

# An Analysis of Card News and Deconstructing News Values in Curated News Contents in the Digital Era<sup>☆</sup>

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## 요 약

본 연구는 새로운 뉴스 콘텐츠로서 카드뉴스를 분석하고 디지털시대에 뉴스가치의 변화에 대해 살펴보았다. 본 연구는 지난 2015년 하반기에 국내 언론사를 통해 보도된 1020개의 카드뉴스에 대한 내용분석을 통해, 뉴스가치에 대한 전통적인 개념들이 변화되고 있음을 확인하였다. 카드뉴스는 새롭게 취재하여 기사화하기보다는 저장된 기존 뉴스들을 재활용하면서, 뉴스가치로서 시의성 보다는 정보제공과 사회적 가치, 오락적 요소를 강조하고 있다. 이는 새로운 뉴스전달방식으로써 카드뉴스는 기존 뉴스에 대한 대체제가 아니라 보완제임을 보여준다. 또한 역피라미트 형태의 글쓰기보다는 리스트 나열형의 기사 작성 방식이 선호되고, 취재원으로서 길거리 일반인(Man-on-the streets)이 자주 인용됨이 발견되었다.

☞ 주제어 : 뉴스 큐레이션, 카드뉴스, 뉴스가치, 역피라미트 글쓰기, 시의성

## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the characteristics of curated news content. With content analysis of 1020 news clips, the study found that news values immersed in card news differed from those of traditional news. Specifically, timeliness was not regarded as a key factor in newsworthiness. Rather, information and social impacts were highly emphasized. Considering news consumers depend on traditional news for timely news, curated news content was not a replacement for traditional news but a supplement. By refurbishing photos from previous news reports and googling the web for related information, curated news reiterates social meaning and provides relevant information. Furthermore, salience of human interest can be explained by entertaining characteristics of curated news. In story forms, the list technique has several important points to stress, and was more frequently used than inverted pyramids. Another key finding of this study is man-on-the street as the most quoted main sources in the curatorial context.

☞ keyword : Curated news content, Card news, News values, Inverted-pyramid technique, Timeliness

## 1. INTRODUCTION

For over 200 years, news media have competed to acquire audiences' attention [1]. In this process, journalists have developed news values, which refer to some elements that news stories must have. Regardless of their quality of journalism, professional journalists have an agreed set of values such as timeliness, proximity, significance, conflicts, unexpectedness, famous people, and so on [2,3]. As such, shoe-leather reporting with those elements has been

evaluated as good journalism [1].

However, producing original content may be expensive, and may not be a good business model, at least, for online customers who want to consume media content for free or at low cost [4]. Thus, news curation with cheap procedural costs has emerged as a way of presenting the news to satisfy past audiences' expectations and to increase online traffic [5]. Through this process of reporting, news is a collaborative effort between professional journalists and the public at large.

This article analyzes the nature of "card news" in South Korea as curated news content. Through the content analysis of 1020 news clips, the study attempts to deconstruct curated news content in terms of format, sources, objectivity, and news values.

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## 2. CURATED NEWS CONTENT IN THE INTERNET AND MOBILE ERA

Unlike traditional news, making and distributing curated news content is not monopolized by professional journalists. Instead, bloggers and the public at large participate in the news making and distributing process [6]. In this process, curated news producers are largely owed to digital archive and search engines like *Google*, *Yahoo*, and *Naver*, because they do not need to build up an individual library [7]. Instead, they simply search and use information on the Internet.

To some extent, the development of content curation is assisted by image curation tools and social media such as *Storify*, *Scribblelive*, *Storyful*, *Instagram*, and *Pinterest* [5]. Thus, some scholars have called this technology-driven process “networked journalism” [8-10].

Even though both news editors and curators set standards for information and the quality of sources, curators have much more room than editors in terms of the scope of subjects [11]. In this sense, content curation is based on the long tail effect, because the variety of subjects does not mainly target a large number of target audiences but specified audiences who are interested in the subjects [12].

In the Korean context, curated news content has been traced back to 2014, when Seoul Broadcasting Service launched *SueBueSue* news [13, 14]. Within a relatively short period of time, curated news has become a popular news content in news aggregators such as *Naver* and *Daum*. *Naver* calls this curated news “card news,” which emphasizes news presentation that consists of a series of card-sized pictures.

## 3. NEWS AND ITS VALUES IN TRANSITIONS

The platforms of news have moved from newspapers, to electric media such as radio and television, to online, and now mobile. In the early stage of online news media, news was mainly repurposed from printed newspapers, as news on television did in the early 1940s [15, 16]. News editors

began to utilize multimedia technology such as interactivity, hyperlinks, and multimedia [17]. News of curated content is also somewhat different from that of traditional journalism in terms of type, format, news sources, the way of news presentation, and news values [8, 9].

### 3.1 HARD NEWS VS. SOFT NEWS

Dichotomized categories with hard news vs. soft news seem to be a rationale to judge quality journalism and tabloid journalism. *Hard news* indicates the coverage of breaking events, which should be reported immediately, because it directly affects people’s lives [18]. By contrast, *soft news* can be relatively less time-bound. Therefore, news regarding politics, war, economics and crime is regarded as hard news, whereas news concerning the arts, entertainment and lifestyle is considered soft news.

Baum argued that hard news in the television era is repackaged into soft news, which is entertainment-oriented news programs and talk shows [19]. Lacking seriousness does not necessary mean that soft news is wrong or bad, because soft news provides news for those who may not pay attention to hard news [18]. As a result, people reach a forum for public criticism and compromise. The same is true for curated news. Curated news viewers may not pay attention to traditional news if they do not meet news with curated content.

Proportions of themes in traditional news differ from those of online news media. For example, news on political and social issues were the main content of the front pages of Korean newspapers, which accounted for 34.2% and 27.9%, respectively [20]. However, the proportion of political and social news was dwarfed at 21% and 24.5% in online media [21].

### 3.2. NEWS SOURCES AND OBJECTIVITY

Journalists cannot observe all facts firsthand. They have to rely on someone else, who are the eyewitnesses or participants [22]. Thus, Schudson defined news as “a product of transaction between sources and elites” [23, p. 134]. Entman and Rojecki observed that news discourse was dominantly influenced by elite sources, because of their

newsworthiness, trustfulness, and influence [24]. Therefore, the news objective depends on trustworthy sources. Of course, the news making process cannot be purely objective, because it relies on journalists' subjective judgements, personal values, and sometimes, biases [23]. A recent study found that objective writing and rational appeal were more frequently found in online media rather than in traditional news media [25].

### 3.3. INVERTED PYRAMID TECHNIQUE

News writing is somewhat different from our daily discussion, because important things are presented with priority. Inverted pyramid writing refers to news presentation of the facts up from most important to least important [1]. This became a professional standard during the American Civil War in the nineteenth century, partly because telegraph technology often mal-functioned, and partly because of commercial interests and limited spaces [23]. By presenting the prime facts first, journalists were able to accomplish economical writing and to hold audiences' attention on the news. However, the Internet environment does not require additional cost in writing lengthy articles in hypertext. Recently, inverted pyramid writing has turned out to be less efficient when it comes to more elaborate web news [26].

### 3.4. NEWS VALUES

The question of what becomes news is not easy to answer, because there are no explicit formulas to explain values in news [3]. Rather, news judgements largely depend on journalists' gut feelings [27]. Several studies have identified underlying principles of news selection process [2, 27, 28]. Galtung and Ruge argued that news values would be something with negativity, recency, proximity, consonance with cultural values, unambiguity, superlativeness, elite persons and elite nations [2]. In addition, continuity developed stories from previous reports and competition (among other stories) are considered important by editors or gatekeepers [28]. Schultz sketched five criteria which became "the backbone of journalistic professional training" in Danish news journalism: timeliness, relevance, identification, conflict and sensation [27, p. 197]. Similarly,

Harcup and O'Neill insisted that entertainment, reference to something positive, and news media's campaign or promotion have important weight in modern journalism practices [29].

Based on the previous discussion, we put forward the following research questions:

- RQ1: Which type of news (hard news vs soft news) was more frequently used in the Korean curated news contents?
- RQ2: Who were the main sources in the curated news contents?
- RQ3: Was inverted-pyramid technique preferred in the curated news content?
- RQ4: What were the dominant news values in the curated news content? Specifically, was timeliness treated as important?

## 4. METHODS

### 4.1. SAMPLE

The study analyzed a total of 1020 samples of card news, which were published in the second half of 2015. The selected card news was produced by six nationwide newspapers (*Chosun Daily*, *Donga Daily*, *Joongang Daily*, *Hankook Daily*, *Hankyereh Daily*, & *Kyonghayng Daily*), three broadcasting companies (*KBS*, *SBS*, *JTBC*) and one internet only media (*Moneytoday*). The average number of cards was 10.93, and ranged from 1 to 34. The average number of sentences was 24.47, and ranged from 0 to 104. The average sentence per card page was 2.24.

### 4.2. CODING CATEGORIES

Curated news content was coded for themes (politics, economy, social issue, living & culture, & etc.), formation (photo, text, illustration, graph, & etc.), dimension of news (individual vs. community concern), news types (hard news vs. soft news), tenses (past, present, future, & mix), main news sources (public officers, celebrities, elite persons such as business people, doctors, and college professors), & man on the street), subjects of news (people, places, animals,

social phenomena, natural phenomena, products, & historical facts), tones (positive, negative, & neutral), the style of news writing (pyramid, reverse-pyramid, list-up, & narrative), characteristics of multi-media (interactive, hyperlink, & multi-media), the way of news presentation (thematic vs. episodic), news values (significance, human interest, timeliness, entertainment, being famous, negativity, proximity, & etc.), and so on.

In order to test the inter-coder reliability of the coding, we double-coded 140 articles (13.7%) of the total units. The lowest coder-agreement was found in news values, which was .97. Thus, we proceeded with the coding process.

## 5. RESULTS

### 5.1. GENERAL TRAITS

Six out of ten card news samples in the study were produced in a series of card only formats. The other 40% of the card news were embedded into a series of articles. However, there were variations according to news outlets. For example, *KBS* and *JTBC* preferred the embedded format, but *Chosun Daily*, *Donga Daily*, and *Hanyereh Daily* used only card formats.

The card news components were text, photo, cartoon, and graph. However, any single component stood for itself. Instead, photos with texts were the most popular formats, which accounted for 58.2%. The combinations of text, photo, and cartoon also took 24.1%. The combinations of text, photo, and graph were also 11.1% of total samples. Moreover, multimedia characteristics have not yet been fully exploited. Only seven percent of the sample provided interaction, emoticons, or hypertext.

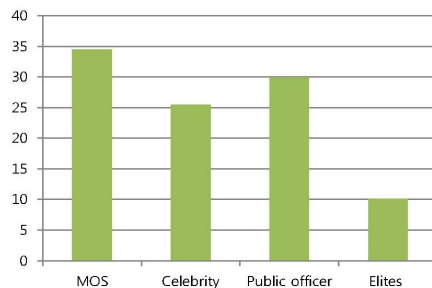
### 5.2. HARD NEWS V.S. SOFT NEWS

Almost half of the total card news in this study were about social issues. Moreover, news about living and culture was 28.3%. However, news about politics and the economy was 9.4% and 4.2%, respectively. In addition, producers of card news preferred hard news (56.1%) to soft news (43.9%).

### 5.3. MAIN SOURCES & OBJECTIVITY

Even though 40.9% of the 1020 samples did not disclose their occupations, the most frequently quoted sources were man-on-the-street (MOS, 20.4%). Then, celebrities such as actors, sports stars, and singers were 15.1%. Public officers were only 17.6%, and elite sources such as professors, doctors, and businessmen were only 6.0%. The proportion of MOS as main sources increased to 34.5% if we excluded unidentified sources. Similarly, proportions of public officer and celebrity were 29.9% and 25.5%.

Moreover, subjective observation and subjective narration were disclosed in 57% of the samples. In tandem with this tendency, the content was favored to contain opinions (71.2%) than not to have opinions (28.8%). The tone of the curated news slightly favored positive (51.5%) rather than negative (41.5%).



(그림 1) 카드뉴스의 메인 소스

(Figure 1) Main sources of curated news contents (%)

### 5.4. INVERTED PYRAMID WRITING

In story forms, narrative writing in a timeline was the most frequently used (39.4%). Then, list technique, which has several important points to stress, followed (34.3%). Interestingly, pyramid style (20.7%) outnumbered inverted pyramid style (5.1%), which is the standard of traditional journalism writing.

The way of news presentation may be discussed in thematic or episodic presentation. Thematic presentation (55.2%) outnumbered the episodic presentation (44.8%). The explicit purposes in curated news articles concentrated on descriptive explanation of phenomena (82.0%), analysis of the cause (39.2%), conveying a moral judgment (19.4%),

and endorsing remedies (6.7%). Multiple response crosstabs found that thematic presentation was slightly higher in descriptive explanation (53.3%), analysis of the cause (52.4%), and providing solution (57.4%). However, the episodic presentation was much more frequently found in moral judgement (66.5%).

(표 1) 뉴스작성의 동기

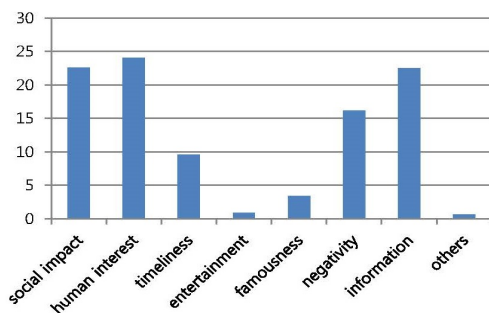
(Table 1) The purpose of curated news contents

	Explain	Cause	Judge	Solution
Thematic	443 (53.3%)	209 (52.4%)	77 (33.5%)	39 (57.4%)
Episodic	388 (46.7%)	190 (47.6%)	131 (66.5%)	29 (42.6%)
Total	831 (100%)	399 (100%)	197 (100%)	68 (100%)

### 5.5. DOMINANT NEWS VALUES

In terms of news values, the content was closely associated with social impact (22.6%), human interest (24.1%), information (22.5%), and negativity (16.2%). Furthermore, the content was relatively associated with timeliness (9.6%). Among the sample, content with any mention about timeliness was exhibited in 341 samples (33.4%) and content without timeliness was shown in 679 samples (66.6%).

News values also associated with news presentation. Specifically, social impacts and human interest were presented in a thematic way, 53.7% and 52.8%, respectively. By contrast, timeliness (61.2%) and entertainment (66.7%), prominence (82.9%), and negativity (55.2%) were associated with thematic presentation.



(그림 2) 카드뉴스의 뉴스가치

(Figure 2) News values in curated news contents (%)

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we analyzed the characteristics of card news content in Korea as curated news content. Unlike traditional news content, card news is based on a mixture format with pictures and text. In story forms, list technique, which has several important points to stress, was more frequently used than inverted pyramids. Moreover, providing information was the main purpose of the content. At the same time, identifying causes, conveying a moral judgment, and endorsing remedies were not the main purposes, which are considered as main functions of modern journalism [31]. The current study also found that a predominance of objectivity and rational appeal in traditional news [25] were lessened in curated news. Instead, subjective comments and emotional appeals prevailed on curatorial contexts.

Moreover, card news seems to be relatively free from timeliness, which is regarded as the most important news value in traditional journalism. Instead, information, human interest, and social impact were more salient news values than timeliness in the card news. That is, card news plays the role of supplement news, which may not replace main news. Simply reiteration of social meaning and providing information are main functions of the curated news content. Furthermore, salience of human interest can be explained by entertaining characteristics of curated news.

Additionally, the most frequently quoted source of the card news turned out to be MOS. Then, public officer, celebrity, and elite sources followed. Comparing the traditional news media which heavily depended on public officers and elites in the society as main news source, the upheaval of MOS as a main source may reflect democratization of sources in curated news contents.

Mobile is predicted as the future winner of the news platform competition because of its connection to the web, mobility, and social connections [7]. In this vein, the outlook for curated news contents either on the web or on the mobile is positive. However, we do not intend to jump to any conclusions that suggest curated news content will replace traditional journalism. Once again, it is like a side dish accompanying the main meal.

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