

The Mirrored Choice: Exploring the Role of the Habitus in Selecting News in Converged Newspaper Organizations in Sri Lanka

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In a world driven by technology, the media industry is experiencing a rapid transformation in its very structure of news production and dissemination. Though the print media has been steadfastly holding its ground in Sri Lanka, there seems to be a degeneration of its former vigour with the online and mobile platforms consolidating a hitherto untapped digital audience. Therefore, there is an increasing call to understand and redefine what entails news selection in a multi-platform delivery. The primary objective of this study is to explore how the working habitus affects news selection in converged press in Sri Lanka. More specifically, the study aims to identify how the working habitus affects the journalists' perception of news values and how the journalists innovate and strategize news selection in the backdrop of media convergence. The study presented is a pilot study of a much larger study and uses the qualitative case study approach. In-depth interviews are conducted from participants comprising journalists and news editors of the daily and weekly broadsheet newspapers of the Wijeya Group. The study also includes content analysis of the print, online and mobile front/home pages of Lankadeepa and Times/Daily Mirror newspapers for a period of two weeks. Bourdieu's habitus provides the theoretical basis for the study since it helps to capture the dispositions, schemas, competences and the know-how that affect news selection in converged newspapers. The findings point towards a journalists' "instinct" for news and the internal socialization processes coupled with the platform specific requirements taking precedence in news selection thus leading us to demur our understanding of news selection in converged media as a routinized practice as well as a form of re-adaptation of the old media in the online and mobile platforms. The study also suggests that re-thinking news habitus in terms of habits, values, preferences and rules might help us more in enhancing our understanding of the news selection process as well as the quality of the media content.

Keywords: Habitus, Selecting News, Print media