

## IS WIKIPEDIA'S INTENTION TRULY ALTRUISTIC?

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Wikipedia, self-proclaimed as an online encyclopedia, operates without a centralized authority to verify the veracity of its content and is not underpinned by a commercially moderated structure, leading to substantial debates regarding its governance. This situation is reminiscent of the early 2000s in Turkey, where the internet was perceived as a monolithic entity, particularly by politicians who implicitly trusted its content. Misinformation led to vehement reactions, rooted in the belief that the internet represented a collective antagonism. Over time, this perception evolved, recognizing the internet as a complex, multifaceted medium, akin to the intricacies of life.

Today's view of Wikipedia mirrors these initial misconceptions of the internet. Established in 2001 by Jimmy Wales, Wikipedia was envisioned as an open system to disseminate accurate information. Notably, during its early stages, iPhones employed Wikipedia as a primary source in Spotlight search responses, but this integration was later discontinued. This led to critical discourse by Wales, particularly focusing on the iPhone's closed system architecture.

The open-source nature of Wikipedia, reliant on community moderators, was initially a point of pride for Wales. However, this model has shown parallels with traditional dictionaries, where moderators have been observed to selectively permit or remove content. A case in point is my attempt to add an entry for Demet Sabancı Çetindogan, recognized as one of Turkey's 50 Most Powerful Business Women, on Wikipedia. Despite multiple submissions, each was consistently removed, with the final rationale being her purported lack of notoriety. Research indicated that this was not an

isolated incident, revealing a global issue within Wikipedia where moderator bias supersedes factual accuracy.

In preparation for this article, I engaged in a dialogue with Jimmy Wales to ascertain whether Wikipedia, professing to miss Turkey, has made strides in mitigating these issues. An incident where a friend's contribution to Wikipedia was promptly removed led to a discussion with Wales. Upon investigation, he attributed the deletion to piracy, despite the content being my original work. This incident prompted me to challenge Wales: if I were to submit an entry guaranteed not to be deleted, it would, nonetheless, be removed within 24 hours. Regrettably, Wales declined this proposition.

### **Freedom of Opinion or Expression: A Wikipedia Paradigm?**

Wikipedia's portrayal of itself as a bastion of free expression was tested when it faced a block in Turkey, which it labeled as a curb on freedom of expression. This characterization, equating the blocking of an 'encyclopedia' with an assault on free speech, seems disingenuous. Information, by its very nature, should stand beyond the realms of opinion or interpretation. Moreover, it's paradoxical for Wikipedia to invoke the principles of freedom of opinion and expression while its moderation system obstructs the incorporation of verifiable information, as exemplified in the case of Demet Sabancı Çetindogan.

The state of Turkish content on Wikipedia is notably inferior compared to other languages, exacerbated by a dwindling number of moderators. As an advocate for augmenting Turkish internet content, this decline is particularly disconcerting. In-depth research

on the plight of Turkish moderators and the Turkish Wikipedia can be accessed at [1].

### **Wikipedia's Ostensible Nostalgia for Turkey**

The timing of Wikipedia's legal action against Turkey through the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), coinciding with the launch of its new social media endeavor, raises questions about its motives. Turkey's prominent role in global social media platforms suggests strategic considerations underlying Wikipedia's expressed longing. One wonders whether Wikipedia's yearning for Turkey is genuine or a calculated move aligned with its social media objectives.

### **REFERENCES**

[1] <http://atif.unaldi.org/blog/2014/08/08/wikipedia-turkce-nostalgia-ve-gercek-babayigitler/>