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# ПУБЛИЧНАЯ СФЕРА В АСПЕКТЕ МАССОВЫХ КОММУНИКАЦИЙ THE PUBLIC SPHERE IN THE ASPECT OF MASS COMMUNICATIONS

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## ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКИ ОСВЕЩЕНИЯ ГЛОБАЛЬНОЙ ПАНДЕМИИ COVID-19 НА CNN.COM (2020–2021)

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**Аннотация.** Пандемия коронавируса является отправной точкой для изучения того, как СМИ освещают глобальные кризисы в цифровую эпоху, когда знания распространяются с такой скоростью, какой мир еще никогда не знал. Автор рассматривает, является ли такое освещение частью эволюции пандемии, или же оно связано с моментом интереса к пандемии со стороны лиц, принимающих политические решения. Цели исследования заключаются в том, чтобы выяснить, какое место занимает тема Covid19 на сайте CNN.com в период пандемии, в каких разделах ресурса и как эта тема представлена, как журналисты показывают врачей и парамедиков. Одна из задач – изучить факторы, определяющие стиль и тон освещения эпидемии на сайте CNN.com с учетом того, что этот онлайн-ресурс относится к ведущим мировым СМИ. Используя метод исследовательского наблюдения, автор изучил интернет-ресурсы CNN.com (2020–2022 гг.) и проследил, как освещалась эта тема в экстренных новостях, разделе о здоровье и специальных проектах. Исследование показало, что основными ньюсмейкерами были директор NIAID доктор Энтони Фаучи и главный корреспондент по вопросам здравоохранения CNN доктор Санджай Гупта. Освещая пандемию Ковида19, журналисты CNN.com поделились с читателями статистикой, связанной с вирусом, обсудили проблемы здравоохранения, которые выявил кризис Ковида19, и выразили свое уважение медицинским работникам, которые делали все возможное, чтобы помочь людям. Информирова о фактах, CNN.com придерживается официального стиля. Личные истории эмоциональны, а описание работы врачей полно уважения и благодарности к ним.

**Ключевые слова:** CNN.com, Ковид-19, освещение пандемии в СМИ, доктор Энтони Фаучи, доктор Санджай Гупта.

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Original article

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF COVID-19 GLOBAL PANDEMIC COVERAGE ON CNN.COM (2020–2021)

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**Abstract.** The study takes the coronavirus pandemic as a starting point for an examination of the media's handling of global crises in the digital age when knowledge is flowing at a pace the world has never had before. The author looks at whether such coverage is part of the evolution of the pandemic, or whether it is linked to a moment of interest in the pandemic on the part of political decision-makers. The goals of the research are to find out what place Covid19 theme occupies on CNN.com during the pandemic, where and how the topic is presented, how doctors and paramedics are shown by journalists to explore the determinants of CNN's coverage

as it is at the forefront of the widespread world mass media. Using the method of exploratory observation, the author studied CNN.com's online resources (2020–2022) and monitored how the topic was covered in breaking news, health section, and special projects. The research showed that the main newsmakers were NIAD Director Dr. Anthony Fauci and CNN Chief Medical Correspondent Dr. Sanjay Gupta. Covering the Covid pandemic, CNN.com journalists shared the virus' statistics with the readers, discussed healthcare problems the Corona crisis had revealed, and expressed their respect to medical professionals who had been doing their best to help people. Informing about the facts CNN.com adheres to the official style. Personal stories are emotional, and description of doctors' work is full of respect and gratitude.

**Key words:** CNN.com, Covid-19, media coverage of pandemic, Dr Anthony Fauci, Dr Sanjay Gupta.

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## Introduction

A new pandemic coronavirus known as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)-Cov-2, also known as Covid-19, made its global breakthrough in January 2020 after being detected in a wet market in Wuhan, China in December 2019 (Liu 2020). After the breakthrough, various governments attempted to reduce the infestation, mainly through strict movement controls or blockades. The social, environmental and governance impacts of Covid-19 have been significant. Every country had a significant impact on this global viral attack. The United States of America, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, China, Turkey, India, Indonesia, and many others remain the most affected countries. This has led the world to a state of unprecedented emergency, so that countries have taken many measures to achieve social distancing and prevent the spread of the virus, while the media, for their part, have taken measures to deal with the pandemic (Benoit, Mauldin 2021), so that they have taken it upon themselves to provide news about the virus, its spread, numbers, etc.

As in other parts of the world, the outbreak of the coronavirus attracted the attention of the US media from the very beginning of its spread, with an abundance of news, information, analysis, opinions, comments and images. The US media, through CNN, tried to fulfil their media duty and follow the event on a daily basis, providing statistics on the infected, the dead and the recovered (Casero-Ripolles 2020), and announcing that the responsible media had followed a calm and balanced coverage of the news about the pandemic, without going so far as to intimidate and frighten people and inform about the excitement, which did not respect the most basic professional standards and moral responsibility to protect the public and its members.

In the face of a global natural health crisis, the role of the world's media in framing the crisis is now becoming an important issue (Aftab, Juliana, Md. Saidur 2022). During this period, Algerian national television rushed to cover the spread of the disease, focusing on different aspects of the pandemic. In addition to shaping public opinion about the pandemic, media coverage of the outbreak was crucial in communicating strategies for managing the outbreak at this point. The media helped to disseminate information and the full facts about the coronavirus pandemic to maximise human awareness and overcome a period of anxiety. By observing reactions and patterns of thought and behaviour in such situations, they gained a deep understanding of the need for human commitment and engagement. The coronavirus pandemic has been at the centre of the world's media agenda, has had an extraordinary impact on the world's economies, and is at the forefront of political attention, in this context, the importance of the US media has increased, given its responsibility to educate and guide citizens in preventing themselves from becoming infected.

Given all this, the media may well want to cover this pandemic (Ong'ong'a, Mutua 2020). The concern that arises is the quality, credibility and depth of the coverage, and whether such coverage is part of the evolution of the pandemic, or whether it is linked to a moment of interest in the pandemic on the part of "political" decision-makers, with the result that the media agenda shifts according to their interests, the research problem appears in the question of the determinants on which the coverage of CNN on the novel coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) in this digital era in which a communication revolution has taken place that has allowed the general public to practice media communication through the new media.

## Materials and Methods of the Research

The study examines the archives of videos related to the health media that the news organisation has uploaded on its website and on its YouTube account in the years 2020-2021. It is based on a qualitative exploratory approach that examines the reality of coronavirus pandemic media coverage carried out by CNN; this reality is analysed from theoretical approaches to health information. Thus, in order to highlight the consistency of news coverage with effective health communication, the study uses some quantitative data and information that preceded and accompanied the emergence of the pandemic.

## Characteristics of how the media covered the coronavirus pandemic

The media and satellite channels have opened up large previously neglected areas in the health sector due to the human and economic toll that the coronavirus pandemic has taken on the world. Tracking the web programmes of some Arab and foreign local and international news channels has revealed their lack of interest in programmes dealing with human health as the basis of all activities... This is because the coronavirus crisis has ravaged all these files,

leaving the health crisis as the main issue, while the prioritisation of these channels includes political and economic affairs and issues such as terrorism. The coronavirus pandemic has led media organisations to change their agenda in the order of news, speed and professionalism in covering real-time events and equipping their journalists to work in exceptional circumstances (Ben Daly 2021: 340). China's announcement of the first coronavirus infections in the city of Wuhan led to an unprecedented emergency. In the wake of the announcement of the first coronavirus infections in the city of Wuhan, China's public health community was faced with an unprecedented emergency, the need to communicate the news of the virus, the limits of its spread, the number of infections, and the orders, directives, and guidelines of the relevant agencies. The exceptional context of the coronavirus pandemic was an opportunity for media organisations to develop new press products such as interactive maps, explanatory reports, data journalism, or to support specific products such as newsletters (Billig 2021), which were widely used. In addition to publications, many institutions have developed a podcast service. Explanatory reports, data reports and interactive maps are among the most commonly used journalistic tools. As a good example, the press can interpret, manage and provide the reader with the necessary background knowledge to understand events.

#### **CNN health media**

For several years, CNN's Headline News (HLN) (5) news channel has featured a medical programme hosted by Dr Drew Pinsky David, an internal medicine physician specialising in addiction medicine who has achieved widespread media fame through his radio and television programmes. The programme was called Dr Drew On call and ran from Monday to Thursday evenings from 4 April 2011 to 22 September 2016 (W. E. Messamore 2020). We take advantage of this experience to make several observations:

The show was not aired on CNN, but on the HLN channel, which is responsible for this area, and which later became CNN PH; HLN is a primarily political channel, which is not the right place for such a show; this raises the main problem raised in this study, which is the low interest of the global media in the health aspect and its separation from the political aspect, which is the most important one. The global media's inferior perception of health information. The network's management decided to discontinue the programme. No alternative has been found in the last four years.

CNN's position on the programme indicates a complete separation between political and health media, with the latter being a small part of political concerns and rarely at the forefront of the landscape. This corresponds to the absence of health programmes in the programming of news channels, where the main news is about politics and politicians). Searching through the lists of videos the channel keeps on its YouTube account, we find a list called "Your Health" which contains 134 videos, including 101 made before the coronavirus appeared. The earliest dated 11 November 2011 and the most recent dated 17 January 2020 (Parimala et al. 2021). The channel has broadcast one health-related news item per month over the past nine years. This is an indication of the absence of a health media based on a competent editorial staff working side by side and competing with specialised groups in politics, economics, sports, culture and others.

Dr Drew's programme does not, however, represent the whole of CNN's health coverage. There is also the Vital Signs News Reporting programme, run by renowned physician and media personality Dr Sinjay Gupta, the network's chief medical correspondent. Vital Signs seeks out worthwhile health stories to demonstrate the global nature of health issues. The CNN website is rich in health content, and the health section includes various topics related to food, fitness, wellness and motherhood (Sanjay Gupta. Vital Signs with Dr. Sanjay Gupta // CNN, <https://edition.cnn.com/specials/health/vital-signs>).

#### **Results of the study and their discussion**

Undoubtedly, the coronavirus outbreak became the only global event to attract the attention of the traditional and new media, and thus the interest of the whole world. This pandemic, which began in China and then gradually spread to most of the countries of the world, can hardly be expected to be missed by the media, which have been covering the development of this pandemic in great detail, counting the cases, the deaths, the recoveries and the countries affected 24 hours a day (Jurkiwicz, Mitchell 2020).

For this reason, the aim of this study is not to examine the coverage of the pandemic by the satellite news channels included in the sample, or simply the absence of such coverage. Rather, it is to examine the determinants of this coverage and link them to the experience of the health media channels, which can be relied upon to explain the possibility of success of the coverage, and whether this coverage has come as a normal extension, paying attention to health matters to such an extent that the world will overcome this crisis through its preparation for it and through the degree of health education that will enable individuals to deal consciously and effectively with the offender, and save individuals, societies and countries from confusion and increasing human and material losses

Recently, during the COVID-19 health crisis, the flow of information exchange has increased dramatically during the COVID-19 health crisis. In this context, a large number of publications have appeared on media framing, misinformation and Covid (Pham, Le 2018) (Parimala et al. 2021) (Xiong et al. 2018) (Arras et al. 2017) (Gupta, Joshi 2019) (Albright 2017) (Aldwairi, Alwahedi 2018) (Benoit, Mauldin 2021) (Fedorov, Levitskaya 2020) (Brennen et al. 2021) (Rodrigues, Xu 2020). and finding ways to improve the anti-manipulative media literacy of

audiences (Abdel Raheem, Alkhamash 2021) (Billig 2021) (Brennen et al. 2021) (Shulman et al. 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. The COVID-19 pandemic has been characterised by uncertainty and constant change, which has forced governments and public health authorities to step up their efforts in risk communication.

The coronavirus issue is the main focus of the international media because of the global pandemic situation. Coverage of SARS-Cov-2 is driven by the news values and interests of readers around the world. The news organisation (CNN) tried to cover the news about Covid-19 during the peak of the virus spread in North America (Brennen, Simon, Nielsen 2021). But it showed its choice of interest based on its “agenda” by sharing videos on its official YouTube channel and website. CNN’s coverage of the coronavirus pandemic can be assessed by looking at the initial interest in the crisis – as evidenced by the videos available on the network’s YouTube account – and the video playlists, as well as the coverage on the network’s website, in addition to the live coverage. We then look at the quality of the content that the channel provides across all its platforms, leading to an overall assessment of Corona’s time on the channel’s screen.

CNN’s YouTube account contains a selection of videos, not the full archive of broadcasts. The oldest video dealing with the Corona virus in the selection is from 20.01.2020, but interest in the virus started with videos from 25.02.2020, when the Centers for Disease Control issued warnings about the spread of the virus in the US. Since 11 March 2020, interest and coverage has increased, until all videos in the last two weeks of March are about the Corona pandemic.

On the main page of the “CNN” channel on YouTube, videos related to the Corona virus can be found under the title “Latest News”, indicating the importance of this issue in the news coverage agenda. Among the lists of videos uploaded to the “CNN” channel on YouTube, which totalled 274 lists on 30 March 2020, there are 41 lists that included videos about the coronavirus (15 %), noting that the oldest of these lists dates back to 2012. We conclude from these lists that CNN did not limit its coverage of the coronavirus pandemic to a specific programme, but rather included a large number of programmes and political, economic, health, cultural, sports and technological fields...in addition to the “Your Health” list that we discussed earlier, which included 32 clips, the oldest of which dates back to 2 March 2020.

In 2020, during the period of presidential elections and the global pandemic, the audience of CNN.com has sharply increased (Rodrigues, Xu 2020). Americans, the main users of the media resource were looking for true information on Covid-19, and the CNN website was the one they trusted. Visitors from all over the world had a chance to get information from cnn.com as well. CNN’s website is no less than its YouTube channel when it comes to covering the Corona pandemic in a comprehensive, intensive and updated manner. The two main pages, one dedicated to the world and the other to the US, provide information on the Coronavirus (Livingston 2020). Links to pages with information on the development of the Coronavirus and news reports on the reality of the Coronavirus and its impact on various aspects of life, as well as a map showing the number of people injured and killed in the US. CNN has made it a priority to provide the latest and most accurate information on the pandemic as it develops. The network updates its website regularly with the latest news and developments, so that its audience can stay informed and up-to-date. CNN’s coverage focuses on the most important aspects of the pandemic and its impact on individuals, communities, and the world. The network strives to provide information and analysis that is relevant and meaningful to its audience. CNN’s coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic on its website, CNN.com, is designed to provide its audience with the latest, most accurate, and most relevant information on this important story. The network’s goal is to inform, educate, and engage its audience, helping them to understand the impact of the pandemic and the efforts being made to combat it.

CNN has collected various topics related to the coronavirus pandemic in a section that is more like a Site within a site under the heading Coronavirus Outbreak. To express the extent of the network’s interest in covering this pandemic, and to learn about the richness of this section’s content, we review its subsections, each of which contains a number of topics; There is a section on “the latest news” relating to the pandemic, “the impact on daily life” (quarantine and the need to work from home or stay at home without work and the political response - policy decisions taken by the authorities) and “the medical interface” (how medical staff are dealing with the epidemic). Coronavirus through “Images” (a photo gallery expressing the pandemic) and video clips on the pandemic, working from home, students adapting to studying at home, infographics on how the epidemic spreads, its most prominent symptoms, and a map of infections in the United States; “Timeline of the development of the pandemic “, “Symptoms of the disease” and “Best CNN articles. “ That explains the pandemic “ and a service to answer users’ questions about the Corona virus.

Thus, this part was found to contain material that resembled that of a media company that specializes in the Corona virus. Multimedia is present in many topics, as well as flexibility, integration and easy access to the network’s different platforms, in terms of the effectiveness of content preparation and distribution. CNN framed the novel coronavirus issue as a pandemic; its focus was to inform people about the virus and its consequences. It was the most common request people made when looking for news. Also, during the global lockdown situation, its news was in demand by global readers and it framed the issue according to the people’s demand, covering the economic issues through the economic consequences frame. However, CNN framed the issue by focusing on the health and public health points, which reflects the responsibility frame, its area of news coverage was deaths and infected people. We assume that

the USA was concerned with the number of deaths, and these news providers set their agenda to inform people more about the safety and prevention methods of the infection (Shulman, Bullock, Riggs 2021).

As for direct on-screen coverage, it included almost all the hours of broadcasting when the various programmes were dedicated to the manifestations of the pandemic and its local and global effects, in addition to the news studios that tried to prepare reports, news bulletins and headlines in a way that is unprecedented, except for the coverage of the results of the US presidential elections, although the coverage of the Corona outbreak was surpassed by the longevity of the coverage. The coverage included the live broadcast of all the press conferences held by US President Donald Trump and his team to deal with the Corona crisis, which have become almost daily, as well as press conferences held by state governors and mayors of major cities (such as the mayor of New York), and the inclusion of state governors in some programmes and bulletins, such as New York Gov (Cilizza Chris. Why is Anthony Fauci hedging on the origins of the coronavirus // CNN. 2021. 24 May, <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/05/24/politics/fauci-donald-trump-coronavirus/index.html>), given that his state is the epicentre of the epidemic in the United States, and the most severe in terms of the number of deaths and lack of medical equipment, and hosting senior officials from the country's medical institutions, such as Dr Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and a member of the White House team on the coronavirus pandemic.

As far as the quantitative coverage of the victims of the Corona virus pandemic is concerned, the channel has intended to dedicate the right part of the screen to the installation of a counter that counts the number of people infected, who have died and who are recovering throughout the world and the United States, so that it will not be necessary to mention digital developments during the news bulletins and programs, on top of the other most prominent digital data at the bottom of the screen, such as the performance of the financial markets during a pandemic.

Perhaps the most striking feature of this coverage is the qualitative presence of the channel's medical media professionals, led by Dr Sanjay Gupta, neurosurgeon and chief medical correspondent for CNN, and media personality Elizabeth Cohen, chief medical correspondent for the channel. Under their leadership, the channel's health media unit has been a positive feature of the channel and its coverage.

Dr Sanjay was the most visible in many bulletins and reports during the days of the pandemic (CNN Digital. Shatters All Historical Records, Reaches Largest, Most Engaged Audience in History in 2020 // CNN Digital. 2020. 22 Dec, <https://cnnpressroom.blogs.cnn.com/2020/12/22/cnn-digital-shatters-all-historical-records-reaches-largest-most-engaged-audience-in-history-in-2020/>). and some of his statements and warnings on the pandemic and his previous interviews were broadcast, in addition to hosting him as a spokesman and interlocutor when hosting decision makers and actors in the Corona pandemic, and his contribution extended to providing indicative advertising clips (such as the method of correct hand washing) addressed to all channel audiences. As well as helping to keep up with the coverage of the event, Dr Sanjay has also created a podcast, "Corona Virus Fact vs. Fiction with Dr Sanjay Gupta", which is broadcast on various digital platforms, in which he answers questions from the public on various health-related issues. Corona virus pandemic. Dr Sanjay's combination of academia, medical practice and media practice, supported by his writing and acting talents, has made him an authority on the subject for the channel's viewers, to the extent that his statements have been quoted by Fox News. (Jurkiwicz M., Mitchell A. Cable TV and COVID-19: How Americans perceive the outbreak and view media coverage differ by main news source // PEW RESEARCH CENTER. 2020. 01 Apr, <https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2020/04/01/cable-tv-and-covid-19-how-americans-perceive-the-outbreak-and-view-media-coverage-differ-by-main-news-source/>).

CNN has a reputation for delivering accurate and trustworthy news and information, and its coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic has been no exception. The network has a team of experienced journalists and experts who work to gather, verify, and report on the latest developments in the pandemic. CNN's reporting on COVID-19 is based on information from credible sources, such as the World Health Organization, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and local health departments, among others. The network also seeks out independent experts, such as epidemiologists, virologists, and public health officials, to provide additional context and analysis to its coverage. However, it's important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic is an ongoing and rapidly evolving situation, and information about the virus and its spread can change quickly.

Given this theoretical approach, the problem addressed by the study, and the aims of the study, which is an analysis of the methods and determination of media coverage of the outbreak on CNN, the main factors that the author has observed during the coverage of the outbreak on CNN are the following:

1. Focus on comprehensive and continuous coverage of the unprecedented experience that the world and contemporary media is undergoing.
2. Adopting a kind of "media emergency" in which the efforts of the preparation, video, graphics, editing and directing departments are brought to bear on covering the pandemic, using all the capabilities of the editorial channel.
3. Providing significant digital data and using it in questions, dialogues, pilgrimages and reports, as well as making it available as raw data that can be easily checked.
4. Focusing on the human aspect related to the conditions of health workers, presenting them as warriors on the front line defending the nation, the feelings of those who have lost their loved ones or those who have

recovered from illness, and the psychological state experienced by people as a result of fear of delinquency or compulsory stay in homes accompanied by unemployment or work. from home.

5. Paying attention to and critiquing statements made by public officials by comparing them with statements made by experts and academics, especially the controversial statements made by the US President.

6. To consider the economic, social and strategic implications of the pandemic and to anticipate the future of the world as regards political systems, international relations and development.

7. Quickly adapting to the forces of the pandemic, which forced people to distance themselves socially and stay at home, some of its journalists and correspondents set up their own home studios and used audiovisual communication applications over the Internet (such as Scabb and WebEx).

### Conclusion

CNN's comprehensive and continuous coverage of the coronavirus pandemic, an unprecedented event for the world and the United States, can be seen as one of the most important determinants. Viewers are helped to understand the situation by statements from officials, experts and scientists. CNN has a political bias, but its coverage of the pandemic has been well thought out and well presented.

This research provides useful insights into CNN's media framing in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic and identifies the different themes that are included in the portrayal of such a pandemic. In the early stages of a disease outbreak, the media play a crucial role in providing information. Their role is essential in influencing the public's perception of the disease and in the prevention of the spread of the pandemic.

This study suggests that media systems are still a phenomenon of cross-border reporting, even though we live in a world of global information sharing due to technological advances in communication. CNN frames news according to its agenda, as this news media organisation publishes selected news on its YouTube channel and website. Getting people's attention and getting them to discuss and comment on the issues of public interest is CNN's main concern. This helps to get the news noticed by the Government or the relevant authority.

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