Revisiting News Value Theory in the Age of Globalization

Muhammad Ittefaq[1]

Abstract

This study reviewed the existing literature on news value theory and examined its validity and implications in the contemporary world. The study refers to digital journalists and academicians. Are the news selection criterion still the same as they were in the past or are editors, journalists, and media outlets changing their approach due to globalization? Do journalists and editors still consider the same news factors to publish a story or not? These questions are addressed in this study. This paper is relevant for future researchers and professional journalists. Today, journalists need more skills than ever before. At the same time, due to digitalization and competition, organizations need stories continuously throughout the day to run their businesses and maintain their ranking among other media outlets. Scholars need to empirically revisit media theories includes middle range theories, according to the needs of the time. Existing literature shows that the globalization has changed a bit news factors and researchers need to revisit existing news factors.

Keywords: *News Value Theory, News Factors, Globalization, Middle-range Theories, Meta-Analysis, Newsworthiness*

Introduction

Jorgensen and Hanitzsch (2009) explain news value and its selection: "Ideas like what news is and how it is selected have long fascinated the practitioners and scholars of journalism alike". This paper examines news value theory and news decisions while considering news factors. It provides an overview of news value and the effect of factors on the decision-making process during gathering, editing, and publishing the news. Johan Galtung and Marie Holmboe Ruge

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[1] Graduate Fellow at Technical University Ilmenau, Institute of Media and Communication Sciences (MCS), Germany

(1965) develop the concept of news value and its factors, which show that if a news story meets certain standards and conditions, it will be published in the media and may see prominent placement. Erjavec and Zajc (2011) discuss a few elements that lead a news story to be published in the news media: frequency, threshold, unambiguity, clarity, familiarity, consistency, predictability, unexpectedness, continuity, composition, personalization and negativity. Nevertheless, it doesn't mean that every published news story or event that meets all the conditions will get published in the news media.

A few decades ago, researchers and practitioners considered these factors while conducting research in news value and news factors theory and journalism. But due to rapid change in the field of media and communication and journalism theories and practices, a number of news factors have evolved, as well. It's impossible for media outlets to keep up with world affairs on a daily basis.

According to the Shoemaker and Reese (1996), prominence/importance, human interest, conflict/controversy, unusualness, timeliness and proximity are the leading factors media professionals take into account while gathering and compiling news stories, and it may be due to a large audience wanting see and hear it. They mention in Mediating the Message that nobody wants to hear all the details of the events or news just like if someone's friend returned from a trip and his friends asked him to tell them all about it: The returning friend would likely start from the most important thing to the lesser (1996, p. 106). Franklin, Hamer, Kinsey, and Richardson (2005) defined news factors as "what an identified audience is interested in reading or watching".

According to Eilders (2006), news values research started in 1922 when Walter Lippmann presented "sensationalism, proximity, relevance, unambiguity and facticity" as the factors of news value. But later on, a concept emerged in the 1960s and 1970s in European countries and in the United States. In Public Opinion, Walter Lippmann (1922) states that "there are not many great reporters", but now in the global and digital world, a number of great reporters, journalists, and media professionals report, edit, and broadcast news stories. They always look for scoops and exclusive information about elite nations. Recent example of Trump and Panama leaks reveal trillions of documents of many political leaders such as the former British Prime Minister 'David Cameron', the Russian president and the Pakistani prime minister in offshore companies. Existing literature shows that there are twelve news factors, and if they are fulfilled, a news story is likely to be published; and the more factors they fulfill, the more chances those stories have of being featured in a prominent way. The factors are: "frequency, threshold, (absolute intensity, intensity increase), unambiguity, meaningfulness (cultural proximity, relevance), consonance (predictability, demand), unexpectedness (unpredictability, scarcity), continuity, composition, reference to elite nations, reference to elite people, reference to persons and reference to something negative" (Galtung and Ruge 1965).

This article examines news value and the scope of news factors theory in light of globalization and digitalization. The relevance of the paper refers to digital journalists. Is journalistic selection criteria still the same as it was in few decades ago or has it changed in the digital world? These days, journalists need more skills to verify facts

and sort out edited images and false claims than they did in the old days, at the same time, as a result of digitalization and competition, organizations need stories continuously throughout the day to run their businesses and maintain their ranking and readership. Scholars need to empirically test these theories according to the needs of the time. So, do journalists and editors still consider the same news factors as they once did, to publish a story?

This paper is relevant for future researchers and professional journalists, as well. Researchers and media professionals can look at it as a reference point to help them gain a better understanding of the state of research in news value theory and the decision-making process of news media when it comes to defining the news of the day. With the relevance point of view, news selection for audiences is a challenge because social media users can give their input regarding the news. News value and news selection deals with audience so it is also a social problem in terms of what information media organizations should highlight.

The objective of this paper is to develop insight on news value theory and news decisions in an era of globalized journalism in a digital world. This article is a resource for news media personnel, media and communication scholars and researchers about news value and factors and newsworthiness in light of existing theories and literature. This paper is intended to provide better understanding of the middle-range theories and see that news value theory is still applicable and check the testability of modern age journalism and media research. The paper reviews previous studies in the field and highlights the importance of news value theory in the decision-making that happens in the news-gathering stage. This

paper also examines whether certain criterion is still applicable in digital media, or is restricted to print and broadcast media.

It can be highlighted that either the media personnel or editors really do consider audience while selecting and neglecting the news stories for publishing in the media or they don't. Media plays a crucial role in society, as it shapes public opinion. How and why do journalists select some news stories and neglect others? Which are the factors that make a story newsworthy? Do news factors really determine the newsworthiness? News selection is a complex process because journalists and reporters cater to societal needs as well as their organization's goal to make a profit. As Adoni and Mane (1984) said, media construct reality through news and articles.

News selection and determining story prominence are not simple processes. News value and news decisions have often been studied in media and communication research. As mentioned earlier, Lippmann (1922) explored the concept of news selection based on certain factors that lead defines newsworthiness. International news and domestic news also have different criteria for determining what is published or broadcast in mainstream media. Furthermore, newsworthiness also depends on tabloid and national papers of a particular region and maybe sometimes on different media systems. News value theory deals with the selection of news stories in media outlets. It also refers to factors that make a story newsworthy. News factors theory is also a part of this phenomenon; researchers use these terms to analyze news value and news selection.

News Value Theory

News value and news factors theory is applicable, universally, to understand news selection and publishing. Middle-range theories

explain journalistic phenomenon and these theories have been tested so many times and also purely for media and journalism studies. Similar to many other theories, such as system theories, action theories, critical theory, and political economy theory, came from different disciplines such as sociology and political science, etc. Middle-range theories are limited to define and analyze their own respective fields. These theories cannot go beyond their own circles like system theory and sociological theories. System theories deal with the whole system, and journalism is a tiny part of that system, for example. But news value theory only deals with whether these factors really determine the value of news or not. News value theory deals with news selection, and the way it is published, and somewhat also with the audience. Eilders (2006) argued that "news factors, from this perspective, not only serve as exclusively journalistic criteria, but as general human selection, deductible from psychology of perception". In a large social system, middle-range theories and news value theory deals with selection criteria by the media and also the impact of those factors on audience selection, as well.

Origin and Emergence of News Value Theory

Kepplinger and Ehmig (2006) explore what Walter Lippmann introduced as the concept of news value in 1922. He tried to explain why media personnel select some events and news and reject others. According to Lippmann, events have some specific characteristics, or news factors, which make them newsworthy. Also, Ostgaard in (1965) proffered three types of news factors: "simplification, identification and sensationalism." Ostgaard explained the stages through which news passes, and he said the first stage is "source," then "government," and lastly, "the nature of the news flow out of

the country". He said all three factors influence the news flow. Galtung and Ruge (1965) defined 12 news factors, which are mentioned in this paper. Rosengren (1974) explained in his paper that "events have qualities which make them more or less valuable" and also argued that an "event with a high news value will be preferred by the news media".

Schulz (1976) also worked on news value as journalists hypothesize and talk about the relevance of the events and measure the impact of news factors on news decisions. Staab (1990) tried to explain in his study about news selection: "during the 1950s theories on news selection increasingly become important in communication sciences". He described six factors: "significance, normality, prominence, proximity, and timeliness". In this order, research in news value and news factors developed over time. "Since the end of the 1960s the impact of such factors on news selection has also been analyzed empirically" (Staab 1990). Additional cited work on news value and news factors theory by Galtung and Ruge (1965) stated by Caple and Bednarek (2013).

Internal and External Factors

Internally, news value theory deals with reporters, photojournalist, editors and news organizations and their policies. On an individual level, journalists develop a news value sense as they get more experienced; after a few years of working as a professional, journalists come to know the ethics, organizational policy and impact of a story. External factors refer to the audience and the specific culture. Specific culture can influence the researchers while building a theory. Those factors can be social institutions, political and media systems, policy makers and governmental institutions and

departments. At the same time, one also has to deal with other theories like system theories, action theories, organizational theories, normative theories and other journalism and communication theories. Sometimes journalists have a news story, which carries more factors and has newsworthiness, but goes against national interest or company policy or their own social system so these factors also come into play. A professional code of ethics is also included in the external factors of the news value and selection process. Pressure groups are also stakeholders in this decision-making.

In the digital age, media outlets also compete with other organizations to break stories and to profit. More focus is given to simply attaining information as opposed to the quality of the information itself. It happens often in mainstream media as well as on social media that, without necessarily having credibility, media organizations (or individual social media personalities) prefer to break news to attract an audience. Now the concept of fact checking is also reemerging in news media to check the validity and reliability of the information. For example, news of the Berlin Christmas market attack immediately spread across the world, and later on, the suspect's name and nationality was misunderstood. Journalists and media organizations also deal with the socio-economic factors of society. The ranking of the news media matters for profit- making in the form of advertising.

The most used key terms in different studies are: Kepplinger and Ehmig (2006) "news value theory, news factors, news selection, and empirical test of theory". They defined these key terms in their studies for a better understanding of media persons and as well as for future researchers and scholars. Eilders (2006) used some of the

same terms and added some of her own: "news factors, news selection, news retention and content analysis". Lau (2012) used "construction of reality, journalistic practices, news value and realism" to conduct his studies. Cho, Ahmed, Park and Keum (2016) consider "value framing, framing effects and decisions making" in their paper to explore the framing effects on the decision-making process of news related to North Korea. Donsbach (2004) use those key words to describe the news decisions psychology, "news decisions, news journalism and professionalization".

Defining News Value Theory

Researchers and scholars try to define news value theory and use key terms for empirical research. Some of them define those terms very clearly but others do not try to define existing key terms and definitions. Researchers Franklin, Hamer, Kinsey and Richardson (2005) define news value as a "set of criteria employed by journalists to measure and judge the news worthiness".

Another definition of news value is: "What an identified audience is interested in reading or watching (Key Concepts in Journalism Theories p. 173-174). According to Evans (1974), "a news story is about necessary information and unusual events should be based on observable facts and should be an unbiased account should be free from the reporter's opinion".

Harcup and O'Neill (2017) define news value as: "Indeed, they [new values] pepper the daily exchanges between journalists in collaborative production procedures. They are the terse shorthand references to shared understandings about the nature and purpose of news which can be used to ease the rapid and difficult manufacture of bulletins and news programs".

One of the main assumptions about news value and news factors theory deals with the phenomenon of factors influencing the process of news selection in different media outlets. Other assumptions of news factors theory, are difficult to explain "journalistic decision-making" Reinemann and Schulz (2006). It's quite hard to explain main assumptions associated with a theory with the help of a single theory or empirical approach. Researchers try to explain the phenomenon with several ways such as: "What factors decide what news professionals consider newsworthy?" Allern (2002). His research findings show that "all kinds of media and news companies that operate in a capitalistic market need a strategy of this kind, even public service broadcasters and, for the matter, and socialist newspapers miscellaneous media that are run on an ideological or purely idealistic basis". Allern (2002) tries to explain the phenomenon of news selection and commercialization. "News factors have different news values for different media outlets" Kepplinger and Ehmig (2006).

During the study of two component theory, Kepplinger and Ehmig (2006) also said that "based on the information about the news factors included in news stories and about the general news values of these news factors, the newsworthiness of a news story can be predicted". According to the research findings of Maier and Ruhrmann (2008), "in the dualized German TV system, first and foremost criteria celebrities and visualization are stable criteria of journalistic selectivity for both groups of TV broadcasters and for reporting on international as well as on non-political events". Eilders (2006) explains "how and why news factors effect media use and the retention of news items".

Analysis of Informational Value

Certainly, news value theory was tested many times by different scholars such as (Lippmann, 1922; Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Ostgaard, 1965; Rosengren, 1970; Schulz, 1976, 1982; Staab, 1990; Donsbach, 1991; Hjarvard, 1995; Eilders, 1997; Schwarz, 2006; Eilders, 2006; and Ruhrmann and Maier, 2008). The news value and news factors theory explain the reality of how and why journalists select particular events and the characteristics of those events. The theory explains the phenomenon of news value but does not fully address the objective. One of the main functions of the theory is to predict the future in the field but news value and news factors could not fully satisfy the predictability of newsworthiness. Researchers applied news value theory in different cultures and with different perspectives but, news value theory and factors related hypothesis always supported the theory except in a few cases.

Consistency

News value and news factors theory has clear internal and external consistency. Assumptions such as the news factors influence the news selection as not contradictory in various studies. Harcup & O'Neill (2001) defined ten news factors and revised them in (2016) on the same parameters. During different times, news value theory has been tested but almost every time its results are not 100 percent the same but slightly changed due to the technology and some other external factors.

Eilders (2006) describes the difference in the selection process into "selective quantitative and qualitative gatekeeping". She explains, and assumes, that news selection for journalists and audience goes in the same way. In framing, media highlights some

aspects of the story and the news selection process is somehow also the same because it depends on which event and factors are considered in the editing and gathering of facts. But on the other hand it's complicated to link news value theory with action and system theory. Cho, Keum and Ahmed (2016) said news media influences public opinion and highlights certain topics to bring to an audience. The more factors a story has, the more chances it has to be published prominently, and it's somehow similar when media highlights something and hides the factors in Agenda Setting Zajc and Erjavec (2011).

General Assessment

Fruitfulness

News value and news factors theory is useful for empirical studies. The above-mentioned studies since Lippmann (1922) explored the concept of news value and news factors theory. Many scholars have conducted empirical studies with different methodologies. Generally, the middle-range theories, news value and factors theory were specifically used by various research scholars of media and communication and journalism studies to test the theory and its applicability in the object. Even researchers used news value theory empirically in (2016) to revise their own work with the same story, so it reflects that news value theory is useful to conduct empirical studies on the basis of news value theory assumptions.

Explanatory Power

News value theory explains the phenomenon of news selection and news factors in the process of publishing and news retention. Schwarz (2006) argued that "news factors have explanatory power in the context of cultures".

Researchers also claim that the selection process of news based on its worthiness is complex, so it is difficult to predict or test the whole picture with just one theory. Different researchers also present various news factors to understand the phenomenon.

Methodology Used by Various Researchers in News Value Theory

Scholars use different methodologies in their empirical studies. In Germany, researchers use content analysis of news stories to determine news value and its selection Eilders (2006). Kepplinger and Ehmig (2006) use the survey method and singled out certain journalists from various media outlets for an empirical study on news value theory. Maier and Ruhrmann (2008) used content analysis to determine news factors of German TV news 1992-2004. In What is News? Study by Harcup and O'Neill (2016) also performed a content analysis of UK newspapers to measure news value factors. Staab (1965) used a survey to measure the effect of news value on news selection and newsworthiness. Other researchers used quantitative content analysis, focus groups, qualitative and quantitative methods via questionnaire, and interviews, and newsroom observations (working paper Oxford) Caple and Bednarek (2013).

Prognosis ability

Middle-range theories remained successful overall to explain what these theories actually aim to explain, and predict the future of journalism. However, as a result of globalization and digitalization, middle-range theories need to be revisited from time to time. News value theory also explains its objectives well. Social media, is a new phenomenon and scholars need to test these middle range theories as well other journalism theories. But the future prediction of theories is somehow missing in news value theory. The first part of the theory

definition is covered but the second part, where theory predicts the future of the object, is not successful as compared to agenda setting and framing theory.

Acceptance levels

Almost all media and communication scholars agreed on the news value and news factors theory only few and they think that Galtung and Ruge (1965) just used these factors to build a theory but did not completely explain the news selection process. They argued that news selection and publishing is a complex matter so, it's quite hard for one theory to explain all factors involved in the process. But still, some scholars did not accept the theories of news value and news factors. Staab (1990) argued that "news factors are characteristics of news stories, rather than specific qualities of the event".

Impact of Globalization on Journalism

Globalization refers to "a multiplicity of linkages and interconnections that transcend the nation states, which make up the modern world system. It's a process through which "events, decisions and activities in one part of the world can come to have a significant consequence for individuals and communities in quite distant parts of the globe" Reich (1998). Certainly, media and communication researchers and scholars realize they should revise their previous works in light of globalization and internationalization. Globalization brings enormous changes in journalism and reporting practices.

Globalization is not a fully developed phenomenon in the field of journalism. Hafez (2009) states empirical factors cannot help to understand the facts of globalization. He also added that the globalization of journalism is not quite as successful as "Plural and

diversified communication". Loffelholz and Weaver (2008) argued that scholars like Manfred Ruhl said "older journalism theories are absolute in the era of globalization and the internet, but the truth is: quite the reverse! Particularly massive theoretical conception".

Digitalization of Journalism

In the age of digitalization, the way journalists work has also changed due to the technicalities of the object. Nies et al (2012) argued that people everywhere are now connected online, and there is a bombardment of information with every passing minute. The journalists and organizations are connected, but also the users and audience get involved in this process. Due to the continuous flow of information online, journalists manage the information while considering the newsworthiness of the events. In the digital age, researchers and scholars cannot ignore the factor of social media including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. There are many other people getting information through this media, and researchers also focus on the current wave of digitalization.

According to the researchers, Nies et al (2012), social media can be used as an indicator of newsworthiness of the object. Everything is on the Internet, and the '90s generation is called the "Internet generation". Still, social media is "un-institutionalized" and open for all. Other than the empirical research of news value theory, digitalization also facilitates research across the globe. Without Internet and digital devices, it wouldn't be possible to connect each with other on such a massive level.

Summary and Outlook: Summing Up and Looking Ahead

In this study, the researcher focuses on the news factors and news decisions with respect to news value theory and middle-range

theory. In this field, the researchers and scholars conceptualize the news factors with the reference of journalistic point of view as well as audience. They analyze the factors influencing the news value and newsworthiness with respect to different media outlets. Some of them also try to test the news value theory with two component theory. Middle-range theories are interlinked to each other. Some researchers also tried to develop a connection between news value theory with the social construction of reality, and they think that the social construction of reality is generated by the audience not the journalists, Eilders (2006).

In different eras, researchers explored various news factors. Galtung and Ruge (1965) offered up 12 news factors; Schulz (1982) named six news factors; Ostgaard (1965) laid out three news factors; Rosengren (1974) found three predictors of newspaper coverage and news factors as secondary "intervening variables"; Westerstahl and Johansson (1994) described five news factors; Donsbach (2004) predicted other factors; O'Neill and Harcup (2009) acknowledge the Johansson work; Golan and Wanta (2001) listed four news factors; and Caple and Bednarek (2014) favored the work of Galtung and Ruge Andreas Anastasiou, ECREA (2016), Prague.

News factors are always in news events or their characteristics. In this article, researcher tries to explain the expansion of news value research since (1922) to support the point of view that certain characteristics of news events play a role in selection. The relevance factor is also used by various media outlets and audience.

In future research, the relationship between source and journalist in light of middle-range theories can be done. Social media can also be a diverse topic to conduct empirical research to test the

news value theory and news factors. Researchers and scholars try to explore news value theory, and news factors' effect on journalistic selection criteria and newsworthiness, but still there is a gap due to the globalization and digitalization of journalism. Future researchers can do comparative studies in different cultures and within different departments of media outlets. On the whole, factors are no longer seen as exclusive to the journalistic contribution, but also pertain to the audience processing the information. Comparative study can test the construction of reality by the journalists and users. The direction for future researchers about news decisions and selection process is to examine the perspective of the audience. News value theory also can be tested in different media systems to see if there is a connection in news factors influencing the selection process of different media systems.

There needs to be a study on websites, blogs, and other digital news platforms and newsmen. There are a number of new ways information has been introduced due to the digital word, so researchers need to address journalistic work done by citizens as well as conventional journalists. Citizen and mobile journalists are using the Internet and doing much of the same work as professional journalists on traditional media.

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