Covid-19 Related Media Coverage Effect on Social Cohorts

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Abstract:
The course of humanity has been intensely interrupted by the sudden eruption of COVID-19 virus. The latter has turned human life upside down and put an end to glorious decades of peace, prosperity, enjoyment and tourism. Ever since the first cases of the virus were recorded, many, if not all, nations adopted comprehensive lockdowns to control the influx of possible infected people and prevent the transmission of infection among people and its spread amidst society. Due to the novelty of what turned out to be a global pandemic and its accompanying unprecedented circumstances, the Moroccan government waged a massive information campaign utilizing all possible radio, television and social media networks attempting to attain a wide reach of its far-flung citizens. Some communication channels, such as 2M, shifted to local dialects like Moroccan Arabic (MA) and Amazigh to reach and forewarn even the illiterate cohorts. Immigrant diaspora in different parts of the world, in China, the cradle of the virus, Europe and America, joined in and reinforced the governmental immense communication campaign by sharing their virus experiences with relatives and friends via videos, audio materials and texts that went viral over social media avenues. This bulky information campaign was not without any effect. This is a study that investigates into the potential upshots of this sustained, incessant and corroborated media coverage of Covid19 pandemic on a random sample of 113 informants composed of shop keepers, street vendors and other laymen we randomly met in Agadir’s streets, markets and gardens upon the alleviation of the shutdown restrictions in June 2020. The interviewees brought up ample effects ranging from the emergence of novel greeting manners, ascending distrustfulness, health consciousness, cautiousness, massive fear as well as re-organization of spending and saving priorities. Likewise, the pandemic seems to have shaken people’s erstwhile trust and confidence in scientific and technological developments that became pretty much vulnerable before wide-ranging, unremitting and consistent media coverage of some issues, especially if the issue turned out to be profitable to some agency/ies.

Keywords: Media coverage, Covid-19, Population sample, Lockdown, Distrustfulness, Health consciousness
Enveloped in a SARS panic, the whole nation was decorated with all sorts of masks that smelt of disinfectant. The successive red threat and white anxiety have brought about a quiet cultural revolution in Chinese society. Unlike the Maoist one, this revolution is not one of ideology led by the state; rather, it is a revolution of information vectors. (Haiqing Yu 2009, p. 61)

1. Introduction

The sudden outbreak of Covid-19 has taken all the nations of the world by surprise. Ever since the emergence of the first infected cases in Wuhan in China in early December 2019, nations’ governments worried much about the most congenial protection measures to adopt to safeguard the countries and their citizens from what seemed to be both an eminent danger and the irreversible flow of the virus. And because ‘prevention is better than cure’, goes the famous adage, most governments focused on and adopted massive multifold information campaign that sought to achieve a variety of objectives.

Through this bulky information campaign, governments aimed at sensitizing and informing their citizens about the nature of Covid-19, its potential transmission processes and the prevention methods. In the absence of related medical treatment, governments hoped their sensitization operations would better forewarn their social members. It was also hoped that the latter should consequently adopt the different preventive measures they are introduced into through the various information networks, which the governments employed meanwhile experts, scientists and laboratories hopefully elaborate an associated medical cure. Ultimately, governments sought to make their citizens responsible for their behavior hoping to control and curb the flow of what turned out to be a global public health crisis.

However, due to global trade and tourism flows, Covid-19 outstepped governments’ measures and rapidly spread across the globe and has so far become the major pandemic in the 21 Century. In accordance, the first infection was confirmed in Morocco in March 2nd, 2020 in Casablanca among a Moroccan immigrant in Italy. A few days later, a second case was spotted among another Moroccan female expatriate in Italy, too. Also, as the rate of infection augmented and out of fear that the influx and the infection rates would rise among its citizens, the Moroccan government, in March 19th, 2020, declared a state of health emergency that should be in effect starting from the following day, March 20th, 2020 at 6 p.m. In other words, the kingdom, on the pattern of many other nations, adopted a great lockdown by closing all of the national borders, educational, religious and entertainment institutions, and forcing its citizens not to leave their houses except for utmost necessity of medication and nutrition procurement. Teleworking possibilities were offered and special authorizations were issued by local officials for employees whose presence at work was mandatory.

The global pandemic has greatly affected media consumption. McQuail and Windahl (1993) assert that people tend to be more dependent on the media during critical times of conflict and instability. Social media platforms have surrogated social gatherings, which have become inaccessible. These social networking sites, according to J.P. Morgan (2020), “have become even more important channels for maintaining connections” (§, 5). He also notes that the use of FB and its messaging applications has risen by more than 50%. In accordance, Messenger and WhatsApp voice and video calls more than double in the quarantine period.

Faced with such novel and unprecedented confinement circumstances, media consumption soared among households. Indeed, the confinement of people inside their houses besides social distancing triggered a conspicuous increase in exposure to diverse media. In this respect, people had to reconsider their daily routines during their previous mode of life in accordance with the
new quarantine status quo. As such, some daily behaviors, like jogging, going to the gym or sitting at cafés with friends, etc., had to be dropped while other novel manners as video phone calls, TV streaming, appeared. In some cases, the duration of former habits, such as TV-viewing, Internet surfing, etc., got extended.

In this regard, Casero-Rippolés (2020) asserts that media consumption surged during the confinement. The Spanish Association for Investigation into Media Consumption (AIMC) points out an increase in the consumption of digital magazines and the Radio during the week of 13-19 April as the 5th incarceration week in Spain. AIMC (2020a) mentions that the Radio exceeded 20.5 million listeners per day, especially from 6 to 10 a.m. Likewise, AIMC (2020b) brings up that 62% of netizens have enlarged their viewing time for both free-to-air and pay channels so as to fight boredom. AIMC also notes that subscriptions to OTTs, or TV-streaming rose by 7.6% during detention in Spain. And Moroccan audiences are no exception or different as Media Metri reports high attendance rates to media networks, especially TV (Aawsat).

In this regard, ever since the emergence of the first infected cases in the kingdom, or perhaps before, the Moroccan government reinforced its information campaign by utilizing diverse media avenues, including television, the Radio, social media, etc., and Covid-19 related explanatory shows. In addition, most such information programs shifted to the local dialect, Moroccan Arabic (MA) attempting to reach the largest portion of citizens including the illiterate. Regional Radio stations also used local Amazigh dialects in their broadcasts about Covid-19. This sizeable information operation was reinvigorated by Moroccan and Arab expatriates who shared their various Covid-19 experiences and occurrences with relatives and fellow citizens over distinct social media platforms.

Consequently, this enormous information campaign together with its accompanying media consumption struck my attention. Then, I decided to study the interplay and the effect of the two afore-mentioned variables on a mostly illiterate sample, which is largely composed of laymen, namely shopkeepers, street vendors and their customers. We randomly met the latter in the streets of Agadir city, near mosques and public gardens upon the alleviation of Covid-19 restrictions in June 2020 over a period of three months.

2. Research questions and hypotheses

In accordance, this study seeks to respond to four main research questions, mainly:

i. Do you think that the massive Covid-19 related information campaign affected its audience members?

ii. What information networks did audience attendees mostly attend to during the confinement?

iii. How long did you attend to these information avenues?

iv. How did such media attendance affect audiences?

This study, in addition, departs from two main hypotheses, chiefly:

H1: Audience members attended massively to different media networks, especially TV, the Radio and Social Networking Sites (SNS) during the confinement.

H2: Heavy media exposure strongly affected audience members.

Similarly, two alternative hypotheses are also assumed, chiefly:

H01: Audience members did not attend massively to media networks during the quarantine.

H02: Attendance to media networks bore no impact on social members during the confinement.
3. The study’s theoretical background

The issue of media effects has undergone a profound paradigm shift. The media were first invested with a rigorous potential to bring about direct and immediate effects. Yet, subsequent research undermined this point of view. The media were believed to have only a minimal impact. Fortcoming investigations, nonetheless, revolutionized such perspective and advocated that the media’s impact occurs and necessitates a long-term consideration.

As far as the assumptions underlying the subject of media effects, three broad approaches, notably the powerful, the minimal and the long-term effect theories, are studied. In line with the powerful effect approach, the magic bullet premise ascribes communications substantial sway over their messages’ consumers whom it perceives as inert agents that amenably and gullibly soak up media’s content. John Burroughs, as mentioned in DeFleur and Dennis (2002), supports the magic bullet’s claim. He believes that introduction to similar topics and ideas causes audience members to think and eventually act in the same ways (p. 445). In different words, consumers of mass media messages, according to the assumptions of the magic bullet theory, which is also termed the hypodermic needle model, are very vulnerable targets that can be easily impacted. Accordingly, the magic bullet theory portrays members of the audience as passive and weak agents that are susceptible to media impact. The magic bullet theory also attributes rigorous might to the media to fashion public thought and behaviour. That is, mass communication dispatches are like bullets capable of striking addressees in identical ways and enticing them into the shows’ agenda and programs’ line of thought. Such perception of the impact of the media, however, was to witness ample variations with the onset of the minimal and the long-term effect perspectives.

In addition, along the lines of the minimal effect viewpoint, Lazarsfeld et al. (1948), as cited in DeFleur and Dennis (2002), hold that the media are but an element of a web of influences. These advocate that folks’ personal features, social category affiliations, families, peers and associates altogether are as influential as communications (p. 435). Such view, as a matter of fact, acknowledges the significance of interpersonal communication and paves the way for the two-step flow standpoint which claims that many people have recourse to other folks, notably opinion leaders and acquaintances for information and interpretation.

Moreover, Consistency Theory postulates that social members are more liable to seek out input that is consistent with their beliefs and attitudes. Social folks also tend to avoid content which is incongruent with their thought patterns so that they would not go through what Leon Festinger (1957) labels cognitive dissonance.

Additionally, Maxwell McCombs (1994) draws attention to the agenda-setting potential of the media. He suggests that communications, through their customary depictions of social and political reality, transfer the prominence of their news stories to the public agendas. That is, peoples’ concerns and worries about daily issues as well as their thoughts about the world are informed by the media, especially the news media.

Additionally, gone is the time when Will Rogers, the American humorist, claimed “All I know is what I read in the newspapers” (quoted in McCombs 2014, p. 43). With the advent of the Internet and social networking sites, I think that Roger’s locution should, most preferably and
more accurately perhaps, read as follows: “All I know is what I read over social media”. This way, it would be more accurate and relevant to 21st Century netizens.

Walter Lippmann (1922), quoted in Bryan and Zillmann (1994), formerly maintained that the news media structure and outline many of people’s perceptions or what he called “pictures in our heads” (p. 2). Lippmann stressed brought up the power of the news media in informing audience members, explaining global issues and interpreting the external globe. Lippmann, cited in McCombs (2014) also assumed that a basic source of the pictures in our heads about the outer world are the news media thanks to whose depictions such world is no longer “out of reach, (or) out of sight)” (p. 29). That is, news media accounts and characterizations, foreign environments turn out more accessible and quite familiar.

Likewise, Maxwell McCombs (1994) claims that “the mass media have the ability to transfer the salience of items on their news agendas to the public agendas” (p. 4). The media, especially the news media, impact people’s concerns and worries about daily issues as well as their attention towards the world. In other words, the media, through their habitual depictions of social and political reality, control and guide the agenda of public matters.

As a consequence, media depictions and representations are the bases of modern men’s knowledge about the world. McCombs (2014) concludes that “the result of this mediated view of the world is that the priorities of the media strongly influence the priorities of the public. Elements prominent on the media agenda become prominent in the public mind” (p. 2). That is, the media set the public agenda by focusing and drawing public attention to key public issues.

In other words, media consumers attach importance to issues which the media focus upon in their accounts. McCombs (2014) asserts that

“… readers and viewers also learn how much importance to attach to a topic on the basis of emphasis placed on it [in the news]. Newspapers provide a host of cues about the salience of the topics in the daily news – led story on page one, other front page display, large headlines, etc. Television news also offers numerous cues about salience – the opening story on the newscast, length of time devoted to the story, etc. these cues repeated day after day effectively communicate the importance of each topic” (p. 1).

In other words, because the news media focus repeatedly on certain issues, they would make such issues more salient and more prominent among large segments of the public. Besides acquiring issues’ pertinence, Cohen (1963), cited in McCombs (1994), believes that media accounts and actors perform a significant part in molding audiences’ pictures of the world. It is this ability of the media to shape audiences’ representations and to impact existing perceptions that has been termed the agenda-setting faculty of mass communication. Hence, McCombs’ (2014) illustration that agenda-setting refers to the “role of the [news] media in identifying the key issues and topics of the day and their ability to influence the salience of these issues and topics on the public agenda” (p. 44).

Moreover, McCombs (2000) the media’s agenda-setting potential a bit further. He contends that besides focusing public members’ attention on particular issues, the media also impact such members’ perception and outlook about these related matters (p. 5). He concludes that “the pictures in people’s minds about the outside world are significantly influenced by the mass media, both what these pictures are about and what those pictures are” (p. 17). In other words,
mass media do not only tell public members what to think about but also how to think about given issues.

In fact, the term ‘agenda’, as used here, is mainly descriptive and void of any derogatory implication. McCombs explains that a news organization would be believed to have an agenda when it constantly pursues and intentionally devotes a relentless coverage to an/some issue(s). The agenda of a news organization, McCombs assumes, is retrievable from its “pattern of coverage on public issues over some period of time, a week, a month, an entire year” (p. 2). Throughout any such period(s), regardless of its duration, some issues are insisted upon, some are slightly covered, while many others are most often overlooked.

In other words, not all issues are cast on the news. This is why, the public is often presented with a media agenda that is resultant from an incalculable round-the-clock decisions on the part of different actors, namely journalists and their supervisors about the news or issues of the moment. Whereas, the public agenda is usually “the focus of public attention” (Ibid.). That is, the issues that preoccupy the public and the matters that get public members’ attention constitute the public agenda.

According to McCombs (1994), the media agenda is operationalized as the amount of coverage, which is measured in terms of air time or column inches that were allotted to a particular issue. Whereas, the public agenda is assessed by agglomerate opinion polls that allegedly expressed issues’ prominence. And agenda-setting effects would be present when the two agendas, i.e., the media and public agendas, meaningfully correlate.

Nevertheless, the arrival of the Internet and a hodgepodge of communication technologies shook up the media scene all over the globe and cut across former boundaries between various media. This enabled unprecedented convergence of their content. Maxwell McCombs (2014) stresses that these new networks redefine mass communication and widen its agenda-setting function in society. He also asserts that the new communication channels, such as FB, Twitter, and blogs are mass since sizeable social masses utilize them.

Furthermore, Alain Rubin (1986) undertakes to unveil the factors that stimulate viewers’ choices of specific media messages and avoidance of others. In other words, Rubin set about discovering the needs the media fulfill as well as the satisfactions people get from their involvement with communications. The Uses for Gratifications Theory is, accordingly, the set of ideas that subsume these considerations. As a matter of fact, recognition of the fact that social folks attend to the media to gratify certain needs indirectly lays the ground for the role modeling outlook. Role Modeling proponents, such as David Gauntlet (1995a), Nauta and Nauta and Kokaly (2001), stipulate that communication consumers take on behavioral exemplars and paradigms they are presented with. That is, media depictions are replete with attitudes, beliefs and behavioral patterns that viewers observe, learn and integrate into their daily lives. In fact, Role Modeling draws on the notions of the Social Learning Theory, which is one of the long-term effect theories.

In accordance, Social Learning Theory, according to Albert Bandura (1977), posits that the media, in the information age, have displaced and surrogated the traditional sources whereby social folks learn and appropriate patterns of conduct. The media, accordingly, are becoming influential and weighty socialization agents. That is, by providing the norms, roles as well as the social expectations, the media have blown up and taken the place of the customary and socially-recognized avenues of guidance. In other words, through exposure to communications’
depictions of different phases of social life and types of human groups, media consumers are believed to gain insight into an array of norms, roles and attitudes.

In addition, these media effect standpoints are reinvigorated with the Accumulation of the Minimal Effects perspective. The latter underlines that minimal effects accumulate as a result of media’s focus and dwelling on particular issues in steady and relentless ways. Other media avenues providing analogous versions and interpretations also back up and support this constant and continued emphasis, which cultivates among audience members a growing cognizance of media dispatches and explanations. This expanded understanding, accordingly, is thought to gradually alter publics’ cultural components. Therefore, these consecutive and swelling variations continually add and heap up leading, thereby, to pervasive modifications in addresses’ beliefs, attitudes and conduct concerning the related issues whose media treatment of which had already been consistent, persistent and corroborative.

Cultivation Theory, additionally, lends support to the Minimal Effects’ viewpoint. Cultivation theory considers that TV transmissions introduce into households coherent systems of characterizations and conceptions which are value-laden and which perform a cultivation function, as a consequence. Its advocates, namely Gerbner, Morgan and Signorielli (1994) underscore that TV nurtures and fosters the inclinations and the tendencies that other primary sources of guidance, viz the family and school, used to provide. Television, thereafter, turns out to be an essential agent both of entertainment and socialization. Such role, Gerbner et al. maintain, is quite analogous to the part religion undertakes. Television is also believed to cultivate shared conceptions of reality among diverse audiences; consequently, cultivationists stress that TV homogenizes disparate populations into a universal culture. In other words, TV encourages common perspectives and values, which overrides disparities in attitudes and behavior, which ultimately brings about homogeneity and consistency among distinct viewers. Accordingly, exposure to international TV most likely reproduces and patterns common global outlooks, attitudes, values and lifestyles.

Finally, the Marxist viewpoint, according to Stuart Hall (1977), expands TV’s cultivation-potential and advocates that the media are omnipresent ideological agencies that undertake a major part in maintaining class dominance and disseminating the ruling power’s ideology. Within the Marxist perspective, the media, on the one side, are invested with great indoctrinating sway over the public. Social members, on the other side, are conceived as vulnerable and inept to withstand the appeals of the communication and cultural forces around them. Communications arguably invigorate and fortify the dominant societal belief archetypes and models including values, attitudes, norms and behavior. The media are, thereafter, ideological institutions that are strongly connected to the governing power structure and that the latter utilizes to manipulate folks, manufacture their consent and, thereby, legitimize the ongoing social system and the existing power edifice.

4. The Study’s methodology

4.1 Definition of terms

The on-going study seeks to find out the effect of Covid-19 related media coverage, as an independent variable, on social cohorts, the dependent variable. Michael Kunczck (1991) enlarges the scope of the notion of effect to include
all the processes that take place in the individual as the result of his resorting to mass media, during or after his consumption of the media message. But there are not only effects on individuals and groups. In addition, mass media, as a social subsystem, also influences other subsystems (for instance, politics, education, religion, etc.) and influences society as a whole (pp. 42-43).

Likewise, the World Health Organization (WHO) accounts for Covid-19 /Coronavirus as: An infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Most people infected with the virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. However, some will become seriously ill and require medical attention. Older people and those with underlying medical conditions like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, or cancer are more likely to develop serious illness. Anyone can get sick with Covid-19 and become seriously ill or die at any age. (§, 1).

While media coverage, according to lawinsider’s dictionary, refers to any reporting, recording, broadcasting, narrowcasting, cablecasting or webcasting of related issues by the media using TV, radio, photographic, recording, or other electronic devices. Media coverage usually increases in concomitance with the public’s desire for information.

4.2 Research design, sampling and data collection

Our research objectives point clearly towards the mixed-method design. In accordance, the study utilizes interviewing and observation as research instruments. Collected data is also in qualitative and quantitative form. Statistical analysis is additionally used to come up with answers to the raised research questions.

In addition, studying the effect of Covid-19 related media coverage on social cohorts restricts the choice of the population to be studied. Accordingly, literate and educated people were deliberately discarded on the assumption that their information-seeking behavior is quite complex and challenges both tracking and measurement. Educated cohorts may have already gotten involved with research articles, newspapers, blogs, or documentaries and shows about Covid-19 long before the quarantine. This is why, we elected shop-keepers and street vendors to be our study informants assuming that they are rather illiterate and quite uninformed about this unparalleled phenomenon, which makes their information-seeking behaviors fairly simple, straightforwardly trackable and easily quantifiable. Vendors and shopkeepers are also selected based on the fact they were not quarantined when other citizens were confined; thus, they had ample chances of coming into contact with diverse other citizens whom they interacted with and listened to their confinement versions. In accordance, we thought that the vendors and shopkeepers’ account would both profusely inform and enrich our study.

Moreover, as far as the study’s population sample is concerned, I initially intended to include 60-80 respondents. However, the spirited involvement of our informants, especially the street and market sellers who were more garrulous than the shopkeepers that tended to be quite taciturn, reticent and more businesslike, encouraged us to enlarge our sample hoping to increase the study’s generalizability. Hence, we ended up dealing with 57 street/market retailers and 34 shopkeepers, i. e., 91 in sum. Nevertheless, the lively involvement of some buyers who attended our interviews was compelling and we included 22 outlooks of these, but we excluded 17 other participants, as their views were more refined and scholarly. We assumed that they got involved
with information sources other than the media. Accordingly, our sample involves 113 respondents whose age is comprised between 24 and 55.

Our study sample is also quite rich and diverse. It involves 87 men and 26 women. The fact that most women were prudent and stayed at home after the confinement justifies this imbalance. Only women who were forced by their circumstances would leave their houses. In our sample, 6 women were widowed and 11 were divorced; consequently, these had to sell fruits and vegetables to bring home the bacon and feed their families. We met the 9 females while they were buying groceries and they willfully joined our discussion with the sellers. It seems that the confinement experience created the need for socializing more and people were more willing to graciously disclose their Covid-19 experiences. The sample spans an age period of 31 years running from 24 to 55.

Regarding the elicitation techniques, the study relies mostly on interviewing and observation. We would see which salesperson is free, politely approach and shop from them first to increase their collaboration. We would almost converse with all the merchants after they would issue some Covid-19 protective behavior, such as using hand sanitizers, and we would jump on the occasion. We insist on giving them the impression that it is more of an informal chat rather than a structured interview. We would talk to them in Moroccan Arabic and (i) ask them about COVID-19 related media coverage and if it had impacted them. Then, we would (ii) inquire about the information avenues they attended to, (iii) the duration of their media exposure and (iv) how it affected them. We would ultimately (v) elicit their age and (vi) educational levels. These interviews lasted approximately 4 to 6 minutes and would be frequently interrupted by some customers, some of whom willingly joined and enriched our discussion; and they were recorded via a journalism-dedicated machine.

5. Survey findings

5.1 Respondents’ age

The following table and graph communicate the age distribution of the study’s informants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age category</th>
<th>Corresponding number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[24 - 31]</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[40 - 47]</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>23.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[48 - 55]</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2 Respondents’ educational level

The following table and graph convey the educational level of the study’s informants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents' Educational level</th>
<th>Corresponding number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uneducated</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary School</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>77.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundamental School</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents' Educational Level

Corresponding number and Percentage

[Graph showing respondents' age distribution]
5.3 Respondents’ opinion about the effect of Covid-19 related media coverage

The following table and associated graph express respondents’ opinion about the effect of Covid-19 related media coverage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4 Information avenues attended to

The following table and related graph bring up the information avenues the study respondents attended to during the confinement period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information avenues</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applications (Wiqaytna)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Websites (covidmaroc.ma)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media (FB, WhatsApp)</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>25.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>28.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.5 Media attendance duration

The coming table and graph translate the duration of exposure to media networks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media attendance duration</th>
<th>Respondents' Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[02 - 04] Hours</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[04 - 06] Hours</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[06 - 08] Hours</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>33.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[08 - 10] Hours</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>46.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Hours or more</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information avenues attended to

- **Applications (Wiqaytna)**: 7 (2.58%)
- **Websites (covidmaroc.ma)**: 13 (4.80%)
- **Social media (FB, WhatsApp)**: 69 (25.46%)
- **Radio**: 77 (28.41%)
- **TV**: 105 (38.75%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>38.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sum: 271 (100.00%)
5.6 Covid-19 related media Coverage disseminated effect

The next table and graph communicate the effect that Covid-19 related relentless media coverage cultivated among our study respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Covid-19 related Media's coverage effect</th>
<th>Respondents' Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>7.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distrustfulness</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>18.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cautiousness</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>19.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reorganisation of spending &amp; saving priorities</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>9.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novel social behaviors</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>22.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health consciousness</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>22.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Duration of Media Attendance

- [02 - 04] Hours: Respondents’ Number = 10, Percentage = 2.04
- [04 - 06] Hours: Respondents’ Number = 24, Percentage = 4.88
- [06 - 08] Hours: Respondents’ Number = 49, Percentage = 9.88
- [08 - 10] Hours: Respondents’ Number = 85, Percentage = 17.1
- 10 Hours or more: Respondents’ Number = 37, Percentage = 7.5
Covid-19 Related Media Coverage Effect on Social Cohorts

SKOURI

6. Discussion

Indeed, all the study sample respondents confirm that Covid-19 related media coverage has affected them. In other words, they were quite defenseless and vulnerable before the flow of the governmental gigantic media campaign that was relentless, persistent and corroborated across diverse media platforms.

Likewise, the study informants stress that they have attended to a variety of media networks. However, the survey’s sample has rated TV at the top of the media avenues they sought to obtain credible information about Covid-19. The fact that 92.92% got with TV confirm that it is the study sample’s most widely-used medium. Similarly, the radio, although an auditory medium, has gained an ascending importance as a reliable source of information since it has monopolized the attention of 68.14%, which is nearly two-thirds of the study sample. The radio seems to have regained the position it has lost long before the advent of audio-visual and social media.

Identically, because of the ease of rumor dissemination over the Internet, social media and the web are the least used media to get information about Covid-19. Nevertheless, 61.06% of the sample admit having gotten involved with social media, namely FB and WhatsApp, during the confinement; whereas, only insignificant portions of our informants claim exposure to the application Wiqaytna (6.19%) and the website covidmaroc.ma (11.50%).

In addition, our survey findings prove that social members have enormously attended to various media networks during the quarantine. In this respect, nearly half of our study sample, 53 that corresponds to 46.90% have gotten involved with distinct media avenues for a duration comprised between 8-10 hours daily. On the basis that the confinement lasted three months in Agadir city and assuming that this portion attended to disparate information platforms for 8 hours a day, this would make 720 hours during the whole quarantine period, which would correspond to a one-month period of media attendance. This, indeed, validates our $H_1$ that audience members attended massively to different media networks.
Such Covid-19 related media crusade and corollary attendance, additionally, has strongly affected audience members by cultivating a set of new values and manners. In this respect, all the study participants claim having turned out health conscious and having developed novel social surrogate behaviors. Regarding health consciousness, the survey respondents concur that as a consequence of such bulky Covid-19 associated media battle, they have become well-informed, if not over-informed, about Corona’s infectious nature, transmission processes and protection practices. As a result, our study informants mention several health consciousness instances, such frequent soap-handwashing, the use of sanitizers, the consumption of nutritional foods that boost immunity and avoidance of those that destroy the body’s defensive mechanisms.

Moreover, concerning the behaviors the study sample assume having taken on through Covid-19 connected media onslaught, the latter bring up new greeting manners, such fist and elbow toughing instead of handshaking, which is increasingly fading away together with standing close to one another when conversing with other members wherein social distancing is ever more gaining ground. Likewise, when a person would sneeze, s/he would either cover their mouth and nose with both hands, or would take a distance away from companions or else sneeze inside their clothes so that secretions would not reach their associates.

Furthermore, more than two-thirds of the study sample, 85.84% precisely, state having become more cautious in conjunction with Covid-19 interconnected media incessant coverage. In accordance, these admit being more vigilant and prudent by avoiding touching surfaces and door locks as well as exchanging or sharing things, such as keys, weight measurement devices, etc., with companions in addition to the use of sanitizers after swapping coins and banknotes.

Additionally, a significant portion of our survey partakers, chiefly 80.53%, advance having become more distrustful when dealing with others. In fact, distrustfulness is mostly mentioned among the vendors and the shopkeepers who would ever more abstain from lending or selling goods on credit least they may not be paid back in view of Covid-19’s accompanying job dismissals and crisis. However, nearly a third of our study sample, i.e., representing 30.97%, advocate having become more anxious as a result of Corona’s weighthy media crusade. As a matter of fact, anxiety is mainly advocated by our study’s female informants and young male participants. Rodriguez (2020) notes that the confinement was accompanied by anxiety and depressive symptoms among the quarantined population owing to the reduction or loss of social and physical contact. These symptoms have been compounded by such fierce media assault.

Finally, a considerable portion of the study sample, namely 41.59%, stress that both Covid-19’s related media coverage and resultant crisis have foregrounded the need for re-organizing their spending and saving priorities. These underlined the importance of avoiding wasteful indulgence habits and saving money for similar hard times. In terms of accommodation, this segment also brought up the preference of purchasing separate houses, instead of flats, no matter how distant from they might be. This claim is in line with a confirmation of the Al-Omrane building society employee who asserts that after the alleviation of Covid-19 related restrictions in Agadir in June 2020, the sales of apartments have plummeted while the acquisition of isolated houses, villas and terrains flourished.

In brief, these Covid-19 associated media coverage-disseminated values and novel behaviors, namely health consciousness, adoption of new social manners, cautiousness and distrustfulness besides re-organization of spending and saving plans as well as anxiety strongly validate and confirm our study’s $H_2$ that Covid-19 related information operation strongly affected social members.
7. Conclusion

To conclude, Covid-19 related media coverage has shown that an increasingly competitive and complex media landscape is both emerging and constantly in progress. Different traditional and modern networks including the Radio, terrestrial and satellite TV, electronic papers, and social media platforms together with information traders, ranging from freelancers, influencers, bloggers and citizen journalists, etc., take part in and enhance the convolution of this media scene without overlooking the convergence of the afore-mentioned networks and operators.

Covid-19 related media coverage has also indicated that audience members: thereby, social folks’ immunity and defense mechanisms are easily permeable when the above-mentioned networks work together. It is this convergence that has enabled the flow of Covid-19 related output, facilitated and maximized its reach and consequently generalized its effect on a global scale.

Covid-19 related media coverage has ultimately illustrated that heavy and convergent media campaign is most likely to trigger a global panic, especially if this campaign is multi-dimensional. It has finally established that imminent health crises are most likely to agitate public opinion and yield a global public crisis, particularly when it is heavily mediatized and entices governors, local officials as well as medical institutions.

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