

Article

Exploring the Content of News Articles on the Possible Istanbul Earthquake

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Abstract: The paper aims to analyze the relationship between crisis communication, media dependency, and the possible Istanbul earthquake. This study also highlights the crucial role of earthquake journalism in enhancing public safety and awareness. Misleading or overly reassuring content can lead to society being unprepared for scientific realities and may undermine trust in authorities. Social media, in particular, poses significant risks during crises due to its rapid spread of misinformation and false news. Therefore, journalists, scientists, and politicians should act responsibly, considering their influence on society. This study examines a total of 92 news articles published between 2020 and 2024 on the Sabah (n=40) and Sözcü (n=52) newspaper websites, filtered by the keyword "possible Istanbul earthquake". In the Sözcü newspaper, 408 subcategories were identified, while in Sabah newspaper, 305 subcategories were found. The main research question addresses how news regarding a possible Istanbul earthquake is presented in online newspapers. Additionally, the study aims to identify potential issues in news presentations and to achieve results beneficial to society. For this purpose, two ideologically different online newspapers were selected as cases. In conclusion, while the approaches to potential earthquake news are common, the Sözcü news site was found to have more news assigning responsibilities.

Keywords: Istanbul; Earthquake; Crisis Management; Media Dependency; Disaster Journalism

1. Introduction

Earthquakes represent a significant reality for Istanbul and the Marmara Region. A consensus among seismologists indicates that at least one major earthquake is likely to occur in Istanbul. Researchers agree that there will be at least one earthquake of magnitude 7 or greater, potentially resulting in thousands of fatalities [1,2]. In this context, the media plays a pivotal role in raising public awareness and disseminating critical information. The portrayal of a possible earthquake in news reports can significantly enhance societal awareness regarding seismic risks and related challenges. Moreover, earthquake news in the media not only elevates awareness levels among thousands but also catalyzes certain societal dynamics. In this context, the earthquake should be addressed as a reality of Istanbul, along with its various possible impact, and the society should be made more aware. To raise this awareness level, the media has a direct and effective role. Determining how this role is executed is particularly important for media and communication scholars in terms of societal benefit. Some studies have particularly focused on the importance of this issue and have addressed various earthquakes in Turkey in the context of the relationship between earthquakes and the media [3,4].

In potential crisis scenarios, or when a crisis manifests, individuals' dependency on media tends to escalate. Social transformations, conflicts, and crises—essentially situations that disrupt daily life and generate security concerns—lead to increased media reliance among individuals and communities [5,6]. Defining a crisis is crucial at this junction. A crisis is characterized as a state of chaos and uncertainty that necessitates external management due to disruptions in the daily lives of communities or families [7]. In such scenarios, the demand for information within society surges, and the risk of accessing accurate information becomes paramount. This study addresses a potential crisis concerning the Istanbul earthquake, emphasizing the importance of understanding how news related to Istanbul is presented. This understanding is vital for assessing public preparedness for future crises and the media's accountability to the public.

Nevertheless, it is essential to recognize that as the long-anticipated Istanbul earthquake approaches, and its likelihood increases daily, the public's need for timely information through media channels intensifies. How this need is addressed constitutes a significant research opportunity. The media's approach to the potential Istanbul earthquake, along with an analysis of this approach, can inform future practices in effective crisis journalism.

Earthquake journalism holds considerable importance from multiple perspectives. Misleading narratives or overly reassuring tones in news coverage can lead to public complacency in the face of scientific realities, resulting in unpreparedness. Such situations can undermine public trust in scientists and governmental authorities [8]. Therefore, it is imperative that journalists, scientists, and politicians remain cognizant of their roles and the implications of their actions on society. The rapid dissemination of false or misleading information via social media can easily eclipse factual reporting. Despite its numerous advantages, social media significantly contributes to the spread of rumors and misinformation during crises [9]. Consequently, preemptive news coverage regarding potential crises is of utmost importance. Raising public awareness about possible crises is inherently a process that requires time and effort. Within this framework, a responsible journalistic approach can mitigate the spread of false information on social media and help prevent the exacerbation of potential crises through proactive media engagement. Indeed, crisis periods often coincide with increased media dependency among the public.

The research aims to answer the question of how news regarding a possible Istanbul earthquake is presented in online newspapers, within the context of media dependency and crisis communication. While fundamentally addressing the identified research question, the study also seeks to uncover potential issues in news presentations and achieve outcomes beneficial to society.

2. Media Dependency Theory, Crisis Management, and the Potential Istanbul Earthquake

In earthquake events, the public's dependence on the media increases as they cannot directly access scientific studies or understand scientific updates. In this context, especially during or possible crises, the media's dependency is quite high in directing aid, informing the public, and raising awareness. Indeed, one of the most effective ways to educate the masses is through the media. In this regard, this article has been examined from the perspective of media dependency theory.

Media dependency theory explains the relationship between the information produced and the need for that information. According to [5], it is a term used to describe individuals' dependency on information, entertainment, or emotional support from the media. The growth of cities and communities following the Industrial Revolution created societies where individuals increasingly

needed to receive news and follow events through various media sources. Living in a more globalized world and within communities characterized by specialized divisions of labor has led individuals to become dependent on media to stay informed about global happenings. This dependency tends to increase, particularly during times of crisis, which also amplifies the responsibilities of media professionals.

The COVID-19 pandemic, with its restrictions on social life and accompanying crises, exacerbated our media dependencies. Indeed, research indicates that in 2020, video viewing rates increased by approximately 60% [6,10]. In this context, media dependency theory places the individual-media relationship within a broader social structure. Thus, the question arises: what do individuals do with media? This inquiry should not only consider the individual-media relationship but also include societal conditions. The assumption that all individuals are, in some way, dependent on media allows for an exploration of the dimensions of this dependency [3]. A crucial question that must be addressed is: what factors contribute to increasing our dependency on media? Numerous studies indicate that the presence of conflict, uncertainty, and disorder in society serves as a third factor that heightens media dependency [6,12,14].

On the other hand, media dependency may not only emerge in connection with individuals' various demands but can also produce negative outcomes. Particularly in developing or imminent crisis situations, the constant need for information can adversely affect individuals' mental states. In this context, media dependency, arising from the necessity to remain vigilant against crises, can lead to psychological issues within society during critical moments.

The above considerations, which illustrate both aspects of media dependency approaches, become even more relevant when discussing the potential Istanbul earthquake. For nearly 20 years, especially following the 1999 İzmit earthquake, the potential for an Istanbul earthquake has been emphasized, with frequent assertions that it will occur soon. The challenge lies not only in continuously reporting on this potential crisis to prepare for it through media channels but also in approaching news coverage with a sense of responsible journalism that considers human psychology. Particularly, the importance of crisis communication and the issues in communication have been highlighted through the 1999 Izmit earthquake [14]. In Istanbul, where a significantly larger population is involved, such crises have the potential to result in much more devastating consequences. In this regard, journalists bear significant responsibilities. News channels must balance the need to inform and prepare for a potential crisis while simultaneously avoiding exaggeration, distortion, and the creation of panic that could capture public attention.

Indeed, a survey conducted by the Özdemir Research Center with 408,079 participants between March 10-25, 2024, revealed that the two primary concerns for residents of Istanbul are fear of earthquakes and preparedness for such events [13]. Given this reality, the limited opportunities for Istanbul residents to directly access scientists or scientific research for various reasons further increases their media dependency. The demand for information regarding the anticipated crisis is substantial. Aware of this situation, journalists strive to meet the information needs of Istanbul residents by continuously reporting on the potential Istanbul earthquake. The manner in which this information is conveyed and what is emphasized in these reports is crucial for preparing the public for a potential crisis.

Additionally, the reflection of the Izmir earthquake that occurred in 2020 on television and radio, and its examination in the context of crisis communication, highlights the importance of the media in

shaping the risk perceptions of society or communities regarding the earthquakes in Istanbul and Izmir [3,4].

In an era where social media and platform journalism have gained prominence, traditional news production and monitoring remain particularly important during crises or disaster situations. Indeed, during potential crises or panic scenarios, society's need for reliable, editorially vetted, and fact-checked news increases. Consequently, in countries like Turkey, where traditional media tools retain their influence, the media plays a vital role in preparing for crises or disasters [14]. At this juncture, there exists a parallel relationship between crisis-disaster communication, media dependency, and societal preparedness for disasters.

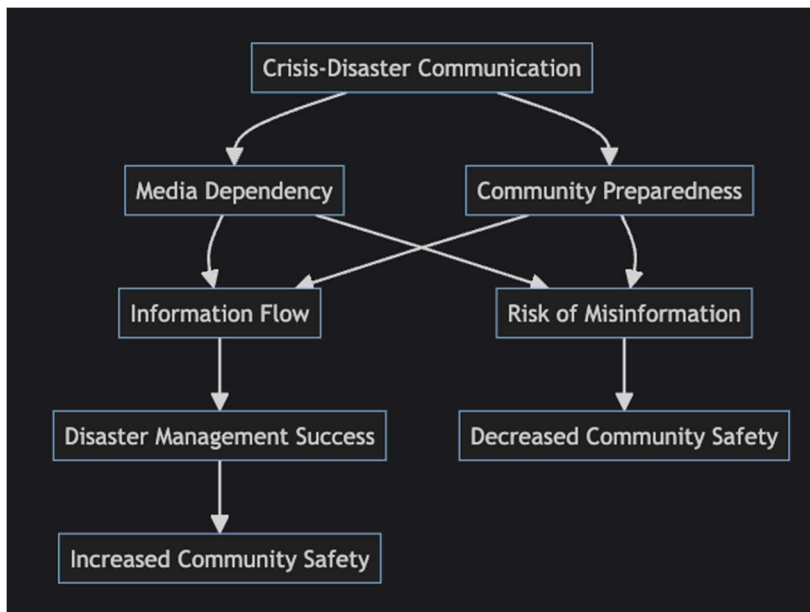


Figure 1. The interconnected elements of crisis-disaster communication.

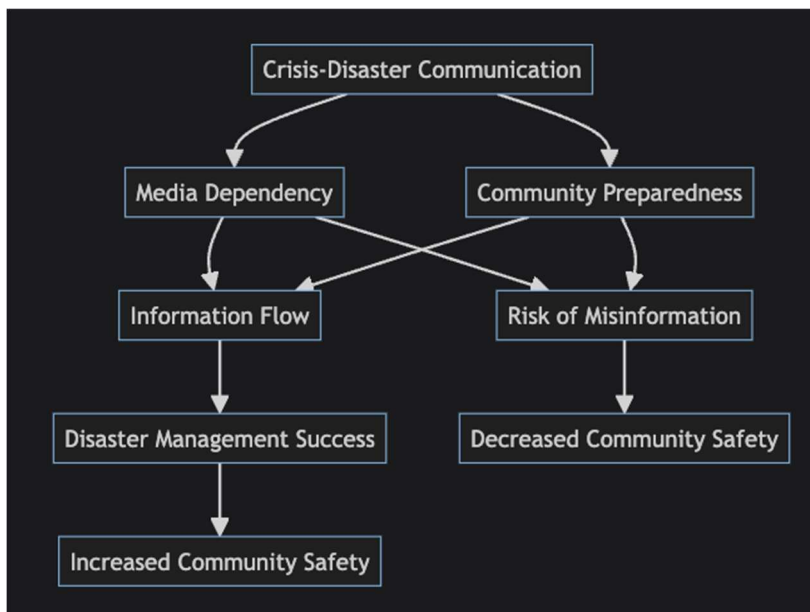


Figure 2. Possible Istanbul Earthquake and its Media Relation.

The relationship between crisis, media, and society also brings with it the risk of panic among the public, which can lead media outlets to prioritize advertising revenue and sensationalism. This risk, whether consciously or unconsciously, can result in the misinformation of individuals and disrupt earthquake preparedness efforts. At this juncture, the need-based relationship between media and society carries the danger of diverging towards different points between informing the public and generating profit.

In the next section, the methodology of the research and the sample will be discussed, and the factors that led to the emergence of the research will be evaluated.

3. Methodology

In this research, content analysis will be utilized. Content analysis is a method frequently encountered in the social sciences, media studies, and particularly in journalism [15,16,17,18,19,20,21].

Content analysis is a type of analysis that provides meaningful and systematic insights by examining the fundamental formation processes of texts or discourses through extraction, categorization, classification, or differentiation. Additionally, it offers researchers the opportunity to make interpretations or draw conclusions. Furthermore, while allowing for interpretations, it maintains systematic objectivity by quantitatively expressing qualitative content with numerical data, thus facilitating a holistic understanding.

The question of how news about the potential Istanbul earthquake is presented in online newspapers has been examined through content analysis of articles appearing on Sözcü.com and Sabah.com, which reach a wide audience in Turkey. According to data from [22], Sözcü.com ranks as the 12th most visited website in Turkey. As a news site, it is the second most visited after hürriyet.com.tr. Meanwhile, Sabah.com ranks as the 19th most visited website and the 6th most visited news site. In addition to their reach, their representation of opposing viewpoints [23,24] also serves as a reason for their selection as samples. The Sözcü.com online newspaper adopts a more leftist or democratic stance with an opposition party-oriented news policy, while Sabah.com is positioned more nationally conservative and aligned with the ruling party [25,26]. These two newspapers have been subjects of many studies as contrasting samples within various themes in Turkey [24,25,26].

In this study, a total of 92 articles related to the potential Istanbul earthquake were identified on the websites of Sözcü.com and Sabah.com between 2020 and 2024. Of these articles, 40 were accessed via Sabah.com and 52 via Sözcü.com. Nine articles that emerged from the search for the potential Istanbul earthquake were deemed unrelated to the Istanbul earthquake and excluded from the analysis. While conducting the content analysis of the articles, various categories were created, and the articles were evaluated based on these categories.

The codes determined for the analysis section of the study were based on the findings from the preliminary readings of the news sites, which were identified according to their frequency. However, while some of the subcategories were determined during the preliminary readings, others were added as subcategories during the examination of the news articles. This was due to the effort to include all earthquake and crisis-related elements detected in the possible Istanbul news in the analysis. Furthermore, the consideration of the study period between 2020-2024 is crucial for the validity of the study. Indeed, the inability to obtain healthy page views of the sites before 2020 has limited the scope of the study. In order to ensure consistency, it was deemed necessary to examine

the same time periods in both news sites. In this context, the examination of the news articles was terminated as of the year 2020. Indeed, a 4-year period was considered sufficient for the universe of the research.

Table 1. Categories and Sub-categories.

Websites	Main Category	Subcategories
Sabah and Sözcü	Content Type	A. News B. Photo Gallery C. Video News
Sabah and Sözcü	Themes of the News	A. Statement B. Claim C. Criticism D. Reassuring Content E. Fear and Panic F. Evaluation G. Information H. Warnings I. Conspiracy
Sabah and Sözcü	Content of Images in News	A. Image of the person in the news B. Infographic / Map / Statistics C. Vitalization D. Archives
Sabah and Sözcü	Person's Opinion in News	A. Seismologist – Geologist B. Construction Experts C. Others D. Risk/Disaster Management Expert E. Search and Rescue Expert F. Historian G. Astrologer / Psychological Counselor H. Local Government Employees I. Government Employees
Sabah and Sözcü	Content Type in News	A. Urban Transformation B. Disaster Gathering Areas C. Scientific Events D. Drills and Preparations E. Warning and Prediction F. Risk-Crisis Management
Sabah and Sözcü	Responsibilities for Possible Istanbul Earthquake	A. Government B. Social C. Responsibility D. Local Governments E. Construction Sector F. NGOs G. Universities H. Media

4. Findings

The research findings were addressed under 6 main categories. Although there is no direct connection between the main categories, this connection has occasionally been evaluated under

relevant headings within the fundamental categories. Additionally, the data obtained from the online newspapers Sözcü.com and Sabah.com were examined comparatively under the same headings and presented through tables. In this context, 408 subcategories were identified within the content of 52 articles on the Sözcü news site. In contrast, 305 subcategories were detected in 40 articles on the Sabah news site.

4.1. Content Type

The content types of both newspapers were examined within the same categories. In this category, only 1 article in Sözcü newspaper was presented as a video news piece, while the other 50 articles were presented as traditional text accompanied by photographs. In Sabah newspaper, 32 articles were expressed in text format, while 7 articles were presented as photo galleries. Additionally, 1 article was a video news piece. The majority of articles categorized as photo galleries on the Sabah news website contained information regarding earthquake risks in Istanbul's districts, and these articles were potentially prepared with considerations for web traffic implications. However, both online newspapers primarily prefer the text-based news delivery method.

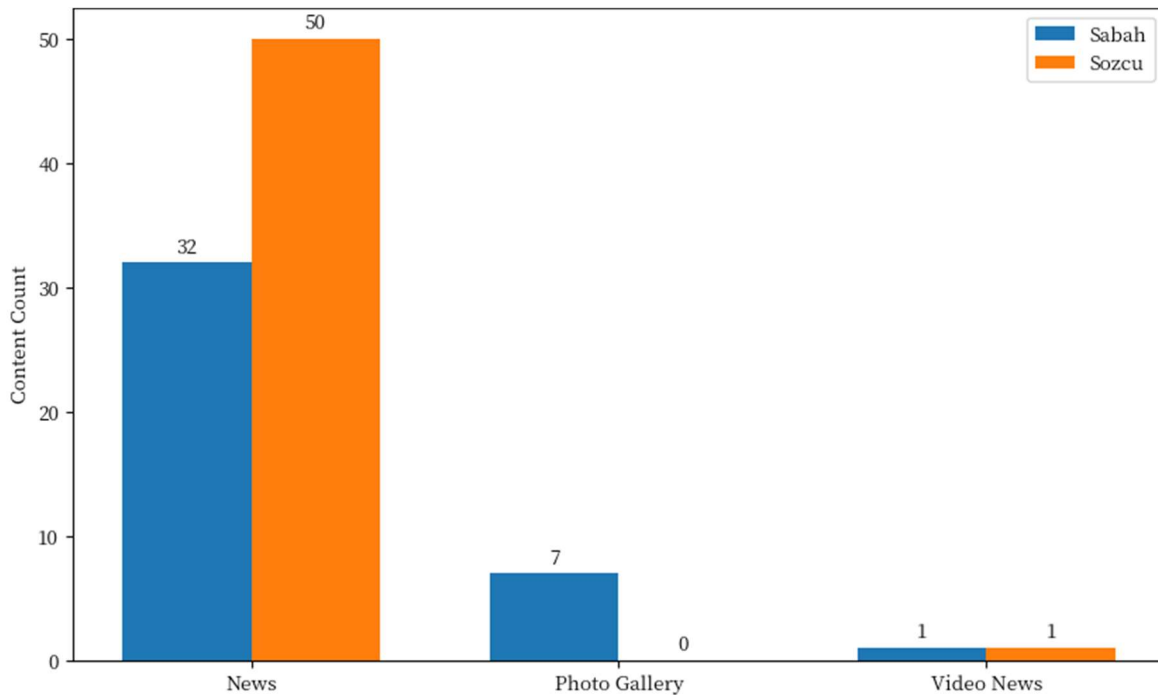


Figure 3. Types of Content in Sözcü and Sabah Online Newspapers.

Based on these data, the significant element across all categories has been the texts in the news articles. Indeed, both news sites establish a text-centric news delivery strategy.

4.2. Themes of the News

Within this category, 9 subcategories were identified: Statement, Claim, Criticism, Reassuring, Fear and Panic, Evaluation, Information, Warning, and Conspiracy. Some articles were evaluated under multiple themes. In this context, 101 themes were identified in 40 articles from the Sabah news site, while a total of 136 themes were identified in 52 articles from the Sözcü news site. In total, 237 markings were made across the 9 subcategories.

The most significant similarity between the two news sites emerges in the Statement subcategory. Out of 40 articles on the Sabah news site, 36 included statements, while 41 out of 52 articles on the Sözcü news site contained statements. These data indicate that both news sites feature expert opinions or statements from authorities, thus providing news that goes beyond mere rumors. Indeed, giving voice to authorized individuals enhances the credibility of the news and its impact on readers regarding the seriousness of the issue. When considered in percentage terms, 83.7% of the news articles contain reports based on expert or authoritative opinions. This suggests that earthquake news is addressed with expert assistance, indicating that the news sites are actively seeking credible sources.

Moreover, both news sites have articles marked in multiple categories alongside statements in this category. Another prominent element is the warning aspects that stand out in possible earthquake news. Based on the aforementioned statements, the warnings made by experts and authorities regarding the potential Istanbul earthquake are particularly noteworthy. In fact, 20 out of 40 articles on the Sabah news site include warnings, primarily issued by experts or authorities. On the other hand, 27 out of 52 articles on the Sözcü news site contain warnings from experts or authorities. From this perspective, both news sites highlight warnings alongside news about the impending Istanbul earthquake. It is not incorrect to say that these warnings, issued by experts, also create fear and panic. However, in this regard, the Sözcü and Sabah newspapers differentiate themselves. The Sabah newspaper reports only 4 articles that could induce panic, while the Sözcü news site features 14 articles that highlight fear and panic elements. In these articles, the main theme emphasizes the urgency of preparedness and the upheaval that life will face due to the earthquake.

Another positive aspect of both news sites is their avoidance of conspiracy theories. Both sites have refrained from sensational news that could incite public panic and have avoided articles with unclear sources. It is important to note that they do not resort to conspiracy theories in their journalistic approach. Only 1 article on the Sözcü news site was identified as being based on astrology, which does not contain any elements of fear or panic nor convey any warnings.

Additionally, it is observed that the news sites frequently provide information through experts regarding fault lines, urban transformation, and historical earthquakes. The evaluations made in the articles are also noted to be based on expert assessments. In this regard, neither news site consulted public opinions nor included personal additions from editors or writers.

Furthermore, both news sites appear to avoid using assertive language. Both parties have refrained from using assertive language regarding earthquake timing, potential occurrences, or future predictions in their news themes.

Both the Sabah and Sözcü news sites have chosen not to include reassuring news. There could be several reasons for this choice: one may be their intention to convey the seriousness of the earthquake, while another could be that sensational news tends to attract more web traffic. A total of 6 reassuring articles were identified across both news sites. Most of these articles relate to completed earthquake preparedness measures or neighborhoods with better soil conditions.

In summary, while both news sites exhibit similar approaches, the number of warnings in Sözcü's articles is 27, compared to 20 in the Sabah news site. Additionally, it can be noted that the Sabah news site has 4 articles that induce fear and panic, significantly fewer than the 14 articles on the Sözcü news site that contain panic-inducing elements. This approach may be explained by the

Sabah news site's pro-government stance, which aims to convey the message that everything is under control. The table below illustrates these differences in percentage terms.

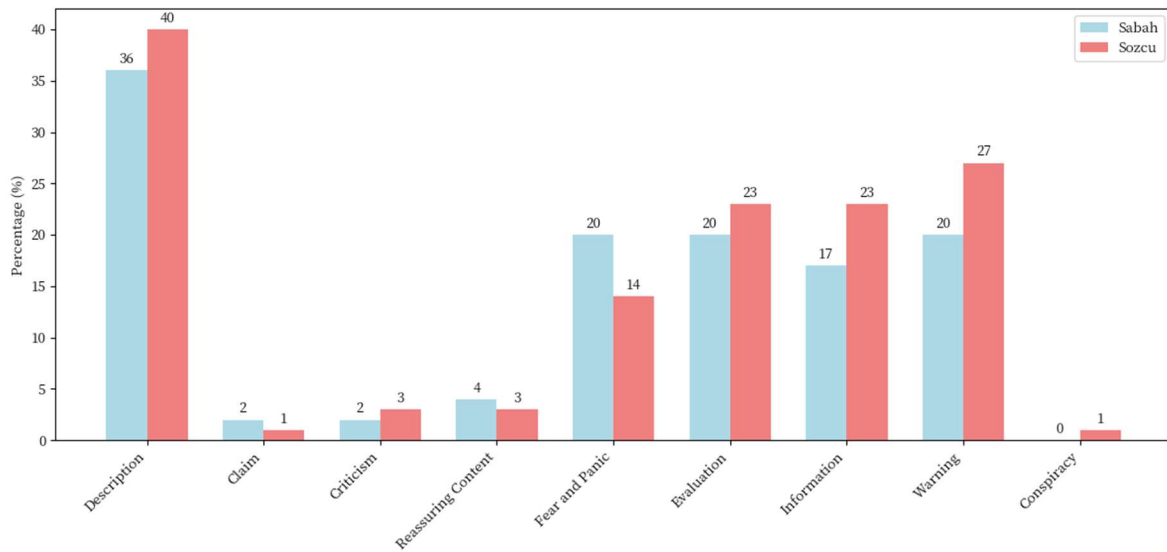


Figure 4. What Do News Contents Include in Percentage?

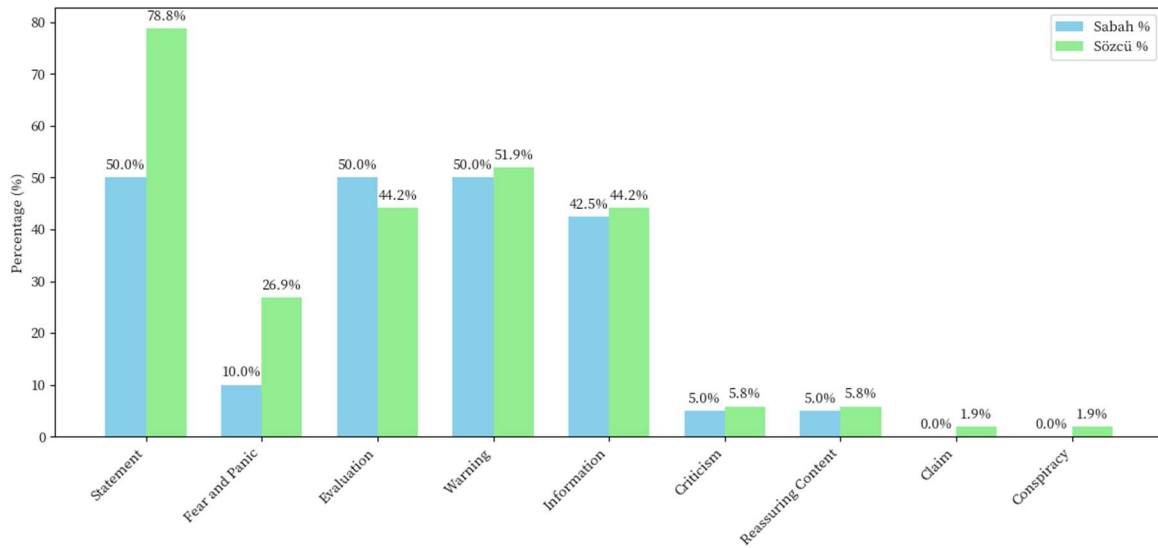


Figure 5. What Do News Contents Include?

The presented data, which shows significant similarities, will become even more meaningful when considered alongside other categories. This comprehensive analysis will provide a clearer understanding of the overall trends and patterns in news reporting between the two sites. By examining these similarities and differences across various categories, we can gain deeper insights into the editorial strategies and thematic focuses of each news outlet.

4.3. Content of Images in News

Based on the general news reporting practices of various news sites, four subcategories have been established for this category. These subcategories are:

- Image of the Person in the News,

- Infographic / Map / Statistics,
- Archive Photo of Previous Incidents,
- Vitalization.

However, vitalization has not been identified in either of the two news sites. At this juncture, two significant subcategories constitute the primary visual content for both news sites: Image of the Person and Archive Photo of Previous Incidents.

In the Sabah news site, archive images are prominent in 26 out of 40 articles, while visuals of the individuals whose opinions were solicited appear in 27 articles. Conversely, the Sözcü news site features archive images in 15 out of 52 articles and includes photographs of the consulted individuals in 38 articles. Notably, some articles contain both archive images and photographs of the individuals providing commentary simultaneously.

A critical distinction between the two news sites lies in their use of maps. The Sabah news site incorporates maps in 9 articles, particularly during the presentation of locations identified as hazardous by experts. In contrast, the Sözcü news site has utilized maps only once. The frequent use of maps and archive images by the Sabah newspaper can be attributed to its tendency to present news as photo stories. This approach is primarily driven by the site's objective to enhance its daily visitor count by displaying each photo on a separate page.

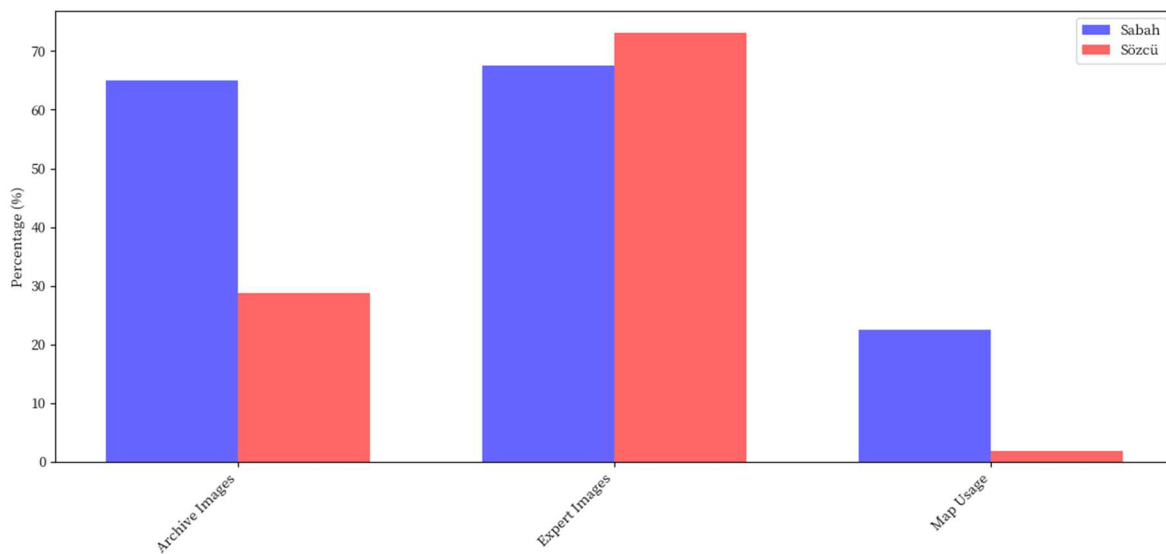


Figure 6. A Comparative Data of Visual Representation in News Media.

Both news sites have included images of the experts whose opinions they feature. However, it has been observed that the Sabah news site utilizes a greater number of visuals in its articles, often incorporating multiple images within many of its reports. In contrast, the Sözcü news site generally prefers to convey its news with a single visual.

4.4. Person's Opinion in News

Under this category, the following subcategories have been established:

- Seismologist /Geologist,
- Construction Experts,
- Risk/Disaster Management Expert,

- Search and Rescue Expert,
- Historian,
- Astrologer / Psychological Counselor,
- Local Government representatives,
- Government representatives.

Initially, the categories of Seismologist and Geologist were evaluated separately; however, they were later merged due to their close relationship. For both news sites, the most frequently consulted individuals for statements are seismologists and geologists. In the Sabah news site, the opinions of seismologists or geologists are included in 17 articles, while the Sözcü news site features such opinions in 33 articles.

In this context, it is noteworthy that both news sites have developed a news reporting approach that relies on the views of individuals capable of conveying scientific data and results regarding a potential earthquake in Istanbul, distancing themselves from speculation and rumors. Indeed, more than 50% of the articles about a potential earthquake in Istanbul on the Sözcü news site include geological or seismological opinions, while this ratio is nearly 40% for the Sabah news site.

On the other hand, the most striking distinction between the two news sites emerges in the reporting of statements made by government officials. In the Sabah news site, which is known for its proximity to the ruling party, 11 articles directly reflect the statements made by politicians affiliated with the government party. In contrast, the Sözcü news site reports this number as 4. Due to the lower number of articles identified, the Sabah news site demonstrates a higher tendency to include government officials and their statements in its reports. These articles generally focus on the government's earthquake preparedness efforts and emphasize how seriously the state or government regards earthquake readiness. Implicitly, this creates an image of the government fulfilling its responsibilities. Additionally, the Sabah newspaper has included statements from local officials in 8 articles, which consist of comments regarding earthquake preparedness from mayors in districts won by the AK Party ¹.

Both news sites have been found to insufficiently cover search and rescue or crisis management experts in their articles. However, this does not mean that there are no reports on search and rescue or crisis management. In the statements made by seismologists included in the news, opinions on search and rescue or crisis management are often presented. Nevertheless, the expert opinions on these topics remain weak.

The most prominent seismologist mentioned is Naci Görür ². Both news sites have frequently referenced his statements, emphasizing his importance in the discussion of the topic.

Additionally, due to the low occurrence of conspiracy theories or pseudoscientific statements, there has been either no inclusion or very limited coverage of expert opinions from psychological counselors, astrologers, and similar figures who cannot be fully categorized within scientific disciplines.

This trend indicates that both news sites recognize the dangers of earthquakes and the importance of preparedness. They refrain from publishing sensationalist or dubious reports

¹ The Justice and Development Party (AKP) has been the sole ruling party in Turkey from 2002 to 2025 and is still in power.

² An internationally recognized geologist and seismologist from Turkey who frequently appears in the media.

regarding the potential earthquake in Istanbul, which could be considered sensational news on its own. In other words, there is a noticeable absence of a tabloid-like approach in their reporting.

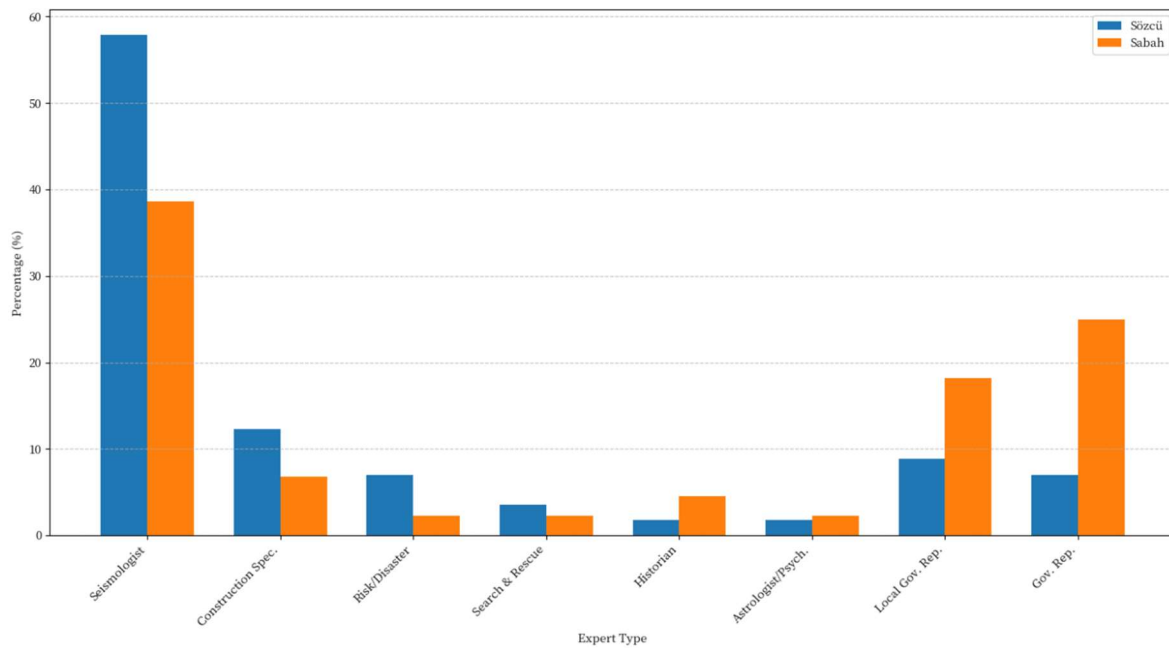


Figure 7. Comparison of Individuals Making Statements.

Expert Type	Sözcü (%)	Sabah (%)	Absolute Difference
Seismologist	57.9	38.6	+19.3%
Construction Specialists	12.3	6.8	+5.5%
Risk/Disaster Management Expert	7.0	2.3	+4.7%
Search & Rescue Expert	3.5	2.3	+1.2%
Historian	1.8	4.5	-2.7%
Astrologist / Psychological Consultant	1.8	2.3	-0.5%
Local Government Representatives	8.8	18.2	-9.4%
Government Representatives	7.0	25.0	-18.0%

Figure 8. Distribution of Experts Featured in the News.

Despite the existence of numerous studies on Istanbul's earthquake history [27,28], there is almost no mention of historians in the news articles. At this point, the news generally consists of discussions about the earthquake threat and future predictions. The past seems to be a method that these news sites use when looking to the future. This situation may reflect the journalists' desire to attract web traffic by piquing curiosity about future events. Indeed, the aim is to convey information about potential future crises, how to cope with them, and how crises arise. However, what can be done during a crisis has been conveyed only in limited detail. The next category, "Content Type in News," will address this topic in more detail.

4.5. Content Type in News

Under this category, various subcategories have been identified, including:

- Urban Transformation,

- Disaster Gathering Areas,
- Scientific Events,
- Drills and Preparations,
- Risk-Crisis Management.

The most striking aspect among the news articles is the question of how Istanbul is preparing for a potential earthquake. In parallel, the preparations that have been made or need to be made for Istanbul following each statement or warning form the core element of the news. Indeed, in the Sabah news site, 16 out of 40 articles focus on preparations for a possible Istanbul earthquake, while in the Sözcü news site, 19 out of 52 articles address this topic.

Moreover, urban transformation is also one of the main content elements in the news. The Sabah news site includes 9 articles on urban transformation, while the Sözcü news site has 17. Urban transformation news is primarily categorized into two points: first, "urban transformation must be completed as soon as possible," and second, "at what stage is the city in the urban transformation process?" As highlighted by these articles, both news sites fulfill the function of raising public awareness about the problems the city may face by recognizing and accepting a potential crisis.

Beyond this, there is frequent emphasis on the predictions of a possible crisis, the measures that can be taken, and the preparations that can be made. However, while doing this, both news sites do not address how urban transformation should be implemented. Additionally, when reporting on necessary preparations or measures to be taken, this reporting is again based on statements from scientists and representatives of government/local authorities. Both news sites provide limited coverage of expert statements from crisis management experts, disaster management specialists, and search and rescue experts, which would be needed in crisis situations. They prefer to feature popular scientists in their statements. This situation may stem from the news sites' concern about web traffic; however, considering the function of raising public awareness regarding a potential crisis, it would be an exaggeration to say that what is done is wrong. Nonetheless, it is clear that there is an incomplete approach.

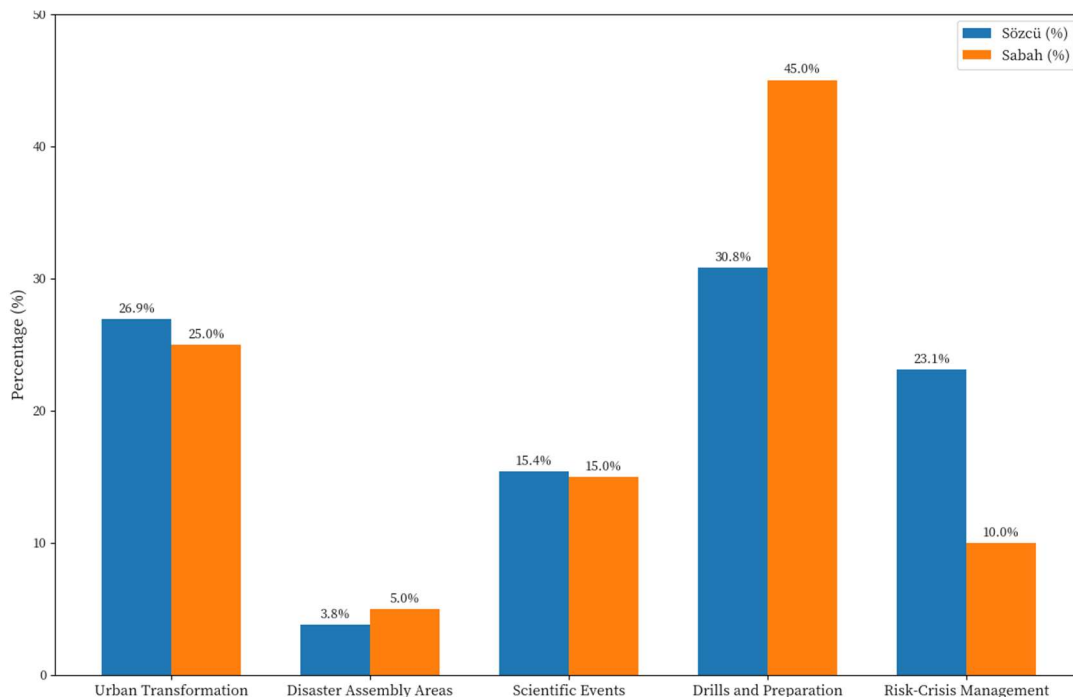


Figure 9. Content Distribution.

Overall, while the content distribution of the two news sites is similar, two main differences stand out. The first is that the percentage of news about drills and preparations is higher on the Sabah news site. These articles generally consist of content that describes how prepared the government is for the upcoming earthquake. On the other hand, the Sözcü newspaper focuses on news related to crisis management during a potential crisis. The aim of the Sözcü news site is to include articles about how the process will unfold during a crisis, what the public can expect, and what should be done in such situations, thereby attempting to raise awareness among readers.

However, as mentioned earlier, these warnings are generally conveyed to the reader by seismologists, and their opinions are discussed. At this point, it can be observed that both news sites occasionally report on scientific events and include the views of the scientists participating in these events. Moreover, by providing limited coverage of conspiracy theories, fake news, or opinions from individuals with questionable expertise, both news sites demonstrate an equal commitment to responsible journalism regarding the seriousness of the topic.

4.6. Responsibilities for Possible Istanbul Earthquake

Among all categories, this is the one where the difference is most clearly evident. The subcategories identified are

- Government,
- Society,
- Local Governments,
- Construction Sector,
- NGOs,
- Universities,
- Media.

The primary aim has been to determine who is held responsible for preparations for a possible Istanbul earthquake and crisis management within the news articles.

In the Sabah news site, out of 40 articles, only 8 hold specific institutions accountable for preparations related to a potential Istanbul earthquake. In total, local governments are mentioned in 5 articles, society in 2 articles, and the state in 1 article. However, there is no expression in the general news language regarding who is responsible for the preparations, the crisis itself, or its aftermath.

Conversely, the Sözcü news site adopts a different strategy in this regard. In a total of 52 articles, government institutions are mentioned 20 times, society 20 times, and local governments 11 times as being responsible for preparation and crisis management related to the potential earthquake. A significant portion of these articles has been approached in a non-blaming manner, opting for a news language that emphasizes the need for those responsible to fulfill their duties. However, the media has not been held accountable in any of the articles for the potential earthquake, nor has there been any highlighted responsibility assigned to universities. Additionally, the importance of NGOs is overlooked in the news. The percentage distribution of the two news sites is shown in Figure 10.

The proximity of the Sabah news site to government officials may have pushed it towards such an approach to avoid creating an image that the government is not fulfilling its duties. On the other hand, the opposite can be shown for the Sözcü news site. Its closeness to opposition parties may have allowed it to produce news more freely while placing responsibility on the government. However, it has been clearly determined that the Sabah news site avoids assigning responsibility. Indeed, while

the Sözcü news site reported responsible units for preparations related to a possible Istanbul earthquake a total of 54 times in 52 articles, this figure is less than half of that on the Sabah news site.

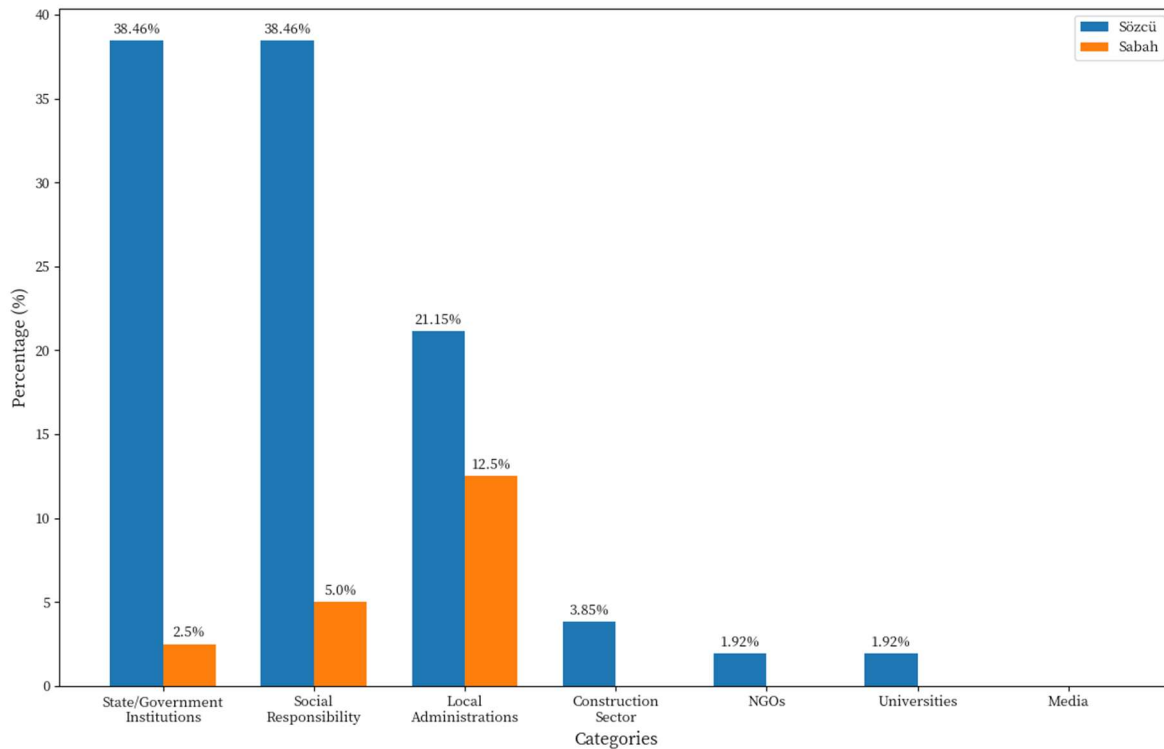


Figure 10. Who holds responsibility for ensuring readiness.

5. Evaluation and Conclusion

Crisis communication and media dependencies during crises need to be evaluated in parallel with each other. Based on this situation, an attempt was made to reveal how a possible Istanbul earthquake is reflected in news sites, how the potential crisis is addressed, and how the increase in media dependency in situations that can be seen as a "continuous crisis" is evaluated by journalists. In doing so, differences were identified by examining two news sites close to the government and the opposition. In this context, it was concluded that both news sites act with a sense of responsibility, being aware of the potential crisis. While similarities in basic news production were noted, a significant difference was identified specifically in the aspect of assigning responsibility. Additionally, the focus was on ensuring accurate journalism by filtering out content that is uncertain, contradicts scientific opinions, and is unscientific. Efforts were made to prevent all kinds of misinformation, highlighting expert statements, while sometimes mentioning shortcomings and at other times what has been done. In the news of both sites, we frequently see that various institutions are taking action regarding the possible Istanbul earthquake and aiming to mitigate the potential crisis. However, it should be noted that the Sözcü news site has produced more content regarding what has not been done or what needs to be done.

Undoubtedly, the study can be expanded to include various newspapers or media sources. On the other hand, examining how two online newspapers with different ideological backgrounds handle earthquake news can provide valuable insights into the bigger picture. Furthermore, the results of this study could open doors for different research in various countries. If the anticipated earthquake occurs, it would be possible to demonstrate how the media conducts crisis

communication and to compare the results. However, it can be said that both newspapers, despite their different ideological backgrounds [15], attempt to develop a responsible journalism approach by utilizing experts, setting aside panic and fear. Alternatively, from a different perspective, it may not have been seen as meaningful to create more fear to attract readers since it is already a topic that concerns Istanbul residents. Ultimately, it is possible to discuss a journalism approach for both online newspapers that is free from speculation, where the responsibilities are clear, and experts are the ones speaking on this matter.

On the other hand, with the presence of social media and various artificial intelligence tools in our lives, the responsibility of the media can be discussed not only as the media's responsibility, but also as the responsibility of rule-makers or lawmakers to impose certain limits and responsibilities on the media. In certain crisis situations or crisis preparation processes, the responsibilities, boundaries, and crisis approach strategies of the media can be revealed by NGOs, civil society organizations, universities, and various institutions and organizations.

Studies on how the possible Istanbul earthquake is addressed are also parallel to the media's and academia's sense of responsibility. At this point, it is essential to conduct broader and project-level studies and turn them into articles. Beyond that, the public should be educated about potential natural disasters such as floods and landslides through media, in parallel with scientific journalism. Indeed, there are many studies in different countries on these topics [29,30,31,32]. Particularly, some studies especially in Japan have also highlighted the importance of the media in reducing natural disaster risks in a similar way. In this context, this study is also parallel as outcomes to different studies conducted [33,34]. Such studies should be conducted more frequently in Turkey, and it should be determined how the media should behave in expected crises.

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