editorial/commentary piece on the journalist's own news organization, to a news story on another news organization, to an editorial/commentary piece on another news organization, or another link.

RESULTS

There is a lot of talk about the symbiotic relationship between mainstream media and social media (Kawamoto, 2003; Davis, 2008; Mare, 2013). In an aim to see if the news agenda as presented in mainstream media was reflected in Twitter as well, the study compared the top stories across mainstream media and Twitter feeds of journalists between March 5, 2012 and March 19, 2012. The mainstream media top stories for the

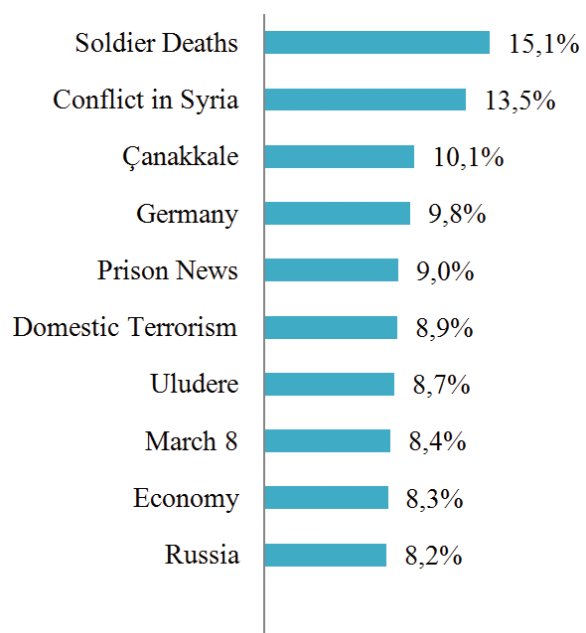
period under study were provided by *Medya Takip Merkezi* (MTM) (the Media Monitoring Center) in Turkey. MTM numbers come from the analysis of a total of 180 national and local newspapers and of new magazines published in Turkey during the time of the study.

In mainstream platforms, soldier deaths in Turkey and the conflict in Syria filled most of the newshole² (see Chart 1). News on soldier deaths filled 15.1% of the newshole according to MTM, the conflict in Syria 13.5% of the coverage and stories commemorating the anniversary of the Battle for Galipoli (Çanakkale) came in at No. 3 (10.1%).

Germany stories for this period were about then Prime Minister Erdoğan's planned visit to Germany to receive the International Leadership Award and on Germany's decision to withdraw the award. Prison News stories is a category of news events about ongoing trials and proceedings in Turkey. Within MTM data, stories about Ergenekon, Balyoz, Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK), and journalists Ahmet Şık and Nedim Şener trials were included under the category of Prison News.

Chart 1: Mainstream Media Top Stories

Mainstream Media Top 10 News Stories March 5-19, 2012

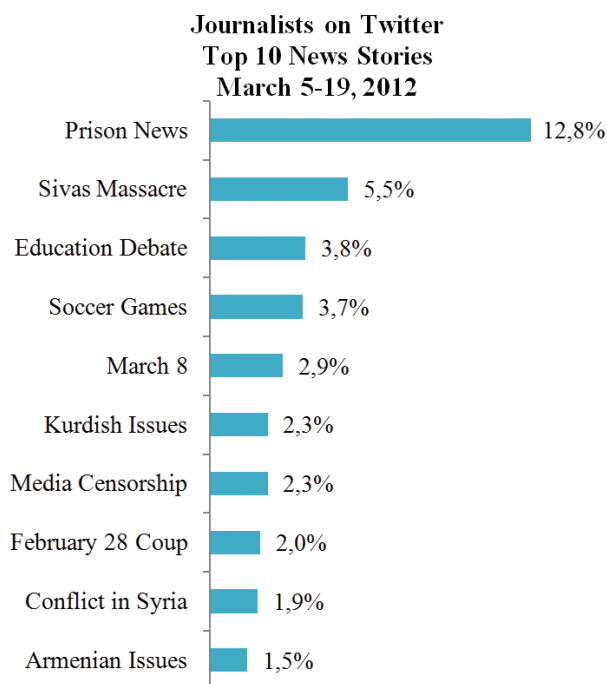


Source: Medya Takip Merkezi (Media Monitoring Center)

The Ergenekon trial is based on an investigation accusing members of the armed forces, media, aca-

demia, and oppositional party members as part of a secularist organization named Ergenekon aimed to overthrow the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). The Balyoz case includes high profile members of the armed forces and accuses them of plotting a secularist military coup in the country. The KCK trial is about people who have been detained on charges of terrorism and backing KCK. Journalists Ahmet Şık and Nedim Şener were on trial for being members of the Ergenekon case but denying any ties the reporters stated that they were being censored because of their investigative writing. News on Uludere (Roboski) relates to the incident in which two Turkish F16 jets fired at a group of villagers, killing 34 of them, acting on the information that Kurdistan Worker Party (PKK) militants were crossing the border illegally. March 8 News were stories about International Women's Day celebrations.

Chart 2: *Journalists on Twitter Top Stories* ³



For Journalists on Twitter, the agenda seemed a little different for the same period under study (Chart 2). 58.4% of the journalist tweets on Twitter had no particular big story. 12.8% of the tweets were about Prison News. Especially one particular story within that category stood out. Trial proceedings of Ahmet Şık and Nedim Şener and their release from prison news on March 12, 2012 constituted more than half of the stories within that category (56.7%). These two prominent investigative reporters were charged with aiding in the Ergenekon plot and had been in jail for more than

a year. Journalists were welcoming the release of their fellow reporters.

The second biggest story for journalists on Twitter was about the Sivas Massacre of 1993. Seen as a major assault on free speech and human rights in Turkey, the Massacre refers to the events of July 2, 1993 which resulted in the death of 37 people, most of them Alevi intellectuals who had gathered for a cultural festival in Sivas, in a hotel fire set by a mob of Islamic extremists. On March 13, 2012 the case against the defendants was dropped due to the statute of limitations. This created an instant reaction on Twitter. Journalists were also a part of this, but not all made this part of their agenda online. 66% of the stories in regards to the Massacre were dated March 13, 2012, the day the news that the case was dropped became public. Among the journalist studied, 3 journalists were responsible for 57% of the tweets in regards to Sivas Massacre news. On days when two big stories came back to back (Ahmet Şık and Nedim Şener's release from prison and the Sivas Massacre statute of limitations news), journalists seemed to be more concerned about the fate of their fellow reporters.

The Education Debate, another important long running issue in Turkey was the third top story for journalists on Twitter during the period under study (with 3.8% of the tweets dedicated to the subject). The AKP government's decision to introduce a 4+4+4 year system by decreasing the elementary education to 4 years was viewed by many as a move to pave the way for religious vocational schools for the secondary education. Journalists on Twitter were actively retweeting both their fellow journalists' as well as readers' reaction to the new regulation in education.

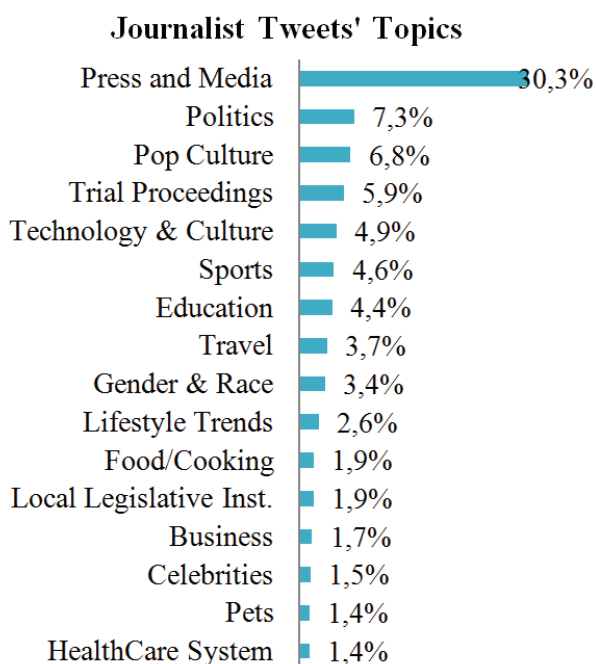
It is not all serious news on Twittersphere. Soccer is a big part of life in Turkey, and when especially Turkey's two of the most successful clubs Fenerbahçe and Galatasaray's game fell on March 17, 2012, journalists took to Twitter to comment on the game and also engage in playful rivalry debates among themselves (more than 57% of all tweets about soccer where dated the day of the game).

Overall the news agenda of the mainstream media and that of journalists on Twitter showed some, though minor, similarity during the period in which both were studied. In all, three out of the top ten stories covered by traditional media were also stories journalists tweeted the most about, though the order varied. Prison News accounted for 12.8% of the tweets studied and was the top story during that time. In mainstream media 9.0% of the newshole was devoted to the same story. The second biggest

story for mainstream media, the ongoing conflict in Syria, filled 13.5% of the newshole, while on Twitter among journalists the same topic only registered for 1.9% of the tweets coded.

A look into the topics covered on Twitter by journalists shows that one third of all the tweets (30.3%) were about stories that dealt with the press and media (Chart 3). 21.4% of tweets under the press and media topic were stories in relation to the release of journalists Ahmet Şık and Nedim Şener from jail; 6.5% of them dealt with general media censorship issues in Turkey; and 4.2% of them with the implication of the February 28, 1997 coup, a military attempt to staunch the increasing religiosity within the Turkish society by forcing out Turkey's first pro-Islam government, and its implications on the control of news media. Journalists were also tweeting about the two Turkish reporters who went missing in Syria.

Chart 3: *Topic of Journalist Tweets*



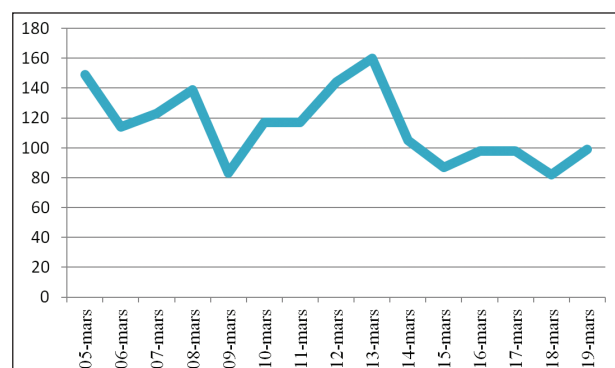
The majority of the tweets within the press and media topic category though were stories that were not part of an ongoing big story (52% of all stories coded under the press and media topic were no big stories). A closer look into these stories reveals that these tweets were mostly when journalists were interacting with both their fellow journalists and their readers/public (45.1% of all press and media stories under the no big story category were reply tweets). Journalists were engaging in banter and some minor information exchange with their colleagues, and were busily thanking their readers

for commenting on their reporting. Tweets coded under the politics category were mostly about routine day to day political news of leader visits and speeches. Popular culture with 6.8% was the No.3 topic for journalists on Twitter. Tweets within this topic ranged from sharing and commenting from popular music to movies (81.2% of the popular culture tweets were not related to an ongoing news event). 17.1% of the popular culture tweets were about Turkish soap operas signaling the presence of a more light hearted side of Twitter content for journalists.

WHO TWEETS AND HOW OFTEN

An overall assessment of all journalist tweets combined indicates sporadic spikes which coincide with major breaking events (Figure 1). The highest number of tweets was on March 13, 2013, the day journalists Ahmet Şık and Nedim Şener were released from prison and the night of the Fenerbahçe and Galatasaray soccer derby game.

Figure 1: *Overall Timeline of Journalist Tweets*



Among the journalists that were studied daily Twitter activity varied widely. Journalists Twitter participation is evident from the number of total tweets during the study period. The journalist with the highest amount of tweets was also the one who had one of the most followers. The top 5 most followed journalists on Twitter included one who tweeted the most (with 231 tweets during the period under study), but also three top followed journalists who were among the least posting (with 20, 13, and 6 tweets only). There seemed to be no relationship between the number of followers journalists had and the amount of tweeting they did. Although very popular and well know media figures they are, it seemed they only regarded Twitter as an additional area to publish their work. The average number of tweets per day for journalists in this study was 6 (Table 1 presents a descriptive profile of the journalists in the sample of this study).

Table 1: Top 20 Journalists in Turkey Followed on Twitter, March 2012

Journalist	Affiliation	Gender	# Of tweets	Followers at the time-march 2012
C. ÖZDEMİR	Radikal & CNN Türk	M	153	477,087
M. A. BİRAND	Hürriyet & ATV	M	20	458,841
Y.ÖZDİL	Hürriyet	M	13	440,468
A. HAKAN	Hürriyet & CNN Türk	M	231	399,894
F.ALTAI	Habertürk & Habertürk TV	M	6	236,878
R. GÜLŞAN	Habertürk	F	190	167,175
B.GÜVEN	Radikal & NTV	F	53	152,552
E. BAŞARAN	Radikal	F	82	140,502
N. ILICAK	Sabah & CNN Türk	F	112	138,951
C. SEMERCİOĞLU	Hürriyet & TV8	M	11	132,706
Y. KOPAN	Radikal & NTV	M	77	123,673
E. TEMELKURAN	Habertürk	F	161	114,437
M. CABAS	NTV	M	21	104,028
O. EĞİN	Akşam & Start TV	M	34	101,507
S. KUZULOĞLU	Radikal & TRT	M	119	98,613
A. ÖZYURT	CNN Türk	F	202	94,228
S. TURGUT	Habertürk & Habertürk TV	M	5	93,225
S. AKINAN	Akşam	M	40	89,103
B. COŞKUN	Cumhuriyet	M	161	88,614
M. BARANSU	Taraf & Kanaltürk	M	24	87,458

A closer look at Twitter activity of the journalist under study did reveal some, albeit small, differences when it came to gender. Six out of the 20 journalists were female, yet despite their lower number they were responsible for 46.7% of the tweets examined in this study (800 tweets came from female journalists vs. 915 tweets from 14 male journalists). Female journalists were definitely tweeting more than their male colleagues. Female journalists also were linking more to external news sites, used hashtags, replied more, and retweeted more. While press and media stories were among the topics preferred by both genders, the second most popular topics for men were pop culture, technology and travel, while stories on trial proceedings, politics and education topped the chart for women journalists.

The journalists that were part of this study are journalists working for prestigious news organizations and thus enjoy a certain celebrity status in Turkey and possibly attract Twitter followers because of it. As Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton (2012)

point out “*having been socialized into the nation’s leading news organizations, they may be more inclined to keep the status quo than their counterparts at news organizations with possibly less reach and influence*” (p.31). The difference of Twitter activity among the journalists under study indicates no such correlation. Eleven out of the 20 journalists in the sample also host their own shows on TV as well. While the most followed journalist Cüneyt Özdemir and Ahmet Hakan were certainly the most active on Twitter, Fatih Altaylı also a journalist and TV host of celebrity stature only took to Twitter 6 times during the period under study.

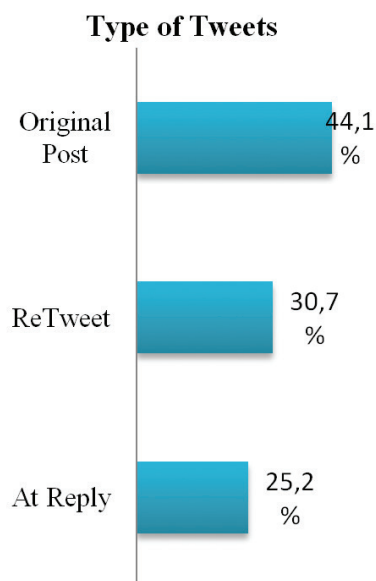
There was also no apparent pattern when it came to younger vs. older journalists within this sample. For example, Bekir Coşkun and Nazlı Ilıcak, two of the older and more established journalists in the sample were also among the journalists who tweeted more often (with 116 and 112 tweets respectively) in comparison to some of their younger counterparts, such as Mirgün Cabas who tweeted only 21 times.

SHARING INFORMATION

Retweeting on Twitter is a common practice. A retweet is a re-post of someone else's tweet, allowing one to share the content with one's followers. Retweeting or passing along another tweet in theory allows news organizations or journalists to forward another user's tweet to their own audience (PEW Journalism, 2012). About one third of tweets in this sample were retweets (44.1 % were original posts, 30.7% were retweets) (Chart 4).

Original posts by journalists on Twitter varied both in big story and in topic. While majority of the original posts (59.5% of them) were not associated with an ongoing big story, tweets in relation to Prison News emerged as the big story that journalists tweeted the most as an original post (12.8% of the original posts). In terms of topic yet again stories about press and media were at the top (16.2% of the original posts). And 12.9% of the original posts were tweets in regards to popular culture.

Chart 4: Type of Journalist Tweets

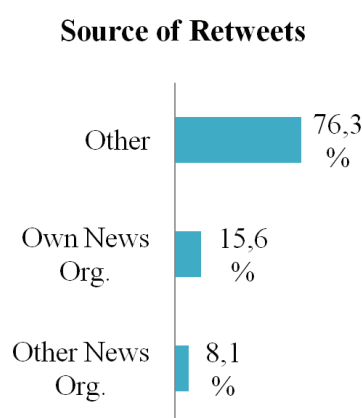


Retweeting on Twitter has the potential to introduce new voices and new ideas besides one's own, and in addition it can expand the reporting on a given topic through the inclusion of other sources (PEW Journalism, 2012). There was considerable variation in retweeting across journalists. While three out of the 20 journalists chose to not retweet at all, there were two whose tweeter feed consisted of mostly retweets.

When it comes to retweeting there was a fair share of self-promotion going on in terms of publicizing one's own stories and also other content from the

journalists' own news organization (15.6 %, Chart 5). Only 8.1% of the retweets were from a news organization other than their own. More than three quarters of the retweets came from other sources. A closer look at them reveals that there was also a fair share of self-promotion going on there by publicizing one's own story. Journalists were retweeting the reader/public tweets about themselves indicating that retweeting can be a form of curation and recommendation, but this time journalists were recommending themselves.

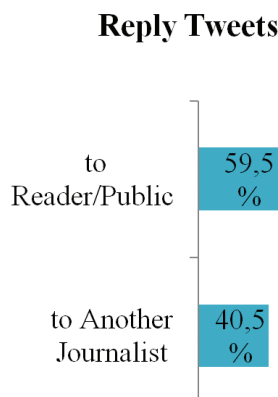
Chart 5: Source of Journalist Retweets



Data also shows that in some cases journalists were using the retweet function to share information that mainstream media may not be carrying live or was not covering via people on the ground. March 11, 2012 when politicians broke into a brawl in the parliament while discussing the proposed 4+4+4 reform in education; March 12 when Ahmet Şık and Nedim Şener were released from jail; the announcement of the statute of limitations for the Sivas Massacre trial and the ensuing live protest in the streets on March 13th; and the news that a helicopter had crashed in Kabul, Afghanistan killing 12 soldiers on March 16, 2012 were some of the stories that received play by play retweets from journalists on Twitter.

The reply tweet is a special type of Twitter activity representing an exchange shared between the journalist and another specified Twitter user in a public fashion (Lasorsa, Lewis & Holton, 2012). 25.2% of all tweets analyzed for the period under study were reply tweets (Table 4). Within the reply tweets more than half of them were tweets when the journalist was engaging in conversation with the reader/public (59.5%) (Chart 6). When replying to a reader/public, journalists were most of the time answering specific questions about their work or elaborating on it, and also chatting about current news events.

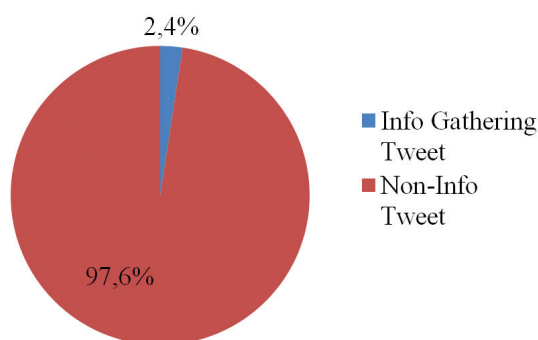
Chart 6: Journalist Reply Tweets



The practice of “talking” to one’s audience could be seen as an act of trying to build a relationship with the reader/public and thus as a contribution to transparency. 40.5% of the reply tweets were directed to other journalists. Journalists here were engaging in job talking, and discussion among themselves. There was also, albeit slight, some friendly banter amongst themselves especially when it came to interaction between journalists who happened to be rooting for rival teams during derby soccer matches.

Journalists in this study exhibited variation in how much they replied on Twitter. Just like in the retweet category, there were some journalists (four out of twenty) who chose not to engage with anybody at all on Twitter. These were journalists who also tweeted and retweeted less. And four others whose reply tweets accounted for more than half of their activity type on Twitter. There was one extreme case where the journalist’s Twitter feed consisted of 69.6% of reply tweets.

Figure 2: Information Seeking Journalists

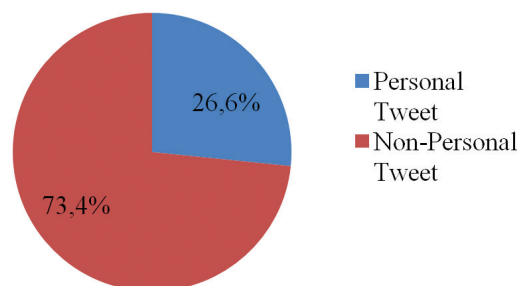


Of all the tweets only 2.4% of them asked followers for information, such as to ask question about an ongoing topic or asking for some feedback (Figure 2). Even the most active journalists were not solicit-

ing information. Nine of the 20 journalists examined in this study never asked followers to help provide information during the period under study.

Another question is the degree to which journalists use Twitter in a personal way. Journalists included personal anecdotes in 26.6% of the tweets studied during the period under study (Figure 3). This figure shows that the idea that Twitter might be a venue, where professional share details of their personal lives, is true to some extent. Yet as in all other categories, journalists exhibited differences among themselves here as well. Three out of the 20 journalists did not tweet anything personal, two mostly tweeted personal stuff (one journalist’s 62.3% tweets and another’s 70% of the tweets contained personal anecdotes). These anecdotes were not particularly informational. Some were about getting ready backstage before a TV talk show and hanging out with guests, some were about travel, food and aging. The journalists under study are well known columnists who frequently appear on TV talk shows, thus it is common that they would be expected to express their opinions as a form of professional judgment. But, a closer look at the overall tweets also suggests that there’s room for satire and lighthearted commentary on popular culture as well.

Figure 3: Personal Anecdotes



There was very little hashtag use by journalists under study during the period. Only 4% of all the tweets contained a hashtag. The # symbol denotes a hashtag, and a symbol is used before a keyword or a phrase to mark or categorize a tweet. Clicking on a hashtag shows all tweets in a category. Hashtags enable users to create, spread, and validate the way events are framed (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013). In the news context a hashtag signals that a tweet, and by extension a linked story is related to a particular ongoing news story or topic (PEW Journalism, 2012). Nine out of 20 journalists under study did not use hashtags. The few who did, were using it as a way to link their story or their column to an ongoing news event. For example, there were place-based-

hashtags (#sivas, #madimak) to connect tweets to news about the Sivas massacre trials. The hashtag #sivastazamanasiminahayir, (which translates into “no to the statute of limitations in the Sivas case”), was used to connect one’s tweets to an ongoing protest on Twitter to the Sivas massacre case decision. The #ahmetnedimozgur (“ahmetandnedim are free”) hashtag was used to connect tweets to the release of Ahmet Şık and Nedim Şener from prison story. As PEW Journalism (2012) states, hashtags enhance the chance that tweets will be read by individuals who are not following one’s feed. The lack of #hashtag use by many journalists in this case suggests that journalists are not making full use of this potential on Twitter.

CONCLUSIONS

Some of the major conclusions of this study are the following:

The journalists in Turkey studied varied widely in how frequently they posted and on what topics they posted. Some used the tool heavily: they self-promoted and engaged in conversations with their readers. Others hardly used it. Though what was common for all was that when journalists did tweet, very little of that material was information gathering/seeking in nature. It can be said that Twitter for journalists in Turkey in 2012 was not seen as a reporting tool.

There’s a lot of talk about the symbiotic relationship between mainstream media and social media, suggesting social media feeding off of mainstream media news. Journalists tweet analysis in the case of Turkey suggested only a minor overlap. Journalists on Twitter in 2012 seemed to be setting their own agenda. They were reacting to ongoing news stories but their priority seemed to be on themselves. On a larger scale perhaps, one might make the argument that the fact an alternate, albeit slightly different, agenda exists on Twitter might in the future evolve into a freer press with less self-regulation of journalists.

Retweeting or passing along another tweet in theory allows news organizations or journalists to forward another user’s tweet to their own audience. Data here shows that in some rare cases in 2012, journalists were using the retweet function to share information that mainstream media may not be carrying live or is not covering via people on the ground. In terms of retweeting there was a fair share of self-promotion going on in terms of publicizing one’s own story and also other stories from the journalist’s news organization. Journalists when

linking were linking to own news institution and also to own work.

In terms of journalistic practice the reply tweet might contribute to professional accountability and transparency, because it involves an exchange between the journalist and another specified Twitter user. More than half of the reply tweets were tweets in response to the reader/public. Journalists were answering specific questions about their work or were asked to elaborate on certain matters. This suggests that Twitter might become a tool for connecting the journalist and the public in Turkey and contributing to the accountability and transparency of the profession.

The use of hashtags in the given sample was very low. The lack of hashtags use is surprising as hashtags would enhance the chance of the journalists to be more visible since hashtags potentially can be read by individuals who are not following said journalist. In 2012, journalists in Turkey were hardly making use of this aspect of Twitter.

Another question is the degree to which individuals use Twitter in a personal way. The idea that Twitter is the venue where professionals share details about their personal lives was true to some degree among journalists studied in Turkey. Tweets about favorite song, movie as well as tweets about travel and aging showcased the human side of the journalists in Turkey. It is important to note that journalists that were part of this study are journalists working for prestigious news organizations and thus enjoy a certain celebrity status in Turkey and possibly attract Twitter followers because of it. As Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton (2012) point out “*having been socialized into the nation’s leading news organizations, they may be more inclined to keep the status quo than their counterparts at news organizations with possibly less reach and influence*” (p.31). Though many were into self-promoting on Twitter, the fact that the trial proceedings of journalists Ahmet Şık and Nedim Şener and their release from prison news on March 12, 2012 received major coverage on Twitter among journalists, might suggest the possibility of Twitter like microblogging system’s potential for improving what many consider as the deteriorating landscape of journalism in Turkey.

This study represents a first of a kind content analysis of journalists in Turkey’s use of Twitter. As Twitter becomes more mainstream its use patterns are likely to evolve as well, yet at this point the study overall suggests that Twitter use of journalists for reporting purposes is at its beginning stages in 2012. The study provides a snapshot of a certain period and can serve as a benchmark for further studies

of Twitter use among journalists in Turkey. A follow up study to track changes in Twitter use would be instrumental.

As with all studies, this one has its limitations as well. This study looked into only 20 journalists, and only considered the ones with the most followers. All of the journalists in the sample were journalists working for major news organizations. A subsequent study including online journalists and citizen journalists could provide further insight into news conversations on Twitter. Additional interviews with journalists on their Twitter use would be an invaluable addition to extend this study.

Turkey is a country where freedom of the press and chronic self-regulation of journalists have been long standing issues of concern -a recent report by Reporters without Borders refers to Turkey as the world's biggest prison for journalists. Many journalists are targeted, dismissed or forced to quit their

jobs. Twitter like microblogging platforms can be of vital importance in such an environment. Economic and political concerns of a country no doubt extend to and influence national information and communication technology policies. After all, to what a user has access and why depends on the specific legal, economic, political and social conditions within a country. Unfortunately the internet, just like mainstream media, is under heavy control. Recent internet legislature has been subject to both national and international reaction. The legal provisions and practices related to freedom of expression and media pluralism on the internet seem to pose serious repercussions for journalists as well as ordinary citizens. How Twitter practice for journalists in Turkey will continue to evolve will be deeply connected to Turkish government's relationship with the Internet, as well as the media in general.

NOTES

^{1.} All data was coded by the author. The author of this study worked as a Methodologist and Analyst at PEW Journalism 2006-2009, and was one of the developers of the original codebook for the PEW Journalism News Index.

^{2.} Newshole refers to the time spent on a particular story on TV and radio, and the space allocated to a particular story in print and online.

^{3.} The reason why the breakdown of big story for tweets does not add up to 100% is because 58.4% of the tweets were not associated with a big story and were thus excluded from Table 2.

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ABSTRACT | RÉSUMÉ | RESUMO

En This study builds on Lasorsa, Lewis & Holton's (2012) work, and on a study by the Pew Research Center's Journalism Project (PEW Journalism), *How Mainstream Media Outlets Use Twitter* (2012); and focuses on how journalists in Turkey behave on Twitter. It aims to explore what kind of information Turkish journalists share online and how they share it, if and how they engage with fellow users; and how their overall Twitter practice influences, and in some cases, redefines their role as professional journalists. To answer these research questions a list of the 20 most-read Turkish journalists and their 1715 tweets between March 5, 2012 and March 19, 2012 were analyzed. The study revealed that the journalists observed varied widely in how frequently they posted, and on what topics they posted. Data showed that journalists in some cases used the retweet function to share information mainstream media was perhaps not able to cover live or with people on site. In terms of retweeting there was a fair share of self-promotion going on in terms of publicizing one's own story and also other stories from the journalist's news organization. Journalists also answered specific questions about their work or were asked to elaborate on certain matters. There was also a fair share of satire and lighthearted commentary on popular culture, food, travel and aging. This study represents a first-of-a-kind content analysis of Twitter use by journalists in Turkey. As Twitter becomes more mainstream its use patterns are likely to evolve as well, yet at this point the study suggests that, generally speaking, Twitter use by journalists for reporting purposes is in its infancy in 2012. The study provides a snapshot of a certain period and can serve as a benchmark for further studies of Twitter use among journalists in Turkey.

Keywords: Twitter, journalism, Turkey, content analysis, social media.

Fr Cette étude s'appuie sur le travail de Lasorsa, Lewis & Holton (2012) et sur une étude du Pew Research Center's Journalism Project (PEW Journalism), *How Mainstream Media Outlets Use Twitter* (2012), et s'intéresse au comportement des journalistes sur Twitter en Turquie. Elle vise à explorer les types d'information que les journalistes turcs partagent en ligne et de quelle façon ils les partagent ; si et de quelle manière ils communiquent avec d'autres utilisateurs ; et enfin comment la pratique de Twitter influence et dans certains cas redéfinit leur rôle en tant que journalistes professionnels. Pour répondre à ces questions, une liste des 20 journalistes turcs les plus suivis ainsi que leurs 1 715 tweets datant du 5 mars 2012 au 19 mars 2012 ont été analysés. L'étude a révélé que la fréquence de publication et les sujets postés variaient considérablement. Les journalistes étudiés avaient parfois recours à la fonction *retweet* pour partager des informations que les médias traditionnels ne pouvaient sans doute pas couvrir en direct ou via des individus sur le terrain. De nombreux *retweets* servaient avant tout à mettre en avant des articles rédigés par les journalistes eux-mêmes ou par des journalistes de leurs groupes de presse dans une dynamique d'autopromotion. Les journalistes répondaient également à des questions précises sur leurs travaux ou étaient invités à donner des détails sur certaines questions d'actualité. La satire, de même que des commentaires amusés sur la culture populaire, la nourriture, les voyages et le vieillissement occupaient également une place considérable. C'est la première fois qu'une étude se consacre à l'analyse du contenu de l'utilisation de Twitter par les journalistes turcs. S'il est probable que les usages de Twitter évolueront au fur et à mesure de sa démocratisation, il apparaît que, d'une manière générale, l'utilisation de Twitter pour couvrir l'actualité en était à ses balbutiements en 2012. L'étude fait état d'une situation à une période donnée qui pourra servir de référence à de futures études portant sur les usages de Twitter des journalistes en Turquie.

Mots-clés : Twitter, journalisme, Turquie, analyse de contenu, réseaux sociaux.

Pt. Este estudo se apoia no trabalho de Lasorsa, Lewis & Holton (2012) e no estudo do Pew Research Center's Journalism Project (PEW Journalism), *How Mainstream Media Outlets Use Twitter* (2012), e está centrado no comportamento dos jornalistas da Turquia no Twitter. Busca explorar os tipos de informação que os jornalistas turcos partilham na internet e como – se existe um como – é produzido o engajamento com outros usuários. Investiga ainda como as práticas no Twitter influenciam, e em alguns casos redefinem, o papel dessas pessoas enquanto jornalistas profissionais. Para responder a essas questões de pesquisa analisou-se uma lista dos 20 jornalistas turcos mais seguidos, bem como 1.715 tweets publicados por eles entre os dias 5 e 18 de março de 2012. O estudo revelou que os jornalistas estudados variaram consideravelmente na frequência de publicação e nos assuntos postados. Os dados mostram que os jornalistas utilizam, em certos casos, a função *retweet* para compartilhar informações que a mídia tradicional não pode cobrir ao vivo ou por meio de jornalistas in loco. Em termos de *retweet* há um número considerável de autopromoção por parte de jornalistas que publicizam seus próprios textos além de outras produções oriundas do seu veículo. Os jornalistas também respondem a questões específicas sobre o seu trabalho ou são instados a dar detalhes sobre alguns assuntos do noticiário. Uma parte considerável de sátira também foi detectada, bem como comentários leves sobre cultura popular, alimentação, viagens e envelhecimento. Este estudo representa uma primeira análise de conteúdo sobre a utilização do Twitter por jornalistas turcos. Na medida em que o Twitter se torna cada vez mais difundido junto ao grande público, seus modos de utilização também são suscetíveis de evoluir – independente do que foi sugerido por este estudo sobre a utilização do Twitter para difusão de informação no início de 2012. Por isso, o estudo é um retrato de uma situação específica, em um momento específico, e pode servir de referência para pesquisas futuras sobre os usos do Twitter por jornalistas na Turquia.

Palavras-chave: Twitter, jornalismo, Turquia, análise de conteúdo, redes sociais.

