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## **EMOTIONS IN SOCIAL MEDIA DISCOURSE: A CASE STUDY OF WIDELY COMMENTED EVENTS IN BULGARIAN NEWS**

***Abstract:** The paper aims at reviewing the linguistic devices expressing emotions both in readers' comments under the five most commented news articles for December 2023 on the Facebook page of a national media outlet, and in the articles themselves. All other article headlines on the page for this month are reviewed too, looking for unifying features that trigger readers to react with a comment on the relevant events presented in the news. The author also introduces her own point of view on the topic of expressing emotions, supported with evidence from the opinions of scholars in the relevant field, namely Charles Darwin, Anna Wierzbicka, Lisa Feldman Barrett, etc. The paper consists of two parts: the first one examines emotions and social media discourse, and the second one presents a practical analysis of the linguistic devices expressing emotions in the articles and in the comments they trigger.*

***Keywords:** emotions, culture, social media discourse, lexical devices expressing emotions*

### **Introduction**

“Men feel disturbed not by things, but by the views which they take of them” (Epictetus, as cited in Ellis, 1975: 33).

“[...] for there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so” (Shakespeare, as cited in Ellis, 1975: 33).

The development and evolution of social networks into social media (Veerasamy 2013) has significantly changed the landscape of public discourse, providing a platform where people can freely share their opinion and emotions. Platforms, such as Facebook, give their users the opportunity not only to read news articles but also to participate in the emotional framing of events reported in the news. On the one hand, this dynamic interaction between news articles and comments generated by users reflects the public point of view. On the other hand, this diverse array of emotions that users create enhances the public opinion.

## Method

This paper presents a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the emotional language used in the top five most commented articles from December 2023 published on the Facebook page of NOVA News. The corpus on which the present study is based consists of 471 articles and the comments on them. They were excerpted from the Facebook page of NOVA News by using the filter menu to select each day of December 2023 separately. The titles, along with the number of likes and comments each article received from Facebook users, are then collected and organized into a table arranged by date, after which, the five most commented articles are selected along with their comments and analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively using a framework specifically adapted for the purposes of this paper. The analyzed news articles and the comments they trigger can be accessed when a user opens the Facebook page of NOVA News and specifically selects the dates they were posted on in December 2023 from the filter menu, and then manually scrolls to the post of their search. Links including the URL, which appears once the article is opened, send the user to the web page of NOVA News, where Facebook comments are not available. All identifying elements, such as user names, have been removed from the analyzed data.

## Theoretical background

For the discourse analysis Phil Benson's framework focusing on digital discourse (Benson 2017) will be used. Benson builds on the structure of spoken interaction initially developed by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), however, for his analysis he adapts several key categories: the hierarchical interactional units comprised by *transaction*, *exchange*, *move*, and *act* (2015: 85). The present paper focuses on interactional moves, i.e. *initiation move* which starts an exchange and sets up expectations for the next move, *response move* which follows an *initiation*, and *follow-up move* which answers a response move rather than an initiation move act. *Adaptation to multimodal discourse* which involves analyzing user actions such as commenting, uploading videos, and engaging with content through likes or dislikes; and *modifications for digital discourse act* (ibid.: 2015: 85 – 86) which consider how interactional moves can be represented across different modalities and interactions on digital platforms. The present paper analyzes the emotional messages in digital discourse through interactional moves that specifically exemplify response move in relation to the news articles (regarded as initiation move) to render how news articles and the corresponding user comments create a structured exchange of interactions. By examining the moves within these exchanges, the present study aims to uncover the dynamics of how readers engage with, react to, and discuss news content. The analysis of interactional moves reveals the mechanisms through which public discourse is shaped and evolved on social media, illustrating how news articles serve as catalysts for dialogue and community interaction.

The present study employs Monika Bednarek's (2008) framework for the analysis of emotion. Bednarek's methodology is based on Martin and White's appraisal theory (Martin & White 2005), only with a narrower focus and specifically targeting the analysis of emotion terms in discourse. Such an extensive framework allows for a detailed examination of emotional language through several key categories: *emotion term* (2008: 154) – the specific word/s or phrase/s used to either describe emotions (e.g., happy, sad, angry) or signal them (2008: 12); *emoter* (2008: 14) or the person or entity experiencing or expressing the emotion (e.g. the author, a character, a group); *trigger* (2008: 14) in Bednarek's framework the category of *trigger* is used to denote the thing, event or situation which causes an emotional response. In the present discussion, a trigger in the comments inspired by each article may refer, but is not limited to, an event, situation, or object in a news article that causes an emotional response; *affect type* (2008: 160) referring to the type of emotion that is being described, in five main categories: *in /security, dis/satisfaction, un/happiness, dis/inclination, surprise* (2008: 173 – 175); *covert/overt affect* (2008: 176) determining whether the emotional expression is explicitly stated or suggested through context and implications; *valence* (2008: 154; 171) determining whether emotions are positive, negative, neutral or ambiguous. In addition, emotion terms exemplifying *emotional talk*<sup>1</sup> by means of “portraying emotions” (2008: 146 – 152) found in the news articles will be explored through Bednarek's framework for analyzing ways of portraying emotions: by *reference to emoter's emotions (literal and figural emotion terms)*, *referring to emoters' psycho-physiological expressions of emotion (using behaviour surge terms)*, *referring to emoters' actions or behavior caused by emotion (describing mental behaviour; describing linguistic behaviour: speech act terms, emotional talk devices; describing (physical) actual or hypothetical behaviour)*, and *references to causes of emotions (describing elicitors/antecedent events)* (ibid.: 2008: 146 – 152). The present paper puts forward the affect type of sarcasm, which will be coded as +/- sarcasm, in addition to the already established types.

By examining both the articles themselves and the comments they trigger, the present study aims to uncover the nature of interaction between media and the public and the various means of emotional expression. The study explores the presence of emotional language in the articles in particular, investigates whether the emotional language, if present, is explicit or implicit, and assesses why and how it influences the emotional responses in the comments. The analysis also considers whether there is synchronicity in the emotional messages conveyed across the articles and the comments they trigger, in attempt to reveal how media narratives and public feelings align or clash.

<sup>1</sup> Monika Bednarek differentiates between linguistic expressions that explicitly denote emotions such as fear, joy, hate, love exemplifying “emotion talk”, and expressions that signal emotions as the sentence “Don't go there, it might be dangerous!”, for example, which conveys fear or concern without explicitly denoting it and exemplifies “emotional talk” (Bednarek 2008: 12).

## Emotions

There is a great body of literature discussing emotions, starting from ancient Greece to the present day. However, there is no single definition of what emotion is or a single theory on expressing emotion that all scholars fully agree upon. The present paper suggests a holistic approach where existing theories on emotions complement rather than contradict each other in order to embrace the complexity of human emotions. It is argued that biological, linguistic, cultural and individual factors must be acknowledged when emotional expression is discussed. While there may be universal aspects to emotional expression, as suggested by Charles Darwin (1872), culture and language have a significant role in shaping how emotions are experienced and articulated (Wierzbicka 1999). Furthermore, “past experiences – from direct encounters, from photos, from movies and books – give meaning to your present sensations” (Barrett 2017: 34) and form an emotional schema that can be easily triggered by the use of words specific for each person or people (Bednarek 2008: 149).

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Charles Darwin argued that the reason why animals and humans experience and express emotions is to improve their chances of survival and reproduction (1872). According to Darwin, a smile on someone’s face indicates happiness, and a frown indicates sadness. However, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century he could not have possibly known that around fifty years later people who work in customer service will have to do something that was later called “emotional work” or “emotional labour” (Hochschild 2012: 9) and smile to clients without actually being happy. Regardless of the mixed reactions this theory received, and the refutation of some of its aspects along the way, even today Darwin’s theory continues to be taken into consideration. Many, if not all, social networks and social media platforms give their users the opportunity to react emotionally to private and public content with smiley faces, frowns, crying faces, and other emojis that are based on Darwin’s theory (Sharrock 2013), which facilitates multimodality in digital discourse.

Around a century later, Anna Wierzbicka (1999) offered a theory that contrasts Darwin’s views on the universality of human emotions. According to Wierzbicka, human emotions are linguistically and culturally shaped (1999: 35) and not shared by all people, since there are words in some languages that describe emotions which do not exist in other languages and cannot be translated by a single word. Yet, according to Wierzbicka, there is a set of around 60 universal concepts, or “semantic primitives” (1999: 38), which can help people describe, in a form of “scenario” (1999: 38 – 45), the emotion they experience, thus unraveling the layers of cultural background that each emotional experience bears.

In recent years the understanding that our brains construct emotions triggered by the environment surrounding the human body has become very popular. According to Barrett (2017: 33 – 51), a racing heart can signal pleasure and excitement in the brain when a person is at a party, but it can trigger fear if the person is in a dark alley, suggesting that emotions are not events that happen to us, but rather experi-

ences that we create. They can vary significantly across different individuals and cultures based on an intricate combination of past experiences, context, and cultural understanding.

The idea that events themselves are inherently neutral and that the personal perception of occurrences as positive or negative is to a great extent determined by the one who perceives them dates back to ancient philosophical traditions as Albert Ellis points out (Ellis 1975: 33). The holistic approach presented in the paper aligns with such a perspective. In this context, the present paper adopts the definition of emotions proposed by Schrauf and Sanchez's (2004) (as cited in Bednarek 2008: 148) that describes emotions as "complex physiological–affective–cognitive responses to the physical and sociocultural environment".

### **The study**

The remainder of the present paper focuses on the analysis of digital discourse and the linguistic devices expressing emotions as exemplified in the articles under observation and in the comments they trigger. There is an intricate connection between emotion and cultural context, which is essential to understanding why certain emotions are expressed and how to interpret them in (digital) discourse. The starting point of the study is the hypothesis that the emotional language used in the articles will employ "portraying emotions" (Bednarek 146 – 150) as a mechanism for emotional framing rather than explicit emotion talk. It is anticipated that articles will exemplify neutral valence and objective reporting in "adherence to certain norms or standards" of newswriting as suggested by Westerståhl (1983) (as cited in Wien 2005: 8). The degree of synchronicity between the emotional messages in the articles and the comments will vary depending on the unique cultural and sociopolitical triggers that are present in the articles. It is anticipated that comments might contrast implied positive valence in the news articles reporting on politics, and reflect and often exaggerate implied negative valence in the articles, employing implicit and often sarcastic emotional language.

### **Digital discourse analysis**

There are 471 news articles posted in December 2023 on the Facebook page of NOVA News. The average number of articles per day is around 15. The most commented news article "Почина отец Боян Саръев" was posted on December 27, 2023 and it elicited 181 comments all of which present a clear response move. The total number of moves is 182 with one initiation move that is the article itself and 181 response moves, most of which are expressions of condolence and respect. The interaction on this Facebook page shows a cohesive response pattern. The discourse is primarily supportive and commemorative with 12 examples of multimodality by means of meme comments illustrating angels, burning candles and flowers, and crying avatars and 170 comments in written text.

The case with the second most commented news article presents a more dynamic and intricate discourse picture. The title is “Свалят фигури от Паметника на Съветската армия за реставрация (ВИДЕО)” and it was posted on December 12, 2023. The article elicited 143 comments with 73 of them presenting response move and 70 presenting follow-up move. There are 8 comments from the ones presenting response move that exemplify multimodality by means of stickers and memes. The response comment which triggers the most follow-up moves (20 in total) with the first five follow-up moves it sparks are presented in *Table 1*.

*Table 1. Follow-up move examples from  
“Свалят фигури от Паметника на Съветската армия  
за реставрация (ВИДЕО)”<sup>2</sup>*

User A: В Русия има Указ която държава разрушава паметници те имат право да ги защитат с всякъкъв вид и това ще стане в България	Response move – responds to the article
User B: User A, Над две г. ще се опитват да стигнат до София и ще “превземат“ една улица! Ако са им останали мъже дотогава!	Follow-up move user B responding to user A
User C: User B, Глупост. За час ще свършат ако решат.	Follow-up move user C responding to user B
User D: User C, За час ще свърши планетата, ако атакуват НАТО и има ядрен отговор	Follow-up move user D responding to user C
User C: User D, Хаха. Дали?	Follow-up move user C responding to user D
User E: User B, моли се да не тръгнат към София няма кои да ви помогне още по малко посолството.	Follow-up move user E responding to user B

<sup>2</sup> All analyzed comments are retained in their authentic form, without any modifications to their content or style.

The interaction on this Facebook page does not show a cohesive response pattern. It presents a charged atmosphere where commenters are more engaged in debating with one another rather than engaging in a constructive dialogue or simply commenting the events reported in the news article. The present paper disregards all follow-up move comments and does not consider any examples of emotion talk or emotional talk that is used in them, because they do not respond to the article, which is the initiation move and the focus of the present analysis.

The third most commented article “За пръв път Украйна ще отбележи Рождество Христово на 24 декември, вместо по стар стил” was posted on December 23, 2023 and it elicited 62 comments, 45 of which exemplify response move and 17 exemplifying follow-up move. There are 5 comments from the ones presenting response move that exemplify multimodality by means of stickers and memes.

The fourth most commented article “Направиха първа копка на магистралата Русе – Велико Търново” was posted on December 3, 2023 and it elicited 58 comments, 54 of them exemplifying response move and 4 exemplifying follow-up moves. There are 11 comments from the ones presenting response move that exemplify multimodality by means of stickers and memes.

The fifth most commented news article is “Задържаха с дрога сина на Софи Маринова” and it was posted on December 2, 2023 eliciting 57 comments, 51 of them presenting response move and 6 exemplifying follow-up move.

### Emotion analysis

The article “Почина отец Боян Саръев” does not exemplify any explicit emotion terms. Emotional talk in Bednarek’s sense is comprised by 10 “linguistic expressions that conventionally signal” emotions (Bednarek 2008: 12), using ways of portraying emotions by giving reference to emoter’s emotion (sadness, grief) using mental disposition terms (*издъхнал, почина*) and metonymic relationship where “the physiological and expressive responses of an emotion stand for the emotion” (Kövecses 2000 as cited by Bednarek (Bednarek 2008: 149), by giving reference to emoter’s actions or behavior (*духовникът, известен като ‘Кръстителя на Родопите’, Развива широка благотворителна, образователна и мисионерска дейност, изхранваше цялогодично близо 100 човека, Той бе един от първите в област Кърджали, изразили готовност да приемат бежанци от Украйна, въведе в Христовата вяра четири украински деца, и призова за разбиране и взаимопомощ местното население и власти, той подмени изцяло иконостаса, взе участие от Кърджали в обиколката на страната*). Emoters in the article are the author, father Boyan Saraev, the people in the Rhodopes, refugees, Ukrainian children and the people. The predominant affect types in the article are happiness: affection, respect and satisfaction: admire, and the valence is predominantly positive. The comments present 163 implicit emotion expressions and 12 memes, with first person emoters, predominant mixed affect type unhappiness: grief and satisfac-

tion: respect, covert affect and a predominantly negative valence in the sense that grief is an emotion that is classified as negative in Bednarek's framework. Comments such as *Поклон* which appears 62 times, *Дълбок поклон* which appears 8 times, *Достоен* which appears 9 times, *Жалко, един от истинските* and *Голям мъж* are classified as negative/ neutral/ ambiguous because they evoke both grief and respect at the same time. There is only one comment *радвайте се – пукна поредния кърджалийски богаташ* that exemplifies unhappiness: antipathy type of affect and a clearly negative valence. Overall comments reflect condolences, admiration for father Boyan Saraev, and respect for his contributions. The article and the comments share a common tone and the implicit emotions in the comments echo the portrayed respect and admiration conveyed in the article.

The article “Свалят фигури от Паметника на Съветската армия за реставрация (ВИДЕО)” exemplifies 6 emoters (expert, political figures (Maya Manolova, Ivaylo Chorbov), the author, political parties, townspeople), 2 explicit emotion terms (*недоволство* and *срам*) and emotional talk comprised by 9 linguistic expressions portraying emotions: referring to emoter's emotions conveying a sense of urgency and concern (*опасен за гражданите, сериозни пукнатини*), referring to emoters' actions or behaviour by means of emotional talk devices (*разбунни духовете на политическата сцена, По тъмна доба зад гърба на гражданите, без да бъдат информирани, се започват действия от областната управа*), and expressions giving reference to emoter's behavior and to causes of emotions (*пристига председателят на партия “Изправи се, България” Мая Манолова, твърдим, че тези действия са незаконни, Ние се отричаме от историята си, експертно становище установи, Съдбата на паметника очаквано предизвика и реакции на недоволство*). There is one predominant trigger which is related to the allegedly illegal actions of politicians, the main affect type is displeasure: anger and valence is neutral with emoter author, and predominantly negative with the rest of the emoters. In the comment section there are 67 examples of written emotional expressions and 8 comments that include memes, avatars and emojis. The predominant affect type is mixed: dissatisfaction: displeasure, anger and unhappiness: antipathy, and the trigger is politicians/officials responsible for the dismantling, and the dismantling itself. Valence is predominantly negative, however examples such as *Бравооо!!*, *Да го махат час по скоро*, *По-добре късно, отколкото никога*, which evoke both cheer and antipathy are classified as expressing neutral/ambiguous valence. Comments such as *Ей ся вечи ши на вземат у еврозоната. И у Шенгена*, and *Оправиха държавата, дойде ред на паметника* are examples of the affect type category of sarcasm, put forward in the present paper as addition to the already established types. The comments of Facebook users mostly echo the emotional talk and reactions of the political figures rather than the neutral tone of the article.

The article „За пръв път Украйна ще отбележи Рождество Христово на 24 декември, вместо по стар стил“ exemplifies 2 emoters (the author, Ukraine), no explicit emotion terms and emotional talk comprised by 9 linguistic expressions portraying emotions by: referring to emoter’s emotion conveying a sense of determination, pride and enthusiasm (*знак за разграничаване от Русия, нещо много повече от обикновена промяна на датата, знак за продължаващия стремеж на Киев да се приобщи към Европа*). Expressions giving reference to emoter’s behavior and to causes of emotions are: *Украйна ще отбележи Рождество Христово на 25 декември, разграничаване от Русия, Приемането на западния, грегориански календар, За първи път от 1917 г. насам, Досега в Украйна, както и в Русия, Коледа се е празнувала на 7 януари*. There is one trigger which is the title itself, and the affect type is satisfaction. Valence in the article is positive and there is presence of covert affect. In contrast, the comments present implicit emotion expressions with a mixed affect type dissatisfaction: ennui (*Е,И!, Дреме ми, Голяма и важна новина..., И това трябва да ни интересува кога тези недоразумения ще празнуват?!*), *Престанете с тази Украйна, Стига вече с тая сканпана Украйна, изобщо не ни интересува какво правят фашистките наглеци*), dissatisfaction: displeasure, outrage (*И тези се присъединиха към гъзоблизците на Запада, Да изчезват, Рождество е на 25!!!*), and unhappiness: antipathy (*А кога ще отбележи капитулацията си? Има ли обявена дата?, Боклуци, Е и кво ме интересуват хохлитe*). There are 2 memes exemplifying the affect type category of sarcasm. The valence in the comments is predominantly negative and the comment *Те се бият за земята си, родината си[...]* is classified as neutral/ambiguous, because it expresses both insecurity: disquiet, concern and satisfaction: pleasure, pride.

The article „Направиха първа копка на магистралата Русе – Велико Търново“ exemplifies 5 emoters (political figure (Nikolay Denkov, Andrey Tsekov), the author, drivers, people from Ruse), 1 explicit emotion term (*изрази надежда*) and portrayed emotions comprised by 11 linguistic expressions: referring to emoter’s emotions (*премиерът Николай Денков изрази надежда, перспективата става много различна, Над 20 г. русенци и шофьори очакват този пътен проект да започне, ще се подобри транспортната свързаност, често стават тежки катастрофи по сегашното трасе*), and expressions giving reference to emoter’s behaviour (*Направиха първа копка, заявил, че се очаква от април 2024 г., строителството ще започне от средата, в района на Бяла, където често стават тежки катастрофи, За него са приключили всички отчуждителни процедури, издадени са разрешителни, осигурено е държавно финансиране за част от строителството*) and to causes of emotions (*с изграждането на магистралата, което би трябвало да се случи за 5 г., ще се подобри транспортната свързаност*). Triggers in the article are: the start of the highway construction, starting the highway construction from a place known for frequent accidents, poten-

tial future benefits, finished expropriation procedure, announcement of the public procurement for the last lot. There are 2 predominant affect types – security: trust and satisfaction: interest. Valence in the article is predominantly positive and there is presence of covert affect. In contrast, the comments present a widespread dissatisfaction, and lack of trust towards the government meeting the fixed deadline and the successful completion of the project in general. This is due to negative emotion schema referring to similar previous events. This is visible in comments such as *Така ще си остане и с първата копка! Пари няма! Промяната ги опанка!, То не сме изградили до край нито една магистрала, ама нова започваме, две дини под една мишница не се носят, но ние ще мъкнем по пет!, А, вече може ли да се яде асфалт?, 40 години се правите че правите магистрала само крадете мръсни предатели продадохте държавата как нямате срам.* The emotional discourse in the comments does not echo the positive appraisals voiced in the article. There are 21 comments exemplifying the added affect type of sarcasm (13 of them by means of memes). Some examples are: *Цена?*<sup>3</sup>, *Ако се строят със същите темпове като хвалбите на Боко може да се очаква да бъде построена от премиер внук на Делян Пеевски, От къде ще е обходът?? През Монголия може би..., До 2119 г. може и да стане.*

The article “Задържаха с дрога сина на Софи Маринова” reports factual information in a neutral valence and includes neither explicit nor implicit expressions of emotion. However, the event itself is negative. In the comment section the reader can find emotionally charged messages with covert expressions of antipathy, outrage and personal attacks. This is due to negative emotion schema referring to similar previous events when celebrities were either caught driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Some examples of the added affect type category of sarcasm are: *добро момче е, поздравява винаги, Браво, иновативен и предприемчив! Европейски ценности!, Честит първи сняг, Лори, Въргалял се е в брашното.* The implicit and emotionally charged comments markedly contrast the factual tone of the article. Despite the fact that the comments are a reaction to a specific incident, they reveal a deep, culturally ingrained dissatisfaction with systemic issues and a wider social discontent.

### Conclusion

The present analysis of emotions as an aspect of digital discourse acts as a barometer for public opinion on various topics. The analyzed articles are the five most commented on out of 471 articles posted in December 2023, as they either

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<sup>3</sup> Based on personal observations, “Цена?” or “Цена?” initially appeared in the comment sections of posts advertising goods for sale without explicitly stating the price on social media platforms. Over time, this comment started appearing under posts on various unrelated topics to express users’ disinterest in a post, highlight the irrelevance of a topic, or simply express their sense of humour through sarcasm.

present sad or negative events, as in the cases with father Boyan Saraev and Sofi Marinova's son, or actions of public importance, closely related to a change in the current state of affairs in Bulgaria or territories near Bulgaria. The discourse model of the asynchronous communication detected by the present analysis is that news articles employ neutral valence, implicit emotional language and objective reporting in an attempt to prevent the escalation of tension and activation of cultural and sociopolitical triggers. Despite the use of such strategy, comments very explicitly show the "folk model of emotion schemas" (Bednarek 2008: 149) referring to lack of trust in institutions and the government, their efficiency, and the actual fulfillment of governmental commitments. The discourse is not limited to the events reported in the news articles. It exemplifies a broader commentary that involves "interrelations, default assignments (prototypes), and expectations" (ibid.: 2008: 149) of the governance and public accountability in the country. The study has found instances of both emotion talk and emotional talk in the articles. The total number of emotion talk expressions in the news articles is 3 and the total number of emotional talk expressions is 39. The analysis has detected lack of synchronicity in the emotional messages conveyed across the articles and their corresponding comments. The best examples are the articles reporting Ukraine's decision to change the date of Christmas celebrations, in which the affect is satisfaction: pleasure, pride and satisfaction: interest, enthusiasm. The predominant affect type in the comments is unhappiness: antipathy and dissatisfaction: ennui. The article reporting the beginning of the construction of the new highway, in which the predominant affect is security: trust and inclination: desire, and the predominant affect type in the comments is insecurity: distrust and dissatisfaction: displeasure, outrage. The last one is the article reporting the arrest of Sofi Marinova's son which does not make use of any expressions of emotion possibly in an attempt to neutralize cultural and sociopolitical triggers employing neutral language, and the comments it inspires predominantly expressing dissatisfaction: displeasure, outrage and unhappiness: antipathy, reveal where and how media narratives and public feelings clash.

The present case study reveals some of the cultural triggers resulting from the unique cultural and sociopolitical context which has fostered a public discourse characterized by distrust and emotional intensity, specifically when it comes to reporting political events. The assumptions made at the beginning of the present paper have been largely validated, particularly the expectation that articles reporting political events would trigger a more negative emotional response in the comments section. The specific methodology elaborated in pursuit of the goals of the present paper can be further used in comparative cross-cultural studies, in studies that explore the changes in emotional discourse over time, or to expand the scope of analysis and include other social media platforms.

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