

Chapter 7

Media Shaped by COVID-19: How Is Media Changing?

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ABSTRACT

Over the past decade, the effects of digitization on Turkey's national and local press have significantly increased. In this study, the authors delve into the specific impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on this ongoing digitization process. The research focuses on two prominent daily newspapers in Turkey: Hürriyet and Yeni Asır. To gain valuable insights, the authors conducted in-depth interviews with 14 media professionals. The study's findings revealed a noteworthy shift in public trust, with social media gaining greater confidence as a news source. Additionally, national and local press have radically transformed their reporting practices, influenced by the growing digital landscape. The study highlights the pandemic's differential impact on various media outlets, underlining the emergence of stale content in the industry. This research sheds light on the dynamic interplay between digitization, the COVID-19 pandemic, and Turkey's national and local press. It offers valuable insights into changing public perceptions, reporting practices, and the diverse effects of the pandemic on media content.

INTRODUCTION

Since the turn of the century, the digitization of content, the rise of social media, and the acceleration in mobile consumption have compelled media companies to adapt their content, monetization strategies, and news production. The Covid-19 pandemic, most recently, has brought about a transformative impact on the media industry, presenting both crises and opportunities. Social distancing measures have increased home media consumption as individuals turn to news providers for timely and reliable information during the crisis.

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This pandemic has highlighted the essential role of news organizations in keeping people informed during complex and uncertain times (Nielsen et al., 2020). Numerous critical studies by Hess & Waller (2020), Richards (2014), Zelizer (2015, 2019), and Alpert and Hagy (2020) have shed light on the significant contribution of professional journalists in this endeavor. Journalists have been crucial in holding governments accountable and explaining their crisis responses, though some attempts to mislead the public about journalists and their work have also been observed.

Despite the pandemic's global effects becoming apparent, many local and national media organizations now face the risk of closure. These media entities, which have been severely impacted during this global crisis, represent the core of the news industry. Furthermore, long-established local newspapers have experienced a decline in advertising revenue (Meade, 2020; Hess & Waller, 2020).

Focusing on the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, this study examines how local and national media organizations in Turkey have undergone a transformation and explores its implications on traditional journalism practices. The study aims to provide a fresh perspective on the future of Turkey's local and national media organizations. Within this study, *Hürriyet*¹, a national and mass market newspaper with the highest circulation, and *Yeni Asır*², the oldest and most influential local media newspaper, are included in the analysis. Consequently, while analyzing the critical need for local and national journalism in Turkey amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, the study also offers valuable suggestions for the way forward.

MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

The study focuses on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on journalism in the context of the Internet, new communication environments, and the influence of social media on journalistic practices. Moreover, this study delves into the evolution of media organizations in Turkey during the Covid-19 pandemic, focusing on its effects on national and local media.

Issues, Controversies, Problems

Specific research questions were considered:

RQ1: How has the traditional media transitioned to digital, especially with the Covid-19 outbreak?

RQ2: How has this process affected the local and national media industries regarding traditional journalism practices?

Table 1 presents the questions asked during the interviews:

Table 1. Questions to the journalists

Sex
1. How long have you been working for this media organization?
2. How does the pandemic transform news organizations?
3. How do news organizations perceive this pandemic?
4. In what ways do you think the pandemic has directly or indirectly impacted male and female professionals working in the media industry?
5. Can you evaluate the effects of this process on the construction of news?

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