THE ROLE OF GATEKEEPERS IN AGENDA-SETTING IN SOCIAL MEDIA: THE TWITTER SAMPLE IN TURKEY

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ABSTRACT
The main purpose of this study was to reveal the extent to which the role of gatekeepers in traditional mass media is realized in agenda-setting in social media. In this context, this study focused on Twitter, the most common microblogging service classified under social media, examining the role of gatekeepers in agenda-setting on the Twitter accounts of major newspapers in Turkey. The Twitter accounts of three major national newspapers in Turkey were used as the research sample. The results revealed that all three Turkish newspapers followed their own agendas to a high degree, and those agendas demonstrated continuity. Namely, the newspapers continuously reported on certain issues on Twitter, which led to continuity within the own agenda of each newspaper. One of the most important roles gatekeepers play in the media in terms of agenda-setting is that of focusing on the same issues and report the same items in foreign and political news, as well as in sensational tabloid press news for creating a dramatic effect (Erdoğan and Alemdar, 2002: 215). It was observed that in the Twitter accounts of the newspapers in Turkey, the role of gatekeepers in agenda-setting mainly occurred within this context.
Keywords: Gatekeepers, Agenda-Setting, Social Media, Twitter, Turkey

INTRODUCTION
Gate-keeping, a term suggested by German-American psycho-sociologist Kurt Lewin with respect to the field of communication, was historically applied as a tool in traditional mass communication (Narmanlıoğlu, 2016: 157).

As is known, not all news materials that are acquired by communications outlets can be turned into news; therefore, they do not all reach the community. Rather, gatekeepers inspect and make selections from the materials they have acquired and determine which to re-edit and present it to the public (Tekinalp and Uzun, 2009: 94). Thus, the term gatekeeper or door holder is used to refer to those individuals who handle the messages that are distributed to receivers through a mass communication outlet (Tekinalp and Uzun, 2009: 93). In other words, gatekeeping involves the process of taking control of the coding of messages or message components by selecting the information to be disseminated and making choices about a message's display, presentation, timing, storing and repetition (Donohue et al., 1972: 53).

Gatekeepers can refer to individuals or groups of people through whom a message passes as it proceeds from the sender to the receiver; the main purpose of the gatekeeper is to filter the messages that are sent. In this sense, while a gatekeeper may allow some messages to go through, they may also stop others from being distributed. For instance, an editor may decide to include one issue and to withhold another (Tekinalp and Uzun, 2009: 94). Weaver et al. (1975: 460) contend that gatekeepers always decide what is to be news and what is not, but that the news that is to be made public is not always evaluated justly. For instance, as they explain, in traditional newspapers, some items may be handled extensively, while others can be cut short; some stories may make the headlines, while others are left to a corner of the page. In this manner, newspapers reveal the importance they place on a story by the size of the headline and the arrangement of the page (Terkan, 2005: 71). Likewise, cases where some of the truth is included in the news, while some is left out; or where stories are edited to hide the facts of a political, economic or cultural interests issue, are also included as actions related to gatekeeping. Moreover, according to Narmanlıoğlu (2016: 156), covering the main news stories in detail or leaving being covered with details or leaving certain events out altogether also comprises gatekeeping activities.

Even if the term gatekeeper is mostly based on news media's own economy politics, publisher's rules made in this line -general publication policy- other dynamics that affect this process are also mentioned. For instance, the personalities of those that make the news materials are also an important filter (Narmanlıoğlu, 2016: 158).

Gatekeeping takes place in the important tasks that shape the agenda in media routines (Terkan, 2005: 69-70). As such, McCombs and Shaw (1972: 176) asserted that editors and publishers, through their choices, have an important impact on shaping the political reality. Because of this, the term gatekeeping is closely associated with agenda; by choosing the most important stories to disseminate, editors affect the public view according to their agenda (Carter, 1998: 392, as cited in Narmanlıoğlu, 2016: 157). According to Mcquail and Windhal (1993: 145), gatekeepers are the primary managers of the agenda of the organizations they work for, and as such, they contribute to defining the public agenda (Yaylagül, 2006: 73). Yüksel (1994: 109) likewise states that gatekeepers have significant influence on defining the agenda, a function that is considered as an extension of gatekeeping (İnceoğlu, 2000: 158, as cited in Terkan, 2005: 70-71).

Also, according to Erdoğan and Alemdar (2002: 212), with respect to agenda-setting, a given issue may or may not be repeated in the media in consideration of their importance in media. Mass communication outlets monitor information about agenda-setting; and in fact, agenda-setting and gatekeepers (also known as door holders) are equivalent in terms of the tasks they entail. In the process of agenda-setting, news and information pass through various gatekeepers before they are released for audience/reader use (e.g., for publication). For example, wire services such as the AP, AA and Reuters are important determinants or gatekeepers of a news agenda; the news items they emphasize are typically adopted by local mass media. Thus, gatekeepers' decisions about the selection, design, manifestation, timing, restriction, lack of delivery, and repeating or not repeating are important aspects of information supervision. In this sense, Erdoğan and Alemdar (2002: 214-215) summarize some important findings about the important roles of gatekeepers in agenda-setting in the media:

1. Gatekeepers act without thinking about their audience when making a decision about information bearing news content. Gatekeepers' decisions are more linked to what publishers or editors think than what the audience is interested in.
2. Wire services influence editors-in-chief.
3. In foreign news; politic news; sensational news that is reported to create a dramatic effect; and tabloid thematic news, gatekeepers dwell on the same issues and deliver same news. In this context, generally, there are rarely any news items delivered by one of these that are not delivered by the others.
4. Most news sources utilized by gatekeepers are official. News items are obtained from reporters' own efforts (interviews and research), from semi-official sources (confidential, other non-governmental organizations and institutions) and from the reporting of other news media.

When the media focuses on a particular issue, it has a tendency sustain the news related to that issue. As such, there are generally no other issues in an agenda when it is focused on a specific issue. Incidents may only enter a media agenda after they have reached a certain point in terms of politics and quality, after they have been viewed one by one. In short, the media keeps bringing forward the same issues in order to keep them on the agenda, thus increasing the interest of the public in the news (Retrieved July 13, 2016, from: http://hbogm.meb.gov.tr/modulerprogramlar/kursprogramlari/gazetecilik/moduller/gundem_organizasyonu.pdf).

Considering that nowadays news reporting has expanded to various forms of social media, it appears that gatekeepers have filtered into the realm of social media, as well. As with the traditional news media, the filter of the publisher also affects the information disseminated on the internet. However, the ease of use and the diversity of the internet allows us access, through diverse sources, to the information that any particular editor may have missed, deemed to be irrelevant or consciously left (Kahriman, 2013: 75).

THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
The main purpose of this study is to reveal the extent to which the role of the gatekeepers in agenda-setting in traditional mass-communication outlets is actualized in social media. In this context, the study focused on Twitter, the most popular micro-blog, as a social media source and examined the role of gatekeepers in agenda-setting in the Twitter accounts of major newspapers in Turkey. The goal of this effort was to determine the relationships between their own issue agendas of the Twitter accounts of major newspapers in Turkey.

METHOD
The Population and the Research Sample
The Twitter accounts of all national newspapers in Turkey make up the main population for this study. As entire the population was too large to be practical, the research sample was selected through purposive, rather than random sampling. As it is in all sample types, in purposive sampling, the ability to generalize from the sample to the larger population is fairly limited. However, in cases where there is extended information about a population, purposive sampling is recognized as a good alternative sampling method (Böke, 2009: 125). This method was

considered to be appropriate for agenda-setting research, as it allows the researcher to sample from media that have been shown in previous studies to play an agenda-setting role (Kushin, 2010: 56-57).

In this case, the Twitter accounts of Turkey's three leading major national newspapers were chosen as the research sample, including Hürriyet, Sabah and Sözcü. The Twitter accounts of these newspapers were chosen due to the newspapers' role as the most important agenda-setting channels, as opposed to other media sources (such as television). These newspapers were chosen on the grounds that they are the leading newspapers in Turkey, thus representing the other newspapers of the nation; more importantly, they are the newspapers with the highest profile in social networking. The chosen newspapers, published by the Press Ad Agency of national newspaper circulation in Turkey, are ranked among the top five newspapers in Turkey, according to the ranking report for September through October 2014.

The Hürriyet newspaper, which was established on May 1, 1948, joined Twitter in August 2009. From approximately 1.78 million followers on Twitter in October 2014, Hürriyet has 4.23 million followers as of July 2018 (Retrieved July 15, 2018, from: https://twitter.com/Hurriyet). This newspaper has the highest number of followers on Twitter among other newspapers of Turkey. Furthermore, the Sabah newspaper, published since April 22, 1985, joined Twitter in October 2009. From approximately 537,000 Twitter followers in October 2014, Sabah has 1.92 million followers by July 2018 (Retrieved July 15, 2018, from: https://twitter.com/Sabah). This paper has the second highest number of followers on Twitter in Turkey among the other newspapers in the sample. Finally, founded on June 27, 2007, the newspaper Sözcü joined Twitter in November 2010. There were approximately 486,000 followers on Twitter in October 2014, increasing to 1.57 million followers by July 2018 (Retrieved July 15, 2018, from: https://twitter.com/gazetesozcu). Sözcü ranks third in terms of the number of followers on Twitter among the newspapers in the sample.

Data Collection and Coding
In this study, the data were collected via content analysis. This step of the content analysis process, where the collection and coding of the data are carried out, is the one in which categories, time frames, coding units, and analysis units (also called contexts or resource units) are identified (Roberts et al., 2002: 457). This step, which McMillan (2000) also refers to as *defining the categories*, is the phase in which the time frame to be considered with the measuring instruments and units to be used in the study are determined. Budd, Thorp, and Donohew (1967: 33-36) identified two primary units of measurements used in content analysis studies as coding units and context units. Coding units are the smallest segment of content counted and scored in the content analysis. The analysis unit (source or context unit) is the body of material surrounding the coding unit. Therefore, it is the source of the variable to be measured. For example, if the coding unit is a word, the unit of analysis (the context unit) might be the sentence in which the word appears or the paragraph or the entire article. Many researchers use the term "unit of analysis" to refer to the context from which coding units are drawn (McMillan, 2000: 81-82).

The unit of analysis used in this study consisted of the tweets/posts that the three major national newspapers in Turkey shared in their official Twitter accounts. Furthermore, the coding units of the study consisted of content categories, which are commonly used by researchers working on content analysis on Web (see McMillan, 2000: 87). *Subject matter categories* are the most frequently used categories in content analysis. The goal is to determine what the communication is about (Holsti, 1969: 104). In this study, the content categories consisted of "subject matter categories". When the focus of study is on a specific issue, rather than on all the news stories published during a particular period, such an approach may overlook a clear relationship between agendas. Therefore, in this study, subjects that were routinely covered for a period of time were examined via the Twitter accounts of the major newspapers in Turkey, to reveal a clear relationship between their own issue agendas. The content categories/subject categories were used as coding units in the study were developed based on the previous literature and according to the contents of the tweets that the newspapers published on their official Twitter accounts during the time period examined.

In this study, the content analysis conducted in order to determine issue agendas of the Twitter accounts of major newspapers in Turkey, the resulting 21 subject categories are as follows:

Table 1: Issue Agendas of the Study

	Issue Agendas on Twitter of the Three Major National Newspapers in Turkey
1	Terror in Syria
2	USA
3	National Security
4	Terror in Turkey
5	National Policy
6	Foreign Policy
7	Military
8	Economy
9	Education
10	Science and Technology
11	Health
12	Sports
13	Art and Culture
14	Crime
15	Media
16	Environment
17	Law
18	Magazine
19	Human Rights
20	Travel and Transportation
21	Immigration

These 21 subject categories were defined and coded via content analysis. The total number of tweets in the Twitter accounts of the three major newspapers in Turkey and the issue agendas raised in this study are presented in Table 2:

Table 2: Total Number of Tweets and Issue Agendas

	Tweets	Issue Agendas
Hürriyet	965	2248
Sabah	334	951
Sözcü	491	1839

As shown in Table 2, during the time period the Twitter accounts were being examined, Hürriyet newspaper for a total of 965 tweets; Sabah newspaper 334; and Sözcü published a total of 491 tweets. The total number of agendas for all the issues covered in these tweets was 2248 for the Hürriyet newspaper; 951 for the Sabah newspaper; and 1839 for Sözcü. Among the newspapers, the one with the highest number of tweets, and in direct proportion to this, the one with the highest issue agenda, was Hürriyet.

One of the first steps in the content analysis was to specify the time frame of the study in which the categories were to be identified and the data collected. So far, there has been no research showing definitively the time period over which the agenda-setting process takes place on the Internet and/or social media. Winter and Eyal's (1981) standard duration of 4 to 6 weeks is still in use by most researchers, although it is known that researches covering other forms of social media often use a period of several weeks (e.g., Dunn et al., 2007).

As such, in this study, the Twitter accounts of the major newspapers in Turkey and the relationships between their own issue agendas were examined over a 4-week period in October of 2014. This specific period of time did not include any kind of groundbreaking or milestone events that endangered the stability of the news coverage. Namely, October of 2014 was chosen because it was a normal time period during which Twitter's newspapers were not exposed to external shocks; nor did it encompass a political campaign period, so as not to cause a convergence between their own weekly agendas. This was done in consideration of the fact that an important event or a political campaign can affect the entire agenda, as the media in general will continuously depict the same event or political content; thus, the various outlets display a convergence in their own agendas over time. With this in mind, a normal time frame was chosen to investigate the Twitter accounts of each of the selected newspapers in terms of whether there was a clear relationship between their own agendas. In this manner, it was assured that the situation under normal conditions was presented and that the surveys were objective. In other words, in case of a extraordinary event, the impact that the media takes the same event

constant on its agenda, the impact was under control. In this study, a 4-week time period was used, as suggested by Winter and Eyal's (1981) assertion that a 4- to 6-week time period is traditionally used in agenda-setting studies. Because the goal of analyzing each of the major newspaper's Twitter accounts was to determine the clear relationships between their own issue agendas, it was considered necessary to analyze the news tweeted over a sufficient period of time. Thus, a 1- or 2-week period was deemed to be insufficient. Moreover, a 4-week period was believed to allow for a more objective relationship analysis, since newspapers may not publish tweets on their Twitter accounts for some days (for example, on weekends), whereas during other periods, they may publish a large number. Thus, the 4-week time period was chosen to allow observations of both short-term (1 week) and long-term relationships (4 weeks) between the own issue agendas on the Twitter accounts of the newspapers. Furthermore, Lee, Lancendorfer and Lee (2005: 62-63) suggest that in such studies, it is more convenient to use four-time span than two-time span. For this reason, in this study, the time period for analysis was determined as four-time parts. These were arranged as follows. Week 1: October 1-7, 2014; Week 2: October 8-14, 2014; Week 3: October 15-21, 2014; and Week 4: October 22-28, 2014. Each week included 7 days, and the relationship between weeks was examined. In other words, the extent to which each newspaper maintained its own agenda for 4 weeks on Twitter was determined by examining each newspaper's relationship with its issue agendas on a weekly basis. Tweets were collected twice a day for 4 weeks, between 7:00-9:00 in the morning and 7:00-9:00 in the evening, because these are the time periods during which Twitter is most intensely used for news and the most tweets are sent. As such, these time periods are commonly known as morning and evening news hours.

Analysis of the Data
The data collection method for this study consisted of content analysis, which is one of the qualitative analysis types. Additionally, the data were analyzed with the use of frequency and Pearson correlation analysis, which are types of quantitative analysis. On account of this, this study is considered as mixed-method research.

Content analysis is considered as a first step in agenda-setting researches (Kushin, 2010: 62) and content analysis software is often used in for this purpose (e.g., Tedesco, 2005a; Tedesco, 2005b; Wallsten, 2007) (by Kushin, 2010: 64). The analysis that is carried in order to present the agendas of media outlets is considered content analysis (King, 1994: 50). The content analysis in this study consisted of an examination of the posts/tweets of the Twitter accounts of the major newspapers in Turkey in order to identify their issue/news agenda.

In this process, the statistical significance and relationships between the agendas were tested in the agendas that were identified by the researcher. The relationships between the issue agendas were identified using the Pearson correlation analysis method.

FINDINGS
Relations among Newspapers' Twitter Agenda Contents in Turkey
The Pearson Correlations showing the relationships among the Twitter accounts of three major national newspapers in Turkey and their own issue agendas are shown in Table 3 below.

When the autocorrelations of Hürriyet's 4-week agenda in Table 3 were examined, it was determined that the correlation values were between about 0.86-0.93. This finding revealed that Hürriyet followed its own agenda to a high degree, and those agendas demonstrated continuity. When the autocorrelations of Sabah's Twitter agendas were observed for 4 weeks, the correlation values were found to be between about 0.72 to 0.93. These high autocorrelations indicate that Sabah is also a follower of its own agenda. When Sözcü's autocorrelations of Twitter account agendas were examined, it was found that the correlations were between 0.76 and 0.97. Maintaining its own agenda, which was observed in Hürriyet and Sabah, was also valid for Sözcü.

Table 3: Pearson Correlations among the Contents of Twitter Accounts of Turkish Newspapers

	Hür(T1)	Hür(T2)	Hür(T3)	Hür(T4)	Sab(T1)	Sab(T2)	Sab(T3)	Sab(T4)	Sözcü(T1)	Sözcü(T2)	Sözcü(T3)	Sözcü(T4)
Hürriyet(T1)	**1**											
Hürriyet(T2)	**0,870**[**]	**1**										
Hürriyet(T3)	**0,870**[**]	**0,855**[**]	**1**									
Hürriyet(T4)	**0,851**[**]	**0,919**[**]	**0,921**[**]	**1**								
Sabah(T1)	0,779[**]	0,806[**]	0,676[**]	0,697[**]	**1**							
Sabah(T2)	0,633[**]	0,754[**]	0,530[**]	0,538[**]	**0,806**[**]	**1**						
Sabah(T3)	0,626[**]	0,768[**]	0,574[**]	0,590[**]	**0,875**[**]	**0,928**[**]	**1**					
SabahT4)	0,679[**]	0,762[**]	0,667[**]	0,714[**]	**0,920**[**]	**0,711**[**]	**0,836**[**]	**1**				
Sözcü(T1)	0,462[*]	0,348	0,198	0,200	0,637[**]	0,653[**]	0,515[**]	0,463[*]	**1**			
Sözcü(T2)	0,507[**]	0,639[**]	0,376[*]	0,410[*]	0,696[**]	0,942[**]	0,796[**]	0,562[**]	**0,758**[**]	**1**		
Sözcü(T3)	0,550[**]	0,563[**]	0,448[*]	0,456[*]	0,765[**]	0,857[**]	0,777[**]	0,693[**]	**0,826**[**]	**0,882**[**]	**1**	
Sözcü(T4)	0,458[*]	0,540[**]	0,394[*]	0,413[*]	0,693[**]	0,861[**]	0,737[**]	0,632[**]	**0,797**[**]	**0,916**[**]	**0,968**[**]	**1**

* and ** indicate statistical significance levels of 5% and 1%, respectively.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
In this study, the relationships between the own issue agendas of three major newspapers in Turkey, as evidenced by their Twitter accounts were investigated according to their autocorrelations. In other words, the autocorrelation of the four-week agenda of each newspaper in Twitter was examined.

In this study, it was found that statistically significant positive autocorrelations between its own issue agendas of Twitter accounts of each major newspaper in Turkey; the findings revealed high agenda autocorrelations in all three newspapers of Turkey over a four-week period. While Hürriyet had the greatest autocorrelation, Sözcü had the second-highest; and with a slight gap, Sabah had the third-highest autocorrelation.

These findings indicate that all three newspapers followed their own issue agendas throughout the period of examination. In conclusion, it has been found that all three newspapers followed their own agendas on Twitter and that they had a high level of continuity in this respect. Hürriyet followed its own agenda on Twitter most, often, followed by Sözcü, and then Sabah, with a slight gap.

The major Turkish newspapers put forward specific issue/issues in their agenda to attract public and followers' attention to these issues. This resulted in a continuation of agenda in each newspaper for four weeks, which accounts for the high agenda autocorrelation in each of these three newspapers. This finding can be explained by the role of gatekeepers in agenda-setting. In other words, the most important reason for the continuity of agendas in the Twitter accounts of the Turkish newspapers was the gatekeepers' agenda-setting role in the media.

As explained previously, one of the most important roles that gatekeepers play in agenda-setting in the media is their emphasis on the same issues in foreign news, political news, and also sensational (disruptive) and magazine themed news that creates a dramatic effect (Erdoğan and Alemdar, 2002: 215). The role of gatekeepers in the agenda-setting through Twitter accounts of Turkish newspapers has increased in this context, as the newspapers have made specific issues constant news items (for example, the Hürriyet magazine issues, or terrorism in Turkey; as well as in each of the three newspapers, the Syrian crisis, national security, foreign policy and national policy issues).

For example, in this study, it is seen that in the Hürriyet's Twitter account, by giving place to issues that concern the whole country, as well as regular magazine issues, they keep this news at the top of their agendas, and that the magazine news has continuity in Hürriyet's Twitter agenda. On the other hand, while this situation puts forward the role of gatekeepers in agenda-setting in the Hürriyet newspaper's Twitter agenda, the lack of magazine news that is put forward on the Twitter accounts of Sabah and Sözcü can again be explained by the role of gatekeepers in agenda-setting. A similar example from this study can be given in relation to sports news. Namely, while the sports news in Hürriyet's Twitter agenda was given as much place as other important issues and events concerning the country, in the Sabah newspaper, only the most important sports news was given place in their agenda. In Sözcü newspapers' agenda, it was found that only the issues concerning the country are given more importance. On the other hand, as long as the terror in Syria, which stood out in October 2014, Turkey's most important agenda issues/problems terrorism and the issues relating to national security has also been seen on Twitter kept on the top of continuous agenda for 4 weeks by the newspapers. These examples show that the gatekeepers of all three newspapers are making decisions about which issues to keep at the top of their Twitter agendas.

The examples above support the findings of İrfan Erdoğan and Korkmaz Alemdar (2002) on the roles of gatekeepers on agenda-setting in the media, and indicate that these roles are also applied by Turkish newspapers on Twitter. Thus, in this study, the high autocorrelation levels on the Twitter agendas of Turkish newspapers are explained by the role of gatekeepers on agenda-setting in the media.

The most crucial benefits of this study are as follows:
- This study investigated the relationships between their own issue agendas of the Twitter accounts of major newspapers in Turkey.
- This study shows that Twitter is used by major newspapers in Turkey as an active and effective reporting tool in order to spread the news nowadays.
- This study shows that the specific issues that become prominent in mass media become also prominent in the Twitter accounts of major newspapers in Turkey; and that these issues are also frequently presented as news in the newspapers' Twitter agendas just as they are in the traditional media.
- This study shows that, just as the traditional and/or online media follow their own issue agendas, the major newspapers in Turkey also maintain their own issue agendas on Twitter.

- This study supports the findings of İrfan Erdoğan and Korkmaz Alemdar (2002) with reference to the roles of gatekeepers on agenda-setting in the media, and it also has revealed that these roles are also applied on Twitter by Turkey's newspapers. As such, the study shows that the role of gatekeepers on agenda-setting in the media are also applicable in the context of the newspapers' Twitter accounts.
- This study has extended the role of gatekeepers on agenda-setting in the media to Twitter.
- This study has important results regarding the media market and its implementers in Turkey. From the perspective of media markets, it is found that the Turkish newspapers are stable in terms of following their own agendas on Twitter. As such, there are no disruptions of their Twitter agendas in any sense and Twitter is consistently used by newspapers as a media tool. Thus, it can be seen that newspapers use Twitter as a media tool in terms of traditional media.
- This study shows the implementers of the news media embrace social media and use it actively. Because of this, it appears that traditional media has been integrated with social media, especially Twitter, in newspaper applications. The evidence in this study shows that social media tools such as Twitter have been embraced in terms of gathering news, publishing, sharing with followers and other media.

The most important recommendation arising from this study is that other social media tools, which the traditional media use as a news tool, should be used in order to test the role of gatekeepers on agenda-setting in terms of different media forms, time periods and issues.

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