

***News industry transformations in light of digital developments***Laadjal Lalmi^{1,*}, Zakaria BenSeghier²¹ University of Mohamed Khider Biskra (Algeria), laadjal.lalmi@univ-biskra.dz² University of Mohamed Khider Biskra (Algeria), zakaria551@univ-biskra.dz**Received:** 16 / 07 / 2024**Accepted:** 29 / 10 / 2024**Published:** 30 / 11 / 2024**Abstract:**

This study addresses the issue of news sources in the rapidly evolving digital era. News sources are considered a fundamental pillar in the process of conveying information and events to the public in the modern age. This includes both traditional and modern media outlets.

Furthermore, there is a wide variety of news source categories in the digital age. In addition to the familiar traditional sources, the audience can now actively participate in news production through new media platforms. In this study, we endeavored to obtain answers regarding the changes that have occurred in news sources within the context of the new digital environment.

Keywords: *Categorization of news sources; New digital environment; News content; News sources.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Media sources play a crucial role in any event, with journalists interviewing or observing them, whether they are guests in live interviews or quoted in relation to the event. Without these sources, news or journalistic content becomes anonymous and unacceptable, regardless of its importance. (Ali, 2016)

The concept of media sources has significantly changed in the era of modern media, and it may be difficult for individuals who practiced journalism before the new millennium - at least in our region - to believe this transformation. In the age of unlimited media openness, news lacking a clear source becomes more acceptable. Additionally, visual content shared on social media platforms by citizen journalists (who formed what is known as citizen journalism) has become more significant than guests in journalistic interviews or individuals who provide quotes.

The role of media has undergone significant structural changes, shifting from being a medium that surrounds the audience to the audience surrounding the media and intervening in its news agenda. Personal accounts on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and even TikTok have become important sources relied upon by large media institutions in building their news content.

Modern technologies associated with the internet and its various services have brought about structural changes in the news industry worldwide, both at its inception and its peak and even at its lowest point. These transformations continue to raise questions about the perceptions presented by the literature that describes and analyzes media sources for professionals in this field and for the audience. The audience also plays a role in media sources for journalistic news production before becoming an active participant in its influence.

According to a 2018 Pew Research Center survey, 68% of American adults aged 18 and older obtain news through social media platforms. Facebook has the largest share in this context, with 43%, followed by YouTube at 21%, and Twitter in third place with 12%. This makes the source a crucial matter for the audience, who pay great attention to knowing the source of the news they interact with.

But the impact of social media goes beyond that. When users click on a news link, they may not necessarily remember the name of the institution that published the news. This reality was confirmed in a study conducted by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism on news on Facebook. The study showed that 47% of social media users in the UK do not remember the name of the institution that published the news, while 67% of them remember the social network through which they clicked on the news link. (Azam, 2020)

Based on this, the following main question arises:

What changes have occurred in news sources in the context of the new digital environment?

To answer this question, it is necessary to address the following sub-questions:

- 1 .What are news sources?
- 2 .What are the different categories of news sources?
3. What are the key factors influencing news production?

II. News Sources:

1. The Source

The source is the first and fundamental part of the communication process, which consists of three main elements: the source, the message, and the receiver. The importance of the source becomes clear in the context of writing a news story, where the news institution formulates and publishes it. If the information sources are inaccurate, contradictory, or aimed at achieving specific goals, the resulting message will be unclear and may lack accuracy and comprehensiveness in presenting accurate information. (Institution, 2008)

2. News Sources

According to the perspective and definition of Wastley and McLane, the source (whether a person, institution, political party, or candidate) as an individual or entity seeks to convey a specific message to the target audience through the media institution. (Institution, 2008)

Determining a definition for news sources is related to the methods used in this field to collect most of the information during this century. Most of these news reached us through one of the following methods:

- Through a team of specialized editors and correspondents who are always present at the event locations to collect and analyze news.
- Through public relations, advertising agencies, and anyone working in them.
- The presence of journalists and correspondents at major news events.

And some of the modern methods that have spread in recent years and have been used to collect news:

- Applying precise journalism techniques skillfully.
- Compliance with laws related to the freedom to handle and use information.
- Taking advantage of the right to keep the identity of news sources confidential. (Stern, 1989)

During the preparation and editing of news, journalists may make mistakes or be exposed to a series of errors, many of which are related to the news source specifically:

- o Failure to verify news sources or fabricate information to favor one party in the crisis.
- o Control over the news source and relying on the testimonies of correspondents who impose their opinions as facts.
- o Limiting interviews to excerpts from statements in a way that distorts their original context.
- o Distorting interviews by excerpting statements in a way that alters their meaning.
- o Using inaccurate translations of foreign languages or providing an incorrect sequence or timing of events.
- o Lack of sufficient knowledge of correspondents about the background of the event.

3. Television News Coverage Team

This term refers to the news source that aims to present a wide range of events or issues at the national and local levels. Through this source, it seeks to attract public attention and obtain public opinions and evaluations. These events are visually captured using the television news coverage team.

Therefore, the television news coverage team consists of a group of individuals, such as correspondents, photographers, visual sound recorders, or lighting distributors. These individuals play an important role in reaching the main news issues and presenting them to the audience in an attractive and engaging way. (Mehdi, 2022)

When considering this source and monitoring the changes that have occurred in television news coverage techniques, it becomes clear that some roles have shifted or even disappeared due to the digital environment providing shortcuts in television coverage plans. For example, the role of the lighting distributor disappeared in the coverage of the recent Turkey earthquake, as citizens used their phones to transmit events, resulting in the formation of a reliable visual source relied upon by the media sector in covering the event that shook the world.

Dispatchers have also been replaced in many areas that previously required media coverage. This is due to individuals providing news coverage of those areas for free, reflecting a psychological impact resulting from the competitive advantage that achieves high viewership numbers. News industry engineers benefit from these processes by reducing costs and avoiding some responsibilities. The common characteristic now grants a certain legitimacy to the publishing process, with a focus on attributing error percentages to social networks that have

become sources for news production.

4. Global Photo News Agencies

These refer to news agencies through which access to a range of news issues is obtained. These agencies provide visual media services by covering issues and events based on the directives of television channels, with a special focus on photographs that rely on the most important news issues or facts presented. (Mehdi, 2022)

Undoubtedly, the news agencies established by "Louis Havas" in the beginning were responsible for collecting news from all over the world, driven by economic, commercial, security, and military purposes. However, these agencies have witnessed a significant decline in their role due to the digital development that has expanded media institutions' sources without temporal, geographical, or material constraints.

III. Classification of News Sources :

Osama Ghait, a journalist and former deputy editor-in-chief of Al-Ahram newspaper, classified journalistic news sources into three categories: (Ali, 2016)

- Official sources.
- Specialized elites.
- Temporary/Moving sources

1. Official sources

These are usually the preferred options for journalists, especially in hot political issues where access to information is limited. There are several reasons for this preference, the first being the official source's position in power, which affects the news event's prominence. The second is the relative ease of accessing these sources, and the third is the close relationships between journalists and official elites

This is reflected in journalists' efforts to strengthen their relationships with officials and official sources through various means, believing that it brings them closer to the events' locations. However, relying exclusively on official sources, especially in controversial topics, poses numerous problems that may harm the journalist's professionalism.

Ghait points out that in specialized news and major issues, journalists must compare and verify information before publishing, even if the information comes from an official source, as statements and statements issued by officials may not adhere to scientific content and objective verification. This deviation aims to serve propaganda purposes rather than providing accurate media content. He emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between media content and objective editorial truth and propaganda content in a political and executive context, where the media becomes tools to promote power unintentionally.

2. Specialized elites

According to the author and global standards, journalists should turn to the decision-maker as the primary source for any news. However, some media incorrectly understand that the decision-maker is only the person with political power, which is an incorrect understanding. In Western societies, civil society plays a crucial role, leading to a significant diversity and multiplicity of news sources. For example, in the United States, large corporations play a significant role in disseminating news in newspapers, forums, and various gatherings, greatly influencing public opinion.

Specialized elites come as another important source relied upon in the media coverage of significant events, as journalists believe they have a high degree of credibility with the public, increasing the effectiveness of the media message. The results of studies on sources in some Arab networks showed that the focus when choosing sources is more on the criteria of "power

or fame" than on "experience." Here, the focus is on individuals whose statements can shape the news rather than individuals who possess knowledge. Journalists consider identifying the source as a member of a political party or a leader in a human rights organization to make their analyses reliable and unquestionable, and therefore, they do not turn to public sources to obtain information in significant events, based on their belief that the public may not have documented or interesting information.

3 .Temporary/Moving sources:

These refer to members of the general public who are used as sources for journalists in their journalistic work. This source varies depending on the event or topic being covered, and it is also referred to as the "man on the street." Despite its significant importance in covering events and journalistic issues, it is often neglected in professional and academic levels.

Professionally, journalists strive to use official or elite sources and establish relationships with them. If they cannot access an official source, they sometimes prefer to strengthen their relationship with someone close to the source. Although "man on the street" can be a rich source of information, it is usually overlooked in professional content, either intentionally or unintentionally. For example, a vegetable vendor can be an excellent source for a crisis related to rising vegetable and fruit prices, providing detailed information that is closer to reality than official or elite sources. The importance of "man on the street" lies in representing information that verifies the information available from other sources, which enhances the journalist's credibility and reputation among the public.

With the technological advancement and the emergence of modern communication tools such as smartphones and laptops, as well as the spread of social media, "man on the street" has become an important source of news and a disseminator. It allows citizens worldwide to publish news and video content about events in real-time, leading to the emergence of what is known as "citizen journalism".

In the context of technological development and the spread of social media, the role of citizens in collecting information about events and disseminating it has increased. The term "citizen journalism" refers to journalism in which citizens play an active role in collecting, transmitting, analyzing, and publishing news and information. Citizen journalism heavily relies on eyewitnesses as the primary source of news, with a focus on the personal experiences of the event's narrator as a secondary source.

In this context, citizen journalism differs from traditional journalism, which primarily relies on official sources. Journalists in citizen journalism avoid relying entirely on official sources due to difficulty in accessing them and instead turn to available sources such as witnesses and personal observation of the event.

There is also a significant reliance on social media and competing media as sources of information about events and issues. A study conducted on several American online news sites indicated that up to 70% of journalists rely on social media as a source of news. Additionally, about 45% of them tend to use competing media as a source to supplement incomplete information in their news stories.

News sources are divided according to their production and availability as follows:

3.1 Internal Sources (Sources within the Television): These rely on the internal staff of the television, such as foreign correspondents and representatives, as well as on confidential and exclusive sources affiliated with the channel.

3.2 External Sources: These include news agencies, special agreements, local and foreign radio stations, newspapers, bulletins, documents, official statements, and other sources. (Al-Shamri, 2018)

Among the most important external sources:

3.2.1 Global News Agencies: They play a crucial role in collecting news and topics from various parts of the world. These agencies rely on a network of correspondents distributed in different countries, and they transfer news, images, and reports to the global audience.

Sometimes, there can be criticisms regarding the manipulation of news content, especially in Third World countries, where they may play a role in setting the media agenda and encouraging the idea of journalistic scoop.

3.2.2 News Exchange: This relies on electronic broadcasting via satellites, microwave networks, and also air freight methods, which have contributed to reducing the dependence on global news agencies to some extent. Alternatives for news supply are provided through national agencies, which have seen growth and have increasingly played an important role in providing news content.

3.2.3 Monitoring Stations and Newspapers: This is necessary as radio stations represent an important source of news for television, and they gain significant importance during crises, especially when the country is in a state of emergency. In the initial moments of a crisis, these radio stations may be the primary source of information, making it necessary to monitor these stations and follow newspapers to obtain reliable and up-to-date information.

3.2.4 Correspondents: They bear a crucial responsibility in determining the information that reaches the public, as they are considered producers of the news due to their role in crafting and assembling information. Their production of news is the primary measure of objectivity, showing their commitment to the audience. The presence of correspondents on the ground, in collaboration with the filming crew, is the main source of news reports, whether in terms of conveying information or following up on the developments related to the story.

3.2.5 Hidden Information Sources: represents an important part of the news information collection process, and this information comes in an enclosed or undisclosed form. Information provided in this manner is referred to by media outlets through expressions such as "the channel has learned" or "sources informed us," and sometimes the hidden source is hinted at by describing it as an "authorized source" or "official source" without revealing its identity.

The reliance on hidden sources may result from the source's desire to remain anonymous, either to avoid problems or to protect their rights and financial obligations. Information may be deliberately leaked to stir public opinion or draw attention to specific issues. The use of hidden sources is evident in investigative journalism and in shedding light on sensitive issues.

3.2.6 Other Sources: Such as press releases, interviews, eyewitnesses, guests, and conflict parties that intentionally leak news to achieve a psychological impact on opponents or to add an element of surprise.

3.2.7 New Media Platforms: These are sources that have emerged from developments in communication technology, such as blogs, social media sites, or websites. (Al-Shamri, 2018)

New media platforms have brought about a significant transformation in information dissemination, surpassing their role as a primary source relied upon by many to obtain news, express opinions, and interact with global events in real-time. New media platforms are characterized by their ability to convey information rapidly and reach a wide audience, which has led some individuals to feel bored with traditional newspapers.

These new media platforms have significantly contributed to the discussion and resolution of many issues, and have provided solutions for them. Consequently, they have become a primary source for many people to obtain information. However, there remains a portion of the audience that expresses doubts about the reliability of the content on these platforms, viewing them as an indicator of the search for more reliable and comprehensive information sources. (Monir, 2017)

3.3 News Sources and Objectivity:

Herbert Stern observed that the relationship between correspondents and the news sources they meet daily differs completely from the relationship with news sources they meet once. He concluded that the first relationship, due to the goodwill and cooperation, may hinder the approach to objectivity, especially when it comes to anything that deserves criticism.

Herbert Stern distinguishes between news sources, dividing them into traditional and non-traditional sources.

Traditional sources are associated with specialized correspondents who are always at the scene of events, and the flaw here is covering the incident from the perspective of others.

Non-traditional sources rely on the use of precise and skilled journalism methods, enacting laws regarding freedom of action, and using minority members as news sources.

We can observe from these two sources that the approach to objectivity is more evident in the second source. This source can reduce the limited perspective in covering events, especially those that tend to prove the existing situation. (Laraj)

IV. Factors Influencing the Formulation and Preparation of News Content:

Researching how the media shapes and formulates the content of news must involve clarifying the professional values, standards, and pressures that influence the formulation and shaping of news content, which varies across societies and the regulatory framework in which the media institution operates. This is due to the fact that Arab media has a reference composed of the social, economic, political, and cultural contexts in which events occur and information is produced. Additionally, the significance and magnitude of the event and its consequent effects and results play a role. The audience's interests and concerns are also a strong pillar, as is the media outlet's stance on the event. However, these dimensions and references in the news are linked to dynamic relationships that return to the nature of contradictions in interests and ideas. Therefore, they may not be taken absolutely because news content can be politicized in favor of governments related to the environment from which the media outlet arises or, at other times, due to the supporting and funding entities. Consequently, the factors influencing the news may already be linked to current interests and immediate political considerations and objectives, which are the real reference for news content, as can be clarified in: (Al-Shamri, 2018)

1. The Media Policy:

The concept of media policy entails several interconnected issues. It includes political aspects related to the system of governance and the degree of freedom granted to media outlets by these systems. It also encompasses ideological aspects related to the political philosophy adopted by these systems and their main orientations. This clarifies one fact: media policy does not arise from nothing and does not operate independently but falls within the framework of general policy. It serves specific political goals, justifies their logic, supports their institutions, and regulates their movement and behavior (Al-Azawi, 2021). It outlines the broad guidelines for the news process and represents a set of principles and rules that control the style or method by which the content of the message is presented.

Thus, it represents the strategy of the media outlet, which is linked to the ideological orientation of the media outlet that shapes the reality of the practices of those working in the media outlet.

1.1 Principles: These are the general goals that the media professional adopts as the ideological framework for their plan.

1.2 Standards: These are the measurements that the media professional uses to determine the general framework of the media message in terms of form and content, and how well it aligns with the general policy.

Rules: These are the foundations on which media policy is based during planning and implementation, and their conformity with the principles of general policy and the social environment.

Among the most important characteristics of media policy are:

a. Media messages have a distinctive nature. This imposes a social and ethical responsibility on the concerned institutions, requiring self-regulation that is not found in other institutions.

- b. Media production requires a certain degree of freedom of choice, as well as material and human resources.
- c. Media work demands speed and immediacy to cover events and keep up with contemporary developments.
- d. Media production revolves around ideas, opinions, beliefs, and information, which necessitates creativity and innovation. (Al-Shamri, 2018)

Therefore, if there is a selection process for the number of events covered by the channel in its news, it is an intellectual and ideological process that gives the channel its unique character and highlights its media policy. This process involves preparing the viewer to accept and interact with the content of the message, stirring their emotions and appealing to their feelings in a way that appears uncontrived, and persuading them to confirm and validate everything presented in the previous two processes. Any failure in this regard would pose an obstacle to conveying the intended meaning of the news content to the viewer as planned.

2. News Values:

The concept of news values remains a topic of epistemological debate, perhaps because news originates from multiple dimensions in line with the functional role that news plays towards societies in knowledge and culture, in addition to the orientations of the audience, which is the primary concern of the media process.

Warida Milyani provided three definitions of news values based on her review of Arab and foreign intellectual heritage:

News values are the standards by which professionals in the media exercise their evaluative judgments and preferences, guiding the process of news collection, selection, and presentation.

News values are a set of material and intellectual standards on the basis of which an event is transformed into news. These are structural qualities related to the interaction between the event and the audience, revealing the essence of the event and its social use, essentially turning it into a subject for awareness, knowledge, and understanding.

News values are the explicit or implicit cognitive and semantic framework that enables the communicator to perceive and select the most important news from among a large number of events or pieces of information. These are the essential components that form news, which stand out due to their prominence and fade in their absence.

Milyani concluded her study by defining news values as "a set of unwritten subjective and objective standards understood by media professionals in the process of news collection and selection, shared by all media institutions, though their application varies from one institution to another. This process is complex due to the ideological meanings it carries and because it also depends on the audience's type and tastes, giving it a quality of change and evolution". (Mohamed & Daoud, 2022)

Thus, values form the explicit or implicit framework that enables the communicator to perceive the most important news and provide it with opportunities to appear in the media.

The importance of news values also lies in their significant impact on the quality of information received by the audience. Adherence to ethical and professional standards in the news dissemination process helps build trust and credibility between the audience and the

media. Failure to adhere to news values can lead to the dissemination of inaccurate or misleading news, negatively impacting trust in media institutions and increasing audience confusion.

Additionally, news values contribute to shaping the audience's concepts and perceptions of events and phenomena. When news is accurately and objectively reported and professionally analyzed, the audience can better understand events and make informed decisions. News values act as a bridge linking the reality of news to the audience's understanding of it.

V. Conclusion:

The media must update and develop its methods and practices to meet the changing demands of the audience. The vast diversity of news sources and the emergence of new media are leading to fundamental changes in how news is gathered and disseminated, opening wide doors for audience interaction in the process of news production and editing.

This new reality requires media outlets to leverage technology and digital transformation to provide media content in innovative and engaging ways to connect with the audience and meet their needs. Media organizations should also seek to benefit from the advantages offered by the digital environment and understand the new consumption patterns.

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