

TWITTER AS A MEANS AND FORM OF COMMUNICATION

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Abstract: Twitter, which is a medium of communication, a social network and a micro blog site, can also be defined as an information/knowledge-sharing platform. The most prominent feature of this new generation platform is its hundred and forty character limitation. The departure point of this study is that this distinctive character limitation which separates Twitter from other social media platforms, i.e. Twitter's format, also determines the form in which information/knowledge is shared. This descriptive study aims to examine Twitter as a means of communication and a form of communication within the framework of precise, striking, "headline style" posts that come about due to the limited space. Impossibility of observing the *sine qua non* 5w 1h rule due to the said limitation compels the news providers to use the available space in the most efficient way possible. In other words, the structural limitation imposed by Twitter prompts the users to present the content in an effective and striking manner. In this study, positive and negative effects of Twitter's character limitation on news transmission will be put forth.

Key words: Twitter, social network, micro blog site, social media platforms, form of communication

INTRODUCTION

Traditional media has undergone profound changes following the development and prevalence of digital communication technologies. One of the most important results that these changes have brought is social media platforms and forms of communication. In other words, with the new technologies and the new generation social sharing platforms, forms of communication have also undergone changes. Traditional media organizations had to adapt themselves to digital communication technologies upon increasing in knowledge sharing through social networks and therefore they showed that they are not indifferent to social media.

As is known, modes of access to knowledge have also changed with internet coming into our lives. Foremost among them are changes in forms of news-consumption and knowledge sharing as access to news and information sharing can be carried out not only by traditional methods (newspapers, radio, television etc.) but also by means of internet, easily, rapidly and immediately. In this study, Twitter which was created as a medium of communication, a social network and a micro blog site in 2006, is addressed as an information/knowledge sharing platform.

The departure point of this study is that this distinctive character limitation which separates Twitter from other social media platforms, i.e. Twitter's format, also determines the form in which information/knowledge is shared. All Twitter users have to adapt themselves to the format imposed by Twitter. Accordingly, information can only be shared in brief, in the form of headlines. In order to comply with the limitation of 140 characters that Twitter has imposed information sharing methods have also changed. The structural limitation imposed by Twitter prompts the newspapers to present the content in an effective and striking manner in their Twitter accounts. Impossibility of observing the *sine qua non* 5w 1h rule due to the said limitation compels the newspapers to use the available space in the most efficient way possible.

This study is a descriptive research that aims to explain with the examples how Twitter's character

limitation affects news transmission or sharing as a presentation method. Within the scope of this purpose Twitter accounts of three big newspaper brands (Hürriyet, Milliyet, Cumhuriyet) with the biggest number of followers in Turkey have been chosen. Selection has been made among local news that are presented on main Twitter accounts and official web sites of newspaper brands, Hürriyet, Milliyet, Cumhuriyet, with the biggest number of followers on Twitter. Three most important prime times (morning, noon and evening) for news casting have been taken into account for the selection of news. When Twitter accounts of the said newspapers are opened on the dates of January 13-14-15th, 2016 at 07.00-09.30 for morning at 12.00-14.30 for noon at 17.00-19.30 for evening, prominent breaking news on the pages have been concerned. Dates (January 13-14-15th, 2016) specified in the study have been selected through random sampling method because the study will be performed visually not depending on time. Each news selected for three different time period during three days have been compared with regard to presentation format on Twitter account and official web site of the relevant newspaper. Differences between mode of presentation/expression of the same news on the web page and Twitter account of the newspaper have been studied and put forth.



Twitter Inc.

Şirket

Twitter, bir sosyal ağ ve mikroblog sitesidir. Kullanıcılara tweet adı verilen en fazla 140 karakterlik metinler yazma imkânı veren Twitter, çeşitli araçlarla daha etkin kullanılabilen bir yeni nesil iletişim aracıdır. [Vikipedi](#)

Kuruluş: 21 Mart 2006, San Francisco, Kaliforniya, ABD

Hisse senedi fiyatı: TWTR (NYSE) 17,84 \$ +0,01 (+%0,08)
22 Ocak 19:58 GMT-5 - Sorumluluk reddi beyanı

CEO: Jack Dorsey

Genel merkez: San Francisco, Kaliforniya, ABD

Kurucular: Evan Williams, Noah Glass, Jack Dorsey, Biz Stone

Twitter

Twitter is a web application which is started with title of “Twittr” (with one letter missing) by a podcast company in San Francisco in March, 2006 (O’Reilly, Tim and Milstein Sarah, 2009: 5). According to Sagolla (2009), who is one of the designers, Twitter is defined as a means of social communication for brief and clear expressions that can be made and understood by everybody easily. Twitter is a social sharing platform enabling a brief and short content to be shared and disseminated within its 140 characters limitation. Accordingly, it is a form of communication where users can share and disseminate knowledge or information in brief, to the point manner, or in the form of a headline.

Characteristics of Twitter:

1. It is a medium of communication that can be accessed from everywhere having Internet connection.
2. It is a widespread means of communication.
3. It is a social media platform.
4. It is a social network and micro blog site.
5. The most distinctive characteristic of Twitter its format/character (140 characters) limitation.
6. Messages written on Twitter are called as «Tweet».
7. Twitter users both produce and consume the content.
8. Reading-writing-sharing consumption is rapid and easy.
9. Knowledge/information sharing appears as spot or headline.
10. It is the social media that represents journalism at a maximum level. / It is a social sharing platform which is suitable for journalism.
11. There is one-way communication where individuals become consumers since they are passive for the contents presented to them (Readers on the Twitter become passive «viewers» especially for news).
12. Briefness of information/knowledge on Twitter (due to its presentation method) does not provide the «viewer» to

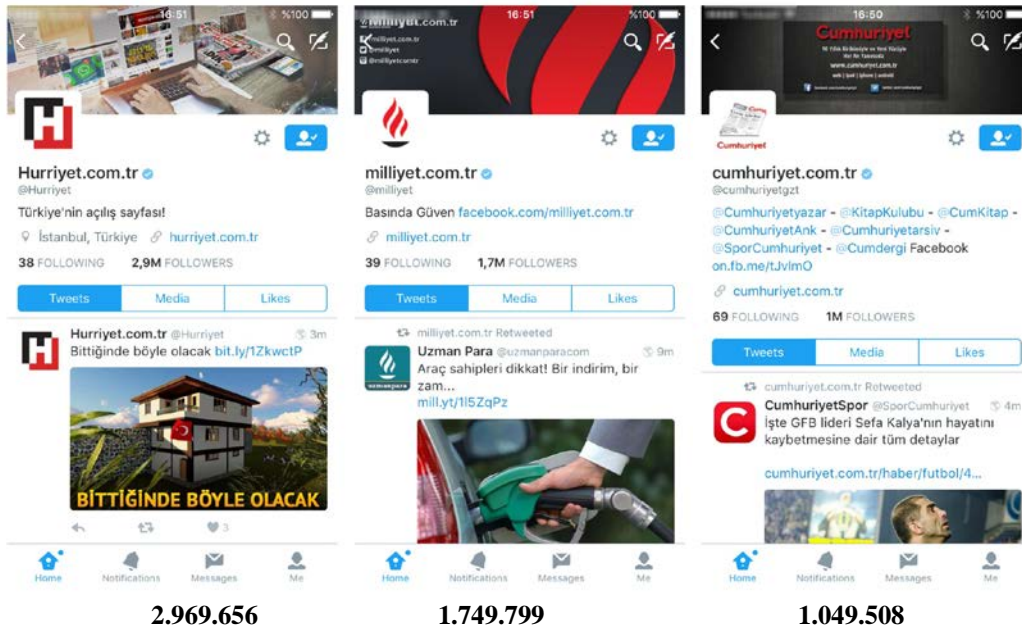
select, think, understand, analyze and interpret the content that they receive.

13. Sharing on Twitter are supported by audio-visual materials.

5W 1H Rule

It is the principle in journalism which is used for finding answers to the questions: What, Where, When, Why, Who and How. Language and text of the news is constituted based on the 5W 1H rule when the news are prepared. By means of this rule it is aimed to include all details of the news. In fact, underlying all the details is the access to information and information sharing that brings light to the news. Within the scope of the study it has been understood that while sharing = news from their Twitter accounts, the newspapers subject to the study did not abide by the 5W 1H rule.

Data Collection: Newspapers from which sample news are collected for the study and which have been selected according to number of followers on the dates of 13-14-15. 01. 2016 have been put in following order; 1st Number of followers for Hürriyet: 2.969.656; 2nd Number of followers for Milliyet: 1.749.799; 3rd Number of followers for Cumhuriyet: 1.049.508

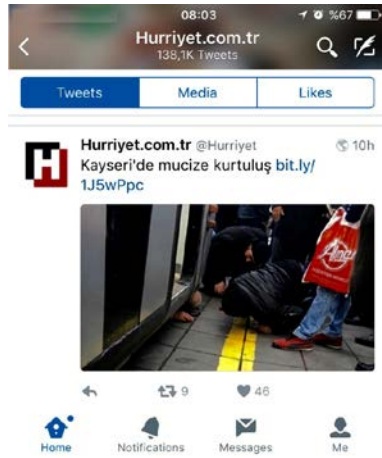


Number of followers of three newspapers has been obtained through computer environment as well as two mobile devices (smart phone and tablet). In the study Twitter accounts of three newspapers have been examined during three different hours of three days and totally news examples have been recorded visually to be examined. In this study researcher who is also Twitter user has entered main Twitter accounts of three big newspapers followed by the researcher and examine the news on a mobile device (smart phone), then link of the news has been opened and at the same time web site of the newspaper has been opened on the computer environment and they have been compared with respect to how the news are presented. During comparison of the presentation of a news piece on Twitter has been evaluated with respect to its compliance to the 5W 1H rule and then it has been compared to the presentation of the same news on the newspaper's web site, according to 5W 1H rule. The news subject to the study have been examined with day and hour order.

Comparison of presentation of the news on Twitter and on the Web Site of the Newspaper:

When the news obtained from main Twitter accounts of Hürriyet in the first place, then Milliyet and Cumhuriyet and the same news obtained from the web sites of the same newspapers at morning, noon and evening hours are

compared, results of the comparison are as follows:



Hürriyet Twitter Main page



Hürriyet Official Website

1. The news obtained from Twitter page of Hürriyet at 8.03 a.m. is the news with the headline of **“Amazing survival in Kayseri (Kayseri’de mucize kurtuluş)”**. When expression of the news including three words is examined, “Where” question can be asked against Kayseri word in the expression based on the 5W 1 H rule. Although there is a photograph under the news, it is understood that this is the information corresponding to an answer of only one question. When the link given with the news is opened, it is accessed to the official web site of Hürriyet. When presentation of the same news on the web page of the newspaper is examined, most notable difference is that it is presented with the headline of **“Trapped under Tramway (Tramvayın altında kaldı)”** which is different from the headline/spot given on Twitter. On the web page it is seen that there are answers of 5 questions except “When” question among 5W 1H questions and photographs supporting the news.

The image displays two side-by-side screenshots from a mobile device. The left screenshot shows a Twitter post from the account 'Hurriyet.com.tr' (@Hurriyet) with the headline 'Ağlatan destek' and a link 'bit.ly/10jLewR'. The right screenshot shows the corresponding article on the Hurriyet Official Website with the headline 'Kayahan'ın şapkası satıldı'. The article text describes the auction of a hat and microphone used by Kayahan at his last concert, mentioning the amount raised and the names of the people involved.

Hürriyet Twitter Main page

Hürriyet Official Website

2. The news obtained from Twitter account of Hürriyet at 13.14 is the news with the headline of “**Support that led to tears**” (**Ağlatan destek**) which is expressed with two words. There is a photograph under the news. From this news no answers of questions regarding 5W 1H rule are obtained. However if the Twitter user recognizes photographs of two people put under the news (Yalçın Menteş, İpek Acar), one may think that it is mentioned about a «support» concerning these two people but he/she cannot understand fully the news. When the link given with the news is opened, it is seen a different headline/title on the website of the newspaper; under the title of “**Kayahan’s hat sold**” (**Kayahan’ın şapkası satıldı**) there are details of the news. From this title on the website answers of 3 questions (What? How? Who?) can be obtained regarding the news. When the presentation of the news on Twitter where there are no details of the news is compared with the text on the website all answers of 5W 1H questions are given. In addition there are a lot of photographs and video supporting the news.

The image displays three screenshots from a mobile device showing news articles from Hurriyet.com.tr. The first screenshot shows a tweet with a symbolic image of a house and the text "BİTTİĞİNDE BÖYLE OLACAK". The second screenshot shows the full article on the website with the headline "Şehidin babaevinin projesi aileye gösterildi" and a photograph of a man in a suit. The third screenshot shows the article's text, including a quote from the Mayor of Ordu and details about the project.

Hürriyet Twitter Main page

Hürriyet Official Website

3. The news obtained from Twitter account of Hürriyet at 17.02 is expressed as “This is how it will look like in the end” (“Bittiğinde böyle olacak”). With this expression no answers of questions regarding 5W 1H Rule are obtained. Under the news there is a symbolic photograph belonging a house but since there is no detail for the news it is difficult to understand, analyze and interpret the news. When the link given with the news is opened, a different headline/title on the website of the newspaper with the title “Project for new home of martyr has been shown to his family” (“Şehidin baba evinin projesi aileye gösterildi”) is seen. All details concerning this news on the website are explained so as to contain 5W 1H answers in detail as well as with photographs.



Milliyet Twitter Main Page



Milliyet Official Website

4. The news obtained from Twitter page of Milliyet at 8.03 is the news with the headline of “Crisis with that country is being resolved!” (“O ülke ile yaşanan kriz çözülüyor!”). When expression/presentation form of the news is examined, “What” question can be asked against “crisis” word in the expression based on the 5W 1 H rule. Except that there is no information about the news. It is not understood content of the crisis when it is looked its form of expression. There is no photograph on Twitter concerning this news. When the link given with the news is opened, it is seen that the news with the title of “Account suspension crisis with England is being resolved” (“İngiltere ile ‘hesap dondurma’ krizi çözülüyor”) overlaps with headline/spot on Twitter just a little. Similarly there is no photograph concerning the news on the website. When the text of the news on the website is read, it is seen that there are all answers of questions in accordance with 5W 1H rule.

Milliyet Twitter Main Page

Milliyet Official Website

5. The news obtained from Twitter account of Milliyet at 13.09 p.m. is expressed as **“We are Kurdish, Muslim and Human”** (**“Kürdüz, müslümanız, insanız”**). With this expression no answers to questions of 5W 1H Rule are obtained. In the photograph under the news there is a woman standing and raising her arms up inside a ruined house. There is no detail concerning the news and information corresponding to any questions in this headline. When the link given with the news is opened, a different title on the website of the newspaper that reads **“Destruction seen with the new day”** (**“Tahribat gün ağarınca ortaya çıktı”**) is seen and all the details are given with video under the title. This news is explained so as to contain 5W 1H answers with long sentences including sub-titles.



Milliyet Twitter Main Page



KILAVUZ ARAÇTAN JANDARMAYA ATEŞ AÇILDI

Elde edilen bilgiler ışığında, 12 Ocak 2016 günü Diyarbakır-Batman karayolu üzerinde daha önceden tespiti yapılan ve içerisinde silah ve mühimmatların olduğu değerlendirilen araç fiziki takibe alınmış, takip sırasında içerisinde 3 şüpheli şahsın bulunduğu başka bir aracın bahse konu araçta kılavuzluk yaptığı tespit edilmiştir. Takibi fark eden şüphellilerin kılavuzluk yapan araçtan Jandarma ekiplerine ateş açmaları üzerine ateşle karşılık verilmiş, açılan ateş sonucu lastikleri patlatılan ve içerisinde silah ve mühimmatların olduğu değerlendirilen şüpheli araç yakalanmış, kılavuzluk yapan diğer araç ise olay yerinden Batman ili istikametine kaçmıştır."



Milliyet Official Website

6. The news obtained from Twitter account of Milliyet at 17.05 p.m. is expressed as “Shocking contents” (“İçinden çıkanlar şok etti”). In addition there is an expression on the photograph under this news as «Look what it contains! Captured during clash». The news cannot be understood from its presentation form on Twitter. When the link of the news is opened, there is a different headline. The news is given with the title of “PKK guns captured” (“PKK silahları yakalandı”) and text of the news is supported with sub-titles and photographs. When the text of the news on the website of Milliyet is read, it is seen that there are all answers of questions in accordance with 5W 1H rule.



Cumhuriyet Twitter Main Page



Cumhuriyet Official Website

7. The news obtained from Twitter account of Cumhuriyet at 08.20 a.m. is expressed as “**Beyazıt Öztürk statement from Erdoğan**” (“**Erdoğan'dan Beyazıt Öztürk açıklaması**”). This news is supported by a photograph of President Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. In the expression of “Beyazıt Öztürk statement from Erdoğan” answers of “Who” and “What” questions according to 5W 1H rule can be obtained. When the link of the news is opened, the news is expressed on the website of Cumhuriyet with the same title “**Beyazıt Öztürk statement from Erdoğan**” as on Twitter. The news is supported by a photograph of President Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan like on Twitter and answers of other questions according to 5W 1H rule can be found in the text of the news.

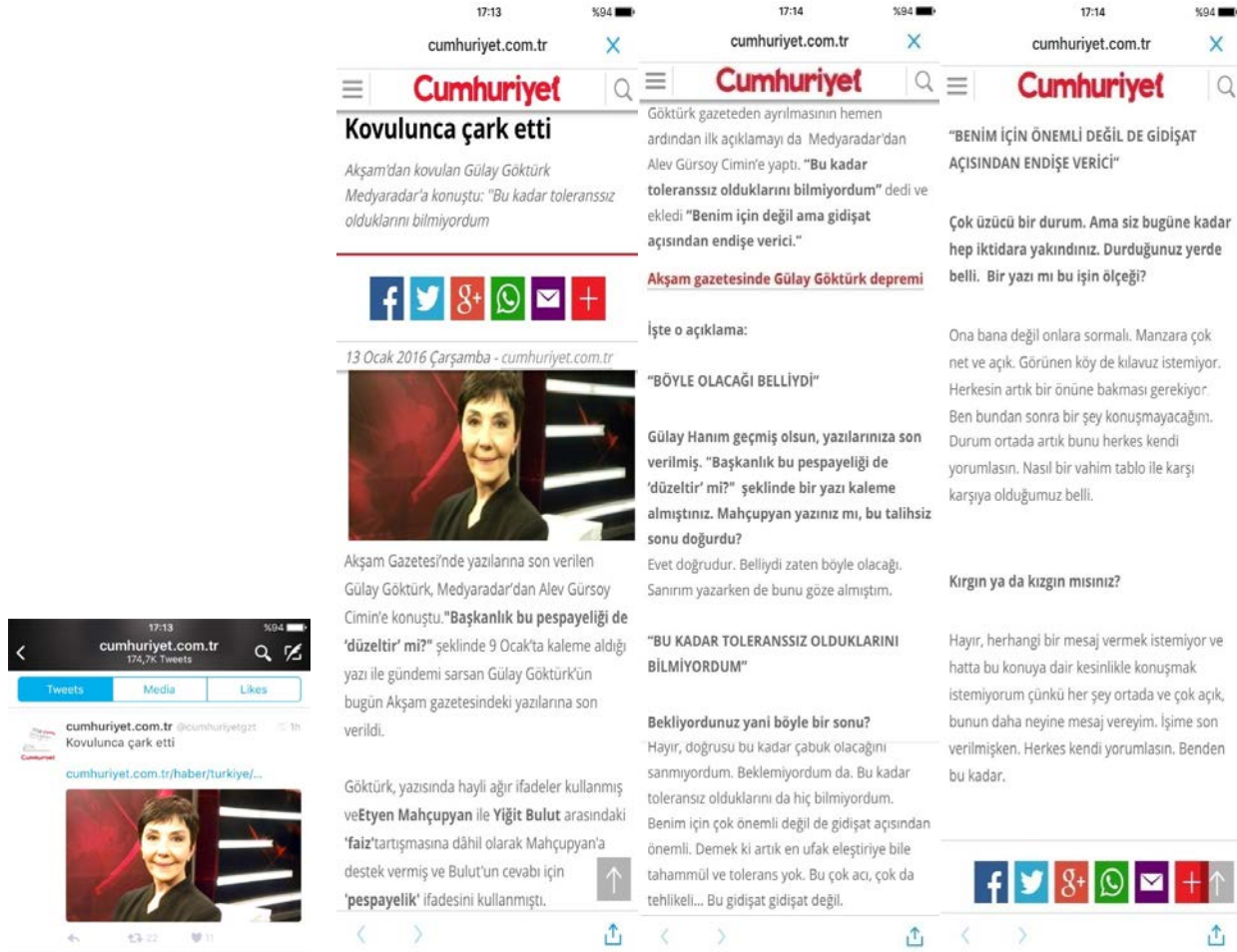


Cumhuriyet Twitter Main Page



Cumhuriyet Official Website

8. The news obtained from Twitter page of Cumhuriyet at 13.05 p.m. is the news with the headline of “**Tour guide prevented massacre with one word**” (“**Turist rehberi tek bir sözyle katliamın büyümesini önledi**”). There is photograph of a woman under this news. Users may not recognize the woman on the photograph since she is not famous but if the user follows the popular topics they may know the woman. In the expression of the news answers of “Who”, “What” and “How” questions according to 5W 1H rule can be obtained. When the link of the news is opened, the news is expressed on the website of Cumhuriyet with the same title “**Tour guide prevented massacre with one word**” and the same photograph as on Twitter. It is seen that the presentation of news meets all 5W 1H questions.



Cumhuriyet Twitter Main Page

Cumhuriyet Official Website

9. The news obtained from Twitter page of Cumhuriyet at 17.13 is expressed as **“Changed her mind after getting fired”** (**“Kovulunca çark etti”**). Only **“What”** question can be answered for the news given as a headline. There is a photograph of Gülay Göktürk who is one of authors of Akşam newspaper under the news. When Twitter users look at the news they may not recognize Gülay Göktürk. If the user knows the journalist, he/she may receive a negative expression but it is difficult to understand since there are no details for the news. When the link of the news is opened, the news is expressed on the website of Cumhuriyet with the same title **“Changed her mind after getting fired”** and the same photograph as on Twitter. The news is presented here with details and sub-heading. Presentation form of the news on the website meets all 5W 1H questions.

As a result of comparison of main Twitter accounts of Hürriyet, Milliyet, Cumhuriyet and their official websites with respect to form of presentation of the news: It has been observed that there are differences between forms of presentation or expression of the same news on Twitter accounts and official web sites (two different social media medium). Within the scope of the study common information determined for these three newspapers Hürriyet, Milliyet and Cumhuriyet is that when sharing news on their Twitter accounts as a headline/spot/title, they do not abide by the 5W 1H rule. In other words it has been seen that all 5W 1H questions are not answered for the news given Twitter accounts of Hürriyet, Milliyet, Cumhuriyet.

In the news on Twitter, which is a social sharing platform and micro-blog site, it has been seen that there are expressions including information answering maximum two/three questions of the 5W 1H rule. As it is stated by Pavlink (2013:7), breaking news are important for the users on the news portals as in traditional journalism. Similarly as it is specified above, it has been seen that a journalism based on headline/spot/title is performed on

Twitter accounts of the newspapers subject to the study. This can be interpreted as headline/title based journalism's reflection on social media, due to the structural characteristics of Twitter. Thanks to the results of the case comparisons, the starting point and basic assumption of this study has been confirmed, which is that the format of Twitter (140-character limitation) is decisive factor for presentation style of the news.

With the comparisons made for the news examined within the scope of the study it has been seen that headline/spot news on Twitter mostly do not the same title on the link of the website. In the study it has been seen that three news obtained from Twitter account of Hürriyet are expressed different from headline/title of the news on the websites. Similarly for the two news obtained from Twitter account of Milliyet, it has been determined that different headline/titles are used. For a specific news piece obtained from Milliyet, it has been seen that titles on Twitter and website are related. Among three newspapers only Cumhuriyet put the same headline/spot for the news on its Twitter account and its website. Because of Twitter's 140 characters limitation, newspapers have to use this limited area as effective and impressive as possible. In other words, the space limitations direct newspapers to express or present the news in a more effective and striking way on their Twitter accounts. The said limitation indirectly causes the sources to not present details of the news. In addition, one of the well known difficulties in journalism is writing a headline for the news since the headline is decisive for the spotting of news by the readers. Presentation of the news as a headline or spot, which is adopted in the journalism approach performed for social media platforms, can be interpreted as a journalism approach following imposition by Twitter's format limitation. As it is stated by Algül and Sütçü (2015:19), this situation indicates that presentation of the news which is liked by their users and by their social media sharing on the social media by news portals causes this environment to be an important means for news presentation.

Audio-visual materials make significant contribution to understanding of the news. Audio-visual information is sometimes only the means presenting content of the news. Therefore if Twitter user does not follow the agenda closely he/she cannot access basic information (5W 1H) used in journalism. If the person subject to the news is not known headline or spot news makes difficult to understand the news by the users.

On Twitter a mode of journalism where the user is directed to the link is used. Sense of wonder is alerted intentionally and users are directed to learn content of the news. Otherwise user cannot access any information with the presentation form of the news on Twitter. A user who reads the news as a headline/spot/title has to open related link in order to learn details of the news. In addition awareness that there is a complementary relation between the links presenting the news and detail can be gained by the user.

140 characters on Twitter indicate not only limitation for knowledge/information presentation or sharing but also shortness, fastness and instantaneousness of daily living. Because Twitter is one of the most popular social sharing platforms where daily living is presented in 2000s. Accordingly, this characteristic of Twitter can be connected with the speed of daily living. According to a study (2009), Twitter is the fastest growing sharing site. According to data which were prepared in 2015 and gathered by "We are Social" in accordance with information obtained from Global Web Index, social sharing network with biggest number of users is Twitter after Facebook in Turkey (<http://sosyalmedya.co/14-maddeyle-turkiyenin-dijital-dunyasi/>).

In the study when positive and negative characteristics of Twitter with respect to knowledge presentation/sharing are examined, following properties has been determined.

Positive Contributions and Negative Effects of Twitter's Structural Characteristics on Presentation of News

Positive Contributions:

- Providing convenience to newspapers as it is a digital medium or to access the news.
- Being suitable for knowledge/information sharing due to its speed.
- Being accessible by smart phones, tablets and laptops as well as everywhere that has internet connection.
- More readers can access knowledge/information.
- Reader can see the news firstly on Twitter without a print newspaper or launching a browser due to Twitter's rapid, accessible and easy sharing and instant sharing structure.

- Social media users can inform their followers by sharing knowledge/information and interpretations on their accounts/micro-blogs.
- 140-character limitation can direct newspapers to express or present the news in a most effective and impressive way within their Twitter accounts.
- A mode of journalism where the user is directed to the link can be used.
- Twitter accounts can increase readability and popularity of the news by Tweeting besides media groups, printed publications, radio-television broadcasts, web sites.
- Users can access visual details such as photos, videos regarding knowledge/information by making time and location isolation.

Negative effects:

- 140-character limitation restricts detailed knowledge/information presentation and sharing.
- Format (140 characters) limitation leads to a new journalism approach.
- Since it is used easily, it makes the news easily consumable.
- Adaptation difficulties due to different interfaces when different devices and software are used.
- It lacks details, accuracy and validity of subjects since knowledge/information is presented briefly.

CONCLUSION

Nowadays it is known that social media is an effective tool for sharing and presenting content. Social media platforms and social media networks, which are means of knowledge/information sharing, are new public spaces besides being channels where personal communication is maintained. As a result of this situation, news portals had to adapt themselves to the characteristics of mobile communication technologies that present their users with new opportunities. Newspapers have showed their willingness to grow their reader base and maintain their continuity by choosing to operate also in a social media environment where their users exist. All broadcasting and publication corporations present the news they prepared on their official Twitter accounts beside broadcasting and publications as well as web pages. Information presented to the users through Twitter accounts of the newspapers are expressed as brief headlines intentionally and access to the link added to the title is added for the users interested in the news. Therefore Twitter facilitates journalism and accelerates news consumption by shortening the process. By this means news can be accessed interactively all over the world. Hence, Twitter is accepted as the most dynamic social sharing platform in the world and in Turkey.

Twitter, as one of the best and fastest forms enabling access to wide populations through communication platforms supported by internet technologies has an important communication function with interactions such as knowledge/information sharing, comments and likes.

Contextual-formal usage of Twitter depending on its distinctive 140 characters limitation can be evaluated as shortness, fastness and instantaneousness of daily life and can be interpreted that this new generation media environment is a typical example of a format which is easy to consume, comfortable and rapid. Consequently with Twitter information and transformation concepts have become prominent and important.

As a result of this study having a title of “Twitter as A Means and Form of Communication”, special situation of Twitter due to its 140 characters limitation has been called as “Twitter effect” by the researcher. In new studies to be performed for “Communication Sciences” it is expected that “Twitter Effect” will be searched, studied in different titles and this effect will contribute to new studies including social media themes.

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