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Digital Content Analysis on the Sudanese Conflict 2023: An Analytical Study of the Contents of News Websites and Social Media Pages on Facebook and the X platform "Twitter" (*)

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Abstract

This study examined the role of digital content in shaping public opinion towards the Sudanese conflict in 2023, focusing on analyzing the content of news websites and social media pages, particularly Facebook and X. The study aimed to analyze the digital content presented about the conflict, identify the media frames used, measure the impact of this content on public attitudes, and determine the differences between various platforms in addressing the conflict.

The study adopted a descriptive analytical approach, using content analysis of a sample of (3,000) posts on Facebook and X during the period from April to September 2023. A content analysis form was used as the primary tool for data collection, focusing on analyzing media frames, types of discourse, and information sources used in covering the conflict.

Results showed that Facebook had higher engagement compared to X, with an average engagement of (487) on Facebook versus (193) on X. Coverage focused on the "power struggle" frame at (33.30%), followed by the "humanitarian crisis" frame at (22.40%). The study revealed a prevalence of hostile language in posts at (39.67%), reflecting the intensity of tension at the beginning of the conflict. Short posts (less than 50 words) dominated the content at (46.70%), indicating the audience's preference for concise and quick information.

The findings indicated that official media sources were the most used at (30.03%), followed by eyewitness accounts at (21.50%), reflecting the importance of official and personal sources in shaping the media narrative during conflicts. The study also revealed fluctuations in the monthly growth rate of posts, with a sharp decline in August and September, indicating a correlation between posting and field developments of the conflict.

Regarding strategies to influence public opinion, "evoking empathy" and "fear" were the most used at (35.77%) and (26.33%) respectively, confirming the role of emotions in guiding public opinion during crises. The results also showed that military leaders were the most mentioned in coverage at (28.53%), followed by politicians at (26.33%), reflecting the media focus on influential figures in the conflict.

(*) The Paper was received on August 27, 2024, and accepted for publication on October 06, 2024.

Based on these findings, the study presented several recommendations to improve media coverage of conflicts. It recommended developing balanced media frames that combine conflict analysis with highlighting humanitarian aspects, emphasizing the need to train journalists in using diverse frames to present a comprehensive picture of the conflict. It also suggested adopting communication strategies that combine emotional and rational discourse to achieve a balance in influencing the audience.

The study emphasized the importance of developing digital content writing skills, focusing on conciseness without compromising meaning. It also recommended creating a specialized team for managing media crises, capable of quickly dealing with changes in political events and field developments. The study stressed the need to raise awareness about the impact of language on conflict, proposing the development of a guideline for responsible language in conflict coverage, and organizing periodic workshops on using constructive language that contributes to dialogue and peace-building.

Furthermore, the study highlighted the need for a more balanced coverage of influential figures, recommending expanding coverage to include influential personalities from various fields such as civil society and academic experts. It suggested developing a diverse database of sources and influential figures to ensure comprehensive and balanced coverage of the conflict from all angles.

In conclusion, this research provides valuable insights into the dynamics of digital media coverage during conflicts and offers practical recommendations for improving the quality and impact of such coverage. It underscores the critical role of digital content in shaping public opinion and the responsibility of media professionals in presenting balanced, accurate, and constructive narratives during times of crisis.

keywords: Digital Content, Sudanese Conflict, Social Media, Facebook, Twitter (X), Media framing, Public opinion, Content analysis, Media Discourse, Humanitarian Crisis.