

The Impact of Social Media on the Framing and Dissemination of News Coverage

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Abstract: This study investigates the impact of social media on news framing and dissemination through a mixed-methods approach. The research combines quantitative analysis of news articles, a survey of social media users, and interviews with media professionals. Key findings of this study suggest, social media plays a significant role in news consumption, particularly for younger generations. Social media content tends to be shorter and more visually appealing than traditional news articles. Social media users are aware of the potential biases and limitations of social media news. Demographic factors influence how individuals consume and evaluate news on social media. Media professionals acknowledge the impact of social media on news framing and dissemination. The findings highlight a complex and multifaceted relationship between social media and news, with both potential benefits and drawbacks. Social media offers opportunities for increased news consumption, engagement, and reach, but also raises concerns about bias, misinformation, and ethical implications. Moving forward, media organizations and platforms need to adapt to the evolving landscape and collaborate to ensure responsible and effective news dissemination.

Keywords: Social Media, News Consumption, News Framing, Misinformation, Disinformation, Audience Engagement, Interaction

INTRODUCTION

The media landscape has undergone a dramatic transformation in the 21st century. The rise of the internet and, more recently, social media platforms has fundamentally changed how news is produced, disseminated, and consumed. Traditional news outlets, such as newspapers and television channels, have faced significant challenges in adapting to this new environment, while social media has emerged as a powerful new force in the information ecosystem.

Social media platforms, like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, have become major sources of news for a large segment of the population. Studies have shown that a significant portion of people now rely on social media for their daily news consumption, bypassing traditional news outlets altogether (Newman et al., 2020). This shift in news consumption patterns has been driven by several factors, including the accessibility and convenience of social media platforms, the ability to

personalize news feeds, and the interactive nature of these platforms (Chadwick, 2017).

However, the rise of social media has not only changed where people get their news but also how news is framed and disseminated. Social media algorithms filter information based on user preferences and past behavior, creating "echo chambers" where individuals are primarily exposed to information that confirms their existing biases (Pariser, 2011). This can lead to a distorted view of reality and a decline in trust in traditional news sources (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017).

Furthermore, the speed and virality of social media can lead to the rapid spread of misinformation and disinformation, which can have a significant impact on public opinion and political discourse (Vosoughi et al., 2018). Social media platforms have also been used to manipulate public opinion through coordinated campaigns and the use of bots and fake accounts (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017).

The concept of framing, developed by scholars like Entman (1993), emphasizes the power of language and presentation in shaping audience perception. News media outlets have long employed framing strategies to influence how audiences interpret events and issues. However, the emergence of social media has introduced new dynamics and complexities to this process.

On the one hand, social media offers a platform for diverse voices and perspectives, potentially challenging the traditional gatekeeping role of mainstream media. This creates opportunities for alternative narratives and underreported stories to reach wider audiences. For instance, during the Arab Spring, social media played a crucial role in disseminating citizen-generated content and amplifying previously marginalized voices (Ferdous & Khatun, 2020).

However, the very nature of social media, with its emphasis on virality and engagement, also creates fertile ground for the spread of misinformation and biased framing. Algorithmic biases within platforms can amplify and echo chamber certain narratives, while the fast-paced environment can limit opportunities for verifying information and critically evaluating diverse perspectives (Vosoughi et al., 2018).

Furthermore, social media users themselves can engage in selective exposure and confirmation bias, gravitating towards content that reinforces their existing beliefs and worldviews (Sunstein, 2001). This can lead to the creation of "filter bubbles" where individuals are primarily exposed to information that confirms their pre-existing biases, further exacerbating polarization and misinformation (Pariser, 2011).

Given the significant impact of social media on news consumption, framing, and dissemination, it is crucial to understand its implications for journalism, democracy, and society as a whole. The evolving landscape of news in the age of social media presents both challenges and opportunities, demanding critical reflection and innovative solutions to ensure informed and engaged citizens in a complex information environment.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research will investigate the impact of social media on the framing and dissemination of news coverage. To achieve this objective, a mixed-methods approach will be employed, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. The mixed-methods approach chosen for this research allows for a comprehensive understanding of the impact of social media on news framing and dissemination. The quantitative data provides insights into the prevalence and patterns of framing in social media news, while the qualitative data provides deeper understanding of user experiences and perceptions (Masud-Un-Nabi, 2021). Combining both methods ensures a more nuanced and accurate picture of the phenomenon under study. A sample of news articles from reputable sources, covering a predetermined range of topics, were collected from traditional news outlets and their social media counterparts. A sample of 200 news articles was collected from five reputable TNOs (New York Times, BBC News, CNN, The Guardian, and Reuters) and their respective SMCs (Twitter and Facebook). The articles covered five predetermined topics: politics, economics, health, environment, and technology. Inclusion criteria were, published within the same timeframe (January-March 2023). Focused on a single topic. Excluded opinion pieces, editorials, and advertisements. Moreover, A survey was conducted to a representative sample of social media users to gauge their news consumption habits and perceptions of social media's influence on framing and dissemination. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews were conducted with journalists, editors, and social media managers to understand their perspectives on the impact of social media on news framing and dissemination.

RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the sampled 200 news articles that was collected from five reputable TNOs (New York Times, BBC News, CNN, The Guardian, and Reuters) and their respective SMCs.

Table 1: Criteria of Quantitative Analysis

Article length	Word count.
Media richness	Images, videos, and embedded links.
Interaction	Likes, shares, comments, reactions.

Quantitative analysis focusing on, Average article length: TNOs: 500 words (SD = 100), SMCs: 200 words (SD = 50). Average media richness: TNOs: 2 images/videos per article, SMCs: 4 images/videos per article. Average interaction: TNOs: 100 interactions per article, SMCs: 500 interactions per article

Qualitative analysis focusing on, headline tone: Positive, negative, neutral. Framing: Emphasis on different aspects of the story. Source diversity: Variety of sources cited.

Headline tone: TNOs: Primarily neutral (70%) with some positive and negative (15% each), SMCs: More varied with positive (40%), negative (30%), and neutral (30%). Framing: TNOs: More in-depth analysis and diverse perspectives, SMCs: Often focused on specific details or quotes with limited context. Source diversity: TNOs: Cited a variety of reputable sources, SMCs: Primarily relied on TNO articles and social media posts.

Independent samples t-test: Significant difference in article length ($p < 0.001$) and interaction ($p < 0.001$) between TNOs and SMCs. Chi-square test: Significant difference in headline tone ($p < 0.001$) and framing ($p < 0.001$) between TNOs and SMCs. Mann-Whitney U test: Significant difference in media richness ($p < 0.001$) and source diversity ($p < 0.001$) between TNOs and SMCs.

Now this study will present the findings of a survey conducted to gauge social media users' news consumption habits and perceptions of social media's influence on news framing and dissemination. The survey aimed to answer the following research questions:

- To what extent do social media users rely on social media platforms for news consumption?
- How do social media users perceive the influence of social media platforms on news framing and dissemination?
- Do demographic factors (age, gender, education level) influence social media users' news consumption habits and perceptions?

Frequency: 60% of respondents reported using social media for news "often" or "sometimes." Platforms: Facebook was the most popular platform for news consumption (45%), followed by YouTube (30%) and Twitter (25%). Sources: Preferred news sources on social media included major news outlets (55%), friends and family (30%), and online influencers (15%). Framing: 70% of respondents believed that social media platforms have a significant influence on news framing, with concerns about bias and agenda-setting. Dissemination: 65% agreed that social media facilitates the rapid spread of news, but

50% expressed concerns about the accuracy and verification of information shared.

Age: Younger respondents (18-24) were more likely to rely on social media for news and trust information shared by friends and family compared to older age groups. Gender: Female respondents were more likely to express concerns about the accuracy of news on social media compared to male respondents. Education Level: Individuals with higher education levels reported using diverse news sources and were more critical of social media's influence on news framing and dissemination. Chi-square tests revealed significant associations between age, gender, education level, and news consumption habits. Correlation analyses showed positive relationships between frequency of social media news consumption and concerns about bias and agenda-setting. Logistic regression models indicated that higher education levels were associated with lower trust in social media as a news source.

The findings suggest that social media plays a significant role in news consumption, particularly for younger generations. However, users are increasingly aware of the potential biases and limitations of social media news. Demographic factors such as age, gender, and education level influence how individuals form and evaluate news on social media.

Now the researcher will analyze the findings of a qualitative study exploring the perspectives of journalists, editors, and social media managers on the impact of social media on news framing and dissemination. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 participants working in various media outlets. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring themes and patterns in their responses.

Increased Speed and Reach: Participants unanimously agreed that social media has significantly increased the speed and reach of news dissemination. Journalists highlighted the ability to share breaking news updates instantly and engage with audiences in real-time. Editors emphasized the potential for wider reach, attracting audiences beyond traditional media channels. Social media managers noted the platform's ability to target specific demographics and tailor content for optimal engagement.

Shift in News Framing: Participants acknowledged a shift in news framing towards shorter, more visually appealing content to cater to social media consumption habits. Journalists expressed concerns about sacrificing depth and context for brevity and virality. Editors highlighted the need to strike a

balance between engaging formats and journalistic integrity. Social media managers emphasized the importance of understanding platform algorithms to optimize content for visibility.

Rise of Misinformation and Disinformation: Participants expressed concerns about the spread of misinformation and disinformation on social media platforms. Journalists lamented the challenges of verifying information quickly and effectively in fast-paced online environments. Editors emphasized the need for media organizations to prioritize fact-checking and investigative journalism. Social media managers highlighted the importance of platform policies and user education to combat misinformation.

Audience Engagement and Interaction: Participants acknowledged the positive impact of social media in fostering audience engagement and interaction. Journalists appreciated the ability to receive immediate feedback and directly connect with readers. Editors saw social media as an opportunity to build communities around specific topics and interests. Social media managers emphasized the importance of social listening and responding to audience comments and concerns.

Ethical and Professional Concerns: Participants raised ethical and professional concerns regarding the use of social media platforms. Journalists expressed concerns about pressure to sensationalize headlines and prioritize clickbait content. Editors highlighted the need for clear editorial guidelines and social media policies. Social media managers emphasized the importance of transparency and accountability in platform algorithms and content moderation.

The findings from the interviews highlight the significant impact of social media on news framing and dissemination. While participants acknowledged the benefits of increased speed, reach, and engagement, they also raised concerns about potential biases, misinformation, and ethical considerations.

Moving forward, media organizations must adapt their practices and collaborate with other stakeholders to ensure responsible and effective use of social media platforms for news dissemination.

DISCUSSION

This research has investigated the impact of social media on news framing and dissemination through quantitative and qualitative analyses of news articles, a survey of social media users, and interviews with media professionals. The findings reveal a complex and multifaceted relationship between social media and news, highlighting both its potential benefits and drawbacks.

The key findings are, social media plays a significant role in news consumption, particularly for younger generations. The survey revealed that 60% of respondents use social media for news "often" or "sometimes," with Facebook being the most popular platform. Social media content tends to be shorter and more visually appealing than traditional news articles. This is reflected in the quantitative analysis, which found significantly shorter article lengths and higher media richness in SMCs compared to TNOs.

Social media users are aware of the potential biases and limitations of social media news. The survey showed that 70% of respondents believe social media platforms have a significant influence on news framing, with concerns about bias and agenda-setting. Demographic factors influence how individuals consume and evaluate news on social media. Age, gender, and education level were found to be associated with news consumption habits and perceptions of social media's influence.

Media professionals acknowledge the impact of social media on news framing and dissemination. While they recognize the benefits of increased speed and reach, they also express concerns about the shift in framing, rise of misinformation, and ethical considerations.

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