Fairness and Media Frames in Conflict Situations

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Abstract

Because of the rising global awareness it is essential that the journalist fraternity value fairness, truth, meticulousness, and objectivity. The 'framing' ideology has been widely used in the communication field since its inception. The theory threatens the model meaning of journalism through the notion of leeway and unscrupulous drills inside the journalism industry. Empirical research has faulted framing for its ability to shape the thoughts of the readers and making it difficult for those implicated in the stories to rebuild public confidence. So the aim of this paper is provision of a comprehensive analysis of the challenges and implications of framing theory in the recent decades as well to inform the audience how framing theory is a threat to core values of journalism.

Key Words: Framing Theory, Journalistic Practices, Soul of Journalism, Reassessment of Journalism Theories.

Introduction

Access to information by the consumers has intensified over time due to technological changes, democracy, and high literacy levels. The theory of framing as a campaign tool was first introduced scientifically by Scheufele and Tewksbury in 2007. The authors analyzed the reporting approaches used by different media channels and shared in the views of McQuail, Golding and De Bens (2005, p.23) that the media is gradually shifting from being informative on facts to being objective and strategic.

The change emerged during the 80s and early 90s, and it is considered to be the most effective way of approaching controversial issues in media reports.

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According to Min (2015, p.149), the framing has a cognitive and informative way of tackling problems in the socio-political arena. The rationale for this is that framing has become a process of transmission of knowledge and revelations that involves the media going to the audience and the audience to the press. This takes place through the resources provided by the society.

Although it is not inappropriate to report as it is on the ground in a narrow focus, omitting severe facts can have detrimental implications on the public perception (Ryabova, 2013, p.32). The justification for this is that the news consumers see the world through a frame of a window that the media houses provide. If the window frame is too small, people will have a biased view of the world or the issue in question. If the window is on the wall facing the west, people will regard only the west. In other words, the media can show only a small part of the world from a particular point of view (Raviola, 2012, p.932). As Goffman (1974, 6) outlines, individuals cannot understand the world entirely and they continually struggle to deduce their life understanding and to make sense of the world around them. He argues that for processing information to be proficient, individuals' apply the schemes of interpretive or ''primary frameworks'' to classify the data in a more meaningful manner.

Framing and the Media

de Vreese, (2005) postulates that framing can be discussed in two sections- frame-setting and frame-building. Frame building is illustrated as the components that control the structural qualities of a news-frame. Frames can necessarily highlight as well as downplay other issues at the same time. Framing is attributed to how journalist selects stories, facts, etc. (Kwansah-Aidoo, 2005, p.48). News frames are created through the internal factors. These factors can be the occupational pressure of the journalist especially the editorial policies as well as news values. Also, external factors like the interaction between the journalist and the elites can factor in on the formation of news frames (de Vreese, 2005, p.52).

de Vreese (2005, 52) stated that 'frame-setting is the cooperation between the media frames and the individual's disposition and prior knowledge. This aspect is precisely what most scholars are concerned in examining spotlighting most of the consequences of framing. He was further of the view that 'additions to framing, a lot of studies have been conducted to examine how news media frame stories'. In the political issue, most media outlets frame their news in an episodic and thematic way (Iyengar, 1994, p.2). He further viewed that 'eepisodic frame focuses problems on a specific or single event while a thematic framework focuses issues and events on a larger scale and more analytical level.

Metzger, (2009) says that 'framing research may vary over time due to the presence of internet. With the internet in place, people can be exposed to many kinds of frames due to the infinite amount of information in the online platform.

With the number of frames available, the frames may display a holistic view of an issue. Although the latter in foreplay, the audience also play a crucial role in selecting the kind of media and frames they would like to be uncovered to in the online platform consequently leading them to be in the exposure of identical frames and attitude reinforcement'.

An internet website which best suits the example of both framing and counter-framing use is the Nikebiz.net which is an extension of the Nike Corporation. Waller and Conaway (2011) mention how Nike was forced to protect against the negative framing involving some Corporate responsibility – arguments that were established by an Anti-Nike coalition. Instead of the media coming forward to frame the issue, they went ahead and constructed a negative frame against the alliance. Nonetheless, the company was able to protect and improve their reputation using their website. This informs that both framing and counter-framing transpires in the mediated channel of discourse; notwithstanding, the framing and counter-framing are not restrained to news media and the internet is influencing the ways that information is established and consumed as (Waller & Conaway, 2011).

Media Framing and Immigration

The mainstream media captures immigration, crime, and economics extensively because the public is so critical about them. Most media outlets frame immigration due to the notion of human trafficking, terrorism, drugs, and crime. The next context will provide a comprehensive analysis of how the media framing transpires in the subject of immigration with respect to my research question on how the media framing is a threat to the soul of journalism.

Realistically, much media-framing done on immigration relating it to terror attacks, drugs and human trafficking, very few cases of this are as the result of immigration. It is also noteworthy that in the account of the often different media have reported the issue it is all imperative to the creation of public opinion, Reese *et. al.* (2001). As a result, many immigrants from Mexico are facing stern watch from many groups in the United States. In line with this, Reese *et. al.* (2001) conducted a study on the audience response to news media where the public register their opinions in the polling place concerning the work was done by the press media. The findings were not surprising to reveal favorable responses where 13 percent registered excellent, 52 percent responded well. In rating the overall constitution of news broadcast every day, 15 percent expressed it as remarkable, and 53 percent said well.

The visitors were also asked to show their concerns that the news only covers the liberal point of view. They responded with 27 percent saying it was a great deal, 22 percent responded not overwhelmed as much, and 12 percent with little response to the concern. With the finding above, it powerfully shows how media

framing is a threat to the soul of journalism and in immigration. As Ortega and Feagin, (2016, 12) report, immigration in the States of America is framed as a peril move that would render the whole country in jeopardy.
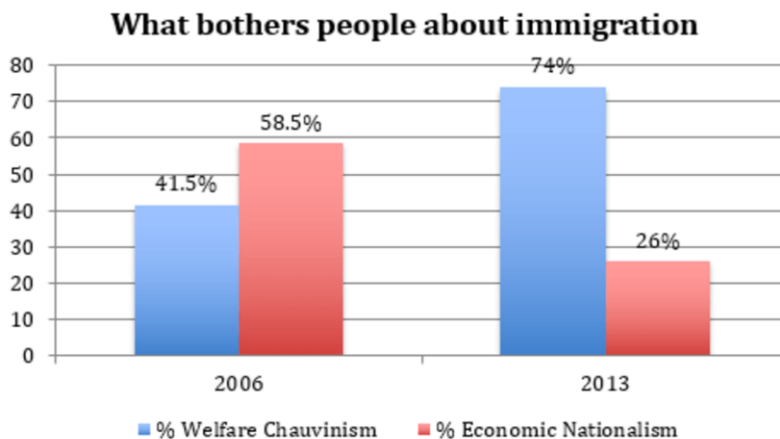

Fig 1: How Migration is Perceived by the Public: *Source: News Statesman (2017)*

 The press has also been in the forefront in advocating against immigration and criticizing the previous government for permitting Muslims to migrate to the United States of America as Aalberg and Beyer (2015, p.859) postulate. They further added that mainstream media has long been in the front line in the frame of immigration according to the issue undue emphasis. This is a great concern because as Ortega and Feagin, (2016, p.12) purport the frames issued by the press are usually considered as precise and devoid of errors by the public.

Also, at the onset of the infamous Iraq war in 1990, the US government and the mainstream media were on the same page. The press was framing and portraying Iraq as a terrorist country and declared that it had mass destruction chemical weapons while the picture was opposite to it. The media played a significant role in justifying the declaration of war in Iraq, and more than 90 percent of the mainstream media stakeholders supported the ordeal (Burrows, 2013, 5). In the war against Saddam Hussein and his allied forces, the Iraq forces were presented to cause numerous violent deaths. However, this was seen as an exaggeration by the parties involved in the war. In Italy, immigration is categorized to cause terrorism, cultural infiltration, and labour conflicts (Klein *et. al.*, 2009, p.333).
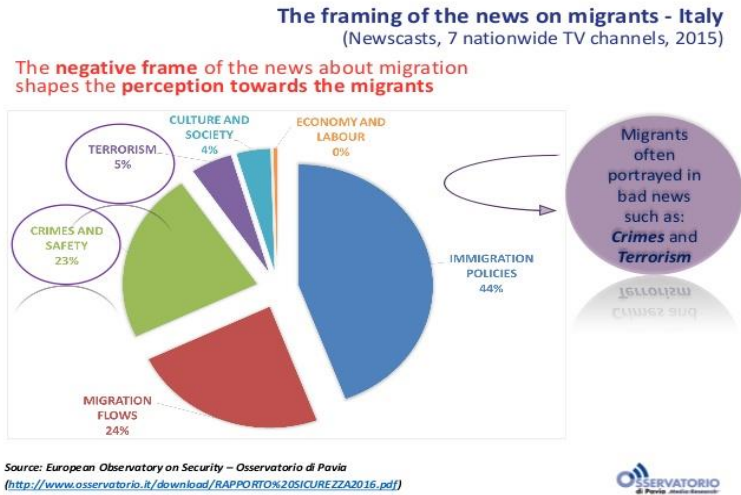
Fig 2: Frames by the Media on Immigration in Italy

The matter is quite alarming since data on terrorist attacks indicates no local terrorist attack has ever been perpetrated by immigrants from the profiled countries (Lakoff & Ferguson, 2017, p.21). Although the enthusiast may content to saying that the framing concept in media has allowed the government to take up preclusive measures, it is refutable since such profiling not only kills the spirit of globalization but also taints the fairness of the media. Framing is also appreciated for its role in triggering the response of those who may be having more information regarding a given story. When reporting, journalists rely on the information they have to build a captivating story. Occasionally, they join the dots to make a conclusion which is sometimes faulty and porous, Wiest *et. al.* (2015, p.189). The individuals who may be implicated in a given story refute some of the information in the public domain.

Media framing and the Iraq War

It is almost impossible to convince the Americans that not all Muslims are terrorists since the media took the first shot in tainting their image in the United States. Although human rights groups and Muslims organizations have presented credible facts, their version of the story is shadowed by what is in the public domain, Wiest *et. al.* (2015, p.191). As noted, the frame through which the media portray information may prove to be comprehensive in the face of the consumers. Riff *et. al.* (2014, p.6) this poses a risk of developing preclusive thoughts that may compromise the role of the media to remain unbiased and accurate.

Truthful information or technically correct information is conditioned by the effective presence of three ingredients which are essential in the development of news. That is the proper authentication of news, rigorously verification and

adequate contextualization. In a situation when these three conditions are not fulfilled, then there are significant defects in the manifestation concrete journalistic information (Heemsbergen, 2013, p.45). He further says that framing has been associated with providing a platform to compromise these three qualities, and it is, therefore, a significant threat to the soul of journalism. The lack of rigorous verification is absent when framing news with the intention to provide biased results.

Media Framing and Watergate Scandal

The Watergate scandal is one of the prime examples of lack of rigorous verification and framing that led the public to form unwarranted conclusions (Heemsbergen, 2013, p.45). The Washington Post ran a headline indicating that President Nixon had resigned. Since the journalists who reported the issues were not present to witness all the details of the case, they associated the scandal with politics and the re-election bid of President Nixon. Forty years later, it has been established that the report was marred by flaws and inconsistencies (Meiseberg *et. al.,* 2016, p.7). This was due to the lack of verification. One of the critical aspects of journalism is impartiality when reporting. However, the need to frame Nixon and associate him with the scandal and consequently make numerous sales led the journalists to make hasty conclusions and present the scandal to the public. The values of responsible journalism were to a large extent overlooked. The scandal is about a series of illegal activities that involved physically beating up of political opposition, stolen memos, wire-tapping the political opposition, breaking out the offices of psychiatrists and bombing the think tanks (Karimi, 2017). But the involvement of US President Nixon appeared later before the public. His key supporters did not support him, and he faced impeachment.

But this news got re-framed by the view of Nixon, and he portrayed himself as a victim indicated by the tapes recovered later. However, he was still resisting the blames about the incident happened. But the tapes recovered refer to the smoking gun conversation revealed his awareness of the burglary that occurred and the way he covered up the entire event. He also brought that tape to convince his family about his resignation. This way he managed to gain the sympathy of some of his supporters (Reston, 1974).

Media Framing and Clinton-Lewinsky Scandal

Another scandal reframed by media for its own popularity is the Clinton-Lewisky scandal which remained in headlines for quite a long time but viewed with a different angle after being defended by Monica. She changed the title of her book as 'The Starr Investigation' or 'The Clinton Impeachment'. After doing this she received immense support on social media (Marcus, 2017). Earlier when Clinton

got impeached from White House the sympathy rating for Hillary Clinton shot up extremely on media. But later it got diverted towards Lewinsky. The news got refurbished at many instances in media. But there was no publishing that supported or garnered sympathy for Clinton nor did he make an effort to do that. Though there were no serious consequences of this scandal on either of the three associated with it. But Hillary Clinton was supported in all news reported regarding the event, (Dugan, 2013).

Media Framing and Climate Change

Framing approach in climate change is a very and communication studies. Climate change framing is a concept that exists in all stages and is accorded equal attention. Most studies conducted have tried to examine how stakeholders communicate their role in climate variation and associate in frame building (Nisbet, 2009). The work of framing in climate change is primarily focused on the science of climate variation, mitigation, variation while our knowledge on how adaptation is being profiled in the press media is limited. Over the observation period, the total number of articles written in the year addressing the issue of adaptation has been on the increase with peaks reported in the year 2007, 2012, and 2013 (Nisbet, 2009). With potential narrative elements fragmenting the fear of climate change to affect the global economies, big business, the oil industry, and the earth's climatic balance.

Discussion and Conclusion

The theories of Journalism in the 21st Century need to be studied from different perspectives. Political science establishing the relation between politics and journalism as well as sourcing patterns; Sociology including the research on relationships, work routines and communications between the ones involved in news production and organizations that helped in fulfilling their work. History is analyzing the past practices and structures of journalism such that contemporary journalism can be easily understood, language analyzing the journalistic content by application of linguistic, semiotic, genre, discourse, or framing theory. Other theories were also studied such as narrative, rhetoric and literary theory. Cultural analysis is focusing on the contextual factors shaping the practices of journalism, constructing news, traditional symbol systems related to the profession; journalistic self-reflection, and identity, stereotypical, archetype, myth, popular traditions, and tabloid as well as mainstream journalism. Other than these subjective factors, certain global factors were also studied such as the economy, philosophy, law, and technology.

The economy is focused on media management, business models, press subsidies, media conglomeration and other related activities. Philosophical research conducted over ethical, epistemological, and ontological grounds in

relation to journalism; under law, it analyzes the legal issues associated with journalism such as privacy law, freedom of information acts. While technology is considered to be the primary consideration in analyzing journalism in both theoretical and practical sense such as interaction, multimedia, hypertext, etc.

Since the nature of journalism was interdisciplinary and cannot be demarcated between different disciplines, there is a scope to widen the theoretical perspectives and viewpoints further in the research. The research field is related to theorizing the enhanced porous and increased domain of journalism. The unpredictability of the evolution of journalism seems to be a common factor in the foundation of contribution in the issue. The uncertainty of the writing has given new scope to the researchers to theorize journalism or encouraged them for a reassessment of traditional theories.

This reassessment was conducted in four ways – papers with conceptual configurations to go deep down in the domain of journalism. Second are the papers providing concepts that will help in theorizing the technology further as a fundamental concept of journalism? These papers are being collected together for Digital Journalism. The third way talks about the latitude of user positions in the Digital Age of Journalism, and the fourth method consists of the contributors who are providing theoretically informed tools that will help in the understanding of the emerging practices of Journalism in distinctive contexts.

This study is in need of socio-technical modeling instead of socio-cultural recognizing the actors, technology, audiences, and the actions through which they interact. Afterwards, the establishment of Actor-Network theory a case was filed against social determinism in the theory of Journalism. The idea behind this was to make the researchers get into the meaning of journalism through the news network. At the same time, newsagents are getting into journalism making it widely present.

Outlining the social history digital journalism through the prism of materiality is crucial to identify those three ways of circulation of news can be understood from the perspective of journalism. These three methods are material dissemination, dissemination of its meaning, and cultural reproduction. The experience of the audiences for specific news can be known by learning the concept of spatial journalism.

It has been argued that it is essential to include audience-inclusive aspect for theorizing journalism and democracy. A framework is suggested to put forward for practice theory that will research over the construction of relevance of the news on a daily basis by the audience. It has also been observed that the source relations are changing in the digital environment in relation to social media. Its theoretical perspective is best understood by establishing the relationship between politicians and journalists. This discussion was broadened by an extended analysis of gate-keeping. The current model states the importance of redistribution or eliminated nature of gate-keeping. The specific articles focused on the unique issues will be

viewed from different perspectives in the Digital Age. These issues hence offer a rich pool of concepts from where the information should be drawn. But after some self-reflection, it is noticed that these issues have certain blind spots that tend to follow broad trends. These issues focus on the importance of broad trends under which the journalism has been theoretically framed.

Again, the lack of psychological perspectives is another blind spot on the journalism studies. If the fundamental character of journalism needs to be understood it should be deeply studied from the standpoint of ethics, epistemology, and ontology that makes journalism free from the bounds of the institutional framework and media modalities.

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