Crime Reporting: Social Media Vs Conventional Media, A Comparative Analysis of Framing Attributes

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Abstract

A new and upcoming challenging competitor for conventional media is the rise of social media. With the increasing usage of digital devices, social media is rapidly becoming a primary source of information for all generations, particularly for the dissemination of criminal-related information. However, how these crime reports are framed differs from the traditional media to social media. According to some research, social media tends to be more sensationalizing and emotion-inducing than conventional media, which leads to different consequences, such as misleading information, increased fear of crime, potential biases among people, and the CJS. This study aims to investigate whether such differences in both media outlets, specifically their framing techniques exist, by comparatively analyzing the news posts, contents, tone, emotional language, emphasis on sensationalism, and how the narratives and information are constructed and presented to the public, we can identify the major differences in their framing technique. Through this study, we can also learn more about how the diversity in the framing technique results in various opinions, perceptions, influence, trust, and other societal implications. To attain more insights about the ongoing events within the media because of this competition and to further validate and refine this study. This study aims to understand whether there is a diversity among the media, whether they have their impact on society, and the need for critical media literacy in collecting and publishing crime-related information.

Keywords: Conventional media, social media, crime reports, framing, societal implication, critical media, impact on CJS and public.

INTRODUCTION

Media criminology is an interdisciplinary area that investigates the connection between crime, the criminal justice system, and media portrayals, which encompass both traditional mediums, such as newspapers and television, as well as digital platforms like social media. Emerging in the mid-20th century, this field has grown to include perspectives from sociology, psychology, and communication studies. Early contributions came from Stanley Cohen, who studied moral panics, and McCombs and Shaw's agenda-setting theory, which demonstrated the media's role in shaping public views on crime.

The rise of social media has changed how crime news is reported, with sites like Twitter and Facebook becoming key information sources. This transformation carries important consequences for the framing

and comprehension of crime. While traditional media follow strict editorial standards to maintain accuracy and provide context, social media enables immediate reporting, which often results in the spread of misinformation and sensational content.

Media criminology scrutinizes various aspects of crime portrayal, focusing on how different media formats frame crime, instigate moral panics, and influence societal narratives. Important framing methods include episodic versus thematic framing, victim versus offender framing, and framing related to moral panic, each of which affects public perception and policy decisions. The use of emotive language and sensationalism frequently distorts reality and amplifies fear of crime.

YouTube has become a crucial platform in this context, where both traditional media outlets and independent content creators share crime-related information. The dynamics of the platform, driven by algorithms and user interactions, shape narratives, often creating echo chambers that reinforce existing biases. As digital technologies continue to advance, media criminologists encounter fresh challenges, including the effects of artificial intelligence and deepfake technology on media credibility.

This study explores the differences in framing characteristics between crime reporting on social media and traditional media, with an emphasis on emotional language, tone, sensationalism, and focus analysis. It is essential to grasp these differences to determine the validity of biases and claims. Through a comparative analysis of select crime reports from both types of media, this research aims to ascertain whether significant differences exist between social media and traditional media, as suggested by various studies, by examining news articles, broadcasts, and YouTube content to analyze attributes such as emotional language and sensationalism.

Objectives of the Study

- To identify and compare the different framing attributes between social media and traditional media outlets in their coverage of crime.
- To know and compare the headings between social media and conventional media
- To see if there are statistically significant changes in the attributes between social media and conventional media
- To give suitable suggestions on crime reporting and framing techniques through the implications of these findings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

- In their 2023 research, Thomson and Bock (1) explore how YouTube thumbnails influence the visual representation of crime reporting, specifically analyzing the 2022 Idaho student murders and contrasting the methods of journalists with those of non-journalists. They refer to thumbnails as "visual gateways" that captivate audience interest, noting that journalists generally utilize official images such as police mugshots, whereas non-journalists prefer more sensational visuals, like social media pictures and eye-catching designs. This brings up ethical issues, as non-journalists might prioritize engagement over truthfulness, resulting in visual misinformation. The authors urge the establishment of ethical guidelines for thumbnail creation and advocate for additional research on their impacts on public perception and crime reporting methods.
- Oghogho et al. (2024) explore how crime reporting through social media influences security in Nigeria, focusing on its significance in citizen journalism. (2) The research tackles issues like

misinformation, breaches of privacy, and collaboration with traditional law enforcement agencies. Since numerous crimes are not reported, the authors stress the importance of law enforcement agencies leveraging reliable social media intelligence and suggest policy reforms, advancements in verification technologies, and stronger collaborations with digital platforms to improve crime prevention and investigations.

- Kumar, Senthil Kumaran, and Nazini (2024) examine how social media affects traditional media, emphasizing the ways digital platforms have changed news distribution, audience interaction, and revenue models. (3) The research highlights the democratization of information and the growth of citizen journalism while also addressing issues such as falling advertising revenue and "filter bubbles" that restrict diverse perspectives. By employing a mixed-methods strategy, the study reveals a decrease in the consumption of traditional media, with many individuals now relying primarily on social media for news. Concerns regarding trust due to misinformation on social media have prompted traditional media outlets to implement fact-checking measures and work with digital platforms. The authors conclude that the dynamic between social and traditional media is both disruptive and harmonious, suggesting the need for improved fact-checking practices and regulatory measures to manage this changing environment.

- Pamoukoglou (2021) investigates the effects of social media and television news usage on perceptions and apprehensions about crime, utilizing Gerbner's Cultivation Theory as a framework. (4) Analysis of data from the World Values Survey reveals that engagement with social media is positively associated with a heightened perception of crime rates and an escalated fear of becoming a victim, whereas consumption of television news shows a negative correlation with crime perception. This indicates that greater engagement with TV news is associated with a diminished perception of crime frequency. The results are attributed to the unfiltered nature of social media content and the emotionally charged crime narratives that amplify fears. The study concludes that social media exerts a more significant influence on fear and beliefs about crime compared to television, underscoring the necessity for additional research and enhanced digital literacy to combat misinformation.

- Ahmed, Cho, and Jaidka (2019) examine the impact of geopolitical proximity on how social conflicts are portrayed in both traditional news outlets and social media, focusing on the case study of the 2013 Little India riot in Singapore. (5) By conducting a content analysis of 227 news articles and 4,495 tweets, the researchers discovered that traditional media typically adheres to the geopolitical proximity hypothesis, which is often influenced by government oversight, while Twitter facilitates more open conversations that question official narratives. Their analysis classifies news sources from 13 different countries and reviews framing elements such as the significance of the issue and who is held accountable. The findings suggest that newspapers in Singapore and neighboring countries minimized the severity of the riot, presenting it as a singular event, whereas media from both directly involved and remote countries were more critical. Conversely, discussions on social media portrayed the riot as a racial or social conflict, frequently taking the government to task. The study ultimately concludes that traditional media aligns itself with geopolitical interests, while social media enables a democratization of information despite facing issues such as misinformation. The authors urge for additional research on how digital platforms shape political discourse.

Research Gap

Some studies have addressed the role of sensationalism and emotional language in media framing, but th-

ere is a gap in understanding how these elements vary across different platforms. Thus, these attributes, such as emotional language, tone, sensationalism, and focus analysis, are done in this study for the content as well as the heading.

Research questions

1. What key framing techniques are used in crime reporting by conventional media vs social media?
2. How does the narrative differ between traditional and social media in crime reports?
3. Does social media's framing of crime get more public attention and reactions than traditional media?
4. What are the implications of these framing differences for media literacy education?

Hypothesis

H0: There are no significant differences in the framing techniques and their influence on social media and traditional media in crime reporting.

H1: Social media uses more sensational and emotion-inducing framing techniques in crime reporting compared to traditional media.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Analysis: Some samples of traditional and social media video posts on YouTube and news articles for some specific crimes will be collected and analyzed for a comparative analysis. The qualitative analysis involves a Qualitative analytical software known as **Atlas.ti**, A coding framework is developed to ensure consistency and reliability in the analysis.

Furthermore, an **ANOVA** test is conducted to see if there are significant changes between the three and to see whether the hypothesis can be proved or not.

Sampling method

The study uses purposive sampling, as the samples of both traditional media and social media are collected from YouTube, along with news articles of the same cases. Therefore, this is content-based purposive sampling.
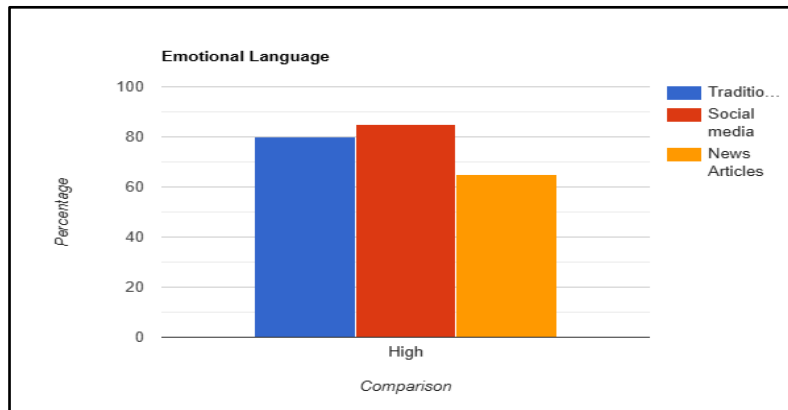
A sample size of 50 nos, 50 cases from traditional media videos and social media, and news articles, which means a total of 100 videos and 50 articles, were analyzed to do the study.

RESULT

Content Analysis:

Comparative analysis of Framing between content as the words used in the videos of both conventional media and social media

Emotional Language Usage

By looking at the chart, we can see that social media content creators use more emotional language than traditional media. While traditional media also uses emotional language, while comparing we can see that it uses 5% less than social media. News articles use significantly less emotional language as compared to both.
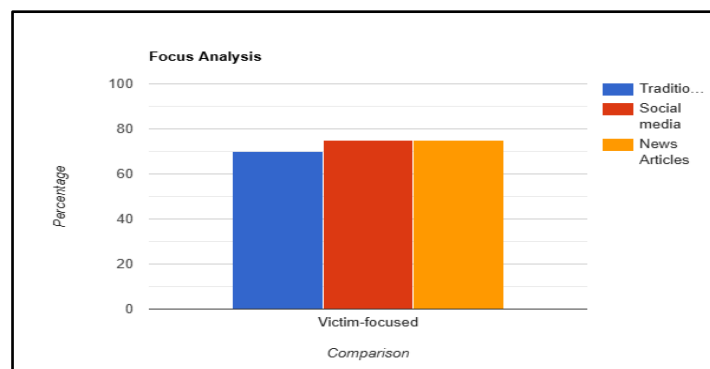
Sensationalism
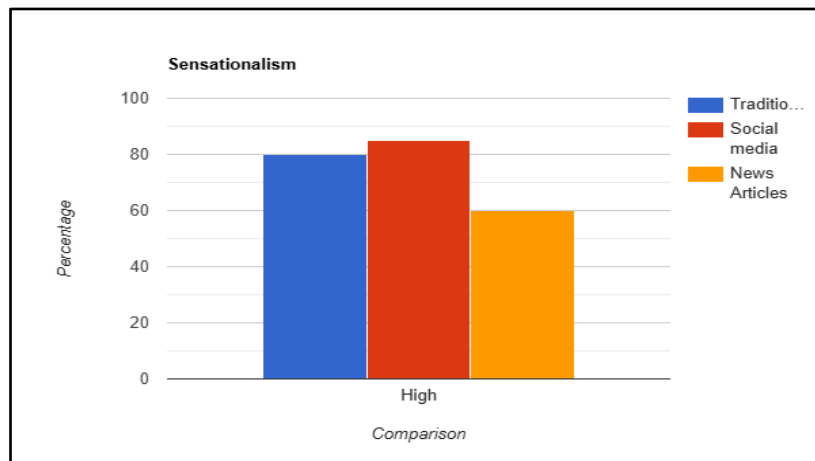
By looking at the chart, we can see that social media content creators use more sensationalism than traditional media, while comparing we can see that traditional media uses 5% less sensationalism than social media. And here, too, the news articles use less sensationalism compared to the other both.
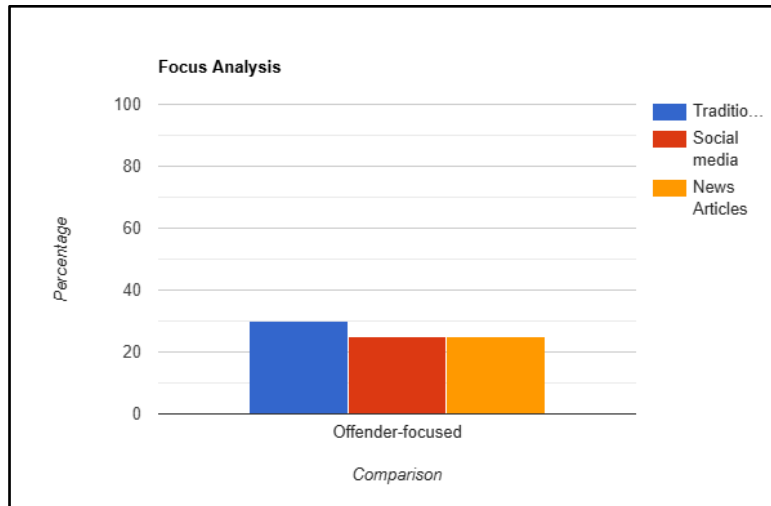
Focus - Analysis
1. Victim-focused:

By looking at the chart, we can see that social media content creators use more victim-focused content than traditional media. We can see that traditional media uses 65% content, while social media uses 70%. Surprisingly, news article uses the same level of victim-focused content as social media.
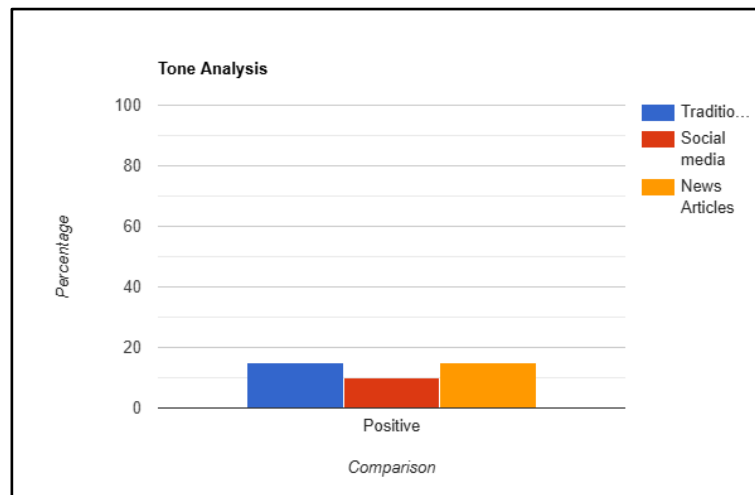
2. Offender-focused:

By looking at the chart, we can see that traditional media use more offender-focused content than social media. We can see that traditional media uses 5% percent more offender-focused content than social media. Here, too news article and social media have similar levels.
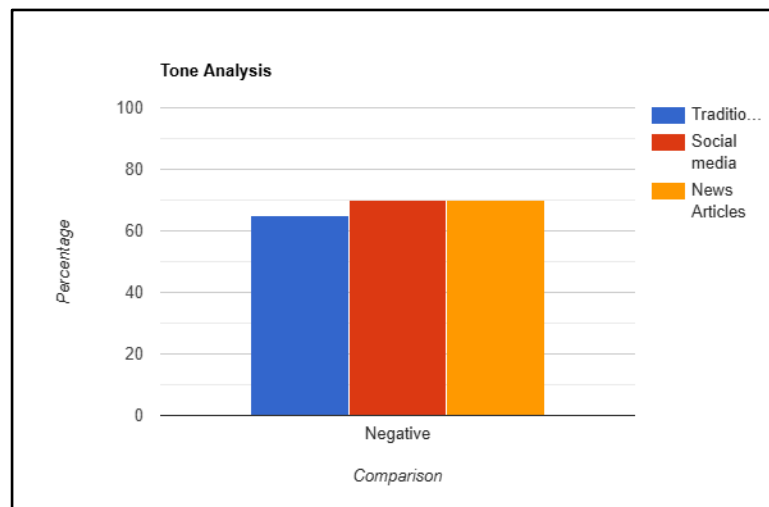
Tone Analysis
1. Positive:

By looking at the chart, we can see that traditional media uses a more positive tone in their content than social media. Here, news articles and traditional recognized news channels' YouTube videos use the same positive tone.

Negative:

We can see that social media uses a more negative tone in their content than traditional media, though the variations in their percentage aren't much different, there are some differences. News articles also include a negative tone as much as social media.

Discussion

By going through the results obtained through the qualitative analysis, we can see that even though there are changes in the framing between news articles, news channels, and content creators on youtube, these changes are not that different to each other. This is contrary to the popular belief that social media is more sensationalizing and emotional than traditional media.

Header Analysis:

The same comparative analysis is done for the heading of the outlets as people click on videos mainly through reading the thumbnail.
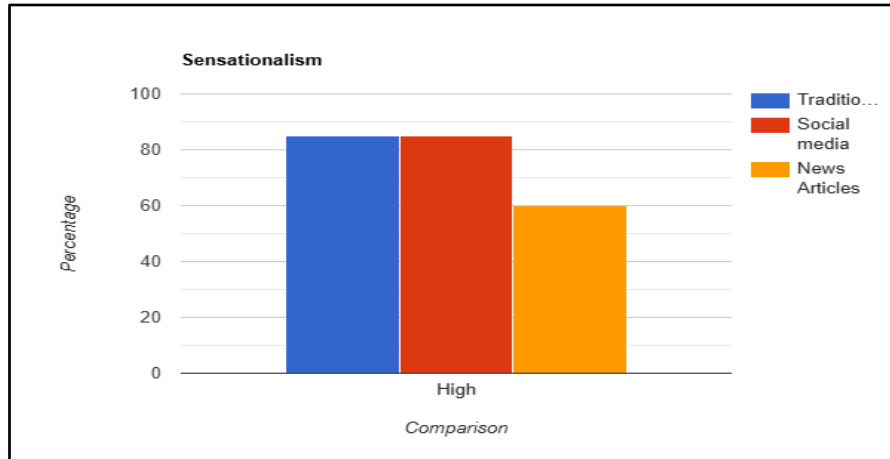
Emotional Language Usage
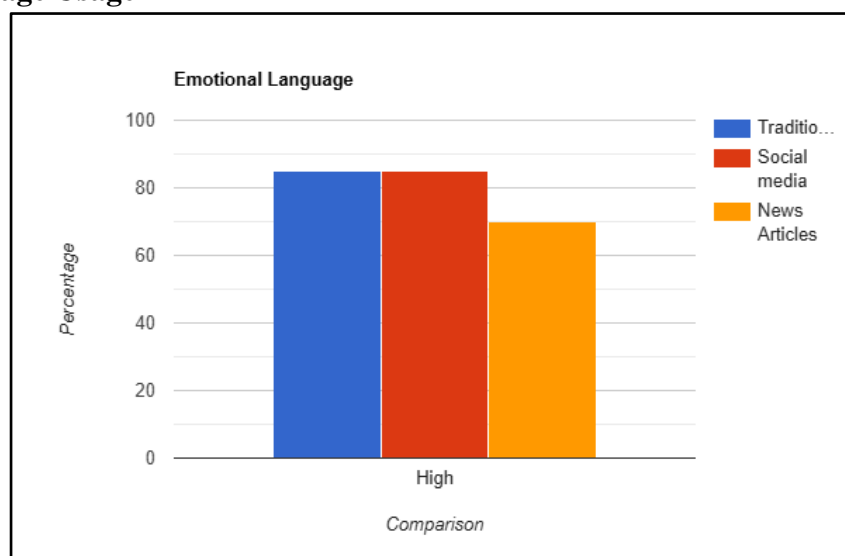
By looking at the chart, we can see that social media content creators use more emotional language than traditional media. While traditional media also uses emotional language, while comparing we can see that

it uses 5% less than social media. News articles' headers use less emotional language.
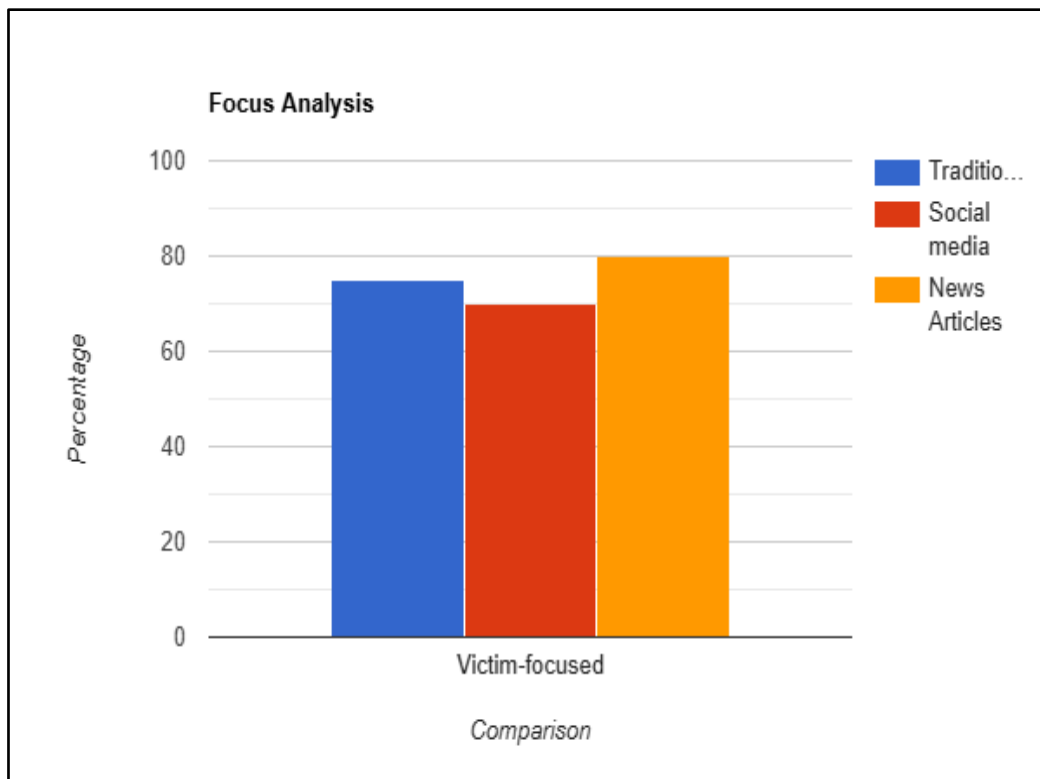
Sensationalism

By looking at the chart, we can see that social media content creators use more sensationalism than traditional media, while comparing we can see that traditional media uses 5% less sensationalism than social media. Here as well, news articles use less sensationalism as compared to both.
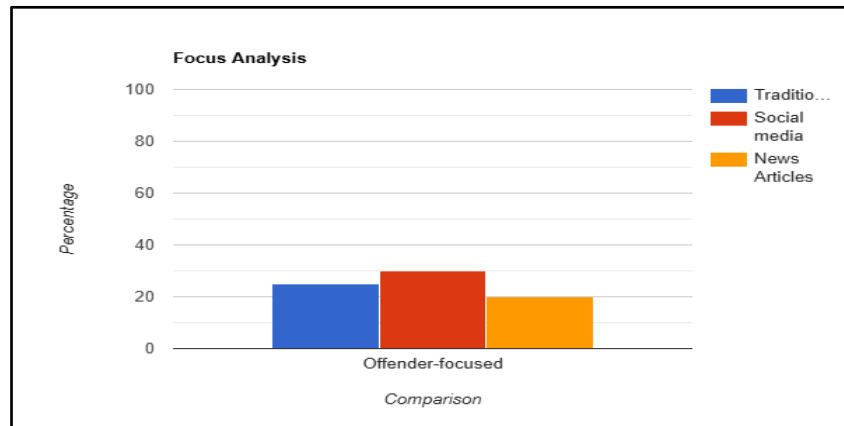
Focus - Analysis
3. Victim-focused:

By looking at the chart, we can see that traditional media uses more victim-focused headings than social media, which is different from the content analysis. We can see that traditional media uses 75% content, while social media uses 70%. We can also see that news articles are more victim-focused than the other two.

4. Offender-focused:

By looking at the chart, we can see that social media uses more offender-focused headings than traditional media, which is also different from the content analysis. We can see that traditional media uses 5% less offender-focused content than social media. News articles are way less when it comes to offender-focused type of headings.
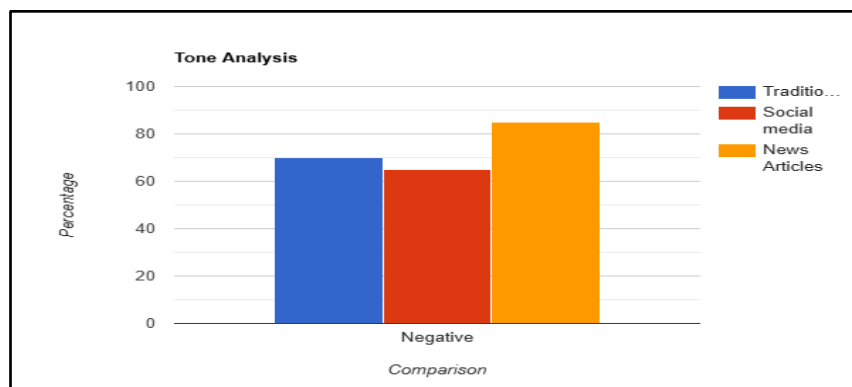
Tone Analysis
2. Positive:
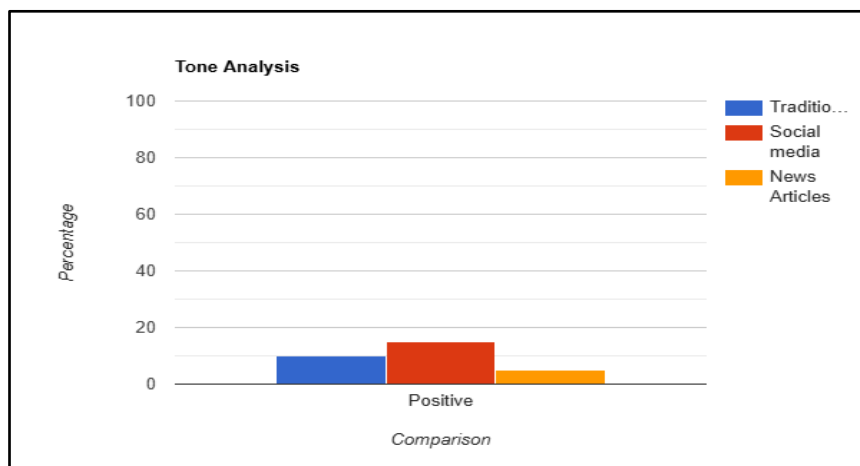
By looking at the chart, we can see that traditional media uses a less positive tone in their heading than social media. News articles use way less positive tone in their article headings.

3. Negative:

We can see that traditional media uses a more negative tone in their content than social media, contrary to the content analysis. And compared to the other two, we can see that news articles have a much more negative tone in their headings.

Discussion

By going through the qualitative analysis done for the header alone, we can see that similar to the content analysis, there are only minor differences between social media and traditional media. The changes are not that significant.

ANOVA TEST RESULT:

By analyzing the variance within and between groups, ANOVA provides a way to test hypotheses about group differences.

- If the **p-value is lower than 0.05**, it suggests that at least one group is significantly different from the others.
- If the **p-value is higher than 0.05**, it indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between the groups.

Independent Variable (Social Media vs Traditional Media)	**Dependent Variable:** Framing Techniques (Sensationalism & Emotional Language Usage)
Anova Test p-value	0.916

Anova test p-value: 0.916 > 0.05. Therefore, H0 is accepted.

The p-value of the test conducted is 0.916, which is greater than 0.05; this reveals that there are no statistically significant differences between traditional media and social media in terms of crime-framing techniques.

With this, we can say that the null hypothesis, which states that there are no significant changes is failed to be rejected and is accepted. The alternative hypothesis, which states that there are significant changes, is rejected.

Discussion

Many researches have shown that social media significantly sensationalizes information and news, but most of them are done only with qualitative analysis and require statistical evidence. If only the qualitative evidence was considered in this research, it would have shown that there are changes in the framing techniques between social media and traditional media, but by doing the ANOVA test we were able to find that even though there are changes, they are not as major or significant as it seems to be.

To give suitable suggestions on crime reporting and framing techniques through the implications of these findings. With the implications of these findings, we can say that there are statistical differences that claim that social media is more sensationalizing and emotional, rather we have found that both type of media are approximately equal in sensationalism and emotional language usage, which arises the concern and the need to emphasize that there need to be some kind of law or ethics that governs, and restricts such

tendencies, so that the information passed through media are fact based and provided only to provide awareness and spread informations.

SUGGESTIONS:

1. Future studies should analyze a larger dataset covering more crime reports across different periods to improve statistical accuracy.
2. Including more media outlets and independent social media creators could provide a broader perspective on framing differences. Instead of focusing only on YouTube, future research should include Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram, where crime news spreads rapidly.
3. Comparing framing styles across short-form content (TikTok) vs. long-form content (YouTube) could provide new insights.
4. Interviews with journalists and social media creators to understand framing decisions.
5. Social media platforms use algorithms to promote certain types of crime content, potentially influencing how crime is framed and consumed. This study did not analyze how algorithmic curation affects crime framing or which types of crime stories gain more visibility.

CONCLUSION

This research examined the techniques used to frame crime in traditional media, social media, and news articles, with a focus on elements such as sensationalism, emotional language, victim/offender emphasis, and overall tone. In contrast to earlier studies, which indicated that social media presents crime more sensationally, the results showed no significant statistical differences in crime framing across these different media types. This suggests that there may be a convergence in reporting styles, possibly due to traditional media evolving in response to digital trends or content creators on social media adopting journalistic practices. The findings contest the belief that social media inherently increases the sensationalism of crime reporting. Nonetheless, the study is limited by factors such as sample size, the exclusion of various social media platforms, and the absence of audience perception analysis. Future studies should focus on these limitations by analyzing larger sample groups, including a range of platforms, and investigating how social media algorithms influence crime narratives. In summary, this study adds to the discussion regarding media framing and digital journalism, emphasizing that the differences in crime reporting between social media and traditional media might not be as pronounced as previously assumed, which is crucial for media professionals, policymakers, and audiences navigating the digital landscape.

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