

AN ANALYTICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE IMPACT OF AUDIENCE AND MODALITY ON PRINT AND ONLINE NEWSPAPER STORIES

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Abstract. *Newspapers are one of the most important media channels that people rely on as a source of information. Nowadays, newspapers appear in two different versions- print and online newspaper. These two versions have common similarities between them. However, they also exhibit several differences that single them apart. Previous researches highlight the differences between the two versions of newspapers in terms of content, accessibility and structure. This study investigates the differences between the print and online versions of the United Arab Emirates-based newspaper Gulf News, and provides possible justifications for the differences in light of Grice's four maxims. Results show that there are many differences in terms of content, length of headlines and word choice. Other differences include dates of publication, updating of articles details givens and other news features. These differences are found to be a consequence of modality, space provided and targeted audience.*

Key words: *online newspaper, print newspaper, differences, structure, audience analysis*

1. INTRODUCTION

Mass media is one of the most important ways of communication and disseminating news. Therefore, different mass media channels keep on appearing in order to facilitate the process of news and information dissemination. Newspapers, whether print or online, have specific formats that make set them apart from any other type of mass media channels. Online newspapers are available to almost all people, who have access to the internet in where in the world. Their audiences belong to different cultures, ideologies, educational and informational levels. Print newspapers have a specific and limited audience, normally from the country in which the newspaper is published. Many similarities between the two types of newspapers can be noticed. However, there are also several noticeable differences between them in terms of formatting, content and focus 2.

2. BRIEF HISTORY OF NEWSPAPERS IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE)

The newspaper industry was not widespread in the UAE in the early 1990s due to the high percentage of illiteracy in the region. However, there were some newspapers during that period of time. The first newspaper in the country was founded by Mohammed Al Medfua in 1927, and named as Al Oman. In this newspaper, the writers wrote about news

from other countries. He also republished articles which were published in magazines in other countries. The author, Mohammed Al Medfua, was joined by Sheikh Abdulla bin Ali Mahmood, Sheikh Ahmad bin Abdurman bin Hadeed and Sheikh Abdulla bin Saleh Al Mutawa in publishing the newspaper. The other newspaper that appeared in the early 1990s, in particular in 1933, was Saut Al Asafeer, 'the sound of birds'. The writer of this newspaper was Ibrahim Al Medfua who used the newspaper to attack the British existence in the Gulf. Authors from other Gulf countries joined him in writing for the newspaper. The first proper newspaper that was published after the unification of the Emirates was Al Ittihad, which still exists until now in the UAE capital- Abu Dhabi. The aim behind this newspaper was to promote for the unification of the Emirates and to promote literacy in the country (Cass, 2001). The newspaper industry kept on developing in the region. Now, more than 19 official newspapers are published in the country. The development of the newspaper industry included different aspects. The first aspect is in the language these papers used. In the UAE, 12 newspapers are published in the English language and seven published in the Arabic language. The other aspect relates to the way of publishing the newspapers. Newspapers nowadays are published in two formats; print newspapers and online ones. One of the most important newspapers which is published in the English language and can be accessed in print and online formats is the Gulf News newspaper.

3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This paper aims to examine online and print versions of Gulf News newspaper in an attempt to probe into the differences between them. The researchers believe that the modality, print versus online, and the type of targeted audience for the two newspapers may result in differences in content, structure, focus and language choice. The reasons behind choosing the Gulf News newspaper are: it is an English-medium newspaper that appears in print and online format, and it is the most popular newspaper and the best seller in the UAE.

4. RESEARCH QUESTION:

The motivation for this study was to find answers to the following questions:

- 4.1. Are there any differences between same news items in print and online versions of Gulf News newspaper?
- 4.2. And if yes, what are the factors behind these differences?

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

Smith (2005), in a study conducted to examine the differences between the five largest online and print newspapers in the south of the United States, collected around 635 news items from the stories appearing on the front pages and Metro section. The articles had been collected on a period of fourteen days at different time intervals between 11 am and 2 pm. Besides, they all were on the same topic. She aimed to examine the differences in content and contextual elements. Her results show that 96.1% of the

articles collected had the same content. Some of the content differences between the two versions usually appeared only in the first paragraph. Regarding differences in the headlines between the two versions, the paper indicated that 24% of the headlines were different. The other difference was in the contextual elements. 335 articles had similar contextual elements between the two versions and the other 203 articles at least shared one similar contextual element. Additionally, 20.8 % of the articles had completely different contextual elements between the online and print newspapers. The contextual elements that had been observed between the two versions of newspapers covered: photos, infobox, sidebar and infographic. The study concluded that most of the articles were almost the same: they had similar headlines, similar content and similar contextual elements. The only noted difference was that the articles in the online newspaper were frequently updated. However, the print newspaper articles lacked this feature. Moreover, some of the online articles had a hyper link which would take the readers to other thematic relevant articles (Smith, 2005).

Another study by Tremayne, Weiss & Alves (2007) highlighted differences in content between print and online newspapers. The study of the content dynamic in the online newspapers was their main research question. In order to answer the research questions, news stories appearing in twenty four (24) online newspapers in the United States over the years 2004, and 2005 were collected and compared with their equivalents in print newspapers. The study collected the articles during different periods of time by using a software named InfoMinde. The software takes a screenshot of the articles at different timings and highlights the differences that appeared in the articles. The study addressed the following questions:

- Q.1.: Is dynamic content associated with a certain topic?
- Q.2. Is the news topic associated with dynamic content?
- Q.3.: Are multimedia elements associated with dynamic journalism?

They rightly argue that publishing in online newspapers allows journalists to use different multimedia tools such as photos, videos and graphs. Furthermore, online newspapers allow more interactivity between the reader and the journalist, a feature that print newspapers lack. The study also pointed out that there were static changes in the content. These changes usually appeared in the form of additions. Moreover, the study showed static changes in the content of the local section in the form of additional information, but there were no significant changes in the national and international sections. The topics that mostly had been subjected to dynamic content changes were government/politics, business/ economy followed by war/military. The results for the last question, which dealt with the dynamic of multimedia, showed that the updates of online newspapers involved the update of the multimedia features. The main commonly updated multimedia feature was videos, with photos being the most constantly changed over the period of the study. The study results also showed that there was a dynamic change in the content of the online newspaper.

Waal, Schonbach and Lauf (2007) discussed the relationship between online newspaper, print newspaper and other news channels in the Dutch community. The paper starts by mentioning the advantages of print newspapers over the online newspapers. The paper mentions that print newspapers have more clues, such as pictures, graphs and tables, than the online ones which help the readers gain a better understanding of the articles. Secondly, print newspapers arrange the news in reverse chronological order to

stress their importance; which helps the readers know the most important events. By contrast, online newspapers rank them in chronological order, which may prevent the reader from reading the most important articles first. Another advantage of print newspapers that they note is that they give the reader a full article in addition to more background information than the online ones, which in most cases provide the reader with an incomplete article which may require the reader to access other articles or links provided to know the complete news.

Waal, Schonbach & Lauf (2007) also examined Dutch readers' preferences for online newspapers, print newspapers and other media channels in order to answer the following questions:

- Q.1.: What kind of information online newspapers are used for in comparison to print newspapers and other media channels?
- Q.2.: How does the reading of online newspapers affect the use of other media channels?

Telephone interviews were conducted on 987 randomly selected respondents whose age ranged from 18 to above 51 to answer questions relating to the reading of online and print newspapers and other media channels. The study shows that only teenagers prefer to read online newspapers over reading print newspapers. Teenagers read online newspapers for information on economy, politics and theater. It also shows that most people who read online newspapers read the print newspapers too.

In the Arab world, Ayish (2014) highlights the main differences between the two types of newspapers. He argues that one of the main differences between print and online newspapers is that online newspapers do not need the funding that print newspapers require, an aspect which facilitates the establishing of these newspapers, especially after the economic crisis in 2009. Other differences that Ayish mentions are the widespread of online newspapers and that they do not only target the local audience, in contrast with print newspapers, but they also aim to reach a wider audience from all over the globe. He adds that online newspapers also have additional sources of information other than the text such as videos and hyperlinks, which will take the reader to other news items (Aiysh, 2014).

Another study carried out by Wei and Pandian (2012) discusses the preference of Malaysian students to reading online and print materials which are related to their fields of study or their interests. They administered a survey to 109 Malaysian university students to ask them about their reading habits and preferences. The results show that most of the students prefer to read online, especially reading newspapers and magazines. They justify their answers by saying that reading online is much easier as they can surf the internet for information and articles faster than print sources. The ease of accessing internet materials and the ability to save and revisit the materials they read is one of the reasons behind the preference for reading online. The remaining participants prefer to read print materials. Print materials for them have more accurate information than the online ones. The interaction that print materials provide the readers with, such as highlighting the important materials, makes students prefer to read print materials (Wei & Pandian, 2012).

The above brief survey of the literature on differences and similarities between print and online newspapers shows beyond doubt that there are differences between the two media of news. Nevertheless, the specificity of these differences is still far from resolved. Therefore, the current study aims to venture into this area.

6. METHODOLOGY

In order to test the research questions, 100 news articles were culled from the Gulf News newspaper, 50 from the online version and 50 from print one.

6.1. Data collection

The one hundred articles were collected from the different sections: Nation, Gulf, Middle East, World and Business during the period from 22nd till 31st of March of the year 2015. The researchers chose those articles from different sections in order to have a representative sample of newspapers items. These articles were on the same topic in order to ensure that the differences would be due to other factors rather than the change in topic. After collecting the articles, the researchers looked for differences between the two types of newspapers in the different sections in terms of audience, structure and focus. The same online articles were collected three times a day, in the early morning, in the middle of the day, and in the evening, to check whether there were any additions or changes in the articles.

6.2. Data analysis

The data were analyzed by addressing these questions:

- Q.1. Are there any differences in content between online and print newspapers? If yes, what are these, and what are the reasons behind these differences?
- Q.2. Are there any differences in the word counts between the two versions of the same article collected from the two newspapers?
- Q.3. Are there any differences between the online articles throughout the day? If yes, what are these differences?
- Q.4. Are there any differences in the structure of the articles in the two newspapers? If yes, what are these differences, and why?

6.3. Data coding

To differentiate between the print and online articles, the researchers coded the articles differently. The letter **P** was used in addition to a number to code articles from the print newspaper. The letter **O** was used in addition to a number to code articles from the online newspaper. For example, the article from the print newspaper will be article **1.P** and the article on the same topic from the online newspaper will be **1.O**.

7. THEORETICAL BASES

The differences and similarities are accounted for in terms of Grice's (1975) four maxims given below:

Quantity

- Make your contribution as informative as required. (Don't say too much or too little.)
- Make the strongest statement you can.

Quality

- Do not say what you believe to be false.
- Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Relation

- Be relevant. (Stay on topic.)

Manner

- Avoid obscurity of expression.
- Avoid ambiguity.
- Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
- Be orderly.

8. RESULTS

Examining the content of the print and online newspaper articles on the same topic, many differences were observed in terms of the headlines, length of article, content and word choice. The below section present the details of these differences.

8.1. Differencies in content and word counts

A simple word count shows that 88 articles out of 100 have different headlines and sub-headlines. Furthermore, online newspaper articles have longer headlines and sub-headlines than the print ones. The online articles' headlines range from six to sixteen words. For the print articles headlines, words range between four and ten words. Both headlines of online and print articles have common words that appear in the two headlines. These words describe the place where the reported events happened and the focus of the news item. Longer headlines in online newspaper provided more detailed information on the reported events. For example, in article 43.P the headline is:

Brotherhood leaders categorized terrorists. However, in article 43.O the headline is:



In this example, the difference between the two headlines can be easily noticed. In text 43.P the headline consists of four words that describe the event in general. The headline sounds more like written English than spoken English. Moreover, the headline is

written in the passive voice, and is also elliptical in nature. On the other hand, the headline of text 43.O consists of seven words describing the event in more details and specifies the doer of the action. The headline sounds more like spoken English. It is written in the active voice and does not use ellipsis. Comparing the two headlines, some common words can be seen. These are: brotherhood leaders and terrorists. These mutual words highlight the main focus of the article that the newspaper in both versions is reporting on. However, the online article adds more words to its headline. These words give more information about the reported event such as *Egypt*, the country where the event took place and the *prosecutor* to identify and specify the person who labeled brotherhood as terrorists and his/her authority. The print newspaper's headline does not contain these details as it focuses more on the event itself rather than its details. The print newspaper is published in this part of world which is the Middle East and people here can anticipate by reading the word *Brotherhood* that the incident happened in Egypt.

The difference in content appeared in two different ways. First, 76 articles showed differences in the content of the articles. The differences appeared in the form of additional information on the topic in the online newspaper. Moreover, 24 articles out of the 100 articles had identical content in both versions. However, the remaining 76 articles showed differences in content between the two versions. 38 articles out of the 50 online articles were longer and had more information than the print ones. The additional information gave more details about the reported event. These additions ranged from words, full sentences, and to more than one paragraph. Another difference is in the choice of the words. Online newspaper used more specific and precise words when describing the events. On the contrary, the print newspaper opted for more general words. For instance,

In text 1.P the wording is:

Suicide bombing that killed at least 142 people at places of worship

But in text 1.O the wording is:

Suicide bombing that killed at least 142 people at Al Houthi mosques

In this example, the difference in word choice can be noticed. Article 1.P used the generic phrase places of worship, in reference to the place where the bombing happened. The phrase is of a general nature and does not specify which Muslim sector owns these places of worship. On the other hand, text 1.O used a more specific phrase which is Al Houthi mosques indicating specifically that these worship places belong to Al Houthi rebels and their fellows, a sector of Shiite Muslims.

One of the significant differences in the choice of words lies in the use of time adverbs. For example, the print newspaper used the word "yesterday" to refer back to the incidents that happened in the previous day. However, out of the 50 online newspaper articles, 5 articles only used the word "yesterday" to refer to the incident that happened previously. The remaining 45 articles replaced the word "yesterday" with the precise day on which the event took place.

For example, text 3.P used the time adverb 'yesterday' as shown in the example below:

Al Madina reported yesterday

By contrast, in text 3.O the specific day is used as shown below:

Manama: Saudi Arabia's Shura Council has rejected a proposal to extend the daily working hours in the public sector by one hour.

Only 10 members of the advisory council voted in favour of the proposal reportedly meant to boost productivity, while 99 opposed it.

"The main problem in the public sector is not the insufficiency of the working hours, but rather the lack of discipline and commitments during the formal working hours as attested by monitoring agencies and public administration studies," members said, local daily Al Madina reported on Wednesday.

In the example, the usage of the word "yesterday" referred back to the event that happened on the previous day, but the online article replaced the word "yesterday" with the specific day on which the event unfolded, "Wednesday".

8.2. The updating feature

Online newspapers exhibit a feature that print newspapers lack, updating of news articles. Out of the 50 online articles collected, 15 had been updated on the newspaper's website. The updating process happens on a regular basis, mainly in the evening. The updating included adding more information to the articles. However, the articles remained the same in the print newspaper.

8.3. Differences in the date of publication

Looking at the date of publication of articles collected, it was observed that there was a time difference regarding the publication of both the online and print versions. Out of the 50 online articles, 20 articles were published a day before their corresponding print ones. However, the other 30 online articles had similar dates of publication to the print ones. For example, the article titled as *Kuwait moves to ban those convicted of blasphemy*, appeared on the 31st of March 2015 issue of the print newspaper. The article was published a day earlier than the print one on the online newspaper's website, 30th of March 2015, as can be noticed from the following image:

UK ELECTIONS 5 UAE 31 GULF 10 MENA 16 EUROPE 18 AFRICA 3 ASI

Kuwait moves to ban those convicted of blasphemy

Proposal aims to prevent entry of persons found to be in contempt of religions or penalised for derision of Islam

PUBLISHED: 13:22 MARCH 30, 2015
BY HABIB TOUMI, BUREAU CHIEF

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Kuwait moves to ban those convicted of blasphemy

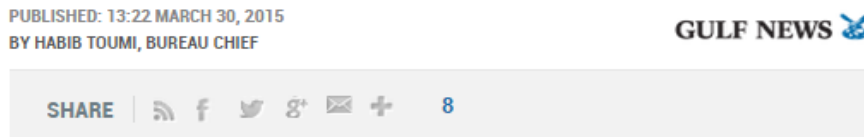
8.4. Structure of the articles

The difference between the structure of the online and print newspapers articles was that the print newspaper articles were written in a column format. There were paragraphs that contained small numbers of lines with each line containing a small number of words, ranging from 4 to 5 words per line. On the contrary, the online newspaper articles were written in longer sentences and clear paragraphs, where each line comprised between 10-20 words.

Text 4.P below is an example of this:

Manama: A Kuwaiti
parliamentary committee
has endorsed a proposal to
ban persons found guilty of
blasphemy from entering
the country.

The difference is clear in text 4.O shown below:

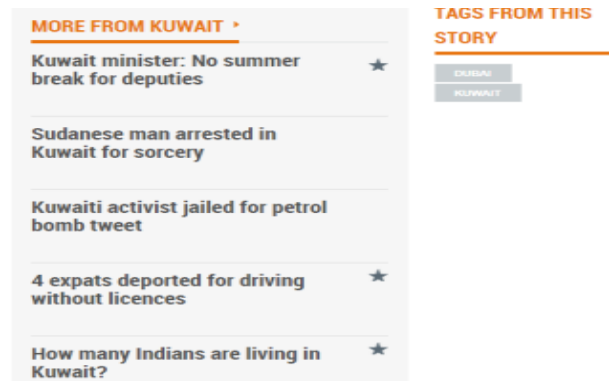


Manama: A Kuwaiti parliamentary committee has endorsed a proposal to ban persons found guilty of blasphemy from entering the country.

It is noticed here that text 4.P is presented in a vertical way with a small number of lines, with each line consisting of 2 or a maximum of 5 words. However, in text 4.O, the text is presented in a horizontal way with longer sentences.

8.5. Online newspapers show more related articles

A difference that can be noticed between the two types of newspapers was the number of related articles. In the online newspaper's website, the website listed different articles related to the same issue that the reader may want to consult, in case of wanting more information on the issue that the news story is tackling. So, if the reader looked above, under or next to the target article, s/he can notice the appearance of articles that have similar and/or related topics. However, the print newspaper had a smaller number of related articles and in some cases no related articles at all. For example in the online newspaper, the box titled "more from Kuwait" provided the readers with more related articles.



8.6. Accessible articles from previous issues

The online newspaper's website demonstrates a feature that the print newspaper lacks, which is accessible previous news articles on the topic. In the online newspaper's website, if the viewers of the website chose a certain topic to read about, the online newspaper's website would automatically provide them with all articles related to the chosen topic. Moreover, the online newspaper ranked the articles based on their dates of publication from the newest to the oldest, which gave the readers the choice and freedom to have more information on the topic and know the sequence of events. On the other hand, the readers of the print newspaper were restricted and confined to articles published in a certain issue of the newspaper.

For example, from the following picture, which was taken from the website of Gulf News newspaper, the page viewer can be noticed at the end of the page. This page viewer allowed the readers to move from the oldest to the newest news articles that had been published on the website:

Al Barrak sentenced to jail for insulting emir

BY HABIB TOUMIBUREAU CHIEF



Lawyers to challenge verdict on former union leader at the cassation court

KUWAIT KUWAIT

Post 41 - 50 of 99



9. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The differences in the content between the two versions of the same newspaper are maybe due to different contextual factors. These could be the target audience, modality and the space provided. As a result of the differences in audience, online newspaper articles have longer headlines and longer texts than the print articles. It seems that the purpose of the headlines is to give the readers an indication of what the text is about. They also attract the readers' attention by providing them with interesting headlines that may encourage them to read the articles. In this regard Marcoci (2014) argues that headlines play an important role in orienting the reader's attention and interpretation of the facts contained in the article. They are a particularly rich source of information about the field of cultural references, necessary to identify the content of the articles.

This explains the difference in headlines between the two versions of newspaper. The print newspaper addresses specific audience. Those are normally who the citizens and residents of the country where the newspaper is published that the news writers can fairly estimate and judge their level of knowledge and background information. Thus, the print newspaper uses shorter and more concise headlines that will effectively attract the targeted audience. On the other hand, the online newspaper, being available online for anyone who has access to the internet from anywhere in the world, has a wider range of audiences from different countries, ideologies and different background information. Thus, in order to cater for these variations among audiences, the online newspaper uses longer headlines that provide those readers with more information on the news story to make it within their understanding. Therefore, knowing the intended audience(s) that each newspaper is targeting may be the reason for differences in the content and word choice of the articles of both versions. A clear example of this is the use of more general words in the print news articles of the Gulf News. For instance, in the print newspaper, the noun '**Daesh**' is used to refer to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, instead of the most common equivalent used in European communities- **ISIS**, because its target audience belongs to the Middle East and knows this group of people by this name '**Daesh**'.

Moreover, the uncertainty about the level of knowledge and background information that online newspaper has regarding its target audience results in adding more information about the reported events to ascertain that their audiences will fully understand the news articles. It also uses more specific words in its description to provide the readers with the necessary details that they may need to comprehend the articles. For example, the online newspaper replaces the word '**Daesh**' with the word "**Islamic state of Iraq and Syria**" because its global audience knows this group of people by this name.

Additionally, the difference in the time of accessibility of the newspaper stories resulted in a difference in the content of both versions' articles, especially in the words that refer to time. The online newspaper rarely uses the adverb of time, "yesterday", in its reference to any events that happened previously. This may be due to reasons of specificity and the news readers' ability to access the news articles on any day other than the publication day. Readers can browse the internet at any time and they have the accessibility to the articles which have been written previously, thus in order to avoid any confusion that readers may face while reading the online articles, journalists of online newspaper replace the word "yesterday" with the specific day of reporting the incidents. However, readers of print newspaper can only access the newspaper on the same day of its publication; therefore, using the word "yesterday" to refer to incidents that happened previously does not confuse the reader as it always refers to the day that preceded this

issue of the newspaper. The last factor that may account for differences in the content of newspaper articles is the space limitation of the newspaper. Print newspaper has a certain number of pages and space that the news reporter should abide by. Thus articles that appear in the print newspaper should be very short and concise. News reporters only include the most important information about the reported events. However, the online newspaper has more space than the print one, thus news reporters can include more details and information about the events, which may also be necessary for an international audience. The online newspapers can also use different features such as hyperlinks and the option to see more in order to glean more information about incidents reported on.

Another difference that appeared as a result of the space provided for the two versions of newspapers is the difference in the articles' structure. Online newspapers articles sometimes comprise paragraphs containing sentences ranging from 10 to 20 words in length. However, due to space considerations, print newspapers have their articles appear in the form of columns which may consist of a very small number of words per line. For example, some lines may exhibit word counts ranging from four to five words. The difference in the structure of articles has an effect on the readers. Reading in a horizontal manner, which is the common practice in online newspapers, allows readers to read faster rather than reading in a vertical way, which is the standard procedure in print newspapers articles. In this regard, Laarni, Simola and Risto (2004) point out that vertical reading is slower rate than horizontal.

The other difference is updating the online newspaper's articles. News is so dynamic. During every minute, new things and events happen around the world and the difference appears in the events that have been reported previously. Therefore updating news articles is important in order to keep pace with what is happening around the world. Online newspapers have the feature of updating the articles at any time during the day which makes the reader aware of the latest news about a certain event in a timely fashion. Contrary to this, the print newspaper gets published at a specific time and cannot be updated unless a supplement or a new issue is published. In this concern, Tremayne, Weiss & Alves (2007) point out that:

A printed newspaper can be defined as a closed, static package of news, information, and advertising, constructed in a typical industrial era line of production with a fixed periodicity or publication cycle. In the digital era, the newspaper faces the challenge of breaking that traditional line of production into a much more dynamic flux of continuous information delivered through different digital platforms, but mainly on its Web site.

Therefore, the difference in the newspapers articles' appeared as a result of different platforms. Here, Grice's (1975) four maxims-quantity, quality, relation and manner- see above, can be used to explain the above reported differences. The use of more words and details in the online news articles can be understood as an attempt to make the information given as informative as is required for the type of targeted audience. It is also an attempt to avoid giving ambiguous information to readers. This is manifest in the clear time references in the online newspapers. Likewise, the non-availability of some of these details in the print newspaper articles is considered as an attempt to not be over-informative for local readers who may have more information about the local events reported on in comparison with the international readers of online news articles. Furthermore, specifying the doer of the action in online news articles in headlines is in agreement with Grice's principles:

- Make the strongest statement you can.

- Do not say what you believe to be false.
- Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Additionally, the fact that most recent news items in online newspapers come first may also be explained in light of Grice's principle:

- Be orderly.

10. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study found several differences between same online and print newspapers articles. These differences appear in several sections of the newspaper and various parts of news articles. First, headlines in online newspapers are more detailed than print newspaper headlines. Also, online newspapers use more specific words and have additions in the news articles more than print newspapers. Online newspaper articles are subjected to periodic and timely updates which print newspaper articles lack. This feature makes readers more aware of the latest breaking news. Another difference concerns the date of publication.

It should be noted here that the results reported in this study are based on a small sample of news articles. Therefore, future research may replicate the study on a bigger sample of news articles, and different news sections for verification and confirmation of findings. Nevertheless, the results underscore the importance of training mass communication students in these areas and alerting them as to how news discourse structure and its contents are impacted by the targeted audience and the publication medium. This knowledge will help them write more accurate and objective news reports.

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