

## Comparison of Digitalization Problems of Local Newspapers in Turkey and Sakarya Local Newspapers

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### ABSTRACT

A great number of studies have been carried out on the problems of local newspapers in Turkey. The most important common point specified in the studies is economic insufficiency. Developments in internet technologies are perceived as a disadvantage for printed newspapers. As a matter of fact, printed local newspapers have difficulty in resisting the digital media that is easy to access for audience, free of charge, and it provides the opportunity to reach the news regardless of time and place. When the problems of local newspapers published in Sakarya are analysed, similar situations are encountered. Most of the local newspapers in Sakarya could not complete their digitalization and they have to deal with the problems it brings along. In the study, in which the Mixed Research Method is used, the problems of local newspapers in Turkey and the problems of local newspapers in Sakarya will be searched in terms of digitalization perspective.

**Keywords:** Local newspaper, Digitalization of newspaper, Problems of Sakarya local newspapers

### INTRODUCTION

According to the report published by TURKSTAT (Turkish Statistical Institute) in 2021, the number of newspapers and magazines decreased by 13.5% and fell to 4746 in 2020 compared to 2019. 54.4% of these publications were journals. The number of newspapers, which was 2 thousand 337 in 2019, decreased to 2 thousand 164 in 2020. Whereas, 91.1% of the newspapers published locally. This means that there are approximately 1 thousand 971 active local newspapers as of 2020 (TURKSTAT, 2021).

Although the interest in communication has increased during the Covid-19 process, there have been serious increases in expenditure due to problems arising from production and distribution around the world. One of the most affected sectors by this situation is the traditional media sector and newspapers in particular. For instance, the local newspaper called "Yeniden Günaydın", which publishes in print in Diyarbakir, has started to continue its publications only in digital media as of January 10, 2022, stating the increasing expenditure. Eight journalists working at the newspaper were terminated. (tr.sputniknews.com, 2022).

The effects of the increasing inflation tendency around the world between the years 2020-2022 is seen in Turkey as well. One of the most important sources of income for local newspapers to continue their activities is Official Announcements organized and distributed by the Press Announcement Agency. According to the 2020 data of TURKSTAT, official announcement and advertising expenditure decreased by 2.6 percent compared to the previous year and became 454 million 729 thousand 980 (TURKSTAT-2021).

Official advertisement publications can also be considered as a support for newspapers today, where digital media are read many times more than printed newspapers. As a matter of fact, within this framework, according to the presidential decree published in the Official Gazette dated 24 February 2022 and numbered 31760, the new official announcement price tariff was increased by 71.57 percent in February 2022, especially by preserving local publications (newspapers with a daily circulation of less than 50 thousand).

The official announcement price tariff backdated to March 1, 2022 is as follows:

Table 1: Official Announcement Price Tariff backdated March 1, 2022 in Turkey:

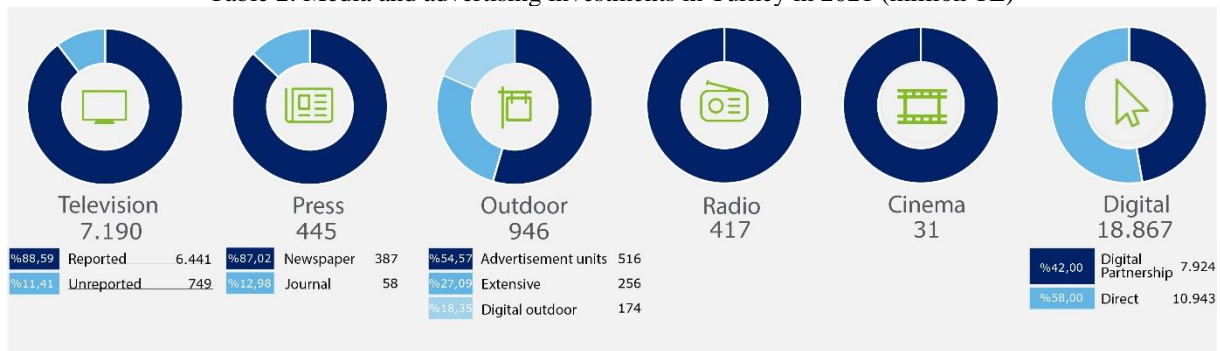
Newspaper Count	Circulation	Present Tariff Column/Cm. (₺)	New Tariff Accepted Column/Cm. (₺)	Ratio of Increase %
961	Below 50.000	20,40	35	71,57

21	Over 50.000 and more	49,35	63	27,66
982				

Source: <https://bik.gov.tr/kurumsal-haberler/resmi-ilan-fiyat-tarifesi-yenilendi-2/>

The problems faced by local newspapers in order to maintain their existence are of course not the decrease in advertising revenues, especially official advertisements. In the report published by the Association of Advertising Agencies on April 22, 2022, it has been reported that the share of digital media in advertising investments in the world is around 60 percent, meanwhile in Turkey, it has been observed that the channels that can broadcast digital advertisements have surpassed the television channel with the share they receive Association of Advertising Agencies, 2022). In the report, with the help of 90% Global Publishers ad revenue and 10% local publishers ad revenue estimation, the size of the 2021 digital advertising market in Turkey is calculated as 18 billion 867 million TL. This constitutes 46.7 percent of the advertising market. The share of the TV channel, which ranks second, is 42.4 percent.

Table 2: Media and advertising investments in Turkey in 2021 (million TL)



Source: [https://www.rvd.org.tr/uploads/2022/04/medyayatirimlari\\_2021yilsonu\\_raporu\\_final.pdf](https://www.rvd.org.tr/uploads/2022/04/medyayatirimlari_2021yilsonu_raporu_final.pdf)

If we consider the subject in terms of technological infrastructure and digitalization index data, we see that the upward acceleration in Turkey continues (Table 3) In the Turkish Informatics Industry Association's 2021 report, the individual use section is one of the best topics in Turkey, considering the digital data, and is the individual use component. (İzmen, Kılıçaslan and Üçdoğruk Gürel, 2021, p.56)

Table 3: Usage Component Data in Turkey Digitalization Index

	2019	2020	2021
<b>C. USAGE COMPONENT</b>	2,88	3,16	3,36
6. Size: Individual use	3,20	3,24	3,31
6.01 Phone subscription (per 100 people)	2,14	2,01	1,82
6.02 Individual internet use (%)	3,55	3,79	3,91
6.03 Computer Ownership in households (%)	3,34	3,33	3,20
6.04 Internet access in households (%)	4,24	4,30	4,51
6.05 Fixed broadband internet subscription (per 100 people)	2,27	2,40	2,45
6.06 Mobile broadband internet subscription (per 100 people)	2,12	2,14	2,21
6.07 Individuals' use of social networks (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn etc.)	4,63	4,45	4,64
6.08 Individuals' use of ICT in areas such as education, health and financial services	3,33	3,49	3,76

Source: <https://www.tubisad.org.tr/tr/images/pdf/tubisad-2021-dde-raporu.pdf>

### Objective of Research

The research has two objectives. The first objective of the research is to identify the problems of local newspapers published in different cities in Turkey and local newspapers published in Sakarya regarding their transition to the digital journalism age and to reveal how much they are affected by this process.

The second objective of the research is to compare the problems of local newspapers published in different provinces in Turkey with the ones of local newspapers in Sakarya and to analyse their similarities and differences together with their causes and effects. It is aimed to reach a more effective result and suggestion by analysing the problems of local newspapers across the country and Sakarya local newspapers.

### **Importance of Research**

Advances in internet technologies have also started to be used in communication technologies, and in this process, the digitalization of journalism has also been possible. Digital technologies that allow the transformation and circulation of all kinds of information have also caused a radical change in journalism practices (Değirmencioğlu, 2016, p.591).

Newspapers that can adapt to these changes can continue to make a name for themselves in the digital medium. Some newspapers are experiencing problems in the transition period, and the professional concerns and professional advantages of journalists may contribute diversely to the transformation. In this adaptation process, serious problems are observed in many newspapers (Ünal, 2020).

In addition to the economic problems, the number of local newspapers that cannot carry out digitalization processes is decreasing every year. With the awareness of the importance of maintaining the existence of local newspapers in order to sustain democracy and local agendas, the closure of local newspapers may cause problems not only for the employees of the sector but also for our society.

In general, our research is important in terms of addressing the problems of local newspapers against digitalization as a whole and in particular, making suggestions for local newspapers in Sakarya to find problems and solutions to digitalization.

### **Method of Investigation**

In the study, Mixed Research Methods, a research method, will be used. Karma In research methods, both quantitative and qualitative data are collected together to understand the research problems. By integrating the data collected in two different ways, the researcher uses their advantages (Creswell, 2021). This method is also substantial in terms of increasing the reliability of the research by considering it with different methods instead of just one. (Butgel Tunalı, S., Gözü, Ö.and Özen, G.,2016, p.107). It is also stated that mixed management allows the researcher to establish a bridge and link between qualitative and quantitative research (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2004 cited in Baki and Gökçek, 2012, p. 2).

In the study, the research on the problems of local media in Turkey were examined, in addition, the similarities or differences between them were tried to be reached by conducting research in Sakarya.

In parallel with this purpose, the following research questions were determined:

- What are the main problems of local newspapers in Turkey?
- What is the attitude of local newspapers in Turkey towards digitalization?
- How have local newspapers that have completed or failed to complete their digital transformations been affected?
- What are the predominant problems of local newspapers in Sakarya?
- What is the digitalization transformation status of local newspapers in Sakarya?
- How have local newspapers in Sakarya been affected by the digitalization factor?
- Do the problems of the local media in Turkey differ from or show similarities between the local media in Sakarya about being against of digitalization?

In order to find answers to the determined questions, the problems of local newspapers in Turkey, which are predominantly produced on the basis of provinces, have been discussed from the perspective of digitalization. Local newspapers in Sakarya have been examined according to digitalization data.

On the other hand, in Sakarya, local newspaper executives who completed the digitalization process and were observed to be unable to complete it were interviewed. Depth Interview Technique, which is one of the Qualitative Research Methods, was used in the interview. In the depth interview technique; it is tried to reach the knowledge, experience, feelings and observations of the interviewee by collecting data with face-to-face interviews, in which all dimensions of the subject are covered, open-ended questions are generally asked, detailed answers are aimed for better analysis (Tekin and Tekin, 2006). This method is effective in achieving results that the researcher could not foresee at the beginning. Plus, many researchers using qualitative research methods use depth interview technique (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). In the depth interview technique, non-standardized interviews were conducted as the data collection method. In the non-standardized interview, while some questions are asked in a planned and necessary manner, the flow of the conversation may take shape according to the answers given by each interviewee. In this technique, in which there is no need to prepare a special question, the researcher directs the speaker to the conversation about various aspects of the subject as much as possible, and also focuses on the points mentioned here and contributing to the research (Lune and Berg, 2019).

Moreover, Literature Search Method was used in the study. Literature search in studies; it includes stages such as researching, finding, reading, classifying summarizing and analysing previously published works on the subject. The first purpose of the literature review is to identify the previous studies and to see where the study will be placed in the literature by revealing the points reached by the literature, gaps and untouched issues. (Demirci, 2014, p.73). The necessity of literature search is not only for academic studies either. It is an innovative research technique that can be applied in all fields.

It has been determined that the literature search contributes to the following subjects (Cited from Gall, Borg and Gall, Köroğlu, S.A. 2015):

- Defining the boundaries of the research problem,
- Capturing new research subjects,
- Elimination of previously tested but unsuccessful methods,
- Determining what future studies might be,
- Forming an idea about the methods that can be used (p.61)

The universe of the research is local newspapers in Isparta, Kocaeli, Tekirdağ, Çorum, Bolu, Aksaray, Bitlis, Elazığ, Erzurum, Gümüşhane, Antalya, Konya, Kayseri, Nevşehir, Sivas, Eskişehir, Denizli and Sakarya in Turkey.

The limit of the research is the newspapers published in Turkey and making local publications.

### **Literature Search**

Various studies have been carried out in Turkey that examine the problems of local media on the subject of digitalization. One of these studies is the research titled "STRUCTURAL FEATURES AND PROBLEMS OF ISPARTA LOCAL PRESS" by Kılıç and Aygün (2020). In the study, the degree to which local journalists use technology has also been revealed. In another study, the websites of 3 local newspapers published in Kocaeli were analysed.

In another study examining the Tekirdağ example, researcher Köseoğlu (2017) analysed the digital versions of local newspapers in Tekirdağ. In his research titled "LOCAL INTERNET JOURNALISM: ÇORUM AS A CASE STUDY" Çınar (2019), examined the websites of the newspapers in Çorum and tried to find out to what extent they were doing digital journalism. In his research titled "Issues that Local Press Encountered in the Digital Communications Age" Arvas (2019), who did research about the newspapers published in Bolu province, questioned the effects of digital transformation on local newspapers in Bolu.

In the "Determinations on Problems of Local Press: A Qualitative Research at The Sample of Aksaray" by Çavuş (2017), it was searched to what extent local newspapers benefited from technological developments. A study on the adaptation of the local media to the changing technology was also carried out by analysing the local newspapers in Bitlis. Coşkun's (2021) study titled "Innovation Practices of Bitlis Local Newspapers" questions the relationship between digitalization and reader losses.

Gülcan and Bekiroğlu (2013), on the other hand, analysed whether there is a connection between the number of local presses in the internet environment in the regions where the Gross National Product (GNP) is high in their study titled "AN OVERVIEW OF THE TURKISH LOCAL PRESS IN RESPECT OF WEB JOURNALISM AND AN EVALUATION BETWEEN REGIONS".

Kurtbaşı, Doğan and Göker (2011) researched the problems of local newspapers in Elazığ and evaluated the capacity of local newspapers to use technology in their research titled "LOCAL MEDIA PROBLEMATICS AND VIEWPOINT OF THE PROBLEMS FROM SECTOR EMPLOYEES 'SAMPLE OF ELAZIĞ CITY". In Köseoğlu's (2018) research titled "A Study on the Advantages and Disadvantages of the Implementation of Local Journalism in Digital Newspapers in the Case of Local Newspapers of Erzurum", the connections of the problems encountered with digitalization of local newspapers in Erzurum with factors such as legal supervision and qualified personnel were discussed.

In Özcan (2019)'s research titled "GUMUSHANE LOCAL PRESS: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND, PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS", whether the local newspapers in Gümüşhane are aware of the importance of online publishing and the existence of internal and external factors at the point of whether or not to switch to digital journalism have been examined. Tunca and Çağlar (2022), who analysed their research with 6 of the newspapers published in print in Antalya, examined the process that the printed newspapers have gone through or are trying to

go through in the digitalization process in their research titled “DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN LOCAL NEWSPAPERS: A STUDY ON ANTALYA LOCAL NEWSPAPERS”

In the research titled "LOCAL ACTORS OF THE VIRTUAL WORLD: AN ANALYSIS OF THE LOCAL PRESS IN KONYA", which was conducted among local newspapers in Konya, the reporting techniques in the digital versions of the newspapers were analysed (Bekiroğlu and Bal, 2013). In the comparative analysis of "SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC SITUATION OF LOCAL MEDIA EMPLOYEES AND OUTLOOK OF LOCAL MEDIA PROBLEMS: A STUDY IN KAYSERİ AND NEVŞEHİR" made with local newspapers of Kayseri and Nevşehir, employees' opinions on technology use and technological competencies were investigated (Temel, Korkmaz, Somuncu and Şilen, 2013).

In the research titled “A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON THE FUTURE OF LOCAL PRESS: THE EXAMPLE OF HAKİKAT AND BÜYÜK SİVAS NEWSPAPERS” (Barış, 2021), which was conducted on local newspapers in Sivas, the expectations of local printed newspapers about their future and their perspectives on digital journalism were analysed. In the study titled "Views of Local News on the Internet - An Evaluation in the Sample of Denizli, Eskişehir and Erzurum", which examines local newspapers in Eskişehir, Erzurum and Denizli, it is analysed whether these provinces have internet news websites even though they have many local newspapers. (Gulcan and Bayram, 2013).

### **Results**

#### ***Common problems of local newspapers in Turkey***

When the local newspapers in Turkey are analysed, it is concluded that there are mainly economic problems. It brought cheap and unqualified labour force along with economic problems, and later on, this caused some ethical and quality problems in the journalism profession, which is described as a 'white-collar worker'.

One of the most important problems of newspapers is that printing expenses have increased significantly in recent years. Therefore, it has been observed that some local newspapers have stopped their newspaper publications and switched to digital publication only, while others have had to dismiss their personnel. In parallel with the deficiencies experienced by local newspapers in employing qualified personnel, the rate of employing graduates of the "Faculty of Communication" is also low.

It has led to an increase in the similarity rates of the news in different newspapers, since the newspapers that are looking for ways to reduce costs, have to employ personnel such as reporters and editors, mainly from people in News Agencies where ready news services are provided and have much cheaper costs. It causes readers' eyebrows to raise and is reflected in the online versions of newspapers.

Another common problem seen in local newspapers is the ones related to the political economy. It has been observed that local newspapers, which could not earn enough income with official advertisement revenues and commercial advertisements, received economic support from local governments, politicians or some NGOs, and as a result, they had difficulties in their editorial independence and were also criticized by the readers.

#### ***Attitudes of local newspapers in Turkey towards digitalization***

Printed newspapers in Turkey have serious difficulties in transitioning to online publications. Technological inadequacy, hesitations and reservations of newspaper management on this issue, and the perception of technological investment is unnecessary are just some of the important obstacles to their transition to digital.

The insecurity about the preparation for the indispensable requirements of internet journalism, such as the demand for effort, the need for advanced technological skills, the speed and confirmation in journalism, also affects the attitudes of newspapers towards digitalization.

Some local newspapers, on the other hand, resist transition to the online version, fearing that their circulation will decrease. Local newspapers that do online journalism update the news on their websites after they are published in their newspapers.

#### ***Status of local newspapers that have completed or failed to complete their digital transition***

Some of the local newspapers published in different provinces of Turkey have completed their digital transition and switched to online publishing. Local newspapers, which do online journalism with everything it requires, seem to be advantageous in this process. When it is analysed within the framework of the tendency of the readers to reduce their problems about confirmation and trust in internet journalism by preferring corporate newspaper websites, the fact that local newspapers are institutional can be an effective reference for readers.



When the mainstream media in Turkey is analysed, it is not a coincidence that newspapers such as *Hürriyet*, *Milliyet* and *Sabah* are among the most read news websites, and this supports the previous view. This is expected to be the ultimate aim in local newspapers, whereas it is generally seen that these transitions are incomplete and not worked efficiently due to technological or personnel inadequacies. The fact that most of the local newspapers are not able to receive advertisements and promotions on their internet versions also prevent them from continuing to pay attention to this issue in a stubborn way.

The situation is even much worse for local newspapers that have not stepped up or not completed digitization. The developments in the Covid-19 Pandemic process, especially in 2020 and 2021, had a very serious impact on the circulation of local newspapers and caused the circulation to decrease. Local newspapers, which have lost their readers and incomes in the face of digitalization, have downsized, had to take measures such as dismissing staff, reducing the number of prints, etc.

### Overview of Local Newspapers in Sakarya

There are 7 local newspapers published daily in Sakarya. All of these local newspapers receive Official Advertisements. There is no local newspaper published without an Official Announcement. All newspapers are published 6 days a week, except for Sundays.

According to the Press Advertisement Institution (BİK in Turkish) data, the newspapers published in Sakarya and their particulars are stated in Table 4.

Table 4, Sakarya Local Newspapers Where Official Announcements and Advertisements Can Be Placed in May 2022

Place	Title of the Periodical	Publication Type	Publication Period	Page Count	Acreage (m <sup>2</sup> )
1	Adapazarı Akşam Haberleri	Local	Daily	12	2,25
2	AdaPostası	Local	Daily	12	2,25
3	Bizim Sakarya	Local	Daily	12	2,35
4	Sakarya Yeniğün	Local	Daily	12	2,35
5	Sakarya Yenihaber	Local	Daily	12	2,25
6	Söz Sakarya	Local	Daily	8	1,56
7	Yeni Sakarya	Local	Daily	12	2,25

Source: <https://ilanbis.bik.gov.tr/Uygulamalar/AylikListe>

Even though it is said that Sakarya local newspapers are effective in setting the agenda, it is seen that their circulation is far behind the rates of cities such as Kocaeli and Bursa. All local newspapers in Sakarya broadcast political content. Regarding the journalism profession, there are 2 important professional organizations in terms of the number of members.

### Major issues of local newspapers in Sakarya

In the research conducted by Yazıcı (2014), it was revealed that although the situation of the press in Sakarya is relatively good compared to other cities, it has problems such as financing and qualified personnel. On the other hand, it has also been revealed that most newspapers still prefer to continue their publications in print, since they count their official advertisement revenues as their main source of income.

In the final report of a research conducted throughout Turkey, it has been observed that the circulation of newspapers has decreased by 50 percent in the last 6 years, and that the steady decline has continued since 2013, and that there has been a decline to the lowest circulation level of the last 20 years (Association of Journalists, 2022). Problems such as the decrease in circulation of the newspapers in Sakarya, the increase in costs, the inability to employ qualified personnel, the similarity of newspaper news arising from the widespread use of agency news and the situation of newspapers in political economy approaches stand out.

### Transition of local newspapers in Sakarya against digitalization

According to the data analysis utilised to see the digitalization levels of local newspapers in Sakarya and its effectiveness, it is beneficial to read two different tables. The first of these is the ranking of the internet news sites that receive the most hits in Sakarya. When Table 5 is analysed, Sakarya's most read news site is Medyabar.com, which was born digital. Medyabar.com is also among the 500 most read websites in Turkey. Medyabar is followed by t54.com.tr and haberfokus.com, respectively, which are digital-born news sites. Although they have a printed newspaper publication in Sakarya, it is still the Yenihaber Newspaper that can reach the most digital readers.

Sakaryayenihaber.com ranks 2 thousand 39 among Internet sites in Turkey. The fifth news site that receives the most visitors in Sakarya, is haberlis.com, which is a born-digital.

Table 5: Ranking of the most visited internet news sites in Sakarya among the websites in Turkey

	Name of Digital News Site	Ranking Among Websites in Turkey
1	Medyabar.com	447
2	T54.com.tr	1.526
3	Haberfokus.com	1.630
4	Sakaryayenihaber.com	2039
5	Haberlisiin.com	2.622

Source: Alexa.com, 28 Mart 2022

In Table 6, comparisons of local newspapers published in Sakarya among themselves are made through the ranking of websites all across Turkey. As it is obvious in Table 6, it is understood that 3 out of 7 newspapers took steps towards digitalization, and 4 did not care much about the issue. Sakarya Yenihaber, Bizim Sakarya and Söz Sakarya newspapers have higher ranking than other newspapers. When we look at the country ranking of Sakarya Yenigün Newspaper, which has been at the top in terms of circulation in Sakarya for many years, it is seen that it ranks 5th in Sakarya among the online versions of local newspapers.

Table 6: Rankings of newspapers in Sakarya and internet news sites in Turkey

Place	Periodical Title	Alexa Country Ranking
1	ADAPAZARI AKŞAM HABERLERİ (aksamhaberleri.com.tr)	20,189
2	ADAPOSTASI (adapostasi.com)	43,078
3	BİZİM SAKARYA (bizimsakarya.com.tr)	3,949
4	SAKARYA YENİGÜN (sakaryayenigun.com.tr)	18,697
5	SAKARYA YENİHABER (sakaryayenihaber.com)	2.039
6	SÖZ SAKARYA (sozsakarya.com)	3,872
7	YENİ SAKARYA (yenisakarya.com)	12,134

Source: Alexa.com

While Sakarya witnessed successful performances by digital-born local newspapers, there are various reasons behind the failure of the online versions of printed newspapers to achieve the same success.

In the Depth Interview technique with the managers of local newspapers in Sakarya, who could not achieve the success they wanted in digital journalism, the reason for this problem was tried to be determined with the help of semi-structured questions. In the research, it is understood that the local newspapers, which could not achieve similar success in the digital environment despite being in the top ranks in terms of circulation in Sakarya, do not attach importance to this issue, do not make the necessary technological investments, and finally do not work with expert personnel on this subject.

As one of the reasons why newspaper owners stay away from the necessary technological investment for digital journalism, there is an expectation that there will be a law that can be interpreted as "If the local newspaper has a website, it can only continue to receive official announcements in one media". can be concluded. Newspapers that have not yet transitioned into digital transformation see this investment as an unnecessary and irreversible investment for the reason we have just mentioned.

One of the most important difficulties experienced by local newspapers in Sakarya in the face of digitalization has emerged in the depth interview method, such as the unauthorized use of news by underground organizations and corporate digital publishing sites and sharing them from their social media accounts. The fact that there is competition among the journalists of Sakarya with personal journalists who are called 'Cubukçu Gazeteciler' based on the policy of broadcasting on social media using a monopod or selfie stick with their mobile phones, also negatively affects some newspaper owners who are willing to invest in this issue.

#### **Interactions of local newspapers in Sakarya against digitalization**

It has been observed that all 7 local newspapers published in Sakarya could not complete their digital transitions effectively. The loss of circulation and the inability to achieve sufficient hit rates in the digital environment caused serious decreases in advertising revenues. On the other hand, the fact that the digital-born Medyabar, which started

its broadcasting life in 2004, has the majority of its readers and advertising share, creates a competitive disadvantage for local newspapers that continue their activities in digital.

Although there are very experienced newspapers in local newspapers, the number of journalists who can adapt to digital and use headlines and images suitable for the characteristics of online journalism is not very high. There is a serious shortage of staff in this regard.

The possibilities of local newspapers in Sakarya to set the agenda of the city with methods such as editorial events, making news, research files, etc., continue to decline in the rate of decrease, as the interest in digital newspapers in Sakarya increases day by day. News centers of born-digital newspapers mainly set the agenda of the city and there are discussions about their columnists.

In the case of breaking news, local newspapers have delays in announcing the news from their internet sites, but digital-born newspapers can make the news instantly, this issue has caused the news mass in Sakarya to switch from local newspapers to digital newspapers.

***Common or Differentiating Problems of Local Newspapers in Turkey and The Ones in Sakarya***

It is not possible to distinguish the problems of local newspapers in Sakarya from the problems experienced by local newspapers in Turkey in general. But there are some differences in some points.

Local newspapers in Sakarya, like most local newspapers in Turkey, could not complete their digital transformation with all their requirements. The circulation losses are decreasing. They are getting worse and worse economically. Requests for external support, subsidies, and assistance are increasing. From time to time, questions arise from the reader on issues such as editorial independence. The news served by a municipality or NGO may similarly be in the headlines, the style of the news may be similar, and they may have local advertisements that can even be taken on the logo, but such issues have caused a negative perception in terms of political economy.

Among the most important differences of Sakarya local newspapers are the high awareness of digitalization, the investments in this regard, the institutional presence of local newspapers which continues to be important for the city's agenda from a political point of view, the fact that experienced and well-known journalists do not lose their readers, also the fact that it is close to other big cities, and the fact that the Political Party, NGOs and athletes from Sakarya have a say in the administrations throughout the country and create the opportunity to turn them into news sources allow local newspapers to continue their existence and produce original news despite their problems.

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

When the problems of local newspapers in Turkey are analysed, it is concluded that there are mainly economic reasons. It is seen that the printed newspapers, which receive most of their income from Official Advertisements, lose more and more readers against news sites that are easier for news followers and can be accessed free of charge, and therefore, they lose more commercial advertisements day by day.

Newspapers have 3 ways ahead. The first is that they should continue to publish printed newspapers in their current form. Although it is a difficult process, it is possible to get out of this struggle sustainable in the short term with the support of political and local governments and/or NGOs. However, this time, problems arise on issues such as "Editorial Independence" and "Reputation Issues of Local Journalists", which researchers frequently focus on. This makes local newspapers far from being reliable in the eyes of readers due to their political economic preferences.

The second way newspapers can do is to end their printed newspaper publications and continue their publications in the digital media. As in the examples of Radikal newspaper and Habertürk newspaper in the mainstream media, the preference to broadcast only in digital media is actually a reflection of a worldwide trend in Turkey. The world-famous newspaper of the UK, "The Independent", made its last edition on March 27, 2016 and switched to its online version. The paid online version of the world-famous newspaper of the USA, "New York Times", has exceeded 1 million subscribers in 2015 (Yazıcı, 2006).

Another option for newspapers that traditionally continue their publications in print is to continue their publications in both print and digital media. An example of this is that the digital versions of the newspapers that are widely published in Turkey are among the most read news sites.

Table 4: Comparison of the circulation of the newspapers in Turkey and the hits of the websites.

PLACE	NEWS SITE	HIT	CIRCULATION
1	hurriyet.com.tr	198,6 million visitors	195 thousand 687 sales



2	sozcu.com.tr	181,5 million visitors	182 thousand 597 sales
3	milliyet.com.tr	135,2 million visitors	124 thousand 932 sales
4	sabah.com.tr	110,4 million visitors	191 thousand 927 sales
5	haberturk.com	79,4 million visitors	-

Source: Alexa.com, <http://app.speedmedya.com>

Although the most read news site in Turkey is a digital-born site, digital versions of printed newspapers come from the second rank. The list created according to the hits of the sites and the circulation of the newspapers, excluding Ensonhaber.com, is shown in Table According to the data in Table 4, the ratio between the total circulation of the newspapers in a month and the hit or click rates they receive can be around a thousand times. For example, Hürriyet newspaper sells 195 thousand copies in a month, while the number of clicks on hurriyet.com.tr is around 198 million. The most realistic solution for local newspapers may be the hybrid method in this way. Continuing with print newspaper publishing on the one hand and investing in digital versions on the other hand should be considered as the most serious option.

Necessary trainings are provided by the state regarding the digitization of local newspapers. Regarding the subject, “digitalization and social media management” training was given by the Press Advertisement Institution in almost all provinces (bik.gov.tr). Educational efforts are of course important, but in addition, economic incentives are also necessary for local newspapers to take their place effectively in the digital environment. The training and financial support provided by KOSGEB (small and medium industry development organization) for SMEs who want to complete their digitalization processes and who want to switch to e-commerce can be done on the digitalization of local newspapers.

There are great similarities between the problems of local newspapers in Turkey and their attitudes towards digitalization and the subject headings of local newspapers in Sakarya. Although the local newspapers of Sakarya were strong, they started to lose their power gradually with the decrease of the readers. If they complete their digital transformation and continue with their digital publishing requirements and methods, they have the potential to reach a much better level in the ranking of the sites with the most hits in Sakarya and Turkey.

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