Use of Artificial Intelligence in Turkey's Alternative News Media

BARIŞ ÇOBAN
Dogus University

Abstract

Integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) into Turkey's alternative media landscape underscores a transformative shift in journalism, especially within a context marked by authoritarian governance and polarised media ecosystems. This paper examines the dual-edged potential of AI in reshaping alternative journalism under Turkey's restrictive media environment. AI tools like generative models, advanced analytics, and automated content creation enable independent journalists to counter resource limitations, enhance investigative reporting, and expand audience engagement. Despite these advancements, ethical dilemmas and operational risks emerge, particularly within politically sensitive contexts.

This research explores how AI adoption in Turkey's alternative media intersects with global trends while navigating unique local constraints. Findings reveal uneven AI literacy among journalists, scepticism regarding its reliability, and challenges linked to biased algorithms and privacy violations. However, AI's ability to democratise content creation and support investigative journalism highlights its potential as a powerful tool for countering authoritarian control. The study advocates for robust ethical frameworks, transparency in AI applications, and interdisciplinary collaboration to mitigate risks and foster responsible adoption. Emphasising training and resource access for alternative media highlights the critical need for equitable AI integration.

Keywords: Alternative media, artificial intelligence, AI in journalism, media polarisation, journalistic innovation

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Integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) into journalism revolutionises how news is produced, shared, distributed, and consumed. This innovation is significant for alternative media outlets operating in challenging environments, such as Turkey, where political polarisation, authoritarian governance, and systemic constraints severely limit press freedom. In Turkey, alternative media serves as a lifeline for independent journalism, striving to counterbalance state-controlled narratives and provide a voice for marginalised perspectives. However, integrating AI into this sector presents unprecedented opportunities and formidable challenges.

Turkey's media ecosystem is deeply polarised, with mainstream media, primarily aligned with the government, acting as a propaganda machine, marginalising independent and oppositional voices (Somer, 2019). In contrast, alternative media outlets -ranging from liberal to radical left- operate under constant threat of censorship, legal persecution, and financial instability. Within this restrictive environment, AI technologies offer a powerful means of enhancing journalistic workflows, from automating routine tasks like transcription and translation to facilitating investigative reporting through advanced data analysis. For instance, generative AI tools are increasingly employed to optimise content creation and expand audience reach. However, these advancements are accompanied by significant ethical and operational dilemmas.

The risks associated with AI in journalism are particularly pronounced in politically sensitive contexts like Turkey. Deepfakes, algorithmic biases, and AI-generated disinformation can undermine public trust and exacerbate social divides. Especially during election campaigns, AI technologies were weaponised to produce misleading content, contributing to an environment of misinformation that heavily influenced po-

litical outcomes. Such incidents underscore the dual-edged nature of AI: while it empowers journalists to overcome resource limitations and state censorship, it also amplifies the tools of authoritarian control and manipulation.

This paper explores the integration of AI in Turkey's alternative media, analysing how these technologies are reshaping journalistic practices in an authoritarian setting. It examines the potential of AI to enhance creativity, efficiency, and audience engagement while addressing its inherent risks, including ethical concerns and the erosion of traditional journalistic values. By situating Turkey's experience within the broader global context of AI adoption, the study highlights the critical role of alternative journalism in sustaining democratic discourse amid technological and political upheaval. Ultimately, this research aims to provide insights into the opportunities and challenges of AI in alternative media, offering a nuanced perspective on its impact on journalism in one of the world's most complex media environments.

1 Turkey's Media Landscape and Alternative Media

Media freedom in Turkey has faced significant challenges recently, with international organisations documenting ongoing restrictions. According to Freedom House (2024), Türkiye remains highly restrictive regarding press freedom, with journalists frequently facing imprisonment. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) ranked Türkiye 158th out of 180 countries in the 2024 World Press Freedom Index, highlighting continued governmental pressures on independent journalism (RSF, 2024). Similarly, the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF, 2024) reported that legal actions against journalists, particularly under disinformation laws, remain a serious concern. These findings indicate that despite minor ranking shifts, the overall media environment in Turkey remains highly constrained, limiting journalistic freedom and pluralism.

In Turkey, the big commercial media has almost entirely become a government-aligned propaganda machine. In a country that has been

polarised by the conscious efforts of the AKP government from the beginning, there are now clearly polarised political camps (Akser & Baybars, 2024). On the opposite side of the ruling camp are news media with different political positions, ranging from the right wing to the left wing, and varying in size. However, most of these organisations, both in terms of access to news audiences, the size of their staff, and the number of active journalists in the field, could be described as the opposition or independent media with liberal tendencies, along with alternative media organisations that usually have organic relationships with radical left parties or groups.

The global political landscape is shifting towards the far-right due to the influence of neoliberal policies, especially in the global south. This shift is causing damage to democratic systems worldwide and eroding hard-won rights and freedoms. The rise of authoritarianism can lead to the promotion of state-sanctioned narratives, the marginalisation of alternative viewpoints in the media (Levitsky & Way, 2020), and gendered disinformation (Clonts, 2024). Journalists may face pressure to conform to official ideologies, limiting their ability to report objectively and critically on political issues (Lendvai-Bainton & Szelewa, 2020). Authoritarian regimes may use the media to consolidate power, suppress opposition, and manipulate public opinion (Mostofa & Subedi, 2020). Government-affiliated media outlets may serve as propaganda tools to promote the ruling party's agenda, while independent or oppositional media face restrictions and intimidation (Bizumić & Duckitt, 2018). Relatedly, the landscape of journalism worldwide is expected to be significantly influenced by the continued rise of polarisation, the proliferation of fake news, and the impact of alt-right ideologies. The role of polarisation in media is anticipated to deepen, with news outlets aligning more strongly with specific political ideologies, leading to a further division in public discourse.

Turkey is among the countries that have recently taken an authoritarian turn (Erensü & Alemdaroğlu, 2018; Yeşil, 2018). The 22-year rule of AKP has combined neo-liberalism and Islam, transforming Turkey into a patriarchal autocracy (Coşar & Özcan, 2021). In this environment, Is-

lamism, populism, racism, ethnocentrism, and authoritarianism are all interacting with each other. The influence of an increasingly authoritarian regime combined with strong media polarisation (Somer, 2019) has dramatically reshaped the landscape of journalism. These factors have created a dichotomous media environment, dividing government-affiliated media from opposition media and independent outlets. The state of journalism in Turkey today can be critically understood through the prism of polarization, a significant force shaping the media landscape. Over the years, Turkey has seen an intensification of media polarisation that mirrors and exacerbates the country's political divides. The media has been co-opted as a tool for partisan interests, aligning closely with either the pro-government or oppositional forces, thus diluting the objectivity and pluralism that are hallmarks of democratic media. Large media conglomerates have been subsumed under the control of business interests aligned with political powers, leading to a media environment where economic dependencies dictate editorial content and the flow of information. The media in Turkey faces significant challenges due to government interventions that have reshaped the institutional framework, leading to the closures of numerous outlets and the imprisonment of journalists deemed oppositional.

The political environment in Turkey heavily influences media operations, with pro-government media serving as de facto arms of state propaganda. These media outlets echo the political ideology of the ruling party, often without substantial scrutiny or opposition. This alignment with government narratives is politically motivated, designed to maintain and strengthen the current regime's hold on power by shaping public perception and silencing dissent (Ataman & Çoban, 2019). The polarisation in media is thus a direct reflection of political strategies aimed at consolidating power, as media outlets are coerced or incentivised to support the government or face repercussions. The media in Turkey is constrained by a range of legal and regulatory frameworks designed to control content and curb dissent. These structural barriers are intended to consolidate media control, ensuring that coverage aligns with government interests and reducing the scope for independent journalism (Kaptan, 2020).

The Turkish media landscape is characterised by significant state intervention. Government-affiliated media receive financial incentives, such as advertising revenues from state agencies and favourable regulatory treatments, securing their financial viability and operational stability. This economic dependency is crafted to ensure media loyalty to the government and limit the economic viability of independent alternative media. Alternative news outlets face financial instability due to restricted access to advertising and punitive economic measures, making it challenging to sustain operations without compromising editorial freedom (Yanatma, 2021). Despite the adverse conditions, alternative media outlets in Turkey strive to maintain editorial independence and provide a counter-narrative to the predominant state-driven stories. However, they operate under the constant threat of legal actions, censorship, financial duress, and even closure. These outlets are crucial for democratic discourse as they tackle topics and perspectives often overlooked or suppressed by mainstream channels. The resilience of these media outlets highlights the critical role of alternative journalism in sustaining democratic processes within an authoritarian context (Ataman & Çoban, 2023).

The dichotomy between pro-government and opposition media in Turkey illustrates the profound impact of authoritarianism and polarisation on journalism. While pro-government media serve as conduits for official propaganda, independent outlets remain vital bastions of free expression and critical analysis. The ongoing struggle for a free press in Turkey is emblematic of the broader fight for democratic values in an environment where media freedoms are severely constrained by political, economic, and structural forces aligned with authoritarian interests. This situation underscores the importance of international attention and support for independent journalism in Turkey, which continues to resist despite formidable challenges.

Turkey's history of alternative media is important for understanding social movements and the struggle for media freedom (Çoban & Ataman, 2015). Against the recent authoritarian turn in Turkey and the aggressive univocally of the ruling media that seeks to legitimise the

oppression of all opposition groups and voices, the practice of journalism in favour of fundamental rights and freedoms in the country can be defined as 'constructing a democratic front in journalism' (Ataman & Çoban, 2019). Within the framework of a theoretical approach based on the unification of an alternative journalism understanding that finds its roots in the revolutionary bourgeois press of the radical enlightenment period (Atton & Hamilton, 2008), the importance of alternative journalism in creating oppositional options against today's authoritarian governments should be emphasised. Alternative journalism is a radical and democratic opposition to global capitalism and the mainstream media industry dominated by hierarchical, commercial and professional journalism (Bailey et al., 2008; Forde, 2011; Harcup, 2013; Downing et al., 2001). Alternative journalism, which tries to reverse the dominant discourse as a counter-hegemonic journalistic practice, means giving voice to the voiceless and taking sides in favour of rights instead of impartiality through a participatory and anti-hierarchical journalism approach. In line with the theoretical approaches of Harcup (2013) and Forde (2011), alternative journalism can be defined as a progressive, transformative, participatory, anti-capitalist and pluralist journalistic practice favouring participatory democracy. Alternative journalists are political activists who struggle in the communication field to construct a pluralistic, democratic and participatory world.

After the weakening of the alternative media and the emergence of a bipolar media structure as pro-government and opposition due to polarization, the debate on the evaluation of opposition media under the umbrella of alternative press emerged. The ideological spectrum of the opposition media is quite inclusive, ranging from nationalist, centre-right, liberal-conservative, liberal-conservative, centre-left to radical left. In this respect, opposition structures that would not usually come together due to polarisation were gathered under the same conceptual roof based on opposition to the government. Liberal news organisations try to act with Western liberal values in the vacuum left by the old mainstream. However, they cannot increase their influence due to their lack of financial power and the fluctuating nature of the audience they address. The most qualified news sources supporting the liberal approach in the

oppositional media line are the Turkish services of international news media (DW Turkish, VOA Turkish, etc.). Although they are targets of polarisation, the Turkish media services, which try to produce news based on liberal principles, are generally staffed by opposition journalists who have previously worked in mainstream or opposition media.

Alternative and independent media try to adapt to the ever-changing, fluctuating social, political and economic conditions and are constantly forced to transform by these conditions. For this reason, different media collectives come to the fore in every period and become ineffective, if not disappear, after fulfilling their functions. Traditional alternative media (Birgün, Evrensel, Artı Gerçek, Artı TV, Gazete Duvar, etc.) maintain their sustainability even if their influence has diminished, as they have loyal followings. In Turkey, where we see that the field of journalism is generally fuelled by X (Twitter) and YouTube, projects using social media channels pioneered by professional journalists have recently come to the fore. As a result, in the context of experienced journalists, whoever continuously produces interesting content and carries out active journalistic activities in the field stands out as an individual and becomes visible. Although digitalised journalism has transformed traditional forms of journalism, it can be said that qualified journalism, which has risen based on the gains achieved in journalism in the past, still maintains its power of influence by adapting to the digital field.

2 AI in Journalism

The emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies has led to significant changes in journalism, ushering in a new era of innovation and transformation. The integration of AI into journalistic processes began in the 1970s with the modest steps of computer-aided reporting. During this period, basic tasks such as data analysis and visualisation were automated, laying the foundations for technological progress in news production processes (Dhiman, 2023; Simon & Isaza-Ibarra, 2023). This first phase of automation represented a subtle but important shift in newsroom operations, allowing journalists to process data more

efficiently. However, the emergence of machine learning technologies in the 2000s broadened the scope of automation. These tools ushered in a new era in data journalism with their ability to analyse large data sets and generate predictive insights (Beckett, 2019; Haas, 2022). Journalism has entered an unprecedented process of change and transformation in all its dimensions after the AI revolution.

The development of natural language processing (NLP) and generative models such as GPT-3, GPT-4 has further advanced the innovations in journalism after digitalisation. These AI tools symbolise a shift from manual to automated production, enabling tasks such as multilingual article drafting, report summarisation, and interactive content production. The adoption of such technologies reflects increased efficiency and productivity as well as the encouragement of creativity in journalism (Newman, 2024; Noain-Sánchez, 2022). As noted by Jia (2022) and Tsourma et al. (2021), these developments have optimised news production processes and introduced innovative storytelling methods that make journalism more dynamic and versatile. As Beckett (2019) notes, these innovations have increased journalistic efficiency and enabled faster content production while reducing costs.

AI tools have been integrated into information gathering, production, and distribution processes, enhancing journalists' capabilities at every stage of the news production process. Automated platforms can now produce content such as articles, summaries, and reports with unprecedented speed and accuracy, providing critical support, especially under time and resource constraints. For example, generative AI models such as ChatGPT are used to rapidly draft coherent news texts, especially under tight deadlines (Dierickx et al., 2023). In addition to content creation, AI-based image and video editing tools are revolutionising visual storytelling, enabling journalists to produce compelling multimedia content that connects with audiences (Murár & Kubovics, 2023). This dual benefit of creating both textual and visual content has opened up new creative possibilities for journalism and enriched the storytelling experience. Integrating digital storytelling into journalism has also enabled the development of a new type of journalistic narrative. Artificial

intelligence is transforming the traditional structure of journalism and conservative text and narrative patterns. This process started with the effective use of social media tools, the prominence of user-generated content, and the rise of citizen journalism. AI tools accelerate this process to become even more effective and accelerate the digitalisation and transformation of traditional journalism.

In the context of the transformation of journalism, the type of journalism most affected by AI technologies has been investigative journalism. It can be said that investigative journalism will become much more effective with artificial intelligence. Today, cross-border investigative journalism primarily benefits greatly from AI technologies. Thanks to its capacity to analyse large data sets, AI enables journalists to uncover patterns and insights that were previously unnoticeable. Important applications include the analysis of satellite imagery for environmental reporting and using advanced analytical methods to uncover financial fraud (Simon & Isaza-Ibarra, 2023). These tools broaden the scope of investigative journalism and allow journalists to cover complex issues more effectively, promoting transparency and accountability. News reports made by investigative journalists using artificial intelligence tools are also very decisive in countries' political lives. Especially in the election processes in authoritarian countries, the importance of investigative journalists is becoming increasingly critical, and we witness that journalists using artificial intelligence tools produce news that puts authoritarian governments in difficulty.

AI has also transformed the sharing and distribution of news. AI-powered algorithms personalise content recommendations, curate news feeds, and optimise advertising strategies based on user behaviour analysis. These applications increase audience engagement by delivering relevant and accessible content to diverse audiences (Husnain, Khan & Malik, 2024). Artificial intelligence tools enable effective planning in delivering the news to the target audience at the right time and through the proper channels. They make it possible to determine the target audience, defined as reader/viewer/user or prosumer, and to use the available data on how accessing and influencing these target audiences will work

very effectively. Moreover, it makes journalism much more effective and efficient in commercial terms. It can also be predicted that new income-generation methods can be developed with artificial intelligence. However, despite all its positive contributions, it should be noted that journalistic practices using artificial intelligence tools are not always used ethically. Personalising content brings along some problems and difficulties. Critics argue that these algorithms risk creating echo chambers, reinforcing biases, and limiting exposure to different perspectives (Newman, 2024). Addressing these concerns requires greater transparency in algorithmic processes and a commitment to protect journalistic integrity (Noain-Sánchez, 2022). In particular, the rise of far-right movements and the normalisation of 'fake news' and 'deepfakes,' which are produced, distributed, and quickly go viral in their media and social media accounts, lead to the everydayisation of 'ordinary fascism.' In this respect, the invalidity of the claim that artificial intelligence tools automatically serve the development of a democratising and emancipatory type of journalism becomes evident.

Ethical dilemmas surrounding AI include algorithmic bias, dissemination of fake news, misinformation, deepfake, and a lack of transparency. These issues are particularly pressing in politically sensitive contexts, such as authoritarian countries, where AI-generated disinformation was weaponised during the 2023 and 2024 elections (Simon, 2024). Mainly during election periods, images produced using AI and fake news produced to discredit politicians using deep-fake videos can have the power to determine the fate of elections. The 2018 Cambridge Analytica scandal is an important example of how manipulated algorithms and fake news can be used in politics. Today, it has been shown that deepfake audio recordings, videos, and images produced using AI-supported tools are arbitrarily used by media and social media trolls directed by the powers that hold power in authoritarian countries.

The ethical and operational challenges of using AI in journalism are considerable. One of the most significant problems is algorithmic bias, often from the training data sets used to develop AI systems. Biased data can perpetuate stereotypes and misinformation, undermining the credi-

bility of journalistic content (Porlezza & Schapals, 2024). In particular, the reproduction of racist and sexist biases is one of the most significant problems of AI. For example, educational data disproportionately representing certain demographic groups can skew content recommendations, misrepresent marginalised communities, and reinforce social inequalities (Haas, 2022). There is a need to take precautions against AI based on widespread stereotypes, reproducing an understanding that ignores or marginalises disadvantaged groups and sensitising content production processes to such issues. Transparency in AI processes is essential to minimise such risks. 'Explainable AI' frameworks, which aim to provide insights into algorithmic decision-making, can play an important role in increasing accountability and building trust in AI-enabled journalism based on approaches that support human-rights-based, inclusive, democratic communicative processes (Simon & Isaza-Ibarra, 2023).

Privacy concerns also stand out as an important issue. The need for large-scale data collection for audience profiling and analyses raises ethical and legal questions. This is a problem for almost all countries. Especially in countries with authoritarian regimes using AI tools, such data collection and analysis can be used against journalists and dissidents. It may raise questions about the privacy of the whole society, and it may become possible for governments to access private information and manipulate it for their political purposes. Another problem is the commercial use of private information by large companies. The dominance of large technology companies exacerbates these challenges. Platforms like Google and Facebook act as gatekeepers, controlling content visibility through proprietary algorithms. This dependency undermines the autonomy of smaller newsrooms, particularly in countries like Turkey, where media independence is already under threat (OSCE, 2023).

In the media, mismanagement of sensitive user data can lead to privacy violations and undermine public trust in journalistic practices. These concerns are further compounded by disparities in adopting AI technologies across regions. While wealthier countries gain access to ad-

vanced AI tools, resource-constrained newsrooms in developing coun-tries struggle to keep pace. This digital divide limits access to different perspectives on a global scale and deepens inequalities in journalistic practices (Beckett, 2019; Simon& Isaza-Ibarra, 2023). In this case, glob-al media companies may act more expansionist, and national and local media may gradually become ineffective and disadvantageous.

The transformative potential of AI in journalism is indisputable. Emerg-ing applications such as real-time data visualisation, augmented reality storytelling, and interactive content creation can redefine storytelling and make news more engaging and inclusive (Opdahl et al., 2023; Simon & Isaza-Ibarra, 2023). AI offers significant possibilities for the develop-ment of new types of digital storytelling. With the use of AI-supported technologies in visualising news stories or producing video narratives for news, it has become possible to produce texts that have an impact far beyond traditional news narratives. Using Generative Models for Image and Video Synthesis has made it easy to create news-related visuals, especially fictional photographs, animations, or videos that support the news and can be effective for the reader. AI tools like DALL-E, Mi-djourney, and Leonardo are revolutionising visual journalism, enabling the creation of graphics and illustrations with minimal human inter-vention (Cools & Diakopoulos, 2024). These tools democratise creativ-ity, allowing smaller newsrooms to produce high-quality multimedia content without extensive resources. However, training journalists and newspaper staff working in IT and visual design on collaboration and new AI models is necessary to realise this potential. Training programs emphasising interdisciplinary collaboration can help journalists use AI responsibly while maintaining editorial independence (Beckett, 2023; Simon& Isaza-Ibarra, 2023).

Establishing strong ethical frameworks is crucial for the future of jour-nalism. Standards adopted across journalism can guide the responsible use of AI and reduce risks such as bias, misinformation, fake news, and data misuse (Haas, 2022; Porlezza & Schapals, 2024). Collabora-tion between news organisations, academic institutions, and technology developers is vital to addressing these challenges and fostering innova-

tion. Joint research initiatives and shared resources can fill gaps in AI expertise and improve its applications in journalism (Beckett, 2023). In this sense, the European Union and UNESCO are studying the subject. It can be said that local journalism organisations should be included in these processes, and a more effective network should be established for training and information on the issue.

AI tools accelerate journalistic processes and reduce costs, making it possible to create more lucrative income models in the sector. In addition, the fact that AI has done much of the work done by journalists in the past brings about a much more compelling content production process with much less personnel. With the news media starting to use AI more effectively, the risk of journalist unemployment has emerged as one of the important problems. The definition of AI as an evil 'Terminator' that will take over their work may emerge based on the opposing approaches of journalists about AI. This situation is also valid for many similar media sectors. In this respect, AI brings a new kind of written and visual textual transformation in journalism, and it has a very successful practice in producing traditional journalistic texts. Even though many journalistic mistakes made by developing AI tools are being revealed and discussed, in this respect, it is predicted that AI will soon be of central importance in the production of old ordinary journalistic content. It can also be said that those who do not have a developed ability to use AI tools in journalism to produce original and creative news content and compelling investigative journalism will find it very difficult to find a place for themselves in the journalism sector. In this respect, it should be noted that journalism is the field that will be most profoundly affected after Generative AI, and journalists should closely follow this transformation.

2.1 The Global Application of AI Technologies in Journalism: Case Studies and Implications

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming journalism worldwide, reshaping how news is produced, distributed, and consumed. By auto-

mating repetitive tasks, personalising content delivery, and enhancing creative outputs, AI enables media organisations to address challenges unique to their operational contexts. This chapter explores how different countries have adopted specific AI tools to improve journalistic practices, illustrating the diverse ways in which AI supports efficiency, creativity, and audience engagement.

The diverse applications of AI in journalism across these countries illustrate the technology's transformative potential. From automating repetitive tasks to fostering creativity and managing audience engagement, AI enables media organisations to navigate challenges while enhancing their offerings. However, these advancements also come with responsibilities, including addressing ethical concerns, ensuring transparency, and maintaining the human elements of journalism.

In the United States, prominent media organisations have embraced AI to streamline workflows and enhance productivity. The Associated Press (AP) has emerged as a leader in automation, utilising AI to generate financial reports and sports recaps. By automating these routine yet essential tasks, AP frees its journalists to focus on more complex investigative stories requiring human insight and analysis (Diakopoulos et al., 2024). Similarly, The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) leverages AI to generate concise summaries of news articles. This approach provides readers with quick and efficient overviews, catering to audiences seeking accessible and digestible information. Such innovations exemplify how AI can support journalists by simplifying time-intensive processes while maintaining content quality (UNESCO, 2023).

In the United Kingdom, AI fosters more profound connections with audiences and addresses economic challenges in the media industry. The Guardian employs AI-driven personalisation algorithms to tailor news recommendations, aligning content with individual reader preferences and habits. This approach enhances audience engagement and fosters loyalty by delivering content that resonates with readers' unique interests (Beckett, 2019). Meanwhile, DMG Media, the parent company of the *Daily Mail*, has adopted AI to address revenue concerns. Collaborat-

ing with ProRata.ai, DMG Media implements AI-driven compensation models to ensure fair revenue distribution across its digital platforms. This application underscores AI's role in navigating financial complexities within the media landscape while maintaining equitable practices (Poynter Institute, 2024).

Spain's media outlets leverage AI to foster respectful and inclusive online environments. *El País* uses the Perspective API, an AI tool designed to moderate user comments and detect toxic language. By automating the moderation process, the tool helps maintain a positive and respectful discourse within digital communities, reinforcing the publication's commitment to ethical standards and audience engagement (Council of Europe, 2023).

In the Netherlands, local media organisations use AI to cover otherwise unreported events. For example, AI tools automatically generate reports on amateur soccer matches, significantly broadening the scope of local sports journalism. This application demonstrates how AI can address gaps in coverage, ensuring that diverse topics and communities receive attention (Ogola, 2023).

In Brazil, the media company UOL employs AI to enhance audience engagement through content optimisation. By analysing search trends and generating news stories tailored to audience interests, AI enables UOL to increase its readership and adapt to shifting consumer demands. This approach highlights AI's potential to bridge the gap between audience preferences and journalistic offerings (Simon & Isaza-Ibarra, 2024).

India's news organisations, often constrained by limited resources, use AI to improve operational efficiency. AI tools are employed for transcription, summarisation, and data analysis, enabling newsrooms to optimise workflows and allocate resources to high-priority tasks. Addressing logistical challenges, AI helps Indian media outlets maintain quality journalism despite financial and infrastructural constraints (Ogola, 2023).

In South Korea, AI tools are revolutionising entertainment reporting. Hanteo Global has deployed AI journalism bots capable of generating articles with remarkable speed and consistency. This innovation allows the organisation to cater to the fast-paced demands of the entertainment industry while maintaining accuracy and reliability. Such tools redefine how newsrooms handle high-volume content needs, ensuring timely delivery without compromising quality (Simon & Isaza-Ibarra, 2024).

Japan showcases AI's creative potential in journalism. AI tools have been used to co-author short novels, blending human creativity with machine efficiency. This innovative use of AI demonstrates how the technology can expand the boundaries of storytelling, offering new formats and perspectives in journalistic content (Simon & Isaza-Ibarra, 2024).

2.2 Use of AI in Alternative Journalism in Turkey

Artificial intelligence (AI) revolutionises journalism, offering tools to enhance newsgathering, reporting, and dissemination. This research explores how alternative media outlets in Turkey, facing complex political and economic constraints, adopt AI, particularly generative AI tools like ChatGPT. The study investigates both the opportunities and challenges of AI integration.

In Turkey, studies on the use of artificial intelligence in journalism are new and few. This is also because the literacy of the news media and journalists on artificial intelligence is still in the development stage. In their study, Azimli and Saka (2024) state, "Most journalists interviewed had limited knowledge of the subject and were pessimistic about using such technology. Additionally, the journalists identified several issues in the media industry in Turkey, such as unemployment, political pressures, lack of funding, and a negative outlook on the profession's future". Despite all these, we can say that journalism in Turkey is rapidly integrating into the field of AI. The debate on whether AI is safe in journalism, including concerns about bias in AI-generated content, production of fake news, use of deepfakes, and violation of individual

privacy, is still being discussed. Especially in Turkey, it can be said that prejudices have been formed in the issue of AI and journalism due to faulty content, incorrect translation, etc., in AI-generated news that is shared with excitement in the process of getting acquainted with AI but without confirmation due to inadequacies in AI literacy. However, it is observed that the use of AI is gradually spreading both in the news media and among individual journalists as news production processes become faster and easier with the support of AI. Integrating AI technologies like ChatGPT in Turkish newsrooms reflects a broader trend of leveraging AI to overcome news production and distribution challenges while maintaining journalistic values like truthfulness, objectivity, impartiality, accuracy, fairness, and accountability in reporting news and information to the public.

The media landscape in Turkey exemplifies the complex interplay between the burgeoning potential of AI and the constraints imposed by political and economic factors. The main focus is on adopting AI in Turkish newsrooms and the role of generative AI tools in journalistic practices. By examining the benefits and risks associated with these technologies, this analysis delves into the unique challenges faced by alternative media outlets in Turkey as they attempt to harness AI's potential while navigating a restrictive media environment. Journalists in these outlets use AI tools to address challenges such as verifying information on social media and enhancing user trust and engagement through AI-driven conversational journalism. While AI offers opportunities for diversifying media offerings and advancing data-driven journalism, concerns about inaccuracies and the lack of empathy in AI systems remain significant (Umrani et al., 2019). The adoption of AI in Turkish newsrooms varies across different stages of the news production process, with different levels of integration depending on the automation of tasks. Technological advancements in AI are reshaping journalistic logic and practices, emphasising the need for journalists to align with technology and adapt their thinking to leverage AI effectively. In Turkey, alternative media outlets face additional challenges due to political pressures and limited access to AI infrastructure. These constraints hinder their ability to leverage AI effectively, often relegat-

ing its use to basic tasks like translation and paraphrasing (Thomson Foundation, 2024).

3 Method

This study employs a qualitative research design, incorporating textual analysis and in-depth interviews to investigate the adoption and implications of artificial intelligence (AI) in Turkey's alternative media landscape. Combining these methods allows for a comprehensive examination of how AI shapes journalistic practices, ethical considerations, and media narratives. These approaches are particularly suited to exploring the intersection of AI and journalism in politically sensitive environments where structural and systemic factors significantly influence media practices. Qualitative approaches efficiently investigate complex sociopolitical phenomena, allowing for interpreting meaning and context in textual data and individual experiences.

Textual analysis was applied to media texts produced by alternative outlets: Evrensel, Birgün, Diken, Bianet, Artı Gerçek, Sol Haber, VOA Turkish, and BBC Turkish. The analysis focused on texts published between December 2022 and September 2023, marked by heightened political activity. The news data containing the word Artificial Intelligence (AI) in all these newspapers were extracted and analysed after the news dealing with AI was identified. This method involves interpreting texts as cultural artefacts to uncover their embedded meanings, ideological framing, and intertextual connections (McKee, 2003). By examining themes, rhetorical structures, and ideological constructs, the study highlights how alternative media represent AI technologies, including their innovative potential and ethical challenges. Special attention was given to how these narratives reflect broader sociopolitical dynamics, such as political polarisation and media freedom in Turkey.

In-depth interviews were conducted with 13 journalists, five male and eight female, from various alternative media outlets, freelance or independent, to complement the textual analysis. This method captures jour-

nalists' experiences and professional perspectives, integrating AI into their workflows (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008). Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure diversity in roles, expertise, and familiarity with AI tools. Semi-structured interviews were employed to maintain consistency in exploring key themes -such as the benefits and risks of AI adoption- while allowing participants the flexibility to elaborate on their unique experiences (Bryman, 2016). Questions covered practical applications of AI, ethical concerns such as disinformation and algorithmic bias, and expectations for AI's future in journalism.

Data from textual analysis and interviews were synthesised to comprehensively understand how AI influences journalistic practices and media narratives. Integrating these methods ensures a nuanced exploration of the interplay between global technological trends and Turkey's unique sociopolitical challenges. This methodological approach highlights the structural and systemic factors shaping AI adoption in journalism, emphasising its implications for journalistic integrity and democratic discourse.

	Reporter	New Media
1	G1 (M)	Gerçek Gündem
2	G2 (M)	Birgün
3	G3 (F)	DW Türkçe
4	G4 (M)	Birgün
5	G5 (F)	Özgür Gündem
6	G6 (F)	İlke TV
7	G7 (M)	Birgün
8	G8 (M)	Gazete Duvar
9	G9 (F)	Dokuz8Haber
10	G10 (F)	Amida Haber
11	G11 (F)	Freelance
12	G12 (F)	Bianet
13	G13 (F)	Haber Global

4. Findings and Analysis

4.1 Analysis of News from Alternative Media

Alternative media has not been able to develop an alternative approach and interpretation of AI. One of the main problems is that alternative media has not been able to develop an AI policy regarding both technical and content. It can also be said that alternative media has not developed a practical approach to alternative AI theories and conducting discussions on them.

Alternative media does not produce original news beyond serving translated news. In this context, developments regarding AI in the international context and the role of AI in the development of technology and technological companies, especially new AI companies, daily life, international relations, politics, especially security and war policies, economy, stock market, education, sports, health, art, etc. and the change and transformation it creates are emphasised. In general, the news is seen to have a positive tone. It is observed that sceptical or opposing views on AI are primarily expressed in columns. In this respect, with a more radical and class perspective, the risk of AI taking away the jobs of employees in the future, the dystopic dominance of large corporations all over the world, and the risk of making impoverishment the future of the masses are expressed. In addition, it is emphasised that AI, security policies, privacy violations, and discrediting campaigns, especially targeting employees, disadvantaged groups, and dissidents, may become valuable tools for usurpation of individual and social freedoms and oppressive authoritarian powers worldwide.

The news analysed is heavily based on the negative impact of AI through the Hollywood strike. The claim that there will be job losses due to AI and that AI will cause a significant class crisis in the context of increased unemployment is emphasised. The second most fundamental emphasis is on the issue of copyrights; in producing both written and visual news, art, and entertainment content, an important copyright problem arises with AI, and the necessity of reorganising national and

international law in this respect is open to discussion. Subsequently, the security of personal data and the problem of surveillance are emphasised in the context of the drawbacks of personal data breaches.

In the alternative media, the promotion of AI and the translated news on research and development issues have considerable coverage. In general, news based on the statements of Big Tech CEOs or employees is produced. Content describing the role and goals of Big Tech companies based on the development processes of Artificial Intelligence has been produced. This news does not contain a critical perspective; news from international agencies is translated and used. One of the most significant handicaps of alternative journalism is the realisation that it is possible to use a critical approach in all news, acting with a different approach to such news and going beyond PR (public relations) journalism.

Another emphasis discussed in the alternative media is the national and international security problems created by AI and the necessity of national and international regulations on AI in the executive meetings held by the US, EU, and UN. In particular, the meetings involving the US President and OpenAI CEO Sam Altman are reported, and the issue of securing AI by the US and the international community is discussed. In the US, the AI issue, the national security risks, the role of AI in the international economy, politics, and conflicts, and the studies on possible roles are gaining importance. Another issue is the US-China rivalry, US sanctions against China, and China's efforts to develop AI (Baidu and now especially DeepSeek). China's AI regulations and restriction efforts are also discussed. In the face of the polarisation of trade competition between the US and the EU, China is developing new strategies of struggle based on technology and AI, and a new debate on the future of capitalism is being conducted in this context.

In media and journalism, the issue of fake news disinformation in news content produced with AI is one of the most discussed issues. The risk of producing disinformation and fake news, especially using deepfake, in the news produced in the political field is being discussed. In this regard, attention is drawn to the manipulative use of AI that may occur

during election periods. The high speed of the spread of fake news produced using AI and the risk and threat of such situations in politically sensitive countries for disadvantaged communities and opposition political party movements are in question. In particular, attempts to destroy the reputation of political leaders produced with deepfakes, portraying them as terrorists, or aiming to destroy their reputation with videos with pornographic content can be used in political election processes and can affect the outcome of elections. Especially in the elections in Turkey in 2023, there have been news reports about the disinformation made by the government against the main opposition party, CHP (the Republican People's Party), and its leader and candidate for presidency elections, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu and the content produced using deepfake. Even if the effect of deepfake images and videos on the election results could not be measured, it can be claimed that they were effective in Kılıçdaroğlu's loss in the presidential elections.

The use of AI in politics is another important topic of discussion; the production of propaganda content by AI and political speeches dictated to AI are among the most discussed topics. The fact that politicians dictate their election speeches to AI and their explanations about this is the subject of news. The primary purpose here is to prove that political parties have an innovative approach and an effective policy in following technological developments. Moreover, to show their innovative approach, political parties state in their election programs that they aim to develop policies on AI.

The most important development in the news media field is using AI intelligence in journalism and its effects. The emerging AI tools (Google - Genesis) and their benefits to journalism in executing essential journalistic activity are discussed. In addition, the issue of large journalists reducing the number of employees by using AI and creating media with fewer people is emphasised. The development of AI in media and employment is seen as the main issue. Accordingly, the establishment of radio stations in the USA and Germany, which are managed and hosted by AI, is reported. Much of the content produced using AI in journalism, especially news, is based on visualisations. Another new type of

journalism is the type of news that we asked the AI for, and it answered as follows: The news consists of prompts entered into the AI and the answers given.

The way AI produces social media content and the problems it creates are also reported. In addition, new features added to social media applications with AI have been reported. In this respect, the expected development of alternative content production possibilities with AI and an approach that alternative media readers will benefit from in this regard has not been demonstrated in depth. Another issue in the AI issue is deepfake and porn. The deepfake porn of ordinary people and celebrities and the adverse effects and legal problems caused by them are discussed. The issue of the security of personal data and blocking deepfake content is emphasised. It has also been revealed that this issue will become a burning problem and that legal regulations and initiatives to develop AI literacy in the social sense are required.

Critical approaches to AI have been put forward, especially in columns and the newspaper Evrensel, which plays a pioneering role. Columnist İsmail Gökhan Bayram writes critical columns on AI from a Marxist perspective within international debates. Although rare, there are columns criticising AI on Birgün (Tolga Mırmırık) Artı Gerçek (Barış Kalkanlı) websites. Apart from these names, no in-depth critical approach has been developed on AI. Apart from columns or comments, it can be said that it is essential for the future of alternative media to raise awareness about integrating artificial intelligence into content production as a technique and producing AI news with a more critical perspective.

4.2 AI Tools and Their Uses in Journalism by Alternative New Media Reporters

4.2.1 Use of AI Tools by Alternative Media Reporters in Turkey

This analysis examines the integration and impact of artificial intelligence (AI) within Turkey's alternative media landscape, leveraging

insights from 13 journalists across various outlets. Anchored in a theoretical framework emphasising AI's transformative potential and ethical dilemmas, the discussion explores three interconnected themes: AI Tools and Uses, AI's Positive and Negative Effects, and AI in the Future of Journalism. This analysis highlights the intricate interplay of global technological trends and Turkey's unique sociopolitical dynamics by synthesising journalist perspectives.

4.2.2 AI Tools and Uses

Adopting AI tools among journalists in Turkey's alternative media illustrates a diverse and evolving engagement with technology characterised by innovation and caution. These tools play an increasingly vital role in content creation, translation, multimedia production, and data analysis, reflecting AI's potential to reshape journalistic workflows. However, the uneven adoption of these tools underscores challenges rooted in resource disparities, digital literacy, and institutional scepticism.

G1 (Gerçek Gündem) demonstrates the strategic and multifaceted use of AI tools, particularly ChatGPT, to paraphrase articles and circumvent content blocks imposed by platforms like Google News. This approach enables news dissemination without censorship and highlights AI's adaptability in overcoming external constraints. G1 also employs Google Gemini for SEO-focused content creation, optimising article visibility and audience reach. These applications align with theoretical perspectives on AI's ability to enhance content dissemination and address algorithmic challenges on digital platforms (Beckett, 2019; Simon & Isaza-Ibarra, 2023). By contrast, G2 (Birgün) and G4 (Birgün) demonstrate minimal engagement with AI. G2 relies solely on Google Translate for basic translation tasks, reflecting a traditional journalistic approach. This limited adoption highlights the persistence of scepticism regarding AI, shaped by concerns over quality and a lack of familiarity with advanced tools. Such disparities reflect global trends in technology diffusion, where access and training influence how widely and effectively AI is utilised (Dhiman, 2023).

G10 (Amida Haber) and G9 (Dokuz8) represent advanced users of AI in multimedia production. G10 leverages Canva and Adobe Firefly to create visuals and video content and enhance storytelling capabilities. G9, a versatile adopter, uses Gamma for presentation design, Adobe Podcast for audio refinement, and Canva for visual creativity. Their integration of AI tools illustrates how technology democratises content creation, enabling smaller newsrooms to compete with more prominent outlets by producing visually engaging material (Newman, 2024). Similarly, G3 (DW Türkçe) and G7 (Birgün) incorporate transcription tools like Google Pinpoint and Trint into their workflows. These tools streamline the conversion of audio recordings into text, allowing journalists to focus on analytical and investigative work. G7's use of Timely for scheduling underscores how AI supports organisational efficiency, a crucial factor in fast-paced news environments. Such practices underscore AI's potential to alleviate administrative burdens and optimise newsroom operations (Beckett, 2023).

G8 (Gazete Duvar) embodies a cautious yet exploratory approach, using beta versions of ChatGPT and Google Gemini for investigative purposes. His work emphasises the potential of AI to analyse large datasets, uncovering patterns and insights that inform impactful journalism. However, G8's reservations about AI's premature adoption in Turkey, shaped by political and economic constraints, highlight the risks of uncritical reliance on technology. These concerns echo broader critiques of AI's role in reinforcing existing power dynamics (Haas, 2022). G6 (Ilke TV) also demonstrates practical AI usage, focusing on ChatGPT for language processing, text summarisation, and filtering undesirable expressions. G6 highlights AI's role in data-driven journalism, where large datasets can be analysed to uncover trends, insights, and investigative leads. Her perspective aligns with global developments in computational journalism, where AI facilitates complex investigations that would otherwise be labour-intensive (Beckett, 2023). Other journalists exhibit varying levels of AI engagement. G11, a freelance journalist, uses transcription tools such as Google Drive Transcribe, Rev, and Descript to streamline her reporting process. G11 also consults ChatGPT for preliminary research and idea generation, reflecting AI's growing

role as a research assistant for journalists. Meanwhile, G10 (Amida Haber) and G5 (Özgür Gündem) show limited AI adoption, using tools like Canva and Adobe Firefly primarily for visual content creation. Finally, G12 (Bianet) also exemplifies thoughtful adoption, using GPT-4 and Canva for efficient content production while emphasising the need to address embedded biases in AI systems. Her focus on productivity and ethical considerations aligns with calls for responsible AI use that upholds journalistic integrity (Simon & Isaza-Ibarra, 2023).

4.2.3 AI's Positive and Negative Effects

The integration of AI into journalism has elicited mixed reactions, reflecting its transformative potential and inherent risks. Journalists acknowledge its ability to enhance productivity, creativity, and accessibility, but they also highlight concerns related to ethical dilemmas, job displacement, and the erosion of content quality. These perspectives underscore AI's dual-edged nature within the theoretical framework of media transformation. Efficiency gains are among the most frequently cited benefits of AI.

G3 emphasises how tools like Google Pinpoint expedite transcription, allowing her to dedicate more time to analysis and fieldwork. Similarly, G7 notes that ChatGPT and Trint simplify processing press releases and audio recordings, reducing workload and accelerating news production. G1 emphasises the role of ChatGPT and Google Gemini in speeding up content creation while optimising it for SEO, allowing journalists to engage broader audiences. These examples demonstrate AI's capacity to optimise journalistic workflows by automating repetitive tasks (Jia, 2022; Tsourma et al., 2021).

AI's creative potential is another key advantage. G9, G10 and G12 underscore the importance of tools like Canva and Adobe Firefly in democratising visual storytelling. These tools enable journalists, particularly those in smaller or independent outlets, to produce professional-grade visuals, videos, and graphics without requiring significant financial resources. G13 (Haber Global) also expresses optimism about

AI's potential to empower independent journalists, allowing them to create high-quality multimedia content with minimal costs. AI also fosters creativity by democratising access to advanced tools for multimedia storytelling. Using AI tools to make storytelling effective in social media illustrates how smaller media organisations can produce visually compelling content that rivals the output of well-funded outlets. This democratisation aligns with Simon & Isaza-Ibarra's (2023) observation that AI expands the boundaries of storytelling, enabling journalists to experiment with innovative formats.

Data-driven journalism is another area where AI has proven transformative. G6 highlights the utility of AI in analysing large datasets and uncovering trends and patterns that inform investigative reporting. Her experience underscores the role of AI in enhancing the depth and accuracy of journalism, particularly in complex investigations. Such applications reflect the growing importance of data literacy in modern newsrooms (Beckett, 2023). Despite these advantages, the adoption of AI raises several challenges. Job displacement is a recurring concern, with G6 warning that AI's ability to automate routine editing tasks could reduce demand for human editors. This fear aligns with broader critiques of automation's impact on employment across industries (Noain-Sánchez, 2022). Furthermore, G12 cautions against the commodification of news, where AI-generated content prioritises consumer preferences over public interest. Such trends risk undermining journalism's democratic function, raising ethical questions about the balance between profitability and public service (Porlezza & Schapals, 2024).

The quality of AI-generated content is another primary concern. G10 and G7 argue that reliance on AI can result in shallow, formulaic articles lacking human journalists' critical perspective and originality. This critique underscores the importance of maintaining editorial oversight to uphold journalistic standards. Moreover, G12 and G11 further highlight the ethical challenges associated with AI. Biases embedded in AI algorithms can perpetuate stereotypes and marginalise underrepresented voices, contradicting journalism's commitment to fairness and inclusivity. They emphasise the ethical implications of biases embedded in

AI training data, which can marginalise underrepresented voices and perpetuate systemic inequalities (Haas, 2022). Furthermore, G13 highlights the risks of AI-generated misinformation, including deepfakes and manipulated visuals, which can erode public trust in journalism. These risks are particularly pronounced in Turkey's polarised media environment, where disinformation campaigns have been weaponised for political purposes. Disinformation and content manipulation are particularly pronounced risks in Turkey's polarised media environment. G8 highlights the weaponisation of AI-generated deepfakes (or cheapfakes) during the 2023 elections, where fabricated videos targeted opposition leaders like Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu. These incidents illustrate how AI can amplify existing biases and exacerbate political divisions, undermining trust in journalism. The role of AI in perpetuating misinformation highlights the urgent need for regulatory frameworks to address its misuse in politically sensitive contexts (Simon, 2024).

Turkey's authoritarian media environment exacerbates these challenges. The government's control over mainstream media and its influence on digital platforms create a landscape where polarisation thrives, and independent journalism struggles to survive. Deepfake technology has been weaponised in such environments to discredit opposition figures and manipulate public opinion. For example, fabricated video content used during election cycles has amplified societal divides, reinforcing a sense of distrust among polarised audiences. This dynamic erodes the public's confidence in media institutions and highlights the broader implications of AI misuse in authoritarian contexts.

4.2.4 AI in the Future of Journalism

The future of AI in journalism is shaped by its transformative potential, tempered by the ethical and practical challenges of integration. Journalists offer diverse perspectives on AI's trajectory, reflecting optimism about its capabilities and caution about its limitations.

G1 envisions AI playing a central role in journalism, driving profound changes in how news is produced and consumed. He advocates for jour-

nalists to acquire AI-related skills to remain competitive in an evolving profession. Similarly, G6 predicts AI will reshape editorial workflows, enabling personalised journalism tailored to individual reader preferences. However, she warns against the risks of commodification, emphasising the need to balance innovation with journalistic values (Cools & Diakopoulos, 2024). Conversely, G2 adopts a more conservative stance, viewing AI as a tool best suited for routine tasks. His scepticism about AI's ability to replicate human judgment and ethical decision-making highlights the enduring value of critical thinking in journalism. This perspective aligns with critiques of AI's limitations in addressing complex, nuanced issues (Moran & Shaikh, 2022).

G6 envisions the rise of personalised news tailored to individual reader preferences but warns that this trend risks undermining journalism's public service role. Conversely, G8 emphasises the importance of context-sensitive AI integration in Turkey, where political pressures and economic disparities shape the media landscape. He cautions against premature deployment driven by commercial interests, which could exacerbate inequalities in representation and access. Similarly, G3 and G9 stress the need for ethical oversight and AI literacy to ensure responsible adoption. These concerns highlight the necessity of aligning AI adoption with democratic principles to avoid reinforcing existing power imbalances (Erensü & Alemdaroğlu, 2018). G9 advocates for the ethical use of AI, emphasising the need for oversight mechanisms to address risks like disinformation and bias. Her vision of AI as a tool for enhancing productivity and creativity without compromising integrity reflects a balanced approach to technological adoption. Similarly, G13 expresses enthusiasm for AI's potential to democratise multimedia production, enabling independent journalists to create high-quality graphics and videos at a minimal cost. These perspectives underscore the importance of thoughtful AI integration that prioritises inclusivity and accountability (Beckett, 2019).

This analysis reveals the multifaceted impact of AI on Turkey's alternative media, highlighting its dual-edged nature as both a driver of innovation and a source of ethical dilemmas. The experiences of 13 jour-

nalists underscore the complex interplay between global technological advancements and local sociopolitical constraints. While AI enhances efficiency, creativity, and accessibility, it also poses challenges related to job displacement, content quality, and misinformation. Turkish journalists navigate the challenges within a restrictive media environment, advocating for responsible adoption that upholds the principles of transparency, accountability, and inclusivity. As AI continues to evolve, its role in journalism must be managed thoughtfully to ensure it serves the public good while preserving the profession's core ideals. This balance is critical not only for Turkey's media landscape but also for broader discussions on the future of journalism in the digital age.

5 Conclusion

Integrating artificial intelligence into Turkey's alternative media landscape marks a significant turning point in journalism practises, particularly in a context shaped by authoritarian governance, polarization, and constrained press freedoms. AI has emerged as both a lifeline and a challenge for alternative media outlets striving to maintain their independence and uphold democratic values. Its adoption demonstrates the potential to enhance journalistic practices, but it also underscores the ethical and operational dilemmas associated with new technologies in politically sensitive environments.

In Turkey, where mainstream media is heavily influenced by state control, alternative journalism is critical in offering counter-narratives, amplifying marginalised voices, and holding power to account. AI has empowered these outlets by streamlining content production, improving efficiency, and expanding their reach to audiences through innovative storytelling formats. Tools like ChatGPT, Canva, and Adobe Firefly have enabled journalists to overcome financial and resource limitations, producing high-quality content that rivals better-funded organisations. For example, AI's ability to automate transcription, translation, and data analysis has freed journalists to focus on in-depth investigative reporting, a cornerstone of democratic accountability.

However, the challenges posed by AI adoption in Turkey's alternative media are formidable. The political landscape is rife with risks associated with misinformation, algorithmic biases, and the manipulation of AI technologies to reinforce authoritarian control. Elections illustrated how AI can be weaponised to spread disinformation, such as deepfakes used to discredit political opponents and influence public opinion. This dual-edged nature of AI highlights the paradox it presents. While it empowers journalists to resist state censorship and enhance their storytelling, it also provides tools that can undermine public trust and further polarise society.

Another pressing issue is AI's uneven adoption and understanding within the alternative media sector. Many journalists remain sceptical of AI's potential or lack the training necessary to use it effectively. This digital divide is exacerbated by financial constraints and limited access to cutting-edge technologies, leaving smaller outlets at a disadvantage compared to their more resourceful peers. Without targeted efforts to build capacity and promote technological literacy, the benefits of AI risk being concentrated among a few, widening existing inequalities in the media landscape.

Ethical considerations also loom large in the discourse on AI in journalism. Concerns about bias embedded in AI systems, the commodification of news, and the erosion of journalistic integrity raise important questions about the long-term implications of automation. In Turkey's polarised media environment, these issues are especially critical. Ensuring that AI is a tool for empowerment rather than control requires robust ethical frameworks and transparency in AI applications. Journalists must navigate the fine line between leveraging AI for innovation and safeguarding the values of fairness, inclusivity, and accountability that underpin their work.

Looking ahead, the future of AI in Turkey's alternative media lies in a balanced approach that prioritises ethical considerations while embracing the technology's potential to transform journalism. Collaborative efforts involving journalists, technologists, policymakers, and civil soci-

ety organisations are essential to establishing guidelines for responsible AI use. Training programs and increased access to AI tools can democratise its benefits, enabling smaller outlets to compete more effectively and sustain their independence.

In conclusion, AI represents a powerful opportunity for alternative media in Turkey, offering solutions to many challenges posed by authoritarianism and limited resources. However, its adoption must be guided by a commitment to journalistic principles and the public good. By addressing AI's ethical and operational complexities, Turkey's alternative media can harness its transformative potential to survive and thrive as bastions of independent journalism. They reaffirm their critical role in safeguarding democratic discourse, even amid political and technological challenges. The future depends on a collective resolve to use AI responsibly, ensuring it serves as a force for transparency, inclusivity, and democratic resilience.

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