

Source Credibility of Instagram on Gaza War: A Comparative Approach

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Abstract

Repercussions of the 7th of October 2023 started to be limited then expanded and escalated, not only on the geopolitical level but also on media and communication environments. One of the things that has drawn attention in the Israel-Hamas war is that the declining ability of famous sources and prestigious media networks to persuade public opinion of the legitimacy of Israel's war on Gaza under the pretext of self-defence, at a time when other sources gained popularity and credibility simply because they defended the Palestinian cause. This discrepancy raises many questions about the determinants that impact the credibility of media sources if the topic relates to an issue with overlapping complicated dimensions. The aim is to verify the impact of determinants that shape credibility of sources by analysing their posts on Instagram BBC news and motaz_azaiza accounts.

Keywords: Gaza war, Source credibility, Instagram, BBC.

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The war on Gaza drew attention to the influence of the media on moving global public opinion interest towards issues that had remained on the margins of news coverage for decades, such as the Palestinian issue. During this war, some independent media influencers (e.g., Pisan Owda and Plestia Alaqad) emerged that were able to raise the voices of the ignored, and most of them used social media networks to live-stream the facts from the grounds.

This war reconsidered the source credibility approach and the role that the media can play in convincing the public of the semantic and formal structures of the message contained in the news story. This war showed that elements of source credibility such as powers of coercion, reward, legitimacy, expert, referent, and informational, may not be sufficient to explain public conviction in an issue being presented. Using a particular medium includes the

communicator, the communication channel, and a host of other factors that must be taken into consideration.

Remarkably, technically modest but humanitarian valuable coverage by an independent photojournalist and a team of amateurs was able to outperform well-established networks with a global reputation and stature in terms of its audience and persuasive ability. During a three-month period beginning in October 7/2023, Moataz Azaiza, an independent Palestinian photojournalist, was able to convey events from different angles that added exceptional values to news coverage. This paper comparatively investigates the elements of coverage provided by Moataz Azaiza and the BBC during the first period of the war on Gaza, with the aim of a deeper understanding of the relationship between source credibility and conviction, considering the political, historical, and social contexts intertwined with it.

Characteristics of source credibility on Gaza war

Source credibility approach is mainly a marketing communication scope that is interested in identifying the basic elements of the public's conviction of certain product and then influence its attitudes and direct purchasing behavior (Jang, W., 2022). There are many models that define these elements and influences on Instagram and TikTok play a noticeable role in the success of marketing communication (Ouvrein, G., 2021, Jin, S. V., 2019, Oliveira, M., 2020). However, when exploring the initial meaning of source credibility, it is "a term commonly used to imply a communicator's positive characteristics that affect the receiver's acceptance of a message." (Ohanian, 1990) Based on this definition, we can expand the scope of application to include every media message, including news content that aims to persuade the audience through the elements of the message and the characteristics of its source. Source credibility theory explains how persuasiveness is influenced by the perceived credibility of the source of communication. Because the credibility of the source is a strong driver of conviction, it has aroused scholars'

interest to analyze and identify the most central factors in forming audience convictions. Therefore, it is expected that the medium with the most established reputation in terms of credibility will be the most persuasive through digital metrics such as the number of likes, the trend of comments, and shares across social platforms such as Instagram.

The paper aims to investigate the positive features of Moataz Azaiza and the BBC, which gave each of them preferential features that increase their credibility on Instagram, and how can we understand the impact of this credibility when the elements of media coverage are intertwined with the humanitarian, political, and social dimensions.

Literature Review

Credibility of message sources is an essential generator of audience persuasion. It inspired scholars in communication, law, marketing, and political sciences to define and analyze its main elements. Aristotle argued that the reliability of speaker exists before delivering communication messages and consists of credibility (ethos), emotions (pathos), and logic (logos) (Cope,2010). The audience is inclined to believe communicators when perceiving characteristics of honesty, integrity, and sincerity. These characteristics are related to dimensions of credibility which are competence, extraversion, composure, character, and sociability (French & Raven, 1959) that have been broken down to specified elements as a measurement scale of source credibility but should not be assumed to be universally applicable (McCroskey, 1981). Croskey concluded that these five dimensions are fundamental to establish and maintain credibility.

Source credibility dynamics refer to the three stages that credibility goes through, first is the initial credibility and it occurs before the start of the communication interaction, where the audience has a previous knowledge of the source, and the more this source is known in advance, the higher its level of initial credibility. The second level is transactional credibility,

and it is formed during communication interaction and may support or undermine initial credibility (Bühlmann, H.,2015). The last stage of credibility is terminal credibility, which is formed as a conclusion of communication interaction and remains with the audience after its completion. Moreover, Researchers pointed to the power factors that determine the degree of credibility, which are reward as positive power, coercion as negative power, legitimacy, that represents the degree of persuasion agent truthfulness, expert power, referential power, and information power. (Raven,1993, Gaziano, 1986) Prior belief consistency and source expertise influenced the perceived credibility of accurate and inaccurate social media posts after controlling the subject of the post (Kuuttila, M.,2023). In a study of Reddit community, it has been shown that initial credibility is represented by the popularity of persuasion agents within the community. Transactional credibility is presented using upvoted and downvoted content to determine the average of viewership, terminal credibility is formed by users and posts over time (Hartzell, A., 2021).

Traditional media is facing unprecedented credibility challenges with the spread of social media, the latter adding incompatible factors such as personal appeal, showing similarities, using complements that make the persuasion agent more influential (Ooms, J.,2019). This effect is observed when newspapers quote bloggers as credible sources to support their content and when they are hosted by television channels or radio stations as a means of increasing viewership and listening rates. These are some indicators of credibility crisis that traditional media have not been able to overcome with independent solutions (Suciu, I., 2018).

Some studies have concluded that television viewers consider hard news to be more credible than soft news with increasing evidence of popular skepticism in media content (Miller, 2010). Others revealed a significant influence of personal sources and cognitive elaboration positively mediates this influence and conditionally affected by high source credibility (Nekmat, E., 2019). There is considerable evidence to support that people's

invitations from close networks are more influential compared to organizational sources. Being both a human source and institutional source together form the construction of content source credibility (He, R.,2023).

In addition to personal relationships, attractiveness and trustworthiness of the source seems to influence his credibility (Balaban, D., 2019) social differences have no significant impact in changing users' perspectives toward the source attractiveness. Trustworthiness has a significant positive impact on spreading information on social media and it elaborates with expertise to influence source credibility positively (Chao, F., 2024). Gender was also found to has a moderating effect on the relationship between information quality and source credibility (Dedeoglu, 2018). Females focus more on details and allocate more attention to multiple sources of information than males do.

Source credibility in social media seems to have a positive and substantial impact on the motive for sharing information and search intentions but does not influence the motive for information seeking and entertainment motives (Nathalia, T., 2018) Individuals' credibility perceptions can be evaluated in terms of multiple characteristics that are connected to the source of information channel. An analytical approach suggests three tasks to assess the credibility of information on social media including the detection of fake news and spam in microblogging (Viviani, M., 2020). Source credibility exists in social media within online environments and being facilitated by "non-experts" (Hartzell, A., 2021). From an HCI perspective, there is a relationship between technological abilities and making judgments about credibility of online sources (Westerman, 2014). According to Sunder MIAN model, machine generated information is perceived to be more objective and leads to a greater sense of trust compared to people as source of information. In addition to automation, the recency of posts and tweets fosters the impact of source credibility but considers cognitive elaboration as a mediated factor. It is argued that social media interactivity significantly impacts credibility and

usefulness of information (Hajli, N., 2018). WOM facilitates the evaluation of products and services, and its automated applications have an increasing role in sharing political information (Flanagin, A., 2017).

Source credibility becomes more sophisticated to be measured because of social networked technology and one consequence of this is that fake news spreads quicker than enacting a reliable mechanism for detecting it and distinguish it from truthful content (Aïmeur, E., 2023). Because of the notable tendency to create false claims on social media, fact-checking websites have become increasingly popular to identify misinformation and there are several attempts that developed analytical instruments to incorporate in solving this problem. A model of fact checking through an experimental approach has been suggested to include the stance, reliability, and trend of evidence and counter evidence sources with 80% accuracy (Popat, K., 2017). A conceptual framework proposed four dimensions of information sources; information presentation, information credibility and decision related issues of social media users when evaluating research directions (Keshavarz, H., 2021) The model includes source credibility, message credibility, and media credibility and each direction analyzed to its opportunities, challenges, and solutions. A system employed natural language processing techniques concluded that vector machine classifiers have the highest accuracy for both news category analysis and sentiment analysis (Wijesekara, M., 2020). A study proposed “CredRank” algorithm to measure user credibility in social media. This algorithm helps to detect internet users who use many social media accounts to diffuse content that is likely to be untrue (Abbasi, M., 2012).

Information quality plays a crucial role in perceiving source credibility, but bias can influence information quality in special cases (Li, X.,2023). It seems that information quality was not the key factor affecting perceived dimensional differences of generation Zs unprecedented pursuit of source credibility and this explains the rise of social media celebrity

economy. Moreover, presence of negative facial emotions can lead to perception of higher bias in content (Karduni, A., 2021). In the time that negative portrayals of different politicians over time may lead to lower perception of source credibility, visual propositions manifested by emotions in facial expressions may have a notable impact on our trust in news.

Research questions

The investigative content along with methodological procedures aims to draw answers for the following questions:

RQ1- What are power tactics (soft, hard, rational, nonrational, bilateral, unilateral) employed by BBC to support source credibility?

RQ2- What are power tactics (soft, hard, rational, nonrational, bilateral, unilateral) employed by Motaz Azaiza to support source credibility?

RQ3- What are bases of power (coercion, reward, legitimacy, expert, referent, informational) embedded in BBC content to support source credibility?

RQ4- What are bases of power (coercion, reward, legitimacy, expert, referent, informational) embedded in Motaz Azaiza content to support source credibility?

RQ5- What are dynamics of source credibility (initial, transactional, terminal) that work with BBC?

RQ6- What are dynamics of source credibility (initial, transactional, terminal) that work with Motaz Azaiza?

Method

To achieve a comprehensive and comparative understanding of source credibility determinants of Motaz Azaiza and BBC, it is more efficient to rely on a mixed methodology to explore possible answers to the questions of this study. Therefore, integrated qualitative and quantitative approaches have been employed. The quantitative approach uses a content analysis method to identify the variables that determine source credibility on Instagram posts of BBC and Motaz Azaiza and the qualitative approach uses textual analysis of the posts and the users'

comments. A thematic analysis is applied to investigate the common attitudes toward each conflict party and the toward the content of the news/photo post.

A sample of 120 posts have been examined from both sources starting from the day one of Gaza war, 7th of October to the 31st of December. This time span represents the first stage of the war which ended by an exchange of hostages' agreement. The sample is closer to systematic randomness, but with an application that takes into account the logistical differences between individual and institutional capabilities, as it relied on analyzing the most interactive posts on the BBC, so that it parallels what Azaiza published during the same temporal span, which represents the sixty days as a comprehensive inventory of everything that Azaiza published, taking into account periods of interruption beyond his control. Chi square test is used to diagnose the significance of relationships between likes and comments volume and the content posted by BBC and Azaiza about Gaza war. Likes and comments are considered as tangible indicators of source credibility on Instagram. In table 2, the comparison results are regarding the type of content that represents facets of Gaza war and include, destruction, displacement, martyrs/injured, explosion, statements, report, infographics, witness. Another explanatory indicator is the relationship between sentimental elements and likes and comments that are demonstrated in table 3. The sentimental elements include cry, persistence, misery, horror, grief, catastrophe. In addition, the coding sheet includes categories of comments that could be pro-Hamas, pro-Israel, or balanced. When the number of likes is usually larger than number of comments, the likes divisions were wider and reached 1M or more. The message delivered by BBC and by Azaiza has been classified to messages that put blame on Israel, Hamas, Arab countries, Islamic nation, or a message makes a call to the world. As a visual analysis, the coding sheet includes identification of the footage elements such as videos, single photo, multiple photos. Also, the availability of the post connected with containing sensitive content like severe injuries or horrific killings may indicate relationship between demonstrating

shocking information and source capability to persuade the audience. In addition to using χ^2 , a Contingency Coefficient has been calculated to measure the strength of correlation between variables. A reliability test has been conducted to determine the consistency of correlation between two measurements of same variables. Alfa Cronbach was calculated to identify the inter-item correlation for the these variables: content/destruction (0.836), displacement (0.927), corps (0.834), statements (0.769), report (0.866), infographic (0.621), likes (0.928), comments (0.928), call to the world (0.899), pro Hamas comments (0.915), Sentimental/cry (0.887), persistence (0.886), grief (0.866). The correlation between measurements of variables shows that the reliability rate ranges from above average to high.

The research five hypotheses are the following:

H₁- There is a relationship between the content of the Instagram post and volumes of likes and comments.

H₂- There is a relationship between sentimental content of Instagram posts (IP) and volumes of likes and comments.

H₃- There is a relationship between the location of the source and volumes of likes and comments.

H₄- There is a relationship between the message of the IP and volumes of likes and comments.

H₅- There is a relationship between availability of the IP and volumes of likes and comments.

Results

No significant relationships were found between research variables except a partial one between the No. of comments and Gaza as news location (0.02) and persistence as human value (0.00). Posts represented messages as call for the world to take an action have significant

relationship with volumes of both likes and comments. Comments on posts that support Hamas have a significant relationship with BBC rather than posts that support Israel (Table 4).

The next table No.1 compares BBC and Azaiza in the main analysis trajectories that includes the answer to the paper questions and the following graphs highlighting the most significant elements of the comparison:

Table 1

Variables Descriptive Frequencies of Azaiza and BBC

Content	Azaiza	BBC	Message	Azaiza	BBC	Visuals	Azaiza	BBC
Destruction	46.7	35.0	Blame-I	73.3	50.0	Video	45.0	78.3
Displace.	11.7	21.7	Blame-H	0	20.0	Multi pics	26.7	20.0
Dead / Injuries	31.7	11.7	Call World	35.0	6.7	One picture	28.3	5.0
Explosion	11.7	8.3	None	20.0	23.3	Availability		
Statement	8.3	11.7	Likes V.			Available	83.3	98.3
Report	20.0	41.7	< 50 K	1.7	53.3	Not Available	16.7	1.7
Infograph	0	8.3	50 - 100 K	0	30.0	Camera		
Witness	6.7	11.7	100 - 500 K	13.3	16.7	Medium	75.0	46.6
Other	35.0	31.7	500 K - 1M	26.7	0	Close	1.6	8.3
Sentiment			> 1M	58.3	0	Long	10.0	1.7
Cry / Weep	15.0	11.7	Comments A.			Drone	6.7	1.7
Persistence	26.7	13.3	Pro Hamas	95.0	68.3	Report	6.7	41.7
Comment	13.3	28.3	Pro-Israel	5.0	20.0			
Miserable	40.0	18.3	Equal	0	11.7			
Horror	20.0	13.3	Comments V.					
Grief	1.7	11.7	< 1 K	1.7	0			
Catastrophe	6.7	3.3	1 - 5 K	10.0	41.7			

Chaos	0	20.0	5 - 10 K	15.0	40.0
Other	38.3	11.7	> 10 K	73.3	18.3

Regarding the basis of the power that supports the credibility of both Azaiza and the BBC, they both relied on legitimacy, experience, reference, and information, but from different angles. Azaiza is an independent photographer from Gaza with average experience in photojournalism and video coverage of events. It is clear from his social media profiles that he does not belong to any political party and has no ideological orientation. Being a resident of Gaza makes him more understanding of its cultural, social and political peculiarities. Through his relationships with his neighborhood, he was able to form an information network that could be relied upon for quick and direct coverage of events, even if they did not include a coherent news context. As for the BBC, it relied on correspondents who were not present inside Gaza, but who are experienced at writing news reports using maps and infographics.

When analyzing dynamics of source credibility, regarding initial credibility, Azaiza did not have the same credit as the BBC. The latter has a long history of journalistic work and professional charters that govern its work and restrict correspondents to strict rules in dealing with sources and covering news stories with commitment to quality and inclusiveness. Azaiza cannot compete with this credit. This initial credibility began to erode with the continued coverage of the war on Gaza in a biased manner, which made the balance of transitional credibility increase significantly in Azaiza's favor. Evidence of this is the presence of a large difference in the like rate, which reached millions in many of Azaiza's blog posts, while it did not exceed dozens of thousands or less on the BBC. It seems that the human and emotional relationship that Azaiza was able to form with his followers has created long-term credibility that will make his posts about Gaza or other topics highly credible in exchange for a possible decline in the long-term credibility of the BBC.

Table 2

Relationships Statistically significance of Azaiza and BBC - 1

Azaiza				BBC			
Relationship	Chi ²	C. C	Spear.	Relationship	Chi ²	C. C	Spear.
destruction * Likes	.156	.303	.154	destruction * Likes	.123	.258	.048
destruction * Comments	.133	.277	.087	destruction * Comments	.916	.054	.729
displace * Likes	.238	.246	.749	displace * Likes	.719	.105	.84
displace * Comments	.687	.158	.362	displace * Comments	.871	.068	.94
corps * Likes	.422	.243	.653	corps * Likes	.120	.233	.960
corps * Comments	.319	.227	.577	corps * Comments	.619	.127	.667
explosion * Likes	.480	.186	.627	explosion * Likes	.247	.211	.195
explosion * Comments	.594	.134	.386	explosion * Comments	.402	.180	.191
statement * Likes	.222	.247	.060	statement * Likes	.05	.249	.134
statement * Comments	.353	.179	.170	statement * Comments	.954	.039	.864
report * Likes	.676	.193	.704	report * Likes	.838	.077	.743
report * Comments	.914	.073	.832	report * Comments	.473	.156	.867
Infograph * Likes	-	-	-	Infograph * Likes	.820	.081	.578
Infograph * Comments	-	-	-	Infograph * Comments	.994	.014	.921
witness * Likes	.341	.220	.096	witness * Likes	.03	.294	.632
witness * Comments	.460	.159	.224	witness * Comments	.287	.189	.731
Other * Likes	.558	.205	.129	Other * Likes	.666	.112	.509
Other * Comments	.611	.153	.352	Other * Comments	.134	.232	.105

Table 3

Relationships Statistically significance of Azaiza and BBC - 2

Relationship	Azaiza			Relationship	BBC		
	Chi ²	C. C	Spear.		Chi ²	C. C	Spear.
Cry * Likes	.859	.141	.705	Cry * Likes	.619	.127	.667
Cry * Comments	.866	.101	.692	Cry * Comments	.235	.170	.562
Persistence * Likes	.045	.342	.00	Persistence * Likes	.851	.073	.584
Persistence * Comments	.744	.125	.381	Persistence * Comments	.134	.206	.119
comment * Likes	.562	.172	.579	comment * Likes	.530	.143	.280
comment * Comments	.469	.166	.761	comment * Comments	.245	.207	.581
misery * Likes	.058	.356	.00	misery * Likes	.182	.262	.119
misery * Comments	.59	.323	.064	misery * Comments	.250	.222	.131
horror * Likes	.964	.081	.967	horror * Likes	.802	.089	.704
horror * Comments	.261	.210	.698	horror * Comments	.383	.178	.570
grief * Likes	.387	.315	.105	grief * Likes	.973	.030	.821
grief * Comments	.190	.364	.052	grief * Comments	.206	.176	.226
catastrophe * Likes	.094	.319	.031	catastrophe * Likes	.662	.088	.645
catastrophe * Comments	.179	.299	.034	catastrophe * Comments	.633	.102	.893
Chaos * Likes	-	-	-	Chaos * Likes	.512	.143	.273
Chaos * Comments	-	-	-	Chaos * Comments	.355	.179	.164
other * Likes	.430	.228	.619	other * Likes	.361	.181	.163
other * Comments	.431	.122	.479	other * Comments	.268	.224	.194

It can be concluded from the following charts that demonstrate the most salient findings of this study that most volumes of likes went to Gaza (100k-500k) on BBC and more than 1M

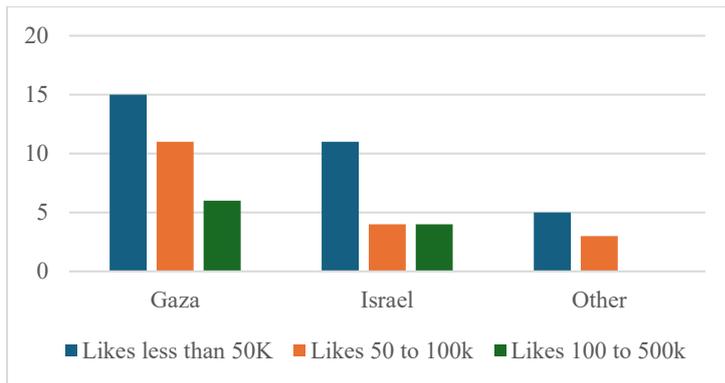
on Azaiza Instagram account. (Charts 1,2) Most of the photos' content describe the deconstruction and the comments are on the photos represent the miserable conditions and persistence quotes of the Palestinian people. (Charts 3,4) Most of the comments blaming Israel as the responsible party of continuity of War on Gaza in both Azaiza and BBC. (Chart 5). Most higher volumes of likes and comments went to Azaiza content. (Charts 6,7) Comments that represent pro Hamas attitudes and opinions are higher than those supports Israel. (Chart 8) Most of the visual content posted by Azaiza was in the form of one still image (due to network signal complications), however the BBC content was mainly videos, and the accessibility of BBC content was slightly higher than Azaiza content. (Charts 9.10).

Table 4

Comments are Significantly Correlated to Post Location

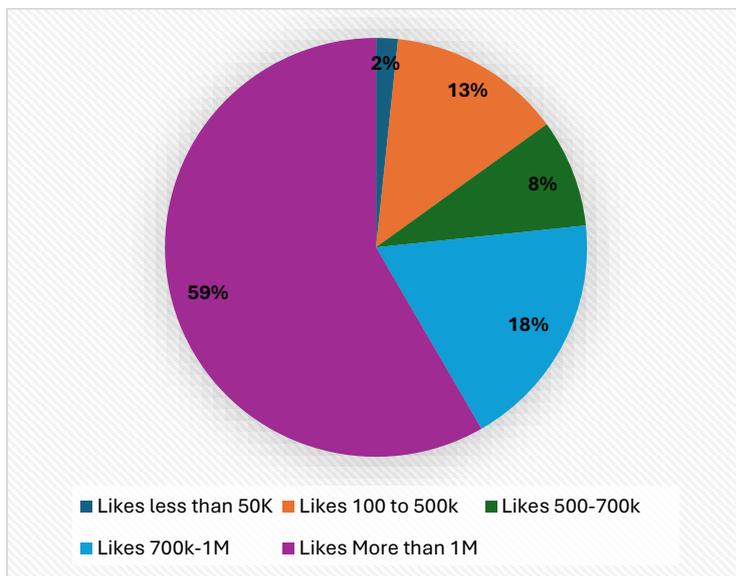
BBC			
Relationship	Chi ²	C. C	Spear.
Location *Likes	.474	.245	.447
Location*comments	.021	.439	.886

Figure 1



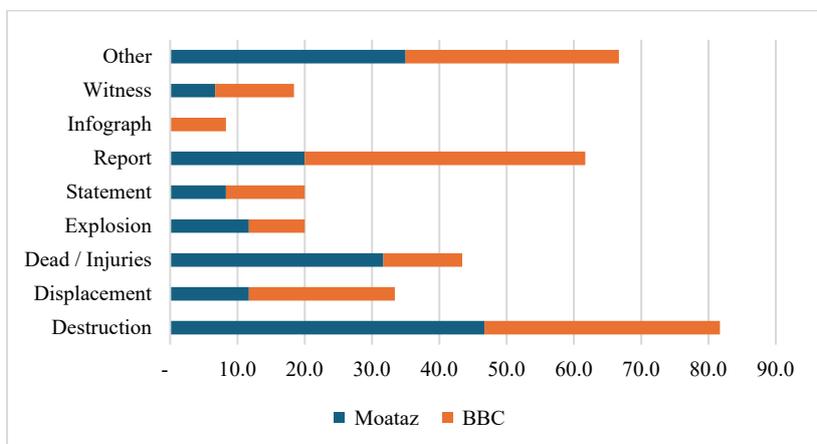
Likes volumes correlation to Location of the Posts

Figure 2



Likes volumes correlation to Gaza in Azaiza Posts

Figure 3



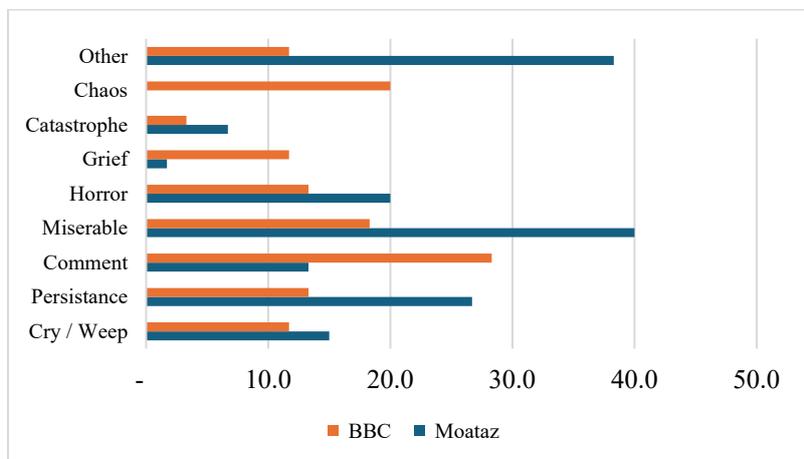
Comparing the Type of Post Content

Table 5

“Calls for the World” is Significantly Connected to Likes and Comments

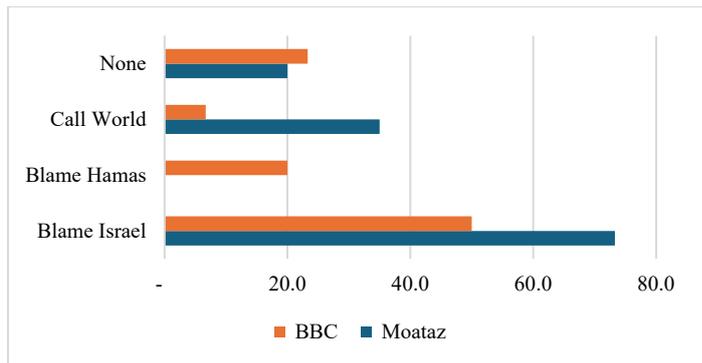
Azaiza				BBC			
Relationship	Chi ²	C. C	Spear.	Relationship	Chi ²	C. C	Spear.
Availability*Likes	.027	.391	.843	Availability*Likes	.160	.280	.111
Availability*Comments	.253	.198	.243	Availability*Comments	.176	.265	.128
M_B_Is * Likes	.502	.234	.372	M_B_Is * Likes	.497	.150	.418
M_B_Is * Comments	.449	.203	.252	M_B_Is * Comments	.937	.047	.741
M_B_H * Likes	---	---	---	M_B_H * Likes	.696	.113	.628
M_B_H * Comments	---	---	---	M_B_H * Comments	.086	.293	.050
M_C_W * Likes	.001	.443	.000	M_C_W * Likes	.226	.173	.582
M_C_W * Comments	.013	.346	.000	M_C_W * Comments	.769	.091	.506

Figure 4



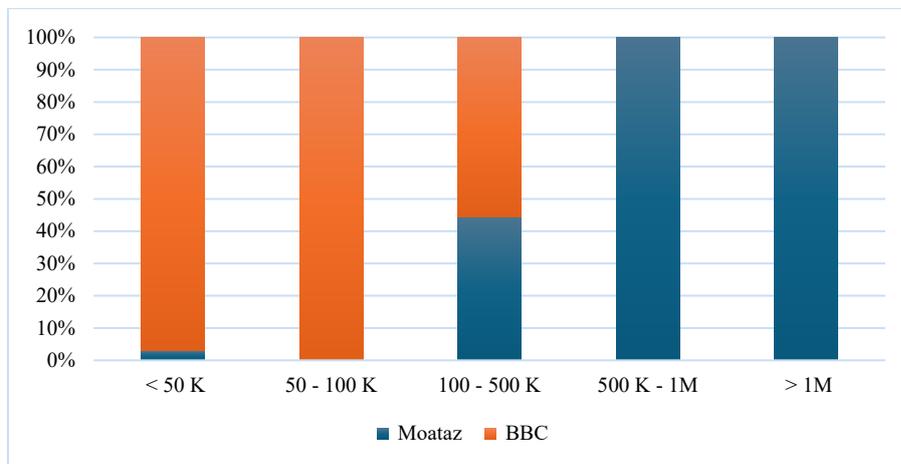
Sentimental Messages of the Posts

Figure 5



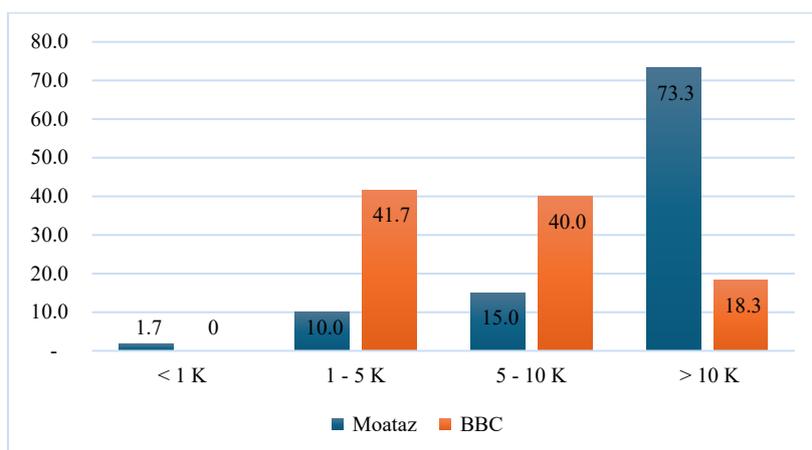
Comparing Messages Attitudes

Figure 6



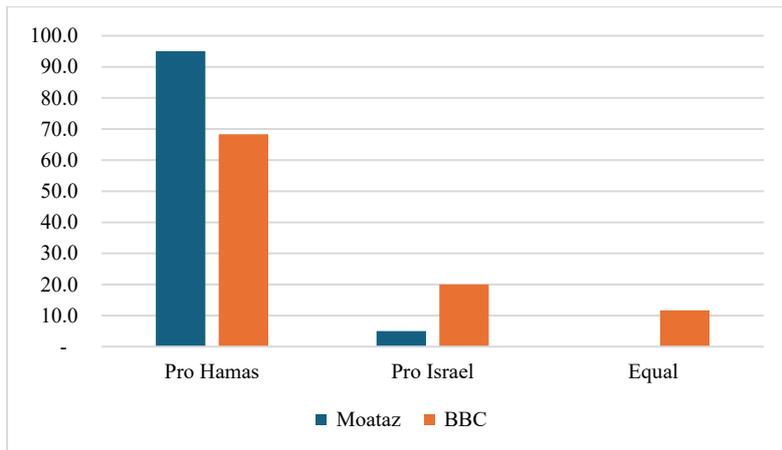
Comparing volumes of Likes

Figure 7



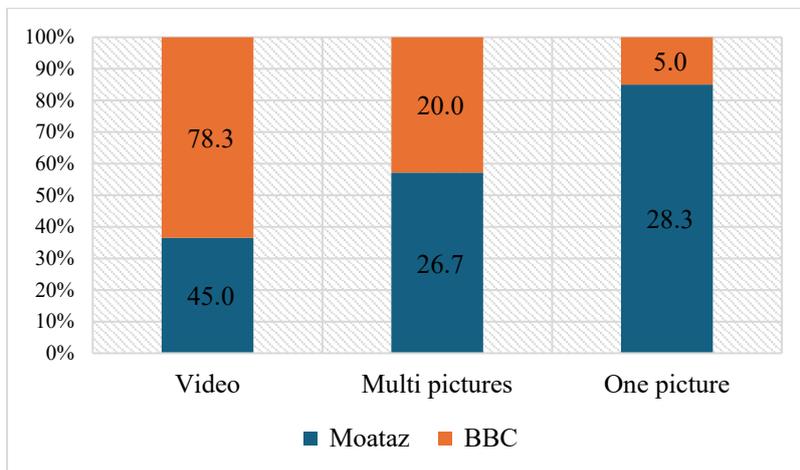
Comparing Volumes of Comments

Figure 8



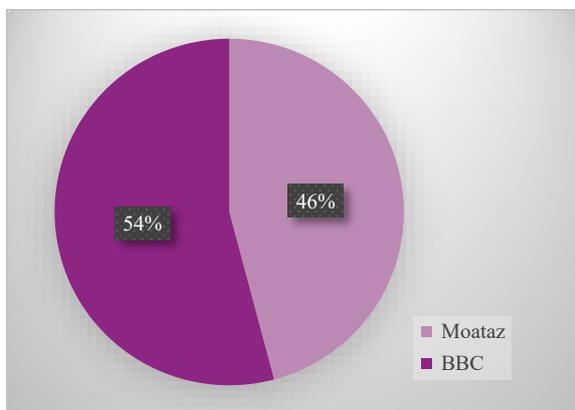
Comparing Attitudes of Comments

Figure 9



Comparing Types of Visuals

Figure 10



Comparing Visuals Accessibility

By analyzing the textual content of Aziza and BBC, it can be noticed that there is a remarkable decline in BBC credibility for adopting coverage that contradicts with logic and far from common sense in comparison between victims and casualties in both sides. It has been found that there are contexts of coverage that would support credibility and other contexts that destroy credibility of source. Contexts that destroy credibility include, illogical responsibility attribution, discrepancy between video facts and news reporting, crushing human values in favor of adhering to positions, firm conviction of the injustice of the conflict situation, blindly repeat ridiculous arguments. In contrast, contexts that support credibility include bearing (part of) live broadcasting costs and risks, unwavering belief in justice and humanity, and a relentless commitment to reporting the news. Here are samples of the users' comments that explain this result:

- First, **illogical responsibility attribution**

This was reported by BBC in 16th of October to hold Hamas responsible of Israeli attacks. "More than 2,700 people in Gaza have been killed in retaliatory strikes by Israel, following an attack by Hamas which killed 1,400 people."

- Next day bombing the National hospital (18th Oct), President Biden visited Israel and declared during a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister that "it "appears" a hospital blast in Gaza was done by the other team". The comments hold Biden responsible for supporting genocide. "Based on what I can see, you seem complicit in a genocide, Joe."

- Second, the **discrepancy between video facts and news reporting.**

When the hostage deal released an 85-year-old grandmother the BBC headline was a quote "I went through hell", however in the same report she said that the hostages have been treated well!! The comments accused BBC of spreading fake news and lies.

This is one of the comments examples “Please tell your kids that if they don't stop lying, they will grow up and end up working in BBC 😊”

- Third, **crushing human values in favor of adhering to positions.**

A comment on Naftali Bennett statement, “Hey BBC, you can choose not to post this. Your job is not to simply post. But to THINK before you post. While children DIE every day in Gaza, you help build the narrative that Islam is radical and dangerous, creating future hazards for Muslims around the world, Muslims who have absolutely nothing to do with this atrocity.” This post got more than 4500 likes with hundred replies extending the argument.

- Fourth, **firm conviction of the injustice of the conflict situation**

One of the comments on the news story of bombing the ambulance vehicle on BBC 5th Nov and got thousands of likes: “Israel has broken SIXTY-TWO United Nations Resolutions with absolutely no consequences. Iraq broke TWO and got invaded and destroyed by the United States for 8 years. From the Holocaust, we should have learned that crimes against humanity are intolerable. Not that they are tolerable depending on who commits them.”

When BBC keep saying Hamas-run health ministry, one of the popular comments said: “This is ridiculous on so many levels - why do you keep saying “Hamas-run” when you never say whether gov departments in Israel are “Zionist-run” or “Israeli-run”.

- Fifth, **blindly repeat ridiculous arguments.**

When BBC reported that Israel gives prior notice before bombing a group of towers in Gaza at 8th of Nov. as a humanistic act, comments was saying it doesn't make sense, “WHY WHY WHY WHY WOULD you give prior notice of bombing if you were targeting Hamas bases?! If the people vacated the area - WOULDNT “HAMAS” ALSO

VACATE?!? Dumbest propaganda I have ever come across! Please! Make it make sense!”

- When BBC reported 4 days fighting pause on 24th Nov with pics demonstrating how this could be a relief for Palestinians, thousands of comments objected, “They’re already firing on Palestinians what a joke”.

Limitations

- Despite the hybrid nature of this research, the reliance on quantitative approaches outweighed the interest in expanding and deepening qualitative analysis, even though this had an impact on enriching the debate on the basic tenets of source credibility theory.
- Some power tactics identified in the research questions were indirectly addressed in the results, but some could not be traced, such as bilateral and unilateral in terms of their impact on the credibility of the source when comparing coverage between Azaiza and the BBC.
- Research methodology is limited to identifying the relationships between independent and dependent variables without paying attention to the potential roles of mediating variables such as Instagram algorithms and echo chambers, which would have developed more accurate understanding of the relationships.

Conclusion

In times of conflicts, wars, and crises, especially those that are deeply intertwined with social, political, and historical contexts, it seems more beneficial for the party that seeks public sympathy in the age of social media to employ independent, credible influencers than to rely entirely on the well-established media networks, no matter how efficient or reputable it is (Hamdan, Y. 2024, Mohammad, H. W. A. 2024, Hurley, Z. 2025).

It seems that the conviction of the content of the communication message does not depend only on the credibility of the source, but rather that the elements of this credibility as defined by theoretical frameworks such as reputation and informational may not represent anything in conveying the message to the audience and being convinced of it, but rather there are other factors with a greater influence such as visual content on screens and live broadcasts from event sites, which do not require a mediator to transmit it, and therefore the characteristics of the mediator related to credibility are not of vital importance. (Mang, V., et al. 2024)

The war on Gaza demonstrated that even highly credible media can lose much of its reputation due to the message's content contradicting logic and historical experience, and the unjustified discrimination in the value of human life between parties in conflict zones, especially if the zone is occupied territory whose inhabitants have been resisting occupation for decades. (Khamis, S., & Dogbatse, F. S. 2024, Hassan, K. 2024).

Deviating from the objective coverage expected from credible outlets may lead audiences, especially younger ones, to rely almost entirely on independent sources for news. This could have three consequences: First, it allows a greater opportunity for the spread of fake news; second, it could lead to the public losing trust in other news provided by the untrustworthy outlet; and third, perhaps the most positive consequence is that this failure to achieve credibility could arouse the public's curiosity to know the truth about what is happening, and they may search for the social contexts and historical backgrounds of the news themselves. This search would promote an independent understanding of conflict-related news and could construct a critical view of its course. Whether it is searching for backgrounds and contexts or forming a critical perspective for understanding, these are roles that the media, with its traditional practices and narratives, has not been able to perform adequately.

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