



The Professional Performance of Media and Social Network During the Crisis: Audience's Perception of Covid-19 Coverage

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to identify and analyze the public attitudes and perceptions of the treatment of the coronavirus crisis by media and communication organizations in the UAE. To what extent have they succeeded in introducing the CORONA virus and its symptoms, methods of prevention and precautionary measures, their perceptions of the most important means of communication that succeeded in raising their awareness of the crisis and affected their handling of the crisis, and their assessment of the nature of the information obtained from these mass media and social media in terms of its completeness, accuracy, etc. The study revealed a convergence in the roles that social media and the media have been interested in dealing with the virus and their relevance to the roles assigned to them, and both agreed to prioritize the roles related to the identification of THE CORONA virus, to raise awareness of the importance of taking precautionary measures with regard to HIV and to inform members of society about the symptoms of the virus. These results indicated that both the media and social media play an important role in spreading information related to the virus than in the roles of awareness and guidance. It also reveals that there is a lack of effort exerted by both media in the use of specialists to fulfil their roles in enhancing the awareness and guidance of the virus. The study also found that the public relied more on social media than the conventional media to obtain information about the coronavirus, which is risky because of the inaccuracy and reliability of the information published through social media. The public's assessment of the professional performance of the conventional media was also more positive than their assessment of the professional performance of social media.

Keywords: Crisis media, media coverage of CORONA, social media and CORONA virus, professional media performance

INTRODUCTION

Since early 2020, the world has been witnessing an unprecedented crisis, as a result of the consequences of the spread of the Corona virus, at a time when visions are confused about the best ways to deal with this pandemic, whether at the health, economic, political, psychological or media levels. While some countries, institutions and individuals have succeeded to some extent in dealing with this crisis, others have suffered from many crises. At a time when several

institutions played important roles in addressing this pandemic, others did not perform the roles assigned to them.

Moreover, visions varied in terms of the roles played by social media and other sources, whether personal, specialized or official, in dealing with the Corona virus crisis. Whereas some considered that social media spread a lot of rumors and misinformation, and that their professional performance neither transferred true information, nor provided guidance or spread awareness, others considered that the traditional media succeeded in conveying a more accurate picture of the virus to the public (Ipsos, 2020, Middle East, June, 2020, Nic Newman. 2020. Reuters Report 2020). But in general, the results related to this matter are still inconclusive, in addition to the fact that the emergence of other sources that played important roles in the process of communicating with the public to introduce and prevent the virus, including specialized and governmental agencies and personal means of communication, calls for conducting many studies to identify the public's perceptions of the virus regarding the means they relied on in dealing with the coronavirus crisis and their evaluation of their professional performance, which helps to form clearer visions of how to deal with such crises and disasters, and good planning for communicating with the public.

The importance of the media in modern societies is that it is a major source of information, especially after the spread of satellite channels and the increasing reliance on the Internet and social media. While some studies have concluded that satellite TV is at the forefront of the means that the public relies on as sources of information, other studies have shown the increasing reliance on the Internet; especially on the part of young people, to obtain information; especially during crises.

With the tremendous progress in communication technology, which made it possible to know news at the global level at the same time and receive it as quickly as receiving local news, the public's dependence on these means has increased as the main source for obtaining information about the events and issues raised; especially in times of need for information, and the need of individuals to information that helps them reveal what is going on, evaluate situations, and build new directions (Suzan Al-Qalini, 1998). This confirms the need to know the quality of the means from which the public derives its information, and the perceptions of individuals about the nature of the roles played by these means during crises.

During the past months of 2020, the world witnessed many visions about media treatments for the Coronavirus crisis, including: (1) that while the media is one of the most important pillars of managing this crisis in many countries of the world, it was part of the crisis in other countries, as some of these means did not assume national responsibility, and fell into the trap of rumors and intimidation of the crisis, and instead of being a factor of reassurance for society, they were a cause for fear and panic at times. (2) The coronavirus crisis has doubled the responsibility of the media, and it has become the most important actor in managing this crisis. The responsible media contributes to support the governmental and institutional management of any crisis .

(3) If the crisis, in its definition, refers to a sudden and unexpected development in a case, and it requires quick action by the concerned authorities to contain the repercussions arising from

it, then the role of the media in managing this crisis is mainly to reassure the members of society and work to remove any negative feelings that may result and address the rumors associated with it. (4) The outbreak of the crisis was accompanied by an increase in the demand for and access to social media during the crisis by individuals, due to the lack of natural social communication and the presence of more free time for users, who are restricted to stay in their homes (Al-Sharq al-Awsat, July 2020).

(5) The Corona crisis constituted a test for the media in their ability to gain and maintain the public's trust, and their ability to convey accurate health information in times of crisis, without underestimation or intimidation (Amal Al-Ghazawi, 2020) (Nic Newman. 2020. Reuters report, 2020). This study seeks to identify the nature of the roles played by the means of communication as seen by the public.

IMPORTANCE OF STUDY

- Determining the type of communication means that the public depends on in times of crisis, and those on which it depends in acquiring information related to the Coronavirus.
- Getting to know the public's evaluation of the professional performance of the communication methods that were relied upon to obtain information related to the Coronavirus.
- Assisting government and community agencies in evaluating the media and communication experience in dealing with the coronavirus crisis and identifying strengths and weaknesses in the experience.
- Determining the most prominent means that can be employed in the field of crisis media and how to avoid mistakes that can occur during crises.
- Developing indicators to evaluate communication and media performance in the field of dealing with crises.

The study aims to identify and analyze the nature of the public's attitudes and perceptions about the media and communication institutions in the UAE dealing with the Coronavirus crisis and to what extent did they succeed in defining the Coronavirus, its symptoms, methods of prevention, precautionary measures, and response to the authorities concerned with dealing with the crisis, and their perceptions of the most important communication means that succeeded in raising their awareness of the crisis and affected how they deal with it, and their evaluation of the nature of the information obtained from these means and their accuracy, comprehensiveness, completeness, and being free of contradictions, ambiguities, errors, etc.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

There is a wide variety of literature and previous studies that dealt with some aspects of the study, including:

(1) Studies concerned with evaluating media performance in dealing with crises and disasters, such as the study (Laila Hussein El-Sayed, 1998), which aimed to identify the role of means of communication in providing the Egyptian University students with information about current events, and concluded that television ranks first among the sources Information that the respondents depend on to know current events.

The study of Mohamed Mahmoud Al-Mursi (1991) also showed that the Egyptian television came at the forefront of the means on which the public relied in the process of obtaining information about the Gulf crisis, and that the Egyptian television coverage of this crisis was in line with the state's general policy, so there was a shortcoming in news coverage, in presenting all opinions and trends about the crisis. Howayda Mustafa's (1994) study revealed that the media coverage of the Gulf crisis was characterized by severe stances, as well as the inability to diversify its news sources, as well as its commitment to the state's foreign policy directions in return for neglecting views on the conflict in the Gulf region.

The study of Salah Madkour (2000) concluded that television news programs were content with broadcasting news about the dangers of earthquakes and the measures taken by officials towards this crisis. The study of Rifaat al-Dabaa (2014) concluded that the television and newspapers were at the forefront of the media on which they depend in times of crisis, and that the media are the preferred source for obtaining information about crises that occur in society, and that the sample members saw that the media scoop on the bird flu crisis. It was for the media, especially the terrestrial television channels. And that most of the sample members relied on the national newspapers to obtain information on the bird flu crisis.

The study of Suzan al-Qalini (1998) established that television was the first source of information about the Luxor incident, while the Egyptian radio emerged as the best source that covered the Luxor incident, although there were some negative aspects in dealing with these events, including inaccuracy in information, the absence of an explanatory background, and the lack of inclusion element in treatment of coverage.

(3) Studies that dealt with the role of social media in crises, such as Magdy Al-Dagher's study (2018), in which he concluded that Twitter is the social network that university youth are exposed to in times of crises and disasters, and will be used in the field of electronic volunteering, and their support for the role it plays as a source of information and exchange of opinions, comments, photos and videos among its users on the importance of volunteering in times of crisis, and showing the interests of university youth in volunteer activities in times of crises and disasters. The study of Nayef Al-Shalhoub (2010) concluded that the Saudi media did not provide quick and accurate information about the size of the Jeddah rain crisis in 2009, while the alternative media represented by social networks outperformed in revealing the size of the losses.

The study of Sliver & Conrad, 2010 concluded that most of the study sample were satisfied with the information they obtained about Joan Hurricane, and that it was accurate, and the youth group came at the forefront of following the crisis through the Internet, and Sherman, 2009 study concluded the efficiency of short warning messages before the Mississippi Hurricane. The results indicated that the students received warning messages via mobile phone, and that smart phones were faster in obtaining information about the hurricane and avoiding its dangers. The study of Spence, Lachlan & Griffin, 2007 concluded that television was the main source of obtaining information on Hurricane Katrina, while the elite group resorted to smartphones and websites after the hurricane.

(4) Studies related to the analysis of media coverage of the Corona virus, as some studies showed an increase in the rate of information usage in light of the spread of the Coronavirus,

as well as the spread of misinformation and fake news about the virus, which called on many experts to emphasize that the crisis is an opportunity to enhance the status and credibility of the media. As reliable sources of information (Edelman, 2020), a study by researchers (Dad & Ahmed) concluded that virus news controlled the media in all its forms, and that traditional news media played a major role in disseminating vital information to the public, and the report (Comscore, 2020) found an increase in using information via social networks, and having difficulty finding trustworthy sources (Jurkowitz & Mitchell, 2020).

(5) Studies that dealt with rumors in times of crisis: Many studies, such as Wenger & Friedman 1986 study, found that the public avoids official media during a period of social crises and turns to local social networks available to obtain information, as concluded by Oh, et al., 2013. The public felt that local media were not providing the information that residents of fire-affected areas needed in a timely manner, so many of them turned to social media to fill the information gap created by official media. Garrett, 2011 concluded that social media allow the formation of more extensive relational relationships between individuals, which in turn increases the effectiveness of spreading rumors. The study of Al-Rawas and Al-Hayes (2016) confirmed the existence of a negative impact of Internet applications in spreading rumors, as a result of the lack of awareness and the low level of education.

(6) Studies that analyzed media coverage of the Coronavirus, including the Muslim Abbas study (2020), in which he identified several paths that the media followed in covering information about the virus (1) The First Path: conveying facts about the virus from its actual sources, such as hospitals and specialized institutions, the World Health Organization, as well as publishing previous scientific research on viruses, the nature of their lives and ways of transmission to humans, and the preventive measures that a person must take to protect themselves and others from those incurable viruses. (2) The Second Path: relying on biased reports, i.e. the sense of the political use of the virus, some satellite channels deal with the spread of the virus according to the nature of the country it targets. (3) The Third Path: Intimidation and underestimation, as some satellite channels transmitted news of the virus as if it represented the end of humanity, while other means underestimated the virus as if it resembled the seasonal flu that infects people in the winter season. (4) The Fourth Path: It is represented in the coverage of social networking sites, which I considered unsuitable for circulation for many reasons, including the lack of specialized bodies in transmitting news, the absence of control over the flow of information and the public's weakness in verifying news, as well as classifying these sites among sites that disseminate information on raising awareness, another focusing on intimidation, a third focusing on belittling, and a fourth dealing with the virus as if it were a religious conflict.

Youssef Haddad's study (2020) on the Emirati media's handling of the Coronavirus crisis concluded that the Emirati media plays an active, influential and key role in managing the crisis of the spread of the Coronavirus, whether in terms of providing information on a timely basis and in full transparency to show the facts to the Emirati and international community, or in terms of playing its educational by raising awareness of members of society through many activities aimed at protecting society, or through messages of solidarity with countries and societies that suffer from a large outbreak of the virus.

He also concluded that the most important characteristic of the Emirati media's handling of the "Corona" crisis is the rapid and balanced response that did not leave an opportunity to launch malicious rumors that raise concern among members of society, and to unify the message by the various media, written, audio and visual. Moreover, the various social media were keen to provide transparent information about the virus to show the facts to the Emirati and international community, and to reveal the numbers of people infected with the virus firsthand without denial or intimidation, and to follow up on their health condition and the extent of their response to treatment, which helped send messages of reassurance to members of society.

Some Notes on Previous Studies

Most of them dealt with separate and scattered parts of the media and communication approaches to crises and disasters. Some focus on one medium without the other, or the traditional media without the new media and social media.

The information and results of previous studies contradict the role of the media in crises, and which means are more important, as well as their evaluation of the performance of these means. While foreign studies focused on opinion polls about crises and disasters expected to occur and how to avoid their risks, most Arab studies relied on studying the crisis after its occurrence and counting the damages resulting from it.

While some studies were satisfied with the theoretical framework of crises and crisis media, other studies focused on the field analysis of crises and did not combine them, nor did they present perceptions of how the media should deal with crises based on experiences, field analysis and analysis of the contents, messages, speeches and media briefings.

Most studies indicated the importance of accuracy, transparency and clarity in providing information in times of disaster, and that the public depends on the media not only to obtain information, but also to enhance its morale and search for the values of social capital in society. Shortage of Arabic studies and being outdated in general with regard to crisis media and the scarcity of local Emirati studies in this field. And lack of studies that analyzed whether the media coverage of the Coronavirus or the response and reactions of the public to this coverage. This study seeks to overcome the shortcomings of previous studies, the inadequacy of the theoretical aspect, and to analyze the public's perceptions about the performance of the means of communication in covering the Coronavirus, and their evaluation of their professional performance.

PROBLEM OF STUDY

Despite the emergence of the role of communication and media institutions and social media in addressing the crisis of the Coronavirus, and the reliance of many institutions on them in communicating with the various parties concerned with the crisis and the target to reach it, is it not known precisely how successful these communication and media means in performing their roles? What is the quality of the media strategy that it has adopted in carrying out its mission during its handling of the crisis, and the extent of its commitment to the necessary professional standards and controls during its handling of such crises? Did it help in facing the crisis or did it lead to the spread of a lot of false and misleading information and rumors that exacerbated the spread of the crisis?

To what extent have they followed integrated communication and media strategies in dealing with the Coronavirus crisis? They also do not know what the public's perceptions and reactions were towards the communication and media establishment's handling of this crisis?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The current study relies on the theory (dependence on the media) as a theoretical framework as it focuses on the means and the degree of its importance to the individual in order to derive their information from it. This theory is based on two pillars: A - Objectives: that is, there are goals that individuals seek to achieve through the information provided by the various media, whether these goals are personal or social. B- Sources:

Where the media is an information system sought by individuals in order to achieve their goals. It considers that individuals depend on the media to achieve the following objectives (1) Understanding: It includes knowing what is going on in the surrounding environment and obtaining experiences, which help to know and interpret things about the external and local world. (2) Guidance: where the media direct individuals to take appropriate decisions and political participation, and interactive reciprocal guidance to obtain indications of how to deal with new situations. (3) Entertainment: where the media provide entertainment that contributes to relaxation, getting rid of boredom and escaping from life's problems (Servin & Withankrd, 1997). The approach identifies a set of effects resulting from individuals' dependence on the media, as follows:

Cognitive Impacts, which are determined in forming trends, arranging priorities, expanding beliefs, promoting and maintaining values (2). Sentimental Impacts are determined by an increase in fear and anxiety, emotional apathy and an increase or decrease in the feeling of alienation. (3) Behavioral Impacts, i.e., the individual doing a certain action as a result of exposure to the means, and it may be a positive, beneficial or negative behavior (Melvin Devler and Sandra Paul, 1993).

The study also relies on the information-seeking theory, and this theory seeks to "test the hypothesis that selective exposure causes individuals to choose information that supports their current trends" (Makawi and El-Sayed, 2009, p. 337). It assumes that "there are stimuli and motivations that define situations or problems that require an individual to request information, and these stimuli and motivations, which require the attention of individuals, who compare them to the elements of the realistic picture they have, that is, compare them to their values, knowledge and vision, in order to achieve the ability to deal with situations, and with their level of need and ability to absorb. And finally, the way they deal with information" (Abu Isbaa, 2010, pg. 209).

As for the type of information that the individual is looking for, "they may use what is known as a risky search strategy, which depends on a specific source or on several basic sources, or by following all the information that the individual can collect, then this information is classified, analyzed and linked to the individual's previous experience." (Makawi and El-Sayed, 2009, 338). Some media researchers identify other elements that are related to situations and affect the individual's search for information, including "time constraints and limitations, the availability of previous information on the subject, and the strategy of searching for information

that relies on basic sources so that the individual collects this information, classifies it, analyzes it, and links it to their previous repertoire."

The theory of seeking information is based on three main pillars through which the public's relationship with the media can be monitored and the extent of its preference for a particular medium, which are: 1. Factors that can affect the individual's choice of communication messages to which he is exposed, and then the medium. 2. Motivations and stimuli that lead the individual to seek information 3. The structure of society and the quality of the media used in it, as the type of media used in a society affects the preference of its members for a particular medium as a source of information. (Abu Isbaa, 2010).

TYPE OF STUDY

This study is located within the framework of exploratory and descriptive studies, as it seeks to explore and describe the nature of the public's interaction with traditional and new media, the quality of the means they relied on in acquiring information related to the Coronavirus, their perceptions of the extent to which these means perform their professional roles, and the quality of the means that they trust in its credibility in dealing with this media crisis.

RESEARCH APPROACH

This study uses the media survey method, to explore and describe the public's perceptions and opinions about the extent of their dependence on the means of communication in acquiring information about the Coronavirus, and their evaluation of the professional performance of these means, in an organized scientific manner, and the analysis of the nature of the public's attitudes and perceptions about the media and communicational institutions in the Emirates dealing with the crisis? And to what extent did they succeed in introducing them to the Coronavirus and its symptoms, methods of prevention, precautionary measures, and response to the authorities concerned with dealing with the crisis, and their perceptions of the most important communication means that succeeded in raising their awareness of the crisis and affected their dealing with it, and their evaluation of the nature of the information obtained from these means and their accuracy, comprehensiveness, completeness, and freedom from Contradictions, ambiguities, errors, etc.

HYPOTHESES OF STUDY

1. The relative importance of the roles that the media and social networking sites play in relation to the handling of COVID-19 varies in public perception.
2. The public's reliance on social media is increasing more than traditional media in obtaining information about the Corona virus.
3. The public relies on social media to obtain information and news about the Coronavirus more than personal means of communication, official and specialized sources (briefings and the website of the Ministry of Health), (health education sites, foreign health sites and alternative medicine sites).
4. The public's evaluation of the professional performance of the media is more positive than its evaluation of the performance of social media in terms of handling Coronavirus news and information.
5. There are statistically significant differences between audience groups according to demographic variables regarding most aspects of the media and social media coverage of Coronavirus news and information.

Data Collection Tools Used:

The study relied on a main tool for data collection, which is the questionnaire form, which aimed to identify the attitudes and motives of the public, several axes which are:

The roles played by the media, social networking sites and the types of media that the public relied on to obtain information about the Coronavirus, the means used to obtain information between personal, official and specialized, the extent to which health information is derived from various means, and evaluation of the public for the professional performance of media and social networking sites.

The questionnaire was applied between the months of March and August 2020, meaning that its questionnaire form was applied before the outbreak of the Coronavirus, and its application continued during the period of the spread of the virus.

Community of Study

The study was applied to a sample of 286 citizens and residents in the UAE. In terms of gender, the percentage of females was (79.7%) and males (20.4%), the arithmetic mean was (1.808) and the standard deviation was (.3948), and in terms of nationality, it was the percentage of citizens in the sample (71.4%) and non-citizens (28.6%), the arithmetic mean (1.322) and the standard deviation (.5570), and in terms of age, the percentage of those under 20 years old (16.9%) and those aged between 20 and 30 years (39.3%), and those aged between 30 to 40 years (13.4%), and those aged between 40 to 50 years (16.2%) and those over 50 years (14.2%) the arithmetic mean (2.682) and the standard deviation (1.2924). In terms of education, the percentage of high school graduates reached (7%), those, who obtained diploma (8.6%), those, who obtained bachelor's degree (44.8%), master's degree (27.2%), PhD Degree (5.9%), and other certificates reached. 12.7%) and the arithmetic mean (4.319) and standard deviation (1.2131), and in terms of income, the percentage of those, whose incomes were less than five thousand dirhams (47.6%), and those whose incomes ranged between five thousand and ten thousand dirhams (11.7%), and those whose incomes ranged between ten thousand and fifteen thousand (4.8%), and those whose incomes exceed fifteen thousand (34%), the arithmetic mean was (2.975) and the standard deviation reached (2.5236), and in terms of employment, the percentage of students is (46.6%) and government employees (215). Employees in the private sector (4.8%), businessmen (2.1%) and pensioners (8.35), the housewives (10.35), the non-workers (4.5%), and the arithmetic mean was (2.523) and the standard deviation was (1.9899).

RESULTS OF STUDY

(1) Roles played by both the media and social networking sites The roles of the media and social media Roles of media and social media

Table No. (1) shows the roles of means of communication in dealing with the Coronavirus.

Roles of media and social media	Roles of Mass Media				Social Media			
	Average	Relative Importance	Relative Importance	Ranking	Average	Relative Importance	Relative Importance	Ranking
Introducing the Coronavirus to individuals of Society.	4.557	0.911	High	1	4.455	0.891	High	1
The society individuals acquaintance with information about the causes and methods of Coronavirus transmission.	4.510	0.902	High	3	4.372	0.874	High	5
Introducing the Coronavirus Symptoms to the society individuals	4.484	0.897	High	4	4.382	0.876	High	4
Raising the awareness of society individuals in terms of the Coronavirus complications	4.383	0.877	High	8	4.355	0.871	High	6
Raising the awareness for following the precautionary measures.	4.568	0.914	High	2	4.469	0.894	High	2
Helping in quitting the social habits that cause the spread of Coronavirus	4.477	0.895	High	6	4.353	0.871	High	7
Highlighting the importance of preventive health screenings.	4.482	0.896	High	5	4.344	0.869	High	8
Raising the awareness of quitting the social habits that cause the virus	4.456	0.891	High	7	4.406	0.881	High	3

Table No. (1) shows the public's perceptions of the roles played by the media and social sites in relation to the handling of the Coronavirus.

With regard to the roles of the media in addressing the Coronavirus, these roles came in the following order according to the rate of relative importance: In the forefront was the definition of community members with the Coronavirus, with a mean (4.557), a relative importance rate (0.911) and a level of importance (high), followed by awareness of the importance of following precautionary measures for prevention with an arithmetic average (4.568), a relative importance rate (0.914) and an importance level (high), followed by briefing community members with information about the causes and methods of transmission of the Coronavirus, with an arithmetic average (4.510), and a relative importance rate (0.902) and a level of importance (high), followed by introducing community members to the symptoms of the Coronavirus, with a mean (4.557), a relative importance rate (0.911) and a level of importance (high), followed by awareness of the importance of conducting tests for prevention, with a mean (4.482), a relative importance rate (0.896) and a level of importance (high), followed by helping in correcting the social habits that cause the spread of the Coronavirus, with a mean (4.477), and a relative importance rate (0.895) and a level of importance (high), followed by awareness to quit the social habits that cause the virus, with a mean (4.456), and a relative

importance rate (0.891) with a significance level (high), followed by educating community members about the complications of the coronavirus with an arithmetic mean (4.383), a relative importance rate (0.877) and a significance level (high).

With regard to the roles of social media in addressing aspects related to the Coronavirus, these roles came in the following order, according to the rate of relative importance:

Introducing community members to the Coronavirus with an arithmetic average (4.455), a relative importance rate (0.891) and a level of importance (high), followed by awareness of the importance of following the precautionary measures for prevention with an arithmetic average (4.469), and a relative importance rate (0.894) and a level of importance (high), followed by awareness of quitting the social habits that cause the virus with an arithmetic mean (4.406), a relative importance rate (0.881) and a (high) importance level, followed by introducing community members to the symptoms of the Coronavirus with an arithmetic mean (4.382), and a relative importance rate (0.876) at a (high) level of importance, followed by informing community members with information about the causes and methods of transmission of the Coronavirus with an arithmetic average (4.372), a relative importance rate (0.874) and a level of importance (high), followed by educating individuals about the ways of transmission of the Coronavirus with an arithmetic average (4.372), and a relative importance rate (0.874) with a level of importance (high), followed by help in correcting the social habits that cause the spread of the Coronavirus with an arithmetic average (4.353), a relative importance rate (0.871) and a level of importance (high), followed by awareness of the importance of conducting tests for prevention with an arithmetic average (4.344), with a rate of relative importance (0.869) and a level of importance (high).

The results of the table reveal the convergence of the roles that both social media and the social networking sites paid attention to in dealing with the Coronavirus, and giving the same importance to all the roles assigned to them, as the relative importance of all roles reached a high level, which proves the incorrectness of the assumption that the relative importance of roles played by the media and social networking sites in relation to dealing with the Coronavirus varies even if they agree to give priority to the roles related to introducing the Coronavirus, raising awareness of the importance of following precautionary measures in relation to the virus, and informing members of society of the symptoms of the virus.

The previous results indicate that the media and social networking sites are more interested in playing informational and definable roles than in awareness and guidance roles, which has repercussions on the frequent transmission of information that may not be true about the virus on the one hand, and on the lack of effort exerted by any of these means of hiring specialists to perform awareness and guidance roles.

The means used to obtain information varied between personal, official and specialized.

Mass Media	Average	Relative Importance Rate	Relative Importance Level	Gender		Nationality	
				Mann Whitney	Significant Value	Mann Whitney	Significant Value
Instagram	4.035	0.807	High	4524	0.001	6475.000	521.
Twitter	2.847	0.569	Medium	5230	0.045	5440.000	019.
YouTube	2.448	0.490	Medium	5257.5	0.07	6182.000	276.
Snapchat	2.854	0.571	Medium	4583.5	0.004	5351.000	010.
Facebook	1.547	0.309	Low- medium	3592	0	4560.000	000.
Governmental Media Briefings	4.105	0.821	High	5724	0.276	5500.500	021.
Ministry of Health Website	3.153	0.631	Medium-high	5674.5	0.335	6610.000	922.
Health Education Websites	2.695	0.539	Medium	5856	0.986	5679.000	106.
Family	3.593	0.719	Medium-high	5705.5	0.225	6691.500	796.
Friends	3.365	0.673	Medium-high	5226	0.061	6461.000	661.
WhatsApp	3.457	0.691	Medium-high	5234.5	0.041	5641.500	032.
Private Electronic Groups	2.062	0.412	Medium	5803.5	0.307	6633.500	750.
Courses and seminars	2.121	0.424	Medium	5604.5	0.151	5983.000	108.
Alternative Medicine websites	1.806	0.361	Low-medium-	5727	0.407	6711.500	912.
Physicians	3.176	0.635	Medium-high	5607	0.237	5948.500	118.
Health Care Centres	2.810	0.562	Medium	6060	0.622	6093.000	195.
Pharmacists	2.362	0.472	Medium	6253	0.974	6374.500	586.
Foreign Health Websites	2.115	0.423	Medium	5925	0.775	6237.000	444.

Table No. (3) shows a comparison between the means used to obtain information about Corona The previous table compares the extent to which the public depends on official sources (briefings and the website of the Ministry of Health) and specialized sites (health education sites, foreign health sites and alternative medicine sites), social media for news and information about the Coronavirus, and personal means of communication (family, friends and WhatsApp _ as a means of communication between acquaintances, friends and family) and it appeared that the most reliable means was Instagram among the social media with an average of (4.035) and a relative importance rate (0.807) and a high level of importance, as well as reliance on government media briefings with an average of (4.105) with a relative importance rate of (0.821).

And at a high level of importance, which is healthy in terms of the public's keenness to follow the news of the virus through government media briefings as a reliable, official and local source, and to match it with the same importance as social media.

The results of the table can be detailed as follows (1) In terms of the public's dependence on official sources such as: government media briefings, the dependence on them came with an average of 4.105, and a relative importance rate of 0.821, and the level of relative importance is high, although there are statistically significant differences between Emirati and non-Emirati citizens in terms of relying on government media briefings to obtain news and information about the Coronavirus, the Emirati citizen was more interested in following them, as the value of (Mann Whitney 5500.500, P value 0.021 less than 0.05). But there were no statistically significant differences between males and females in terms of the extent of dependence on government briefings to obtain news and information about the Coronavirus, as it reached (Mann Whitney 5724, P value 0.276 greater than 0.05).

The arithmetic mean of relying on the website of the Ministry of Health was 3.153, the rate of relative importance was 0.631, and the level of relative importance was medium-high. There were no statistically significant differences between the Emirati and non-Emirati citizen in terms of the extent of reliance on the website of the Ministry of Health to obtain news and information about the Coronavirus, where the value of (Mann Whitney 6610, P value 0.922 is greater than 0.05). Also, there were no statistically significant differences between males and females in terms of the extent of reliance on the website of the Ministry of Health to obtain news and information about the Coronavirus, where the value of (Mann Whitney 5674.500, P value 0.335 is greater than 0.05).

Regarding The audience's dependence on social media, the table reveals the audience's dependence on Instagram with an average of 4.035, a relative importance rate of 0.807, and a high level of relative importance, and statistically significant differences appeared between males and females in terms of the extent of dependence on Instagram as a means of social communication to obtain news and information on the Coronavirus, where the value of (Mann Whitney 4524, P value 0.001 less than 0.05). However, there were no statistically significant differences between the Emirati and non-Emirati citizen in terms of the extent of reliance on Instagram as a means of social communication to obtain news and information about the Coronavirus, where the value of (Man Whitney 6475, P value 0.521 is greater than 0.05). While the public is interested in relying on Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube and Twitter come in second place, but the importance of relying on Facebook among the public's social media has declined, as its popularity in the UAE is less than other social media; especially among the youth group.

With regard to the public's dependence on personal means of communication to obtain news and information about the Coronavirus, these sources came in the following order: the family, in the first place, with an average of 3.593, a relative importance rate of 0.719, and the level of relative importance between medium and high, There were no statistically significant differences in gender and nationality in terms of the extent of reliance on the family as a non-media source for news and information on the Coronavirus. Followed by friends, in the second rank with an average of 3.365, and a relative importance rate of 0.673, and the level of relative importance between medium and high, and there were no statistically significant differences in gender and nationality in terms of the extent of dependence on friends as a source of non-media sources for news and information about the Coronavirus. This is followed by courses and seminars, with an average of 2.121, with a relative importance rate of 0.424, and a medium level of relative importance. There were no statistically significant differences in gender and nationality in terms of the extent of reliance on courses and seminars as a source of non-media

sources to obtain news and information about the Coronavirus. Followed by dependence on WhatsApp with an average of 3.457, a rate of relative importance of 0.691, and a level of relative importance of medium – high.

There were statistically significant differences between males and females in terms of the extent of reliance on WhatsApp as a means of social communication to obtain news and information about the Coronavirus, where the value of (Mann Whitney 5234.500, P value 0.041 less than 0.05). There were also statistically significant differences between Emirati and non-Emirati citizens in terms of the extent of dependence on WhatsApp as a means of social communication to obtain news and information about the Coronavirus, where the value of (Mann Whitney 5641.500, P value 0.032 less than 0.05), with an average of 2.062, with a relative importance rate of 0.412, and a medium level of relative importance, there were no statistically significant differences in gender and nationality in terms of the extent of reliance on private electronic groups as a source of non-media sources to obtain news and information about the Coronavirus.

(4) With regard to the public's reliance on specialized sources in obtaining information and news about the Coronavirus, at the forefront was the reliance on doctors, with an average of 3.176, a relative importance rate of 0.635, and a level of relative importance between medium and high, and no statistically significant differences appeared in the gender and nationality in terms of the extent to which doctors are relied upon as a non-media source for news and information about the Coronavirus. Followed by the health care centers, with an average of 2.810, and a relative importance rate of 0.562, and the level of relative importance is medium, and there were no statistically significant differences in gender and nationality in terms of the extent of reliance on health care centers as a source of non-media sources to obtain news and information about the Coronavirus, followed by the reliance on pharmacists, with an average of 2.362, and a relative importance rate of 0.472, and the level of relative importance is medium. There were no statistically significant differences in gender and nationality in terms of the extent of dependence on pharmacists as a source of non-media sources to obtain news and information about the Coronavirus.

The previous results reveal the incorrectness of the hypothesis that the public has increased its dependence on social media to obtain information and news about the Coronavirus from personal means of communication more than official and specialized sources (media briefings and the website of the Ministry of Health) and (health education sites, foreign health sites and alternative medicine sites), where the importance of official sources (media briefings) with social media (Instagram) in obtaining information about the Coronavirus was equal. This indicates that official sources (media briefings) have credibility as an information source for the public.

Each of them came at a high level, and while the level of importance for most social media was of medium importance, and to low and medium, official sources ranged between high and medium, high and medium, while most personal means of communication were between medium and high, and the medium level of importance prevailed over specialized sources, though the level of importance of using physicians as a source of information ranged from medium to high.

In general, the means of personal communication did not appear as important as other means in obtaining information about the virus, and this may be due to the fact that other means provide more specialized sources and are able to transmit information about personal means of communication, as well as the conditions imposed by the virus, as it socially distanced individuals, which minimized their chances of communication.

(2) The public's evaluation of the professional performance of the media and social media

Professional Performance	Average	Relative Importance Rate	Relative Importance Level
Coronavirus news grabbed the attention of media in the country	4.581	0.916	High
Announcing the successive developments about the virus first-hand.	4.393	0.879	High
Connecting the public in the country with the specialized agencies concerned with combating the virus.	4.300	0.860	High
The coverage of the media in the country is characterized by the comprehensiveness of information about the virus	4.290	0.858	High
Messages of social media encourage the public to follow the instructions related to the prevention of Coronavirus	4.292	0.858	High
Coverage of media in the country is characterized by the accuracy of information about the virus	4.248	0.850	High
Social media has outperformed the mass media in covering news on the virus.	4.163	0.833	High
Answered questions and queries of the public about the virus	4.160	0.832	High
Interests of media were suitable for the developments of the Coronavirus	4.144	0.829	High
Media relied on credible specialists to transfer information on the virus.	4.128	0.826	High
The coverage of media helped in providing the public with the needed information about the Coronavirus	4.078	0.816	High
Mass media helped in distinguishing the fake and true news about the virus.	4.060	0.812	High
The Mass media helped in overcoming the fears of the public towards the virus.	4.050	0.810	مرتفع
The news of media gained more credibility than that of the social media.	4.000	0.800	High
TV channels outperformed the Emirati newspapers in covering news on the virus.	4.004	0.801	High
News on Coronavirus via the social media were full of rumours and errors	3.616	0.723	Medium- high

The social media transferred conflicting and contradictory messages about the virus.	3.593	0.719	Medium- high
The social media encouraged disseminating misleading ideas about virus-related conspiracies.	3.332	0.666	Medium- high
Mass media transferred conflicting and contradictory information about the Coronavirus	3.235	0.647	Medium- high
Mass media exaggerated the transmission of information and the harms caused by the Coronavirus	3.117	0.623	Medium- high

Table No. (5) shows the public's evaluation of the professional performance of the means of communication

The previous table shows the public's assessment of the professional performance of the media and social network sites in dealing with issues related to the Coronavirus. While some of these evaluations were ranked at a high level in the public's perception, others ranged between average and high, and the audience's ranking converged to levels of importance, both with regard to the high level of importance or the level that ranges between medium and high.

The public's positive evaluations of the professional performance of the media have outperformed the positive evaluations of the performance of social media, which confirms the validity of the hypothesis that the public's evaluation of the professional performance of the media is more positive than its evaluation of the performance of social media with regard to handling the news and information of the Coronavirus. This confirms the importance of traditional media in dealing with crises, given that they have professional cadres, who can carry out their functions, whether in terms of transmitting information or guiding and educating the public, as the public showed positive trends regarding the interest of the media in the country in transmitting news of the Coronavirus, with an arithmetic mean (4.581) with a relative importance rate of (0.916). And the transmission of the successive developments of the news of the virus firsthand, with an average of (4,393) and a rate of relative importance (0.879), followed by the media linking the public with specialized agencies concerned with combating the Coronavirus with an average of (4,300) and a rate of relative importance (0.860), followed by the coverage of media outlets. The media of topics related to the Coronavirus crisis comprehensively, with an average of (4.290) and a rate of relative importance (0.858), followed by saying that the media messages encourage the public to follow the instructions for the prevention of the Coronavirus, with an average of (4.292) and a rate of relative importance (0.858).

It is followed by the media coverage of the virus with accuracy, with a mean (4.248) and a relative importance rate (0.850). It is followed by saying that it answered the inquiries and questions of the public with an arithmetic mean (4.160) and a relative importance rate (0.832), followed by saying that the media were appropriate with the developments of the Coronavirus crisis with an arithmetic mean (4.144) and a relative importance rate (0.829), followed by saying that the media depended on credible specialists, who transmit verified information about the virus with an average of (4.128) and a rate of relative importance (0.826), followed by saying that media coverage helped provide the public with what they need to know about the Coronavirus, with an average of (4.078) and a rate of relative importance (0.816)., followed

by saying that the media helped distinguish between false and true news about the virus, with a mean (4.060) and a relative importance rate (0.812).

It is followed by saying that the media in the country helped alleviate the public's fears of the virus, with an arithmetic mean (4.050) and a relative importance rate (0.810), and positive trends appeared among the public regarding the increase in the rate of exposure to the media with the developments of the spread of the Coronavirus, with an arithmetic mean (3.701), with a relative importance rate of (0.740).

With regard to the public's negative evaluations of the media's performance, the public showed attitudes in favor of saying that the media exaggerated the transmission of information and the damage caused by the Coronavirus, with a mean (3.117), a relative importance rate (0.647), and a level of relative importance between medium and high.

With regard to the public's evaluation of the professional performance of social media, it came first to say that social media outperformed the media in covering news of the virus, with a mean (4.163) and a relative importance rate (0.833), followed by saying that media news about the virus gained more credibility than the social networking sites, with an average of (4.000) and a relative importance rate of (0.800).

With regard to negative evaluations of the performance of social media, there were positive trends among the public to say that the news of the Coronavirus through social media was full of rumors and errors, with an arithmetic mean (3.616) and a relative importance rate (0.723) and a level of relative importance between medium and high, as well as about saying that social media conveyed conflicting and contradictory messages about the virus, where the arithmetic mean value was (3.593), and the relative importance rate (0.719) and the level of relative importance between medium and high, as well as about saying that social media encouraged the dissemination of misleading ideas about conspiracies related to the virus. , with an arithmetic mean (3.332), a relative importance rate (0.666) and a level of relative importance between medium and high.

With regard to the comparison between the performance of Emirati newspapers and TV channels, the public showed positive trends about saying that TV channels outperformed Emirati newspapers in covering the news of the virus, with a mean (4.004), a relative importance rate (0.801) and a high level of importance.

(3) Public attitudes towards the professional performance of both mass media and social media

The Professional Performance of Media and Social Media	Gender		Nationality		Educational Level		Age		Income		Job	
	Mann Whitney	Significant Value	Mann Whitney	Significant Value	Kruskal Wallis	Significant Value	Kruskal Wallis	Significant Value	Kruskal Wallis	Significant Value	Kruskal Wallis	Significant Value
The Coronavirus news gained the attention of mass media in the country	6100.5	.901	6171.0	.385	2.428	.657	6.222	.183	10.556	.014	7.393	.286
Transferred the successive developments about the virus first-hand.	4679.0	.005	6044.0	.400	5.292	.259	1.010	.908	4.105	.250	17.431	.008
Connected the public in the country to the specialized and concerned agencies of combating the virus	5143.5	.039	5975.0	.238	4.386	.356	3.143	.534	4.828	.185	15.048	.020
The coverage of mass media in the country is characterized by the comprehensiveness of information	5382.5	.198	5555.0	.104	5.799	.215	2.355	.671	3.866	.276	9.709	.137
The coverage of mass media in the country is characterized by the accuracy of information about the virus.	5019.0	.044	5568.0	.085	2.539	.638	4.745	.315	2.452	.484	8.955	.176
The social media outperformed the mass media in covering news on the virus.	5177.0	.061	6300.0	.656	3.770	.438	1.538	.820	2.058	.560	4.339	.631
Answered the questions and queries of the public about the virus.	6027.5	.839	6312.0	.668	1.462	.833	3.617	.460	.724	.868	3.810	.702
The mass media relied on credible specialists to transfer information on the virus.	5122.0	.075	5345.0	.033	2.080	.721	2.981	.561	1.136	.768	15.998	.014
The mass media helped me to distinguish between the fake and true news about the virus.	5562.5	.335	5108.5	.005	2.713	.607	11.719	.020	4.236	.237	3.790	.705
The mass media in the country helped in overcoming the fears of the public.	5701.0	.368	5398.0	.022	3.085	.544	7.240	.124	2.146	.543	10.207	.116
The mass media news on the virus gained	5474.5	.314	5943.0	.287	10.963	.027	3.296	.510	1.778	.620	7.318	.292

more credibility than the social media.												
The Coronavirus news via the social media were full of rumours and errors.	5657.0	.477	6105.0	.378	.257	.992	4.200	.380	4.293	.232	3.787	.706
The social media transferred conflicting and contradictory messages about the virus.	5588.0	.299	6434.0	.858	9.689	.046	7.522	.111	3.779	.286	12.053	.061
The social media encouraged disseminating misleading ideas about virus-related conspiracies.	5298.0	.173	5785.0	.079	1.195	.879	3.979	.409	2.335	.506	1.495	.960
The mass media transferred conflicting and contradictory information about the Coronavirus.	5050.5	.057	6373.0	.630	17.368	.002	8.797	.066	4.468	.215	19.675	.003

Table No. (6) shows the differences in the public's attitudes towards their evaluation of the professional performance of the means of communication.

The previous table reveals the differences between audience attitudes (in terms of gender, nationality, educational level, age, income and occupation) towards the professional performance of the media compared to social media:

With regard to the income variable, statistically significant differences appeared in the audience's attitudes in terms of income with regard to saying that the news of the Coronavirus gained the attention of the media in the country.

With regard to the differences between the public according to the variable of education, there were statistically significant differences in the audience's attitudes in terms of the educational level with regard to saying that the continuous follow-up of the news of the Coronavirus through the media caused the public to panic and fear, as well as with regard to saying that the news of the Coronavirus through social media was full of rumors and errors, as well as with regard to saying that the media conveyed conflicting and contradictory information about the Coronavirus.

With regard to the differences between the public according to the variable of gender, statistically significant differences appeared in the audience's attitudes in terms of gender, with regard to saying that the media answered the public's inquiries and questions about the virus, as well as with regard to saying the superiority of social media over the mass media in covering the news of the virus, as well as regarding the claim that social media encouraged the spread of misleading ideas about conspiracies related to the virus.

With regard to the differences between the public according to the variable of nationality, statistically significant differences emerged in the audience's attitudes in terms of nationality, with regard to saying that the media linked the public in the country to specialized agencies concerned with combating the virus, as well as with regard to saying that the media helped distinguish between false and true news about the virus, as well as regarding saying that social media has conveyed conflicting and contradictory messages about the virus.

With regard to the variables of gender and occupation, statistically significant differences emerged in the audience's attitudes in terms of gender and occupation with regard to saying that the media coverage in the country was characterized by accurate information about the virus. Moreover, with regard to saying that the media coverage in the country is more comprehensive about the virus, as well as regarding the statement that the media reported the successive developments about the virus first-hand.

There were also statistically significant differences in the audience's attitudes in terms of nationality and occupation, with regard to saying that media news about the virus had more credibility than social media.

With regard to the differences between the public according to the variable of gender and age, statistically significant differences appeared in the audience's attitudes of gender and age in terms of saying that the media depend on credible specialists in transmitting information about the virus.

The previous results indicate that there are statistically significant differences between audience groups according to demographic variables regarding most aspects of both the media and social media coverage of coronavirus news and information, Knowing that the variables of education and gender had the most noticeable differences between the public regarding their perceptions of the professional performance of these means, which prove the validity of the hypothesis that there are differences between the public regarding the evaluation of the professional performance of both the media and social media relevant to the coverage of information and news of the Coronavirus.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study focused on identifying the means that the public in the UAE relied on to follow up on the news and information of the Coronavirus, and their evaluation of the professional performance of both the media and social media with regard to aspects related to the Coronavirus.

The study revealed a convergence in the roles that both social media and the media were concerned with in dealing with the Coronavirus, and giving the same importance to the roles entrusted to them, and each of them agreed to give priority to the roles related to introducing the Coronavirus, and raising awareness of the importance of following precautionary measures in relation to the Coronavirus. It relates to the virus, and to informing members of the community of the symptoms of the virus.

These results indicate that both the mass media and social media play informational and definable roles more than performing roles related to awareness and guidance, which has

negative repercussions on the extent to which these media perform their roles, knowing that the increasing role of carrier or news anchors at the expense of other roles that are based on explanation, awareness and interpretation may lead to the transmission of information that may not be true about the virus on the one hand, and it also reveals the lack of effort exerted by any of these means in seeking the assistance of specialists to carry out awareness and guidance roles, and their keenness on the informational role more than other roles that reveal their interest in their roles, which are related to their social responsibilities.

Moreover, the study concluded that the public emphasized the importance of both social media and media briefings and their appreciation for benefiting from obtaining information from each of them about the virus, while the level of importance of other means was equal, even if they were topped by Emirati newspapers, and while the public can obtain unreliable information from social media, both press briefings and newspapers can provide the public with more credible and useful information. Also, personal means of communication did not appear as important as other means in obtaining information about the virus, and this may be due to the fact that other means provide more specialized sources and are able to transmit information about personal means of communication, and the lack of natural social communication between individuals due to the necessities of social distancing imposed by the Coronavirus.

With regard to the public's evaluation of the professional performance of the mass media and social media in dealing with issues related to the Coronavirus, the public's positive assessments of the professional performance of the media, on the one hand, topped the positive assessments of the performance of social media, and the public also showed positive attitudes regarding the interest of the media in the country in transmitting news of the Coronavirus, but on the other hand, the public showed supportive tendencies to say that the media exaggerated the transmission of information and the harms caused by the Coronavirus. While the study sample stated that social media outperformed the mass media in covering news of the virus, which is consistent with the study conducted by Reuters 2020 (Nic Newman. 2020). However, it stated that media news about the virus gained more credibility than social media. Supportive attitudes also emerged among the public to say that news of the Coronavirus through social media was full of rumors and errors, and that it transmitted conflicting and contradictory messages about the virus, and encouraged the dissemination of misleading ideas about conspiracies related to the virus, even if the rate of exposure to social media increased with the developments in the spread of the Coronavirus, which indicates the public's awareness of the professional role of the media, and its ability to distinguish between sources of information and knowing that social media contain information that may not be true about the virus, which requires building on it to educate the public about the importance of verifying the credibility of the information they receive and to investigate the elicitation of this information and obtaining them from professionally qualified sources.

In addition, the study concluded that positive attitudes appeared among the public regarding the statement that television channels outperformed Emirati newspapers in covering news of the virus, which is due to individuals staying at home most of the time, and Emirati newspapers refraining from printing during the virus period for fear of spread of infection among individuals.

With regard to the psychological effects of following the media and social media coverage of the news of the Coronavirus, the public showed positive towards saying that they had avoided following the news of the Coronavirus recently to reduce the degree of tension and the feeling of fear, and that the continuous follow-up of Coronavirus news through the media caused the public to panic and fear.

The study also concluded that there are statistically significant differences between groups of the public according to the demographic variables regarding most aspects of the coverage of both the media and social media for news and information about the Coronavirus, although the variable of education and gender is the most of these variables in terms of the emergence of differences between the public regarding their vision of the professional performance of these methods.

The study reveals the need to conduct more studies on the professional performance of the media and social media in times of crisis, and to define criteria for evaluating the professional performance of each of them, and to conduct studies to identify the factors affecting the professional performance of these media; especially among producers of media and users of these media as well as conducting studies to plan for the optimal use of these methods in crisis media.

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