



## The Journal of *News Science*

Vol. 14, No. 3, Ser.55, Autumn 2025, P. 17- 22

Journal homepage: <https://www.mjourcom.ir/>

DOI : <http://doi.org/10.22034/lrsi.2025.534573.1398>

---

**Open Access**

**ORIGINAL ARTICLE**

### **Investigating News Replication in Iranian Media: News Value versus Editorial Policies**

Esmacil Afghahi 

1. Assistant Professor; Media Department; Research Center for Culture, Art and Communication;  
[eafghahi@yahoo.com](mailto:eafghahi@yahoo.com)

Received: July 14, 2025

Accepted: October 22, 2025

---

### **EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

#### **Interdiction:**

When content is originally published by a media outlet, it is frequently reproduced by numerous other outlets. On occasion, the secondary outlet cites the source from which the material was obtained; however, in the majority of instances, the duplicated or paraphrased content is redistributed without proper attribution. This process typically unfolds such that news initially produced by a single outlet is disseminated across an expanding network of media organizations, ultimately to the point where the identity of the original source is obscured or forgotten. This phenomenon coalesces into a trend wherein media outlets increasingly emulate one another, thereby engendering a unified discourse that pervades all actors operating within this pattern.

Consider, for example, a news item first published by Media 1, subsequently reproduced by Media 2, then Media 3, and eventually by Media n. In such a chain, it is often indeterminable from which intermediary source—Media 9, for instance—the content was obtained, even though Media 1 is known to be the originator. Within the professional media landscape, the initial publication of a news item positions the originating outlet as a news agency. Other media intending to republish that content are normatively expected to compensate the original agency and to cite it as the source. In the contemporary era of social media, however, such practices are rarely observed. Moreover, certain outlets—commonly referred to as media aggregators—compile content from various news agencies and websites and republish it. In the context of prominent domestic news platforms, *Tabnak* may, to some extent, be characterized as an aggregator. Through this process, news is pervasively duplicated and disseminated without due attribution.

The significance of media replication lies in its capacity to extend the reach of news or content to broader audiences. As a communicative process, replication enables media to transmit and reiterate messages and information, thereby playing a critical role in shaping public opinion and fostering shared perceptions within society. This dynamic can either reinforce prevailing beliefs and values or instigate transformations in social attitudes and behaviors.

The hypothesis under investigation is thus articulated as follows: when a news item A is initially published by Media 1, any subsequent outlet Media n (where  $n = 1, 2, 3, \dots$ ) that reproduces and disseminates this content participates in a shared news discourse with Media 1. The concept of "news discourse" is herein defined to signify that the reported event possesses intrinsic news value for the target audiences of the respective media, independent of their editorial or institutional policies. In other words, it is the news value of the event itself that drives its replication across heterogeneous outlets.

Within the field of journalism, only those events that embody news values are capable of generating discourse. News discourse constitutes an integral component of the framing process in public policy issues and performs a pivotal function in structuring public debate around such issues. In the present study, the term *news discourse* refers to a sociological process involving three principal actors: news sources, journalists, and audiences. The binding element that connects these three actors is the news value inherent to the event.

It is necessary to distinguish the hypothesized phenomenon of media replication from that of media streaming. The latter refers to a politically orchestrated process whereby media outlets disseminate specific news items within a predetermined strategic framework. Media streaming is characterized by intentionality and ideological coherence. In contrast, media replication is an emergent and unplanned process, which may occur even in the case of routine or politically neutral content and without any prior coordination among outlets. Whereas streaming involves ideologically aligned media acting in concert, replication entails each outlet independently covering the same news item according to its own mission, editorial policy, managerial orientation, or professional journalistic judgment.

According to Rogers (2003), diffusion denotes the process by which information is transmitted over time from one source to others, encompassing the dissemination and adoption of messages within social and media networks. Content diffusion analysis operationalizes this concept within the media domain by tracing the trajectory of information or news across outlets and examining the transformations it undergoes during reproduction. Within this analytical framework, content diffusion analysis seeks to map pathways of message dissemination,

identify shifts in framing and emphasis throughout the reproduction process, and reveal how meanings are reframed across diverse media environments.

### **Method:**

To investigate the proposed hypothesis, this study employed content diffusion analysis. Content diffusion analysis—also referred to as media diffusion analysis—is a research method in communication studies used to examine how content is disseminated, amplified, and reproduced across media outlets (Rogers, 2003). The stepwise procedure for conducting content diffusion analysis is as follows:

- Defining the research topic and objectives: Precisely identifying the news item or content to be monitored.
- Selecting media and data sources: Determining the geographical scope and types of media (print, broadcast, online, social media, etc.).
- Data collection (media monitoring): Continuously observing selected media and documenting the date, source, and content of reproduced news items.
- Data classification: Categorizing news items based on attributes such as media type, publication time, and thematic focus.
- Content analysis (qualitative and quantitative): Quantifying the frequency of news redistribution; assessing the volume and temporal patterns of dissemination; examining linguistic variations, framing strategies, emphasis, bias, and reporting styles.
- Network analysis: Identifying relationships among media outlets and reconstructing the pathways of news diffusion; analyzing the roles of key media actors, gatekeepers, and the most influential sources in the information flow.
- Interpretation of results: Evaluating patterns and trends in news dissemination; assessing the influence of media in shaping and transforming messages during their propagation.
- Reporting and presentation: Compiling research findings based on quantitative and qualitative data; offering analytical recommendations to advance the understanding of content diffusion.

Data for this study were collected using note-taking (index card method). The research population comprised salient and current news items that were widely circulated across multiple media platforms and social networks, thereby attaining trending status. Purposive sampling was employed over a six-month period from Dey 1403 to Khordad 1404 (December 2024 to June 2025). The recording unit and the unit of analysis were identical, both defined as individual news items.

### **Findings:**

As articulated in the introduction, when content is originally published by a media outlet, it is frequently reproduced by numerous other outlets—occasionally with source attribution, but more often without. This process unfolds such that news initially produced by a single source is propagated across an ever-expanding network of media organizations, to the extent that the identity of the originator is commonly lost.

Consistent with the findings, the news items examined were reproduced predominantly by ideologically aligned media, and in certain instances, by moderate or relatively neutral outlets. This pattern suggests that the news value inherent to the event motivates replication across disparate media, and no evidence of orchestrated media flow was detected. These observations

corroborate the media replication hypothesis. Specifically, when a news item A is initially published by Media 1, any subsequent Media n (where  $n = 1, 2, 3, \dots$ ) that replicates and disseminates this content participates in a shared news discourse with Media 1. Media outlets that reproduce one another's content are not necessarily ideologically aligned, yet they may nonetheless cohabit within the same discursive space.

## Conclusions

It is noteworthy that the findings also reveal that, in the case of media outlets expressing opposition to or criticism of a particular event or news item, news values are frequently subordinated to editorial policy. Media policy is often deployed to fulfill agenda-setting objectives. Thus, it may be cautiously asserted that media outlets engaging in replication—by prioritizing news value over media policy—exhibit comparatively reduced bias toward events and demonstrate greater fidelity to news value relative to outlets that do not participate in replication. Accordingly, the replication hypothesis may serve as a criterion for evaluating the credibility and professionalism of media organizations. Importantly, it is a mark of professional integrity for a media outlet to report an event of intrinsic news value even when it does not align with its editorial stance; conversely, the exclusive coverage of events that merely serve institutional policy lacks substantive professional merit.

The findings of this study merit further evaluation using larger statistical populations and advanced statistical testing to yield more robust and generalizable results. Moreover, the media replication hypothesis may be examined across various media formats—including national broadcast news, dedicated news channels, and social media platforms—to enable comparative analysis across distinct media environments.

### Data Availability Statement

Data available on request from the authors.

### Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank anonymous reviewers.

### Ethical considerations

Not applicable.

### Funding

Not applicable.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## References

- Azarbakhsh, A. M. (2013). *An Introduction to the Role of Media in Agenda-setting*. Qom: Islamic Research Center of IRIB. (In Persian)
- Asadi, A. (2014). *Journalism in the Contemporary World*. Tehran: Asar-e Fekr. (In Persian).
- Afghahi, E. (2015). Media Agenda-setting from Theory to Practice. *Information and Communication Book Review Quarterly*, 2(5), 93–101. (In Persian)
- Bashir, H. (2013). *Foreign Media: A Discourse Analytical Reading*. Tehran: Simaye Shargh.
- Davies, N. (2009). *Flat Earth News: An Award-Winning Reporter Exposes Falsehood, Distortion and Propaganda in the Global Media*. Vintage UK.
- Pan, Z.; Kosicki, G.M. (1993): Framing Analysis: An Approach to News Discourse. *Political Communication*, 10(1): 55-75
- Riffe, D., Lacy, S., & Fico, F. G. (2009). *Analyzing Media Messages: Using Quantitative Content Analysis in Research*. translated by M. Boroujerdi Alavi. Tehran: Soroush and Center for Research, Studies, and Program Evaluation. (In Persian)
- Rogers, E. M. (2003). *Diffusion of Innovations*. 5th Edition. Free Press.
- Shoemaker, P. J.; Vos, T. (2009). *Gatekeeping Theory*. Routledge.

---

**Cite this article:** Afghahi, E. (2025). Investigating News Replication in Iranian Media: News Value versus Editorial Policies, *News Science*, 14 (3), 17-22. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22034/lrsi.2025.534573.1398>



© The Author(s).  
DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22034/lrsi.2025.534573.1398>

---