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Traditional versus Social Media News Coverage: An Analysis of the Topic Selection Priorities



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Abstract: *The current study was carried out on framing the ongoing debate on the inter-relationship which exists between social media and traditional media news coverages. Its particular focus is to analyze how both mediums focus on their topic selection when it comes to prioritizing an issue to be presented at the top. By employing the content analysis technique of the Facebook posts and newspaper articles the study tried to sort out to what extent differences exist in traditional media and social media coverage with respect to the selection of the topic in Pakistan. The researchers used Chi-square tests to weigh up the use of alternative media and the frame selection of social media in the selected timeline. The study concluded that social media and traditional media react differently when covering social issues. Social media showed better interaction patterns on grass root issues whereas traditional media focused more on covering political issues.*

Key Words: Social Media, Traditional Media, News Coverage, Issues, Priorities

Introduction

On daily basis, people receive information that exceeds their requirements. Information from the mass media, friends, books and lately the internet influences people in their decision-making process and their perceptions of events and happenings around them. The mass media particularly has now become an important organ through which people make meaning out of their lives, social activities and issues within society (Adeyanju, 2015). In the middle of the current technological hype, digital revolution, scientific discoveries, and the phenomenal advances achieved by

mankind, it would be hard to imagine that such technological developments have been achieved without accompanying developments that are achieved in parallel and simultaneous manner but at different rates and in varying amounts. Like changes in a natural environment, technological changes signal a new stage in which everything changes rather than merely adding or removing an invention.

Technology has changed our interests, ideas, and the symbols we use, which has an impact on the community's character and "the arena where our thoughts grow," in light of these fundamental

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shifts." (Postman, 1993, pp.18-20). Simply by making life easier, social media has altered the lives of everyone in the world. Yet, social media has had a significant impact on a variety of global industries, with the news sector being one of the most affected. Traditionally, the news was originally learned through reading printed newspapers, and then with the development of television, news channels were developed. (Antabi, et. al., 2020).

Now social media has grown, a new competitor has emerged. It is predicted that by 2024, this competitor's industry will be worth \$9.4 billion (Social media analytics market, 2019). Comparisons between traditional and social media are possible because of how recently social media has become popular. Also, some advantages of social media include the capacity to connect with an endless audience, the increase in adaptability, and the freedom of speech for both the speaker and the audience. Antabi, et. al., (2020).

Talking specifically about the Pakistani media setting, social media has been significantly transformed because of the incentive of the Internet. It has been instrumental in persuading this transition. Unlike in the past, society now actively seeks out information online and disseminates it through online media platforms, particularly social media. This is in contrast to how society used to get information from traditional media. Administrative practices that served as the people's watchdog have been questioned in public debate on the Internet. But how powerful are social media in Pakistan? And what are the interactions between social media and traditional media? How could these interactions influence each other? To explore the relationship and interaction between social media and traditional media, this study explores the difference between social media and traditional media with reference to the selection of the topic and react differently when covering issues. Traditional media places greater emphasis on covering political topics, social media offers better connections on grassroots issues. The choice of frame is clearly driven by the varied time frames rather than the interplay between social media and conventional media. The modifications in the roles played by medium type are the main topic of discussion. Several events were covered by numerous broadcasting outlets worldwide, with a

focus on the political aspect. Also, online journalists raced to gather as much information about social concerns as they could.

Facebook was chosen as a very important social media site as it is similar to the newspapers in many ways like reach in terms of audience access. As the site has grown in acceptance and its user base has differentiated, the diversity of active users has also grown greatly. With up to 800 million active users, Facebook is not only the major social networking site in Pakistan, but rather it is also found in a survey to be the social media site commonly used by active people in the country.

Literature Review

Bruns et. al., (2012) while elaborating on the role of media was of the view that up until a few decades ago, educated professional journalists were solely responsible for disseminating news and information through traditional news media including newspapers, which served as the primary conduits of information transmission and mass-mediated messaging. But with the advent of new media technologies, this particularity held by media and journalists declined. While according to Jurrat (2011), because of the popularity of the Internet, news and information are shared instantly.

Comparing Social Media and Traditional Media

According to Olteanu et, al., (2015), new media is considered more assimilated media in spreading and ingesting news. But is news access via new media different from mainstream news? The coverage of different features of the story that is presented on social media is received is often reliant on how they are outlined stereotypically by traditional media. This indication puts forward an existing gap between what the traditional media publishes in newspapers and what the public shares in social media. Through the examination of a series of different events, as well as awareness campaigns, natural tragedies, constitutional meetings, and publications. The study uncovers differences in terms of actions and news values that are predominant in both types of media.

According to a related study by Newman (2009), internet apps, sharper signals, and advanced mobile devices have all contributed to

the epidemic wave of involvement that has occurred over the past two years. Fifty per cent of all internet users in the UK use social media platforms, which has become a popular activity that covers over 20% of its internet usage time. Traditional news companies must take notice of this dramatic development.

Apuke (2016), while discussing new media and social media's complementary functions mentioned that one trait shared by both media is the facility to influence large numbers of audiences. This suggests that both old and new media technologies offer is proficient in reaching a large number of people. An additional important role can be seen in new media sites where soft newspapers are posted; this syndicates old and new media to tell any news story. Nowadays, we have access to television online where anyone can watch news stories and related things so the old form of media is approving online media in this aspect. The commercial is an additional part where new and old media's functions concur. Both mediums are mediums of advertisement. For Entertaining content: Both new and old media carry a sense of humour. There are programs on TV and new media addresses/links are given to make a reply in such programs. In the place of a phone in programs, it is the new media that is used for reply. The above-mentioned points to the fact that new media needs the old media and the other way around. Both mediums share important roles in entertainment, advertising, news and information among others.

Today's trend in our culture includes the use of social media. Social media has put traditional media in danger. According to Rajendran & Thesinghraj (2014), social media plays a vital role in communication through rapid information sharing. Social media has since become one of the most effective and convenient ways to meet people's demands. The use of the internet has dramatically expanded since 1995, which was dubbed "The Year of the Internet" at the time. Since that time, reading news online has become common due to its easier accessibility.

Gaskins and Jennifer (2012) posed the question of whether traditional media channels are being replaced by the internet and whether there is a connection between the internet's ease of use and the replacement factor. The premise of the hypothesis is that people select their favourite media depending on how well it satisfies their

needs and preferences. By claiming that "the Internet will replace traditional media if the former serves the same demands as the latter and does so more successfully," the authors support their hypothesis by citing niche theory.

Theoretical Framework

This investigation's foundation was chosen using framing theory. According to this theory, information is only accessible in a specific manner and in support of a specified kind of message when it comes to news articles, images, movies, or pamphlets. The frame can help the reader comprehend what is being stated and how it might affect broader public opinion. According to Entman (1993), the correspondent, the text, the receiver, and the beliefs all influence how the news is framed. This means that journalists have a set of beliefs that influence the words they transmit or publish, and readers who are influenced by a certain culture may or may not be aware of those beliefs. Some details of a narrative are highlighted by reporters too.

Entman has been supported by other researchers who argue that frames can combine knowledge and can be produced in a particular culture (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009). This form of framing is important because, according to Tewksbury and Scheufele, social constructions of comfort aid in the interpretation of evidence by nations and affect findings. One of the primary justifications for a free and open press in a functioning democracy has long been the desire to serve the needs of the populace. If this is the case, it's critical to comprehend how themes are framed in both new and conventional media. Nonetheless, some people might not even be aware that the material they are exposed to contains frames (Tewksbury, Jones, Peske, Raymond, & Vig, 2000). The sociological strategy of framing operates on the premise that the general population wants to consistently

Research Questions

1. What changes appeared in new media and traditional media with respect to the selection of topics for coverage?
2. What interactions occur when traditional and social media are utilized to discuss the same topic?

3. To what extent do differences exist in traditional media and social media coverage with respect to the selection of the topic in Pakistan?

Methodology

The current study uses content analysis of the frames used in the selected newspaper Daily Dawn and Facebook as social media in Pakistan from 1st Aug 2022 to 30th Aug 2022. The English leading newspaper is coded which has the highest circulation rate in Pakistan. Daily Dawn has been taken for the analysis. The front page of the newspaper is selected for the analysis. On the other side, Facebook is coded as social media. It is a comparative study between traditional and social media regarding the selection of topics.

Variables of Study

Variables of the study are the type of the story, the source of the story and the Frame.

Type of the Story

The type of the story means that the story exists in different selected frames.

Source of the Story

The news story is either from a newspaper or Facebook.

Frames

There are five frames analyzed in this study.

1. Social responsibility frame
2. Human interest frame
3. Conflict frame
4. Morality frame
5. Peace frame.

Multiple news issues were analyzed: both in new media and traditional. One month's front-and back-page news stories were collected for analysis from selected newspapers. The same issues were looked up on Facebook on the selected timeline. A deductive approach is used to examine the framing of selected issues from English leading newspapers by analysing relevant frames as content investigative variables to approve the extent of their coverage in the news (Semetko & Valkenhurg, [2000](#)). For this purpose,

five news frames were generated related to the issues.

For this study, front-page news articles and Facebook posts about coverage in Pakistan were analyzed for their content. To compare the use of alternative media and the framing choices made by social and conventional media in the chosen timeframe, the researcher utilizes Chi-square tests. While covering social concerns, traditional and social media respond in different ways. While traditional media places more emphasis on covering political topics, social media has better contact with grassroots issues. Also, when reporting various situations by using various frames, social and conventional media play diverse roles. Although traditional media is regulated by the government, social media scarcely adds to the social responsibility of traditional media in identifying issues and resolving them. prominently, the frame selections

Data Analysis and Discussion

Media, as an important pillar of the state, is dominating the world information system in multiple ways. People all around the world switch to different media platforms on a daily basis to fulfil their information gratifications. Among all the other media forms social media is now leading the information blogosphere just because of its vast reach and diverse audience. Still, traditional media coverage has its values present as it is an easy-to-access and understandable medium. Talking specifically about their coverages and the frames they focus on, the current study carried out the content analysis to sort out their frame selection and issue prioritization. Five leading frames have been selected and their usage has been analyzed accordingly.

Social Responsibility Frame

The most focused frame is that of social responsibility. In order to check how responsible social and traditional media are in their topic selection the news stories of both mediums are analyzed first to check whether the news stories mentioned that the government has the capability to improve the problem discussed. Of 100% of news stories selected from Facebook 20% have considered the government role while 80% were not in favour of it. Whereas Daily Dawn 35% of news coverage discussed the government's role in

a positive manner and 65% took it negatively. Government responsibility in handling the issue is one of the important aspects to be attributed to social responsibility. Among the Facebook posts, 73% mentioned its presence while 27% didn't pay much attention to talking about it. Whereas in coverages by Dawn, 52% of articles talked about

it and 48% didn't include it. Social responsibility requires providing complete information about how issues took place. 60% of Facebook posts in this sense discussed the problem solutions while 40% ignored them. Similarly, 87% of Dawn articles mentioned them while 13% didn't include them.

Table 1

		1 Does the news coverage mention that the government has the power to solve the issue?		
		0	Yes	No
Social Media	Facebook	15	3	12
Newspaper ID	Daily Dawn	150	52	98
Total				
		2 Does the news article say that the issue or problem is caused by the government?		
		0	Yes	No
Social Media	Facebook	15	11	4
Newspaper ID	Daily Dawn	150	78	72
Total				
		3 Does the news report mention that the issue or problem is the result of government action?		
		0	Yes	No
Social media	Facebook	15	9	6
Newspaper ID	Daily Dawn	150	130	20
Total				

Human Interest Frame

The provision of detailed information related to any happening in society is the basic right of individuals in any society. Media coverage should have to consider this element of human interest in their coverage. For this sake, articles were analyzed to check whether the element of human concern is available or not. The most important aspect requires sorting out what techniques are used to create an element of interest. The news covers any element to initiate any feeling. In Facebook posts, 87% have used techniques to create feelings of hatred, sympathy, or kindness.

While 13% did not use it. On the contrary, in Dawn, 85% of articles have considered emotions and 15% haven't. Audience response is a necessary aspect to deal with when it comes to providing highlights of the issues. 67% of Facebook posts have highlighted it while 33% ignored it. In articles by Dawn, 59% talked about it and 41% have no consideration. Another aspect attached to human interest is the matter of invasion into the private lives of individuals. On social media, 73% of posts tried to do so while 27% abide by committing this act. On the other hand, 50% of Dawn articles have it and the remaining 50% had not controlled it.

Table 2

		1 Did the news report employ any strategies to inspire feelings of rage, compassion, or goodness?		
		0	Yes	No
Social Media	Facebook	15	13	2
Newspaper ID	Daily Dawn	150	128	22
Total				

		2 Does the news article discuss how the problem or issue affects specific individuals or groups of individuals?		
		0	Yes	No
Social Media	Facebook	15	10	5
Newspaper ID	Daily Dawn	150	89	61
Total				

		3 Does the news article discuss anyone's personal life?		
		0	Yes	No
Social Media	Facebook	15	11	4
Newspaper ID	Daily Dawn	150	75	75
Total				

Conflict Frame

Issue identification from all dimensions is part of the responsibility when it comes to providing news as it expresses how and why a certain happening took place in society. In this scenario, one of the important things is to point out whether there existed any disparity between individuals, groups and parties. 60% of Facebook posts have highlighted it while 40% didn't pay attention.

Similarly, in Dawn articles, 37% showed it and 63% ignored it. Whereas with the perspective of blaming each other 67% of Facebook posts showed it while 33% ignored it. Dawn 63% of articles discussed conflict among parties while 37% didn't pay attention. The news stories having conflicts should have to cover both sides of the stories. In this regard, Facebook 27% of posts provided it while 73% didn't focus. Whereas in Dawn 44% paid attention and 56% ignored.

Table 3

		1 Does the news article highlight differences between people, groups, and political parties?		
		0	Yes	No
Social Media	Facebook	15	09	06
Newspaper ID	Daily Dawn	150	56	94
Total				

		2 Does one party, one person, or one group blame the other(s)?		
		0	Yes	No
Social Media	Facebook	15	10	05
Newspaper ID	Daily Dawn	150	94	56
Total				

		3 Does the news article include all sides of the issue or problem, or just two?		
		0	Yes	No
Social Media	Facebook	15	4	11
Newspaper ID	Daily Dawn	150	66	84
Total				

Morality Frame

Morality involves covering stories with a good message for the audience. Facebook posts paid less attention i.e., 20% while 80% didn't show positive messages. On the other hand, 43%

covered stories in a good manner while 57% didn't. With perspective to showing morality and other religious tenants' social media, 40% of posts considered them while 60% didn't. Whereas in Dawn 36% had it and was absent in the remaining 64%. Providing instructions on how to behave is

the necessary aspect which was focused on by 60% of the social media coverages and ignored by 40%. In Dawn, an almost similar trend was

observed in which 41% provided so and 59% didn't.

Table 4

		1 Is there a positive message in the news story?		
		0	Yes	No
Social Media	Facebook	15	03	12
Newspaper ID	Daily Dawn	150	64	86
Total				
		2 Does the narrative include any allusions to morality, God, or other religious principles?		
		0	Yes	No
Social Media	Facebook	15	06	09
Newspaper ID	Daily Dawn	150	54	96
Total				
		3 Does the news report include any specific social advice, such as rules of conduct?		
		0	Yes	No
Social Media	Facebook	15	09	06
Newspaper ID	Daily Dawn	150	62	88
Total				

Peace Frame

The media's role in society is to provide truthful and detailed information to the audience by remaining a peaceful manner. The majority of Social media posts in this regard maintained it and their ratio is 53% while 47% were found ignorant. In Dawn, as being a traditional media

platform 34% kept it while 66% ignored it. Things in favour and against both move side by side when it comes to providing realities. Their wordings matter a lot when it comes to maintaining peace and conflict. 67% of Facebook posts contain such words while 33% didn't. Whereas in Dawn 61% had and in 39% it is missing.

Table 5

		1 Does the news report advocate for preserving a calm environment?		
		0	Yes	No
Social Media	Facebook	15	08	07
Newspaper ID	Daily Dawn	150	51	99
Total				
		2 Does the news article use language that disturbs the peace?		
		0	Yes	No
Social Media	Facebook	15	10	05
Newspaper ID	Daily Dawn	150	92	58
Total				

Discussion and Conclusion

Media as an important aspect of society is performing its duties on all the platforms. In the current network society things are transforming instantly. So is the demand of the audience to get updated and complete information. News coverages in this regard are putting their whole

effort into sorting out the trending topics and are trying to be the first to report when it comes to fulfilling audience gratifications. Both traditional and social media are having diverse followers having different demands. The analysis showed that both media forms are following the top trending topics in which social media is more

active as compared to traditional media. But is trying to focus on the current information. Similarly when it comes to highlighting the changes one main aspect noticed was that citizens as well as media reporters both are there to provide updated information, especially in the case of social media.

When covering a story on the same issue both the media are trying to cover maximum information in a minimum time span but by keeping the moralities and peaceful aspect. Conflicting information was mostly ignored by both mediums. The major difference between both platforms is that traditional media was seen as more responsible when it comes to following

rules while social media coverage was seen as less professional. Human interest was greatly observed by both the media and even the point of view of people was there, especially in social media posts.

Social media has played a persuasive role in the digital transformation of Pakistani society. The public actively seeks information online and disseminates it via online media channels, particularly social media. Internet-based public discourse has questioned administrative practices that acted as the people's watchdog. In general, it is impossible to overlook the media's role in disseminating information.

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