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Liwa University Conference 2025 on: (New Horizons in Digital Content Creation and Data Analysis)

English Researches:

- **Dr. Adnan Khalid Jawabri** - Liwa University - Al Ain

Dr. Hany Selim - Liwa University - Al Ain

Trends in Artificial Intelligence for Digital Media: A Literature Review of Future Perspectives in Business and Management 7

- **Dr. Rafif Faisal** - Liwa University - Abu Dhabi

AI in Media Careers: Ethical and Legal Challenges and Strategies for Adaptation 32

- **Dr. Mohamed Rashad Ahmed** - Liwa University - Abu Dhabi

The Role of Hypertext in Enhancing News Comprehension: An Analytical Study of Digital News on Arab Television Channels' Websites Regarding the Iranian Israeli War 49

Abstracts of Arabic Researches:

- **Associate Prof. Dr. Ahmed ElSaid Abdelkader Sakr** - Liwa University - Abu Dhabi

Technologies Used to Enrich Digital Images and their Role in Enhancing Consumer's Trust in Digital Marketing System and Influencing Purchasing Behavior 75

- **Associate Prof. Dr. Shama Mustafa Mohamed Salih Abu Sham** - Liwa University - Abu Dhabi
Dr. Abdelrhman Gafar Abdelrhman Abdalla - University of the Holy Quran and Islamic Sciences

The Impact of Employing Smart Training Environments Based on Big Data on Developing Digital Media Skills: A Survey Study of a Sample of Media Professors at Arab Universities 76

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The Role of Hypertext in Enhancing News Comprehension: An Analytical Study of Digital News on Arab Television Channels' Websites Regarding the Iranian Israeli War (*)

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(*) The Paper was received on August 05, 2025, and accepted for publication on October 01, 2025.

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The Role of Hypertext in Enhancing News Comprehension: An Analytical Study of Digital News on Arab Television Channels' Websites Regarding the Iranian Israeli War

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Abstract

This study examine the use of hypertext in news content across three major Arabic television news websites-Al Jazeera, Sky News Arabia, and Al Arabiya-during their coverage of the Iran-Israel war. It aims to investigate how hyperlinks are utilized to enhance the reader's understanding, provide background information, and support the overall credibility of the news. Using content analysis, the research examines the number, type (internal or external), placement, and function of hyperlinks, as well as their relevance to the main news topic.

The results show that the three platforms' hyperlinking tactics differ significantly from one another. In order to provide comprehensive background material, Al Jazeera mostly uses internal linkages, mainly through its encyclopedia service. On the other hand, Sky News Arabia and Al Arabiya place a strong emphasis on contextual linking, frequently tying stories to relevant events. Because of its affiliated economy platform, Sky News also features a significant amount of political and economic analysis. The study comes to the conclusion that hyperlinking techniques affect consumers' news experience, comprehension depth, and reading flow and are impacted by editorial policies. These findings emphasize the value of well considered hyperlink design in digital journalism and offer ideas for future study avenues, such as user interaction experiments with hypertext.

Keywords: Hypertext, Al Jazeera, Sky News Arabia, Al Arabia, Hypertext Theory, User Experience.

Introduction

Amid the digital transformation in media, news websites have become interactive platforms that not only present news texts but also rely on hypertexts and links as tools to enhance understanding and expand the reader's knowledge background. The importance of these links becomes evident when addressing complex and multifaceted events such as the Iranian-Israeli war, which intertwines political, military, historical, and regional dimensions.

Some studies back up this claim by demonstrating that the news content of news websites and printed newspapers is virtually identical. However, when

comparing printed newspapers to Internet newspapers, the formats of news publication change significantly (Opgehaffen, 2009, p.2).

It appears that the presence of hypertextuality is one of the distinguishing features of online news from printed news (Heinonen, 1999).

Many studies have focused on readers' use of hypertext. In contrast, this study examines how news websites utilize hypertext, given its significant neglect by many sites that publish news in the same manner as printed news without including links within the news text. It also explores whether these links provide value to the reader or are merely used as a routine procedure on news websites.

In the ever-changing landscape of digital journalism, hypertextuality has emerged as a distinguishing feature of online news. Hyperlinks, as essential components of hypertext, influence how people navigate and interact with news items. They not only help readers navigate interconnected information, but they also improve the depth, context, and legitimacy of news reporting. The smart use of hyperlinks can transform a linear news piece into a layered, interactive experience that allows visitors to investigate background facts, check sources, and gain a deeper understanding of complicated events.

This study will look at how prominent Arabic-language television news websites, such as Al Jazeera, Sky News Arabia, and Al Arabiya, employ hyperlinks in their coverage of the Iran-Israel war. While these media outlets have a significant impact on public discourse in the Arab world, their editorial decisions regarding hyperlink usage may reflect wider journalistic tactics and user engagement assumptions.

This study examines the types, placement, and functions of hyperlinks, including internal vs. external links, contextual references, background explanations, and keyword usage, to determine how these digital tools help to or hamper reader understanding and knowledge depth. The study uses Hypertext Theory to better understand the nonlinear structure of online news and how it affects user experience during a regional crisis.

Literature Review

According to research, hypertextuality promotes nonlinear reading habits, encouraging users to explore numerous threads and subtopics, which can lead to a more comprehensive understanding of news events (Narin, 2018). Hypertext can enhance accessibility by providing clear navigation and information structure, thereby allowing diverse users to access digital media more effectively and inclusively (Bonilha, 2022). Studies found that Hypertext, as a core component of the web, enhances navigation and interaction for users with diverse requirements and limitations (Colston et al., 2022; Dang, 2024; Raymond & Carlson, 2023). Following the WCAG 2.1 criteria guarantees that hypertext elements are designed to be accessible, fostering inclusivity for all users (Colston et al., 2022; Shah, 2024)

Hypertext enables readers to browse interconnected articles and themes, increasing their engagement and comprehension of complicated stories (Narin, 2018). Luuk (2014) revealed that news stories with hyperlinked sources had a beneficial effect on perceived control, particularly among those who valued control highly. This interactivity encourages a more informed audience by allowing visitors to delve deeper into topics (Orero & Cebrián-Enrique, 2019).

The use of hyperlinks in online news articles is a complex dynamic; while they can boost credibility by providing sources and context, excessive or poorly managed hyperlinking can lead to information overload or misinterpretation (Borah, 2014).

Hypertext improves interactivity and user engagement, but it may also contribute to information overload, making it difficult for users to distinguish genuine sources among the enormous array of linked content. De Maeyer (2012) illustrates that there are continuous arguments over the proper use of hyperlinks in journalism, exposing contradictions between traditional journalistic principles and the needs of hypertextuality. On the other hand, a study found that Semantic linkages increase user engagement by offering additional context and related content, allowing users to move easily through information (Orero & Cebrián-Enrique, 2019).

Hyperlinks increase the credibility of online news sources by allowing readers to check assertions and access original sources, so promoting transparency. This relationship enhances perceived reliability by allowing readers to independently analyze the information offered in journalistic publications (Gruber & Godulla, 2016). De Maeyer & Heinderyckx (2013) found that Hypertext linkages in journalism can influence credibility and reliability by disclosing interrelationships between journalists, sources, and audiences, as well as being affected by economic interests and socio-technical contexts, influencing how information is viewed and trusted.

Hypertext in internet news builds credibility by linking to reputable sources such as government and academic websites. However, the underutilization of multimedia and language-specific material is a wasted chance to properly exploit hypertext for increasing user experience and information accessibility (Stroobant & Raeymaeckers, 2019). Hyperlinks in news stories can boost credibility and information-seeking behavior, especially when integrated with value-framed content. This interaction implies that hypertext has a substantial impact on how people evaluate the reliability of online news sources (Borah, 2014).

New technologies also may enhance the efficiency of hyperlinking. Hussain (2024) found that AI-powered solutions can improve hypertext by making real-time alterations to material based on user demands, enabling a more inclusive experience.

The reviewed literature highlights the multifaceted role of hypertext in online journalism, showing that it fosters nonlinear reading, enhances user

engagement, and contributes significantly to credibility and transparency. On the other hand, several scholars point out challenges associated with hyperlinking like information overload and misinterpretation.

Research Problem

Hypertext theory highlights hyperlinks' central role in shaping digital news by providing transparency, intertextuality, and pathways for deeper audience engagement. Yet, their application in Arabic-language journalism remains underexplored. Arab television news websites such as Al Jazeera, Sky News Arabia, and Al Arabiya make comparatively greater use of hypertext than many other Arab outlets, especially during complex and geopolitically sensitive events like the Iran-Israel war. However, it is still unclear whether these hyperlinks primarily function to enhance comprehension and editorial credibility or whether they serve more as navigational and promotional devices. This gap is significant because, unlike Western counterparts, Arab media platforms operate within distinct editorial cultures, linguistic frameworks, and audience expectations that may shape hyperlink practices in unique ways.

This study aims to close the gap by examining the types, functions, and locations of hyperlinks in coverage of the Iran-Israel conflict on three prominent Arab news platforms: Al Jazeera, Sky News Arabia, and Al Arabiya. It seeks to identify whether hyperlinks are primarily employed to aid reader comprehension, strengthen editorial credibility, or serve purely navigational or promotional purposes. The issue stems from a potential mismatch between hyperlink design and user needs, which could either deepen the reader's knowledge or cause distraction and cognitive overload. This study investigates how hypertext practices reflect Arab media outlets' editorial efforts and influence the overall quality of digital news consumption.

Objectives of the study:

Main Objective:

- To analyze the use of hyperlinks in covering the Iran–Israel war on major Arab television news websites (*Al Jazeera*, *Sky News Arabia*, and *Al Arabiya*).

Supporting Aims:

- To identify the types of hyperlinks used (e.g., internal vs. external links).
- To examine the placement of hyperlinks within the news text.
- To investigate the functions of hyperlinks, such as:
 - Explaining concepts or terms
 - Providing background information
 - Referring to previous or related news articles

- To assess the contribution of hyperlinks in enhancing reader understanding and improving the news reading experience for Arab audiences.

Importance of the study:

- Examines the use of hyperlinks in covering a high-stakes geopolitical war, providing insight into how Arab news websites navigate complex and fast-changing events. Understanding linking methods enables media users to be more critical and informed consumers of digital news.
- Compares three major news channels, Al Jazeera, Sky News Arabia, and Al Arabiya, to identify variances in hyperlink behaviors that reflect editorial views. This lays the groundwork for understanding how different Arab news companies approach digital storytelling.
- investigating the potential for new concepts of journalism practice to arise from a deeper comprehension of hypertext.
- Guidance for Newsroom Practice and Innovation: The results can assist digital editors, journalists, and developers optimize hyperlinking tactics to make content more interesting, trustworthy, and reader-friendly—especially during coverage of significant international crises like the Iran-Israel conflict.

Research Questions

RQ1: What specific types of hyperlinks do Arab television news websites (Al Jazeera, Sky News Arabia, Al Arabiya) employ in their coverage of the Iran-Israel war, and how do these align with principles of hypertext theory?

RQ2: What functional roles do hyperlinks serve (contextual, evidential, navigational, or promotional) within Arab news coverage of the conflict, and how do these reflect editorial strategies?

RQ3: In what ways do hyperlinks embedded in news stories shape or enhance readers' comprehension, in line with hypertext theory's emphasis on guiding user pathways and meaning-making?

RQ4: How is hypertext operationalized through keyword-linking at the end of news articles, and what theoretical implications does this hold for structuring user navigation?

RQ5: To what extent do hyperlink practices on Arab television news websites contribute to improving user experience, reducing cognitive overload, and reinforcing audience trust?

Hypothesis:

H1: "The media channels (Al Jazeera, Sky News Arabia, and Al Arabiya) use internal hyperlinks more than external ones.

H2: "There is a statistically significant difference in the function of hyperlinks among the websites (Al Jazeera, Sky News Arabia, and Al Arabiya).

H3 :"A statistically significant difference was found in the frequencies of news hyperlink relevance among the different media channels (Al Jazeera, Sky News Arabia, and Al Arabiya).

H4: "There are statistically significant differences in the strategy of using keywords across the three news websites (Al Jazeera, Sky News Arabia, and Al Arabiya).

H5: "There are statistically significant differences in the editorial approaches to hyperlink usage across the three news websites: Al Jazeera, Sky News Arabia, and Al Arabiya."

Methodology

This research falls under descriptive studies, examining the various elements of journalistic coverage of the Iranian-Israeli war on the selected news websites by analyzing their news coverage and comparing the content provided, which relies on hyperlinks within the news text. The study is also analytical, as it depends on content analysis of news articles addressing the Iranian-Israeli war. The study adopted the media survey methodology as a standard model for data collection, through surveying and analyzing news articles covering the Iranian-Israeli war on the news websites affiliated with Arab television channels (Sky News Arabia, Al Jazeera, and Al Arabiya).

The researcher conducted a pre-test on Arabic news websites affiliated with journalistic institutions such as Al-Ahram (Egyptian), Al-Ittihad (Emirati), and Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, as well as news websites linked to television news channels such as Al-Hadath, Nile News, and CNN Arabic. The study revealed a rare use of hyperlinks in news texts by Arabic news websites affiliated with print journalistic institutions, as well as by other television news channel websites.

These specific websites were chosen due to their reliance on incorporating hyperlinks within news articles, while other websites, notably CNN Arabic, were excluded due to the rarity of hyperlink usage in their news.

The study also employed a systematic comparison approach to identify the nature of the phenomenon under study on the selected websites, exploring how it occurs and its causes by comparing multiple phenomena (Abdul Hamid, 2000, p. 35). The comparison focused on the journalistic formats used by these websites to present news related to the Iranian-Israeli war, the information sources relied upon, and the similarities and differences in the use of hypertext in news presentation.

Sample

The news related to the Iranian-Israeli war, which lasted 12 days from June 13 to June 24, 2025, was analyzed. The analysis process covered the entire month of June, thus including the period before the war began and continuing to monitor news for a week after its end. A comprehensive inventory was conducted of the news covering the issue during the previously specified time

period. A total of 282 news articles from Al Jazeera, 220 news articles from Sky News Arabia, and 249 news articles from Al Arabiya were analyzed. The number of hyperlinks in each news article was identified, as this was the primary focus of the analysis. News published solely in video format was excluded because it does not contain text and, therefore, falls outside the scope of the research.

Al Arabiya.net was launched on February 21, 2004, as the online platform for Al Arabiya channel, which began in March 2003, offering viewers detailed reports, images, and follow-ups. In 2009, integration between the channel and the website transformed it into a televised platform, providing news, programs, and expanded content with images and videos, leading to an unprecedented increase in site visits.

The **Al Jazeera.net** website was launched in 2001. Al Jazeera Encyclopedia, launched in 2015, is an interactive news platform that provides comprehensive, reliable, and accessible information on countries, figures, organizations, events, and issues, particularly those impacting the Arab and Islamic world. It aims to be a primary reference for Arabic readers by offering clear, professionally curated content that complements Al Jazeera Net's daily news coverage, utilizing hyperlinks and multimedia to document historical and contemporary developments while addressing topics like rights, freedoms, and global economic and health issues (Al Jazeera, 2015).

Sky News Arabia, from its headquarters in Abu Dhabi, is a multi-platform news organization broadcasting news in Arabic.

Unit of Analysis

The **unit of analysis** is the individual hyperlink within a news article. Each hyperlink will be coded according to its type, function, and location. Additionally, the article as a whole will be considered when evaluating hyperlink density and patterns of keyword usage.

Coding Categories

Drawing on prior research in hypertext studies and adapting it to the Arab media context, the following coding categories will be applied:

1. **Type of Hyperlink**
 - Internal link (within the same website)
 - External link (to other websites)
 - Keyword/tag link
2. **Function of Hyperlink**
 - **Contextual or related news** (provides background or definitions)
 - **Evidential or explanation** (supports claims with sources or documents)
 - **Navigational** (guides users to other sections of the site)
 - **Analysis** (drives traffic to sponsored content or affiliated material)

3. Location of Hyperlink

- Within the body text
- At the end of the article (keywords, tags, related links)

4. User-Oriented Value (based on hypertext theory)

- Enhances comprehension
- Enhances credibility/trust
- Enhances knowledge
- Causes distraction (Not Working Links)

Validity and Reliability Tests

To ensure the face validity of the scale, the content analysis was presented to a group of specialized arbitratorsⁱ to determine the appropriateness of the statements, their alignment with the analysis categories and study objectives, and the linguistic clarity of the wording. To measure data reliability, the researcher used the test-retest method on a 10% sample after a two-week period and conducted reliability tests across all analysis categories.

Statistical Data Processing

After completing the data collection for the study, the data were coded and entered a computer system. They were then processed, analyzed, and the statistical results were extracted using the "Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)" software. The following statistical methods and tests were employed in analyzing the study data:

- Simple frequencies and percentages.
- Arithmetic means and standard deviations.

The Theoretical Framework

Hypertext, defined at its most basic level as "linked text," and the hyperlink (reduced to simply "link") serve as the foundation for much writing in digitally native environments, influencing print-based writing (Lang & Baehr, 2023).

Hypertext in news refers to nonlinear digital text that enhances the reading experience by allowing users to navigate through links. However, it may also lead to fragmented and confusing reading practices, as users often prefer traditional linear texts despite digital preferences (Narin, 2018).

The functions of Hypertext

- **Verification:** This function is related to credibility, as verifying information is an important aspect for users of online websites. Documenting some critical information within the news and referencing the source of the information through hypertext gives the reader more confidence and credibility in the website.
- **Enhancing Mutual Benefit Relationships:** Blogs, in particular, appear to rely on a strategy of mutual benefit and link exchange to build

credibility and popularity. The nature of a blog's operation differs from major journalistic websites affiliated with media institutions or television channels, which generally aim to increase the distribution and dissemination of news.

- **Context:** Hypertext contributes to providing context in complex news stories by linking readers to related stories through hyperlinks. This allows informed readers to focus on reading without distraction, while helping new readers quickly understand the topic's context, without the need to rephrase basic information that may overwhelm the story.
- **Additional and Background information:** enhancing news comprehension through linked information that users are not familiar with.

Hypertext Theory

Early, pre-web, standalone hypertexts created by the so-called Storyspace School starting in the late 1980s and late poststructuralist ideas served as the foundation for the early development of hypertext Theory (Ensslin, 2020). The term, Hypertext, is used in many different contexts and in a wide range of fields (Mark, 2023).

Hypertext theory explores the characteristics of hypertext, emphasizing intertextuality, multi-pathed organization, and collaborative authoring. It connects to postmodern critical theory, suggesting that hypertext embodies and tests theoretical concepts, reshaping writing practices in digital environments (Lang & Baehr, 2023). Theoretically, links support journalistic quality standards like credibility, accuracy, diversity, readability, or information density (Gruber & Godulla, 2016). For all fields that deal with the production, distribution, preservation, and philosophy of information, hypertext is extremely important (Fitzgibbons, 2008).

Lang & Baehr (2012) illustrates the characteristics of hypertext as :

- nonlinearity;
- text nodes, chunks, or lexia;
- links which enabled flexible and multiple pathways through texts;
- links which signified cognitive associations;
- open-endedness; and
- collaborative authoring and/or editing, to the extent that the author became a marginal or displaced figure.

The study by Gruber and Godulla (2016) shows that even if consumers do not click on external, color-marked hyperlinks often, their presence greatly raises the likelihood of recommendation and improves the overall quality evaluation of otherwise comparable journalistic content.

The usage of hyperlinks in online news coverage of the Iran-Israel war on well-known Arab television news websites—Al Jazeera, Sky News Arabia, and

Al Arabiya—is examined in this study using Hyperlinking Theory as a primary theoretical framework. According to the theory, hyperlinks have several communication purposes, such as directing readers to background material, assisting with verification, extending contextual awareness, and improving user navigation. The theory is used in this study to investigate how various hyperlink kinds and functions—such as internal versus external and contextual versus background—affect the reader's experience, understanding, and depth of information.

Results

Table (1) Number of hyperlinks in news articles covering the Iranian-Israeli war on Arab news channel websites:

Website	Al Jazeera		Sky News		Al Arabiya		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
No. of news	282	%42.34	220	30.55	249	%42.27	742	37.62
No. of hypertext	666		720		589		1975	
Mean	2.36		3.27		2.36			

The previous table indicates that the average number of hyperlinks used by the Sky News Arabia website leads with 3.27, compared to 2.36 for both Al Arabiya and Al Jazeera websites. This is despite Al Jazeera publishing a higher number of news articles (282) compared to Sky News Arabia (220). It appears from the above that Sky News Arabia enhances reader engagement and the "depth of the news experience" to a greater extent through the intensive use of hyperlinks compared to the other two websites. Meanwhile, Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya tend to use hyperlinks at a balanced but less intensive rate, possibly due to different editorial policies.

"Table (2): Crosstabulation of Link Direction (Internal vs. External) by Media Channel with Chi-Square Test Results"

Channel * link direction Crosstabulation						Chi-Square Tests		
			Link direction		Total	Value	df	Sig.
			External	Internal				
Website	Al Jazeera	Count	67	599	666	24.032 ^a	2	.000
		Expected Count	42.2	623.8	666.0			
	Sky News Arabia	Count	29	691	720			
		Expected Count	45.6	674.4	720.0			
	Alarabiya	Count	29	560	589			
		Expected Count	37.3	551.7	589.0			
Total		Count	125	1850	1975			
		Expected Count	125.0	1850.0	1975.0			

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 37.28.

Looking at the table No.2 above, we observe the following:

Al Jazeera recorded 599 internal hyperlinks and 67 external hyperlinks, compared to expected counts of 623.8 and 42.2, respectively, indicating strong usage of internal links but slightly higher than expected use of external links.

Sky News Arabia recorded 691 internal hyperlinks and 29 external hyperlinks, compared to expected counts of 674.4 and 45.6, suggesting a clear preference for internal links and lower than expected use of external links.

Al Arabiya recorded 560 internal hyperlinks and 29 external hyperlinks, compared to expected counts of 551.7 and 37.3, reflecting high usage of internal links and lower use of external links than expected.

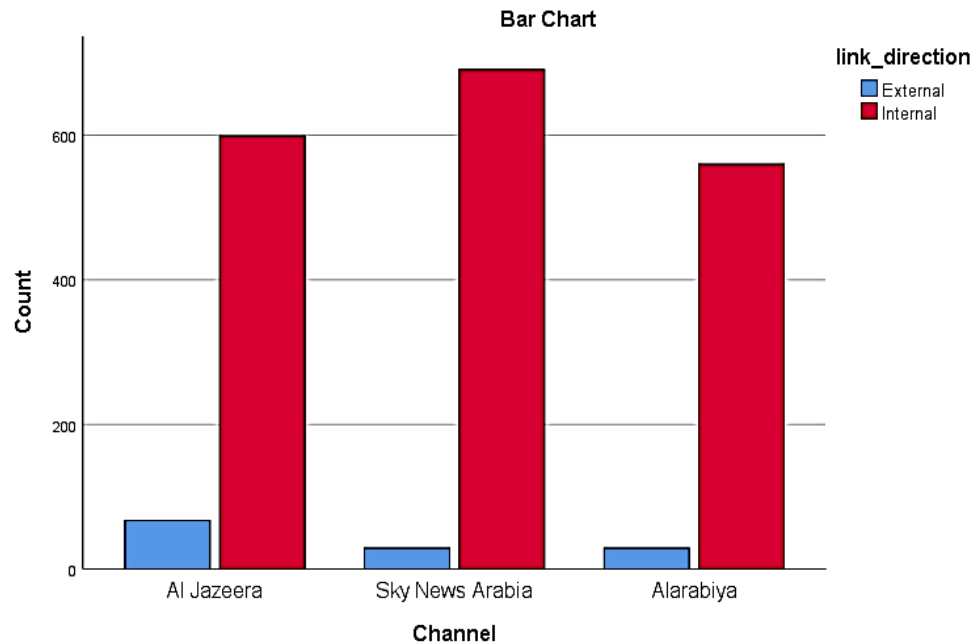
The Chi-Square test results confirm these differences, with a χ^2 value of 24.032, degrees of freedom 2, and a p-value < 0.001 , indicating that the differences between channels in link usage are statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

It is important to note that all expected counts are above 5, with the minimum expected count being 37.28, which means that the conditions for applying the Chi-Square test have been fully satisfied.

Looking at the overall values in the study sample, we find that most hyperlinks were internal, accounting for 93.7% (1850 hyperlinks) of the total, compared to 6.3% (125 hyperlinks) external links.

It can be concluded that the sample demonstrates a generally high level of internal hyperlink usage, with Al Jazeera showing strong internal link usage but slightly higher external links than expected, while Sky News and Al Arabiya exhibit a clearer preference for internal links. This indicates a limited diversity in external linking sources and possibly a traditional approach to content-linking strategies for Sky News Arabia and Al Arabiya, which may reflect a more conservative editorial policy. In contrast, Al Jazeera demonstrates a clear strategy of linking readers to additional content within its own platform, an approach that enhances cognitive depth and user experience. However, the external links provided by Al Jazeera primarily rely on posts from the X platform. Overall, the news websites under study aim to keep users within their platforms, a strategy oriented toward improving internal usage metrics, such as the time readers spend on the site.

This indicates the validity of the hypothesis that : **H1: "The media channels (Al Jazeera, Sky News Arabia, and Al Arabiya) use internal hyperlinks more than external ones.** There are differences between them in this regard, and the overall level of internal hyperlink usage is higher than that of external hyperlinks."



"Table (3): Crosstabulation of Hypertext Functions by Media Channel with Chi-Square Test Results"

Website * Functions of Hypertext Crosstabulation							Chi-Square Tests		
			Functions of Hypertext				Chi-Square	df	Sig.
			Verification	Context	Additional and Background information				
Website	Al Jazeera	Count	40	0	626	666	1874.22	ε	.000
		Expected Count	31.4	423.5	211.1	666.0			
	Sky News Arabia	Count	25	695	0	720			
		Expected Count	33.9	457.9	228.2	720.0			
	Alarabiya	Count	28	561	0	589			
		Expected Count	27.7	374.6	186.7	589.0			
Total		Count	93	1256	626	1975			
		Expected Count	93.0	1256.0	626.0	1975.0			

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 27.74.

Looking at the table No.3 above, we observe the following:

Al Jazeera recorded 40 hyperlinks for Verification, 0 for Context, and 626 for Additional and Background information, compared to expected counts of 31.4, 423.5, and 211.1, respectively. This indicates a clear preference for using hyperlinks to provide additional and background information, with minimal use for contextual purposes.

Sky News Arabia recorded 25 hyperlinks for Verification, 695 for Context, and 0 for Additional and Background information, compared to expected counts of 33.9, 457.9, and 228.2, respectively. This suggests a strong tendency to use hyperlinks for contextual purposes rather than for verification or additional information.

Al Arabiya recorded 28 hyperlinks for Verification, 561 for Context, and 0 for Additional and Background information, compared to expected counts of 27.7, 374.6, and 186.7, respectively, reflecting a similar pattern to Sky News, with a clear preference for contextual hyperlinks.

The Chi-Square test results confirm these differences, with a χ^2 value of 1874.22, degrees of freedom 4, and a p-value < 0.001 , indicating that the differences in hyperlink function among the channels are statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

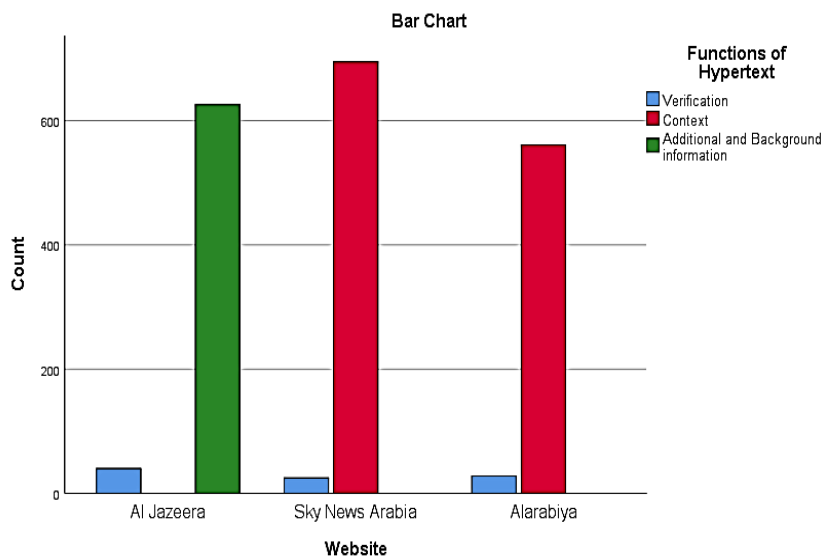
It is important to note that all expected counts are above 5, with the minimum expected count being 27.74, which means that the conditions for applying the Chi-Square test have been fully satisfied.

Looking at the overall values across the study sample, the most frequently used function of hyperlinks is to provide additional and background information, with 626 hyperlinks out of 1975 (31.7%), followed by contextual information (1256 hyperlinks, 63.6%) and verification (93 hyperlinks, 4.7%).

The previous table also shows that most of the hyperlinks used for verification are related to tweets published by leaders and officials of various ranks on their social media accounts. This does not mean that the news lacks sources; rather, the sources are typically mentioned within the body of the news article. However, the act of verification is most often applied when quoting statements made by officials.

It can be concluded that the use of hyperlinks varies significantly among the media channels, with Al Jazeera favoring additional and background information, while Sky News Arabia and Al Arabiya predominantly use contextual hyperlinks. Overall, the most commonly employed hyperlink function across all channels is providing additional and background information. This indicates the validity of the hypothesis that:

H2 "There is a statistically significant difference in the function of hyperlinks among the websites (Al Jazeera, Sky News Arabia, and Al Arabiya), and at the overall level, the most frequently used function is providing additional and background information for the news."



"Table (4): Crosstabulation of News Hyperlink Relevance by Media Channel with Chi-Square Test Results"

Results

Channel * relevance to news Crosstabulation							Chi-Square Tests		
			Relevance to news			Total	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
			Relevant	Partially Relevant	Irrelevant				
Website	Al Jazeera	Count	666	0	0	4	785.036	3	.000
		Expected Count	512.6	50.9	102.5	666.0			
	Sky News Arabia	Count	315	101	304	720			
		Expected Count	554.1	55.0	110.8	720.0			
	Alarabiya	Count	539	50	0	589			
		Expected Count	453.3	45.0	90.7	589.0			
Total		Count	1520	151	304	1975			
		Expected Count	1520.0	151.0	304.0	1975.0			

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 45.03.

Looking at the table No.4 above, we observe the following:

Al Jazeera recorded all hyperlinks in the "Relevant" category, compared to an expected count of 512.6, indicating excellent and clear performance.

Sky News appeared below the expected count in the "Relevant" category (315 versus 554.1), and above the expected counts in the "Partially Relevant" (101 versus 55.0) and "Irrelevant" (304 versus 110.8) categories, suggesting a more dispersed distribution and less consistent performance.

Al Arabiya recorded higher than expected in "Relevant" (539 versus 453.3), close to the expected count in "Partially Relevant" (50 versus 45.0), and none in "Irrelevant" (0 versus 90.7), reflecting good performance but less pronounced than Al Jazeera.

The Chi-Square test results confirm these differences, with a χ^2 value of 785.04, degrees of freedom 4, and a p-value < 0.001, indicating that the differences between channels are statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

It is important to note that all expected counts are above 5, with the minimum expected count being 45.03, which means that the conditions for applying the Chi-Square test have been fully satisfied.

Looking at the overall values of hyperlink relevance in the study sample, we find that most hyperlinks were directly relevant to the news, accounting for 77% (1520 hyperlinks) of the total sample, compared to 7.6% (151 hyperlinks) categorized as "Partially Relevant" and 15.4% (304 hyperlinks) as "Irrelevant".

Al Jazeera adopts a focused editorial approach in its use of hyperlinks by ensuring that the links are directly connected to the core of the news story. A distinctive feature of Al Jazeera's strategy is its integration with "Al Jazeera Encyclopedia," which offers in-depth background on people, places, and concepts mentioned in the news, thereby enhancing reader understanding. On the other hand, Al Arabiya also demonstrates a strong commitment to relevance, often linking directly to other news reports that are closely tied to the event being covered. In contrast, Sky News Arabia follows a less consistent strategy, frequently linking to surrounding or peripheral stories that may not always align closely with the primary news topic, which can dilute the clarity and depth of the content provided to the audience.

It can be concluded that the sample demonstrates a generally high level of hyperlink relevance to the news, with Al Jazeera showing outstanding cognitive linkage, and the other two Arab channels exhibiting more variable performance, with Sky News performing relatively lower. This indicates the validity of the hypothesis that: H3 : **"A statistically significant difference was found in the frequencies of news hyperlink relevance among the different media channels (Al Jazeera, Sky News Arabia, and Al Arabiya), and the overall level of hyperlink relevance to the news was high in the study sample."**

"Table (5): Shows the statistics of keyword usage across the three news websites."

Website	Keywords Hyperlinks		Not Working		Total	
	N	%			N	%
Al Jazeera	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sky News Arabia	1100	100%	-	-	1100	100%
Alarabiya	550	88.4%	72	11.6%	622	100%

The table reveals clear differences in hyperlink functionality and keyword usage strategy across the three news websites analyzed.

Al Jazeera does not utilize dedicated keyword sections at the end of its articles. Instead, the platform emphasizes direct integration of hyperlinks within the news text, often relying on resources such as the Al Jazeera Encyclopedia to provide contextual depth. This editorial strategy focuses on enriching the article content itself without redirecting readers to generic keyword-based pages.

Sky News Arabia, on the other hand, appears to make extensive use of keyword-based linking, as indicated by the high number of hyperlinks (1,100). These are typically structured around related coverage, offering readers a broader view of the topic. However, the data does not specify whether all these links are functional or effective in enhancing reader engagement.

Al Arabiya uses a similar approach by embedding hyperlinks around specific keywords, offering a collection of related articles under each keyword tag. Out of the 622 total links reviewed, 88.4% (550 links) are categorized as “Further Reading,” suggesting an editorial strategy focused on extending user engagement through thematic news clustering. However, 11.6% of Al Arabiya’s links (72 links) were found to be non-functional, which could negatively affect user experience and the perceived credibility of the platform. These broken links often appear at the end of articles and can diminish trust in the content’s reliability.

Overall, Al Jazeera prioritizes content-integrated depth, while Sky News Arabia and Al Arabiya emphasize thematic linkage through keyword aggregation — though the latter must address link maintenance to sustain credibility and user satisfaction.

"Table (6): Crosstabulation of Keyword Usage Strategy by News Website with Chi-Square Test Results"

Website * keyword Crosstabulation						Chi-Square Tests		
			keyword		Total	Chi-Square	Df	Sig.
			Keywords Hyperlinks	Not Working				
Website	Sky News Arabia	Count	1100	0	1100	132.887	1	.000
		Expected Count	1054.0	46.0	1100.0			
	Alarabiya	Count	550	72	622			
		Expected Count	596.0	26.0	622.0			
Total		Count	1650	72	1722			
		Expected Count	1650.0	72.0	1722.0			

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 26.01.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Al Jazeera does not utilize dedicated keyword sections at the end of its articles. Instead, the platform emphasizes direct integration of hyperlinks within

the news text, often relying on resources such as the Al Jazeera Encyclopedia to provide contextual depth. This editorial strategy focuses on enriching the article content itself without redirecting readers to generic keyword-based pages. Looking at the first table, we note that Al Jazeera did not record any repetitions in any of the keyword usage options, which led to its exclusion from the Chi-Square test calculations. Therefore, the statistical comparison was limited to Sky News Arabia and Al Arabiya.

Sky News Arabia recorded a complete reliance on keyword-based hyperlinks, with all links (100%, 1100 links) classified under Keywords Hyperlinks, and no links categorized as "Not Working." In contrast, Al Arabiya showed a different pattern, recording 550 links (88.4%) as keyword hyperlinks, compared to 72 links (11.6%) that were non-functional.

The results of the Chi-Square test confirm the existence of statistically significant differences between the two websites, with a χ^2 value of 132.887, one degree of freedom, and a p-value < 0.001 . This indicates that the strategy of using keyword hyperlinks differs significantly between Sky News and Al Arabiya. It is also important to note that the conditions for applying the Chi-Square test were fully satisfied, as no cell had an expected count less than 5 (the minimum expected count was 26.01).

At the overall level of the study sample, it appears that the most commonly used strategy across the three news websites was the reliance on keyword hyperlinks, accounting for 95.8% (1650 links) of the total, compared to only 4.2% (72 links) that were non-functional.

In summary, while **Al Jazeera** emphasizes **clarity and foundational understanding** through its hyperlinking strategy, **Sky News Arabia** and **Al Arabiya** focus more on **horizontal navigation** and **knowledge exploration**. This difference illustrates how hyperlink functionality can shape user experience—either by reinforcing the story's message or expanding the informational landscape around it. Thus, it can be concluded that Sky News demonstrated complete reliance on keyword-based hyperlinks, while Al Arabiya experienced some non-functional links, and Al Jazeera showed no evident use of this strategy, which should be considered carefully when interpreting the results in the general context. This indicates the validity of the hypothesis that:

H4: "There are statistically significant differences in the strategy of using keywords across the three news websites (Al Jazeera, Sky News Arabia, and Al Arabiya), and at the overall level, the most frequently used strategy is keyword usage."

Table (7): Crosstabulation of Editorial Approaches in Hyperlink Usage by News Website with Chi-Square Test Results

Website * editorial approaches in hyperlink Crosstabulation								
			editorial approaches in hyperlink		Total			
			Links Supporting Core Understanding	Links Enhancing Knowledge Depth				
			Value	df	Sig			
Website	Al Jazeera	Count	599	0	599	1850.000	2	.000
		Expected Count	193.9	405.1	599.0			
	Sky News Arabia	Count	0	691	691			
		Expected Count	223.7	467.3	691.0			
	Alarabiya	Count	0	560	560			
		Expected Count	181.3	378.7	560.0			
Total		Count	599	1251	1850			
		Expected Count	599.0	1251.0	1850.0			

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 181.32.

The results of the table above indicate the existence of statistically significant differences in the editorial approaches to the use of hyperlinks across the three news websites: Al Jazeera, Sky News Arabia, and Al Arabiya.

Al Jazeera recorded all its hyperlinks (599 links) in the category of “Links Supporting Core Understanding”, compared to the expected count of 193.9, and none in the category of “Links Enhancing Knowledge Depth” (Expected = 405.1). This reflects an editorial approach that focuses exclusively on supporting the basic understanding of the news without expanding into deeper knowledge.

On the other hand, Sky News Arabia relied entirely on “Links Enhancing Knowledge Depth” (691 links versus an expected count of 467.3), while recording none in the other category (Expected = 223.7). This indicates a contrasting editorial approach that emphasizes deepening understanding and broadening the knowledge context.

Al Arabiya demonstrated a similar pattern to Sky News, with all of its hyperlinks (560 links) falling into the category of “Links Enhancing Knowledge Depth” (Expected = 378.7), and none in the other category (Expected = 181.3). The results of the Chi-Square Test confirm the significance of these differences, with a χ^2 value of 1850.000, degrees of freedom 2, and a p-value < 0.001, indicating that the differences among the three websites are highly statistically significant at the 0.01 level. It is important to note that the conditions for applying the Chi-Square test were fully met, as no cell had an expected count less than 5 (the minimum expected count was 181.32).

At the overall level of the study sample, it is evident that the most common editorial approach was “Links Enhancing Knowledge Depth”, accounting for

67.6% (1251 links) of the total, compared to only 32.4% (599 links) for “Links Supporting Core Understanding.”

Sky News Arabia and Al Arabiya both use hyperlinks in various ways to improve reader orientation, context, and critical interpretation. Al Jazeera's hyperlinking pattern looks less diversified, with a potential emphasis on background explanation via static resources. This illustrates editorial disparities in hyperlink technique and reading experience among Arabic news websites.

Accordingly, it can be concluded that the three news websites adopted clearly distinct editorial approaches: Al Jazeera focused on supporting core understanding, while Sky News and Al Arabiya preferred the expansion of knowledge. At the general level, the knowledge-enhancing approach dominates as the primary choice. This indicates the validity of the hypothesis that:

H5: "There are statistically significant differences in the editorial approaches to hyperlink usage across the three news websites: Al Jazeera, Sky News Arabia, and Al Arabiya.

Table (8) The way of analysis :

Website	Military analysis		Political analysis		Economic analysis		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Al Jazeera	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sky News Arabia	103	45.9%	71	31.6%	50	20.4	224	100%
Alarabiya	60	43.4%	65	47.1%	13	9.4%	138	100%

The examination of linked content types on several websites indicates significant editorial variances. While Al Jazeera focuses on explanation, Sky News Arabia has a more diverse hyperlinking method. Of the 224 hyperlinks studied, 20.4% were directed toward economic analysis, 31.6% toward political analysis, and the majority, 45.9%, toward military analysis. The comparatively high share of economic information is due to the incorporation of Sky News Arabia's dedicated economic platform, "Sky News Arabia Economy," which supplements the main website with in-depth financial and business reporting.

Al Arabiya, on the other hand, has a more focused editorial alignment. Out of 138 hyperlinks studied, 9.4% were related to economic analysis, a significantly lower number than Sky News. However, 47.1% of the hyperlinks referred to political analysis, while 43.4% were concerned with military aspects of the Iran-Israel conflict. This shows that Al Arabiya prioritizes geopolitical framing over economic coverage, which could be attributable to the channel's greater focus on regional political dynamics and defense material.

These findings demonstrate how internal media ecosystems and specialized platforms within each outlet (such as Sky News Arabia's economy department) influence the way information is stacked and contextualized for users via hyperlinks.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the use of hyperlinks in the coverage of the Iran–Israel conflict on Arab television news websites, focusing on Al Jazeera, Sky News Arabia, and Al Arabiya. The findings demonstrate that although all three platforms employ hyperlinks extensively, there are **significant differences in their types, functions, relevance, keyword usage, and editorial approaches**.

First, the results confirm a general reliance on **internal hyperlinks** (93.7%), with external links constituting only a small fraction. This indicates that Arab news outlets primarily aim to keep readers within their own platforms, strengthening brand loyalty but potentially limiting exposure to diverse perspectives.

Second, regarding **hyperlink functions**, Al Jazeera favors hyperlinks that provide **background and additional information**, while Sky News Arabia and Al Arabiya emphasize **contextual linking**. Verification links, however, remain marginal across all three websites, suggesting that fact-checking is not a central hyperlinking strategy.

Third, the analysis of **relevance** shows that Al Jazeera consistently provides hyperlinks directly tied to the news content, while Sky News Arabia has a more fragmented approach, including a notable proportion of irrelevant or only partially relevant links. Al Arabiya strikes a middle ground, maintaining a generally high level of relevance.

Fourth, differences emerged in the use of **keywords and tags**. Sky News Arabia demonstrates complete reliance on keyword-based hyperlinks, while Al Arabiya combines functional and non-functional keyword links. Al Jazeera, in contrast, does not rely on keyword lists, instead embedding hyperlinks directly in the text.

Finally, in terms of **editorial approaches**, Al Jazeera prioritizes hyperlinks that support readers' **core understanding** of the news, whereas Sky News Arabia and Al Arabiya emphasize links that **enhance knowledge depth** by broadening contextual horizons. At the overall level, the knowledge-enhancing approach dominates.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that Arab television news websites adopt distinct editorial strategies in their use of hyperlinks, reflecting both the strengths and limitations of digital journalism practices in the region. Anchored in hypertext theory, which emphasizes the role of hyperlinks in guiding readers through nonlinear pathways of meaning-making, the results demonstrate that hyperlinking practices in Arab media are shaped not only by technological affordances but also by institutional editorial cultures and audience expectations.

A major result is the overwhelming preference for **internal hyperlinks** (93.7%) across all platforms, with only a marginal use of external sources. While this strategy aligns with the goal of retaining audiences within the same media ecosystem and consolidating institutional credibility, it limits the intertextuality and transparency that hypertext theory associates with journalistic credibility. Unlike many Western outlets that balance internal and external references, Arab platforms appear to privilege self-referential linking, which may reinforce editorial control but reduce readers' exposure to diverse perspectives.

Regarding **hyperlink functions**, the platforms diverge in their approaches:

- **Al Jazeera** prioritizes hyperlinks that provide **background and additional information**, reflecting an editorial tradition of in-depth reporting and resource-driven journalism (e.g., reliance on the Al Jazeera Encyclopedia).
- **Sky News Arabia and Al Arabiya**, by contrast, emphasize **contextual hyperlinks** embedded within articles, designed to situate events within ongoing news coverage. This indicates a more event-driven, rolling-news style of journalism.

The near absence of verification links across all platforms suggests a missed opportunity to reinforce transparency and fact-checking practices, which prior research (e.g., Borah, 2014; De Maeyer, 2012) has identified as a critical function of hyperlinks in digital journalism.

The results on **relevance** further underscore editorial differences. Al Jazeera achieved near-total alignment of hyperlinks with the core news content, reflecting strong editorial discipline in hyperlink design. Sky News Arabia, on the other hand, displayed a higher proportion of partially relevant or irrelevant links, raising concerns about information overload and cognitive distraction, outcomes that hypertext theory warns against. Al Arabiya's results indicate a middle position, with largely relevant links but less consistency than Al Jazeera. When it comes to **keyword usage**, Sky News Arabia demonstrates the most systematic reliance on keyword hyperlinks, while Al Arabiya shows functional gaps with some non-working links, and Al Jazeera avoids keyword lists altogether, embedding hyperlinks directly in the text. This diversity reflects differing conceptualizations of user navigation: Sky News and Al Arabiya rely on structured keyword indexing, while Al Jazeera integrates contextual resources within the narrative flow.

Finally, the **editorial approaches** to hyperlinking show clear divergence:

- **Al Jazeera** uses links primarily to support **core understanding**, reinforcing clarity and basic comprehension.
- **Sky News Arabia and Al Arabiya** adopt a contrasting strategy, using hyperlinks to **deepen knowledge** and broaden contextual horizons.

This contrast highlights a fundamental editorial split between explanatory journalism and expansive, networked journalism. From a theoretical perspective, this indicates that Arab media do not uniformly apply hypertext principles but instead adapt them according to institutional missions and audience strategies.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings extend hypertext theory into the Arab media context, showing that hyperlinking practices are shaped not only by technological affordances but also by institutional priorities such as audience retention, editorial control, and narrative style. Whereas Western scholarship often highlights hyperlinks as tools for transparency and credibility, Arab outlets employ them more as instruments of navigation, branding, and information structuring.

By uncovering these dynamics, the study both confirms and challenges assumptions within hypertext theory. It confirms the centrality of hyperlinks in shaping nonlinear pathways of meaning, yet it challenges the universality of hyperlink functions by revealing how cultural and editorial contexts produce different hyperlinking logics.

Ultimately, the research highlights that hyperlinks in Arab digital journalism are not neutral tools but editorial choices with implications for transparency, comprehension, and user experience. This reinforces the need for a more context-sensitive application of hypertext theory, one that accounts for regional practices, linguistic frameworks, and institutional strategies.

Recommendations

For news organizations, the findings suggest several practical steps:

1. Balance internal and external linking: While internal links promote reader retention, selective external linking to credible international sources can enhance transparency and trust.
2. Expand verification linking: Incorporating hyperlinks to original documents, official statements, and independent reports would strengthen editorial credibility, particularly in conflict coverage.
3. Improve hyperlink relevance: Platforms such as Sky News Arabia should reduce irrelevant links, as these risk undermining reader trust and creating cognitive overload.
4. Enhance keyword strategies: Al Arabiya should address the issue of non-functional keyword links to improve navigation, while Al Jazeera could consider adding a keyword section to complement in-text hyperlinks for better user experience.

5. Diversify editorial approaches: A combination of links that support core understanding and those that deepen knowledge would better serve different reader needs, offering both clarity and depth.

Directions for Future Research

This study highlights avenues for further investigation:

- Comparative studies across languages: Future research could compare hyperlink practices in Arab news websites with Western or Asian outlets to assess cross-cultural editorial strategies.
- Audience reception studies: Experimental research could measure how Arab readers actually use hyperlinks, testing whether they aid comprehension or cause distraction.
- Platform-specific analysis: Expanding the scope to include social media–integrated news sites could shed light on how hyperlinks function differently in hybrid environments.
- Longitudinal studies: Tracking hyperlink practices over time would reveal whether editorial strategies evolve during prolonged conflicts or shifting geopolitical dynamics.

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