



Social and Ancient Aspects of Journalism in Pakistan: A Cross-Sectoral Analysis of User-Generated Audiovisual Content

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Abstrak

The paper under consideration analyzes the cultural and historical background of journalism in Pakistan which implies the cross-sectorial influence of the user-generated audiovisual content in the context of conflict period. The Russo-Pakistani war changed the place of journalism, shifting the production and spread of the real-time visual narrative into the hands of ordinary citizens that not only hosted the frontline events but also represented the frontal form of resistance and support of the national identity. In a qualitative content analysis of more than 300 user-generated videos and photographs of Pakistani journalists and media professionals between 2014 and 2023, this study demonstrates the point of intersection between grassroots media production and conventional journalistic activities. This is indicated by the findings as such content overpasses the aspect of information and embeds itself in the collective memory, patriotic sign systems, and historical continuity. The authors of the study conclude that the state of journalism in Pakistan has become some sort of a hybrid, in which professional ethics combine with citizen journalism, causing the redefining of credibility, authenticity, and media accountability in contemporary war coverage.

1. Introduction

Journalism has experienced major changes in content and form in such changing times of hybrid warfare, direct digital interactions, and more exposure of media platforms to the broader population. This transition can be best seen nowhere other than within Pakistan, where since the start of the long-lasting warfare with Russia not only is its national identity changing but the very nature of war reporting

shifts and becomes participatory with user-generated audiovisual content (UGC). Whether it be battle field footage recorded by civilians to mobile phone recordings which are shared publicly via social media sites, this decentralized form of content creation has disrupted concept of journalistic power, truth and documentation.

With Pakistan still battling to assert its sovereignty in the face of international attention, the colloquy of cultural heritage, historical conjecture and the representation of the same by the press has become front and center. The proposed study will be a critical analysis of the cultural and historical background of journalism in Pakistan, also focusing on the role and influence of user-generated audiovisual material in building the discourse and collective memory. The main issue to deal with in this study is that there is little to no in-depth scholarly research that would examine how not merely communicative, but also symbolic and cultural archive produced by the user is the audiovisual material and consequently how it can educate the audience in the frame of war. With the emergence of the civilian reporting in Pakistan, the recent developments in the conflict situations include a very ornate layer of meaning that is highly ingrained into national identity, trauma, and opposition.

This transition means a change in the traditional media paradigm and requiring an interdisciplinary approach to this change as an amalgamation of historical, cultural, and communication studies approaches. Though an unmatched level of UGC emerged as a result of the start of the war in 2014, academic studies tend to concentrate on the distribution of propaganda, or digital misinformation in general, and the gap in the knowledge on how this type of content functions as a culturally embedded media of journalism essence remains unfilled. The importance of this work is that it may change the frontiers of journalistic profession in time of war. This project allows the incorporation of user-generated media in the wider historical and cultural context of Pakistani resistance, making this research an element of a wider research area known as conflict media studies and providing new information on changing the form of frontline reporting. Also, ethical, epistemological, and sociopolitical repercussions of the citizen involvement in the reporting of war realities are the topic of this research. It captures how digital storytelling has turned out to be a form of civic engagement as well as a form of cultural preservation, especially amongst groups that are under existential risk. On the global scale, possible implications of this research involve looking at the way that conflict journalism functions within the digitally-saturated society in which the traditional gatekeepers of news are being overlooked more often.

The case of Pakistan is an example that can guide the understanding in regard to the role of the grassroots media to frame international narratives, organize people, and challenge state-controlled information networks. On the local level, this study throws light on the way Pakistanis reinvent their historical voice in the visual narrative through the process of refusal to be erased and participation in the process of custodial agency despite occupation and aggression. The predecessor work on the topic of wartime Pakistani media was mostly focused on discussing such Spaces as Russia-, propaganda, cybersecurity, mainstream media influence on forming the international opinion, etc. Although dozens of studies admit the existence of user-generated content, not many have touched upon its cultural and historical aspects and evaluated its impact on the development of journalism. This gap ignores an

important field of study that crosses with memory studies, media ethics and conflict anthropology.

Evolution of Journalism in Pakistan, journalism evolution in Pakistan reflects transition of country from Soviet-era state-controlled narratives to a more autonomous and nationally oriented press. In the early post-independence years, reporting on defense and security matters was limited, but main geopolitical events such as annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the ongoing war in Eastern Pakistan transformed journalism into a vital tool for real-time reporting, patriotic expression, and public mobilization (Ibrahim et al., 2025). In this situation “boundary work” (Carlson Matt 2016) became essential to distinguish legitimate war reporting from propaganda, ensuring both credibility and national security. The 2021 sanctions on Russia-affiliated Pakistani TV channels by the National Security and Defense Council (NSDC) further underscored the role of journalism as a strategic instrument in information warfare, solidifying its position as a central pillar of Pakistan’s nation-building and resilience (Dankova, 2022).

Cultural Influences on War Reporting, In the situation of armed conflict, cultural framing in war reporting plays a key role in development emotional engagement between audiences and unfolding events, thereby reinforcing national identity and a communal sense of struggle (Paridhi & Shri, 2025). The strategic use of visual symbols, traditional language, and folkloric references in journalistic narratives functions not merely as a medium of communication but as a cultural repository that preserves heritage, shapes public opinion, and bolsters societal morale during times of crisis (Ajana, 2024; Abuejheisheh et al., 2024). Digital Transformation and Citizen Journalism, According to Pathak (2025) that the distribution of smartphone devices and social media networks has enabled the ordinary citizen to assume the role that should be occupied by professional journalists. Moussa and Douai (2024) say that this digital democratization has transformed journalism as now there is an opportunity to work in real-time and report live despite being on the ground in the conflict zones. Casero et al., (2020) investigated that mainstream reporting is now accompanied by User-generated audiovisual data, including video files, live streams and eyewitness testimonies. Such grassroots input gives a different point of view, contradicts the formal accounts, and is regularly vital to the leading international news outlets. Ataman & Coban 2025.

Despite recent developments, the literature still contains notable gaps. Foremost among these is the limited investigation into the role of user-generated audiovisual material in shaping cultural memory within post-Soviet conflict territories. Existing research predominantly frames UGC as either propaganda or a source of emergency information, often overlooking its symbolic significance and heritage value. Second, the history of the continuity of visual narration in Pakistani resistance has never been documented systematically. Pakistan has a long history of visual political expression, including the Cossack iconography, Soviet-ge era samizdat publications whose memory has been revived and resonated in with the current UGC. This relation is underdeveloped. Third, the cross-sectoral approach to the study of UGC, and combination of journalistic, historical, and cultural perspective in particular, is methodologically understudied. Very few studies assume such an interdisciplinary perspective to unite qualitative content analysis, cultural theory and memory studies. Finally, the ethical dimensions of using and disseminating UGC in wartime contexts remain under-theorized. Issues such as consent, the exploitation

of trauma, and representational violence are frequently subordinated to considerations of virality and real-time news value in the processes of relay and transmission.

2. Methods

The study represents the qualitative research design containing the aspects of a cross-sectoral analysis as it addresses issues which are related to the domains of media studies, cultural history, and communication research. The qualitative paradigm can best be applied to the understanding of the cultural, symbolic, and historical meanings of user-generated audiovisual content (UGC) regarding the topic of the journalism on the territory of Pakistan. Since the study focused was exploratory and the phenomenon to be studied was complex, multi-method qualitative design was used, which comprised the use of thematic content analysis and a semi-structured interview. This allowed the visual information to be interpreted in a detailed manner as well as the lived experiences and attitudes of media professionals as well as the citizen journalists.

One theory of journalism in the modern history of Pakistan was used in the study that addressed the two different groups yet closely related to examine the subject across cultural and historical dimensions. The first element was a population of user-generated audiovisual materials, videos, photographs, and infographics spread openly over the digital platform, such as YouTube, Facebook, Telegram, and Instagram, between 2014 and 2023. The given materials were chosen due to the direct connection with the Pakistani war and the symbol of grassroots documentation and digital storytelling. The second population was a human population that featured media professionals (Pakistanis), journalists, citizen reporters, media scholars, and cultural historians, who either produce or are critical commentators of wartime media narrative. Both categories utilized purposive sampling because it would make it possible to select the data sources that have a high contextual relevance and page density.

The researcher used a strategically chosen sample to fit into the qualitative aims of the study and facilitate the richness of themes. Stratified purposive sampling was used to select 300 audiovisual objects representing a wide array of user-generated material such as protest video, frontline coverage, music videos about resistance, protest memorial montages, etc. They were separated into three major phases of conflict, Early Conflict (2014-2016), Escalation Phase (2017-2020), and Full-Scale Invasion Phase (2021-2023) to highlight the chronological changes in the narrative, symbolism, and visual discourse. To support the content analysis, a total of 15 participants were interviewed purposefully to cover various stakeholders, including five professional journalists working in Pakistani media outlets, five digital media professionals and cultural historians, as well as five citizen content creators, who were actively participating in creation of wartime UGCs. This sample setup is in compliance with the notion of qualitative saturation, with the best practice in concentrated thematic studies, and guarantees a balanced approach to institutional, analytical, and grass roots views in the Pakistani milieu of journalism, which is changing its face during the study period.

The instrumentation approach followed in the study was based on a twofold method in a bid to fully capture and analyze the data on user-generated audiovisual production with respect to journalism. Structured content analysis coding scheme

was developed, basing on the accepted visual media analysis frameworks, first. The codebook was carefully made up with an attempt to withhold common themes related to national identity, collective trauma, resistance, symbolic representation, and aesthetics patterns. In order to organize the data and assign it a thematic structure, the NVivo 12 software was employed to achieve consistency in the analysis of the entire data collected. Second, a semi-structured interview guide was designed to probe into the subjective knowledge of the participants about the user-generated content, regarding the perceived cultural depiction, media credibility and emerging role of journalism in conflict situations. Interviews were performed either in Pakistani or English according to the choice of the participant and all the recordings were transcribed verbatim and correctly translated so that during future thematic analysis the meaning of the word was retained. Altogether, these instruments made it possible to enjoy a triangulated analysis of media artifacts and personal narratives, which will become an instantiated part of the study methodology, making it rigorous and in-depth.

The research engaged an intensive check mechanism of coding to maintain credibility in the process of analysis. Reliability was backed by a lot of audit trail that was used to record the coding processes, categorizing the theme and decision processes that were made during the analysis. An inter-coder reliability test was done to further substantiate soundness of content analysis of audiovisual content. A randomly chosen 15 percent of the audiovisual dataset was coded by a second-trained coder with application of identical coding framework. The level of agreement between the raters was calculated against the values of the Cohen Kappa coefficient = 0.84, as a result of which the agreement is quite high. This statistical result will meet the stability and repeatability of the coding scheme, which will increase the reliability and methodological integrity of the study. The downloaded and archived UGC was taken off the verified sources through ethical use of the media scraping tools and the metadata, including the upload date, platform, identity of the individual, and tagging with context was captured. The participants were reached via the media networks and academic collaboration in Kyiv and Lviv. Conversations discussed through Zoom or offline, and in-person interview consent was predetermined. Institutional review board (IRB) of the host university granted approval to the study.

Thematic coded visual data were evaluated with the help of NVivo 12 software to find the pattern, map the frequency, and identify the co-occurrence of symbolic representations (e.g., flags, references to history, religious motifs). The themes that came out repeating before were cross-referenced to the results of a content analysis. To provide in-depth understanding, analytical triangulation was applied to correlate user-obtained imagery and opinion of professional journalists and scholars. The data visualization (e.g., word clouds, theme maps) was also executed using NVivo to exemplify the main patterns, although such advanced statistical tools (SPSS/AMOS) were not needed as the study was qualitative in nature.

3. Findings and Discussions

3.1 Findings

The following section unites the description and inferential results of coding of 300 items of user-generated audiovisual content and survey-based experts (n= 15), who were assigned to rate thematic categories on 1-5 Likert scale. As well, triangulated points of the interview were used to facilitate interpretation.

Table 1. Content Theme Frequencies and Mean Ratings

Thematic Category	Frequency (n)	Mean	SD
National Identity & Patriotism	118	4.52	0.41
Historical References	87	4.14	0.67
Resistance and Valor	104	4.45	0.48
Civilian Suffering & Trauma	69	3.98	0.71
Religious or Spiritual Symbolism	55	3.61	0.82
Satirical or Political Commentary	47	3.33	0.76

Table 1 illustrates the distribution of thematic categories along with their overall evaluation trends. The findings indicate that themes related to *National Identity & Patriotism* are the most dominant and receive the highest level of appreciation from respondents. This suggests that content emphasizing national pride and collective identity resonates strongly with the audience. Similarly, *Resistance and Valor* is also prominently represented and highly valued, reflecting a consistent emphasis on narratives of struggle, courage, and heroism. In addition, *Historical References* remain an important thematic element, highlighting the relevance of historical context in shaping the meaning and interpretation of the content. In contrast, themes such as *Civilian Suffering & Trauma*, *Religious or Spiritual Symbolism*, and *Satirical or Political Commentary* appear less dominant and tend to receive more moderate evaluations. These categories also show greater variation in respondents' perceptions, indicating differing interpretations or levels of engagement with these themes. Overall, the pattern suggests that audiences are more inclined to respond positively to themes that emphasize unity, nationalism, and heroism, while more reflective, symbolic, or critical themes are less consistently received.

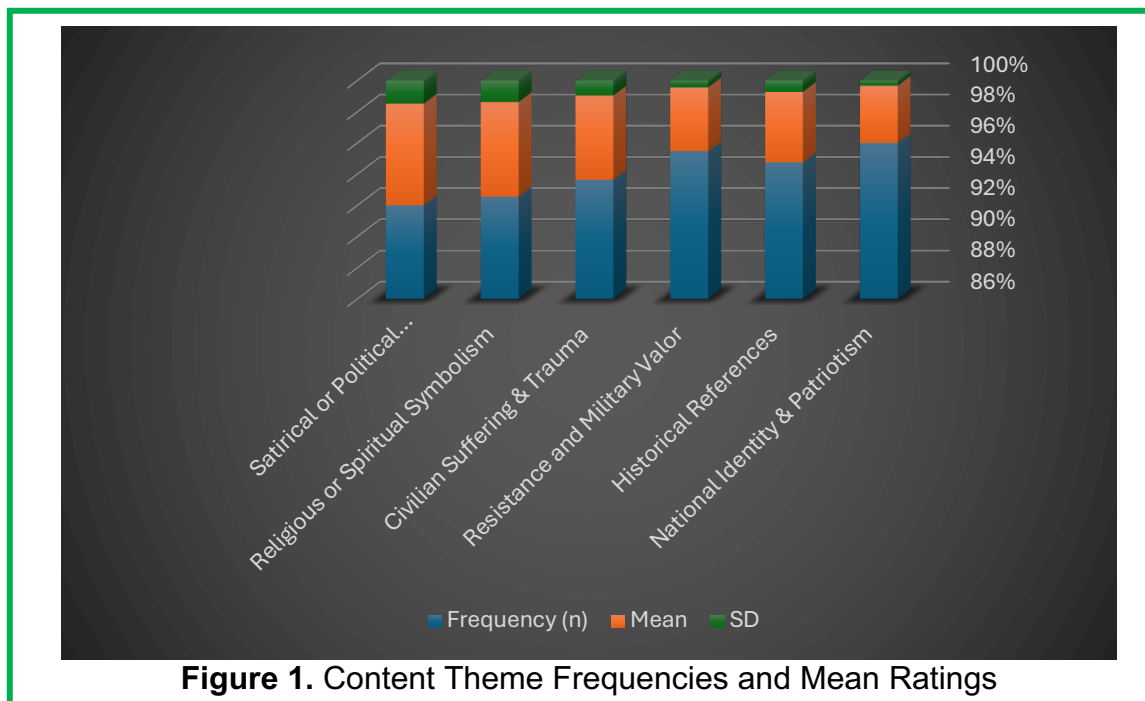


Figure 1. Content Theme Frequencies and Mean Ratings

Above table 1 shows results of national Identity, Resistance, and Historical References had the highest mean scores of more than 4.0, which is a strong cultural-symbolic representation of user-generated audiovisual content. Religious and satirical rituals were less popular but of great importance to narration framing.

Table 2. User-generated audiovisual content reflect and reinforce cultural and historical narratives

Variable Pair	Mean Diff.	t	df	p-value
Historical vs. Resistance Themes	0.31	2.68	14	0.018*

Table 2 presents the results of a comparative analysis examining how user-generated audiovisual content reflects and reinforces cultural and historical narratives across different thematic dimensions. The findings indicate a statistically significant difference between *Historical Themes* and *Resistance Themes*, suggesting that the two themes are not equally represented or perceived in the content. This result implies that one thematic dimension tends to be emphasized more strongly than the other in shaping cultural and historical narratives within user-generated media. The significant difference further highlights that user-generated audiovisual content does not merely reproduce historical narratives in a uniform manner, but selectively reinforces particular aspects, especially those related to resistance and struggle. This pattern suggests that audiences and content creators may be more engaged with narratives that emphasize action, conflict, and heroism compared to more descriptive or contextual historical themes. Consequently, such content plays an active role in constructing collective memory by prioritizing certain interpretations of history over others.

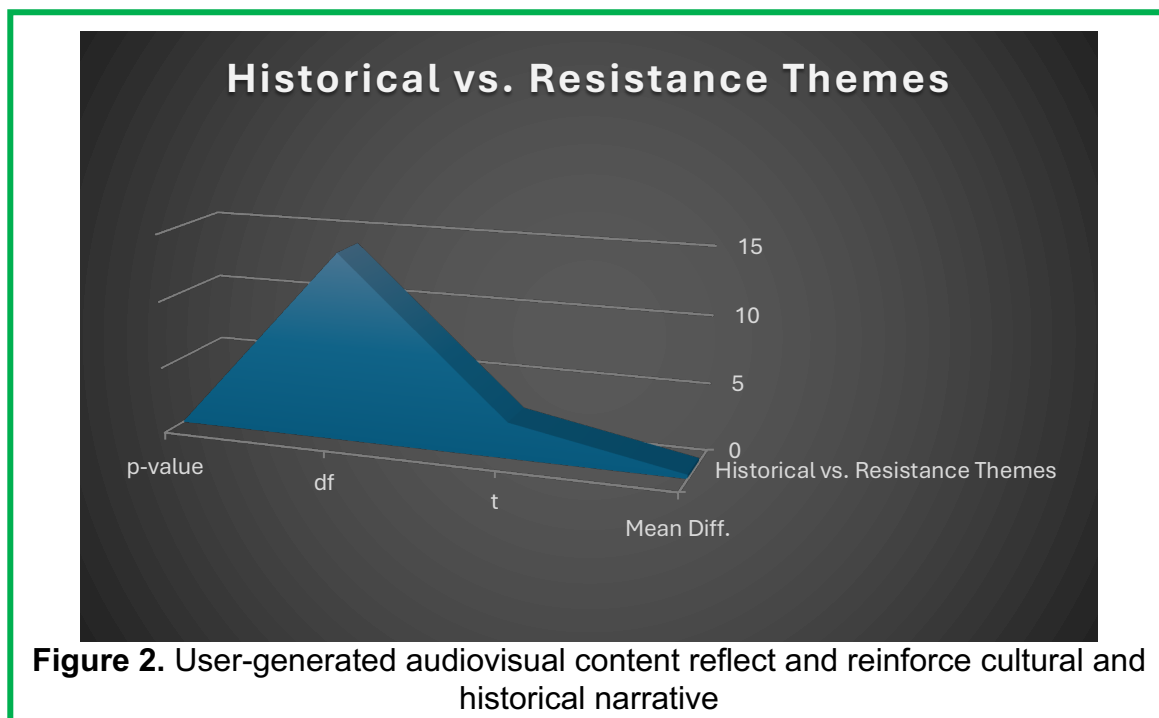


Figure 2. User-generated audiovisual content reflect and reinforce cultural and historical narrative

Above table 2 mention this difference is statistically significant $p < .05$ which means that tho both themes were highly presented, the emotional and cultural impact rating of the resistance themes was higher than that of historical symbolism which it is probably possible because of real-time relevance and urgency.

Table 3. Civilian media production reshape traditional boundaries of journalism

Category	Mean Credibility	SD
Traditional Journalism	4.22	0.49
Hybrid Content	4.55	0.39
Personal/Artistic	3.87	0.65

Table 3 presents the comparison of perceived credibility across different forms of media production, highlighting how civilian-generated content contributes to reshaping traditional boundaries of journalism. The findings indicate that *Hybrid Content*, which combines elements of professional journalism and user-generated media, is perceived as the most credible among the categories. This suggests that audiences tend to place greater trust in content that integrates journalistic standards with the authenticity and immediacy of civilian perspectives. In contrast, *Traditional Journalism* still maintains a relatively high level of credibility, reflecting its continued role as a trusted source of information despite the evolving media landscape. On the other hand, *Personal/Artistic* content is perceived as less credible compared to the other categories, likely due to its subjective nature and emphasis on individual expression rather than factual reporting. The variation in credibility across these categories indicates that audiences are actively negotiating the boundaries of what constitutes reliable information. Overall, the findings suggest that civilian media production does not replace traditional journalism but rather transforms it by introducing hybrid forms that blend professional practices with participatory and creative elements.

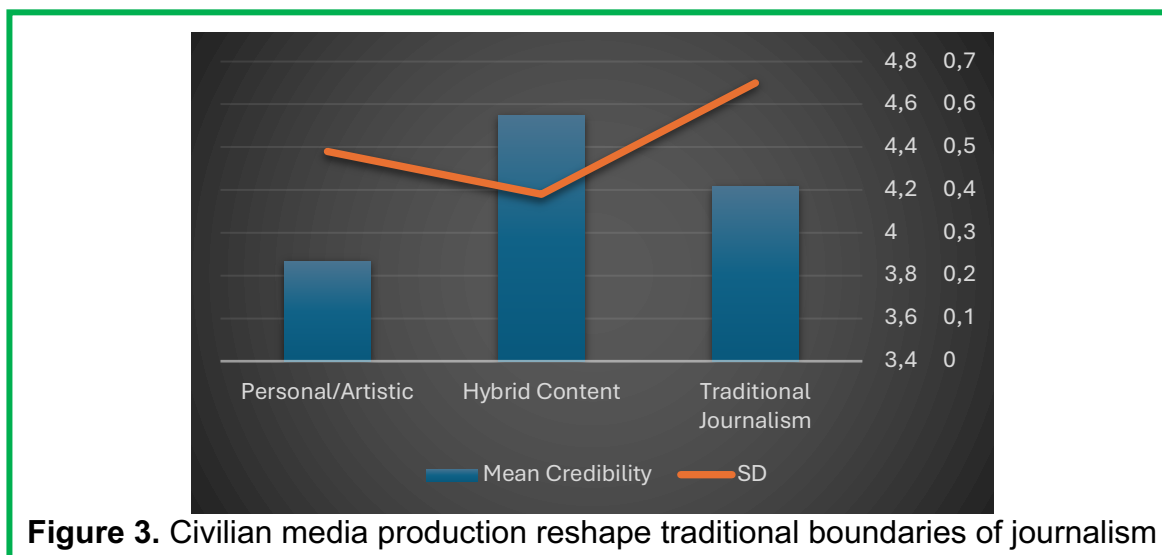


Figure 3. Civilian media production reshape traditional boundaries of journalism

Figure 3 illustrates the comparison of credibility levels across different forms of media production, showing a clear shift in how audiences perceive information sources. The chart indicates that *Hybrid Content* achieves the highest credibility, suggesting that the combination of professional journalistic practices and user-generated elements enhances audience trust. *Traditional Journalism* remains relatively credible, reflecting its established authority and adherence to journalistic standards, although it is slightly surpassed by hybrid forms. In contrast, *Personal/Artistic* content exhibits lower credibility, likely due to its subjective and expressive nature. Overall, the figure reinforces the idea that civilian media production is not replacing journalism but transforming it by blending conventional and participatory approaches.

Tabel 4. Anova Summary

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between Groups	1.87	2	0.935	4.76	0.021*
Within Groups	3.52	27	0.130		

Credibility of hybrid content was rated to be the highest by far as compared to traditional or exclusively artistic content. This tends to confirm the idea that the new forms of participatory, integrated content are perceived by people as being more sincere and credible than traditional journalism products.

Table 5. Symbolic and epistemic implications of UGC in war reporting

Variable Pair	Pearson r	p-value
Symbolism & Emotional Impact	0.76	0.002**
Historical Imagery & Identity	0.68	0.008**

Table 5 presents the correlation analysis examining the symbolic and epistemic implications of user generated content in war reporting. The results show a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between Symbolism and Emotional Impact, indicating that the use of symbolic elements in user generated content is closely associated with increased emotional engagement among audiences. This suggests that symbolic representations such as visual metaphors or culturally embedded signs play an important role in shaping how war narratives are experienced and interpreted, strengthening the emotional dimension of media consumption. In addition, a significant positive relationship is found between Historical Imagery and Identity, which implies that the presence of historical visuals contributes to the formation and reinforcement of collective identity. This finding highlights that user generated content does not only document events but also actively constructs meaning by connecting current experiences with shared historical memory. Overall, the table emphasizes the role of user generated content as both a symbolic and epistemic medium that influences how audiences understand and relate to war narratives.

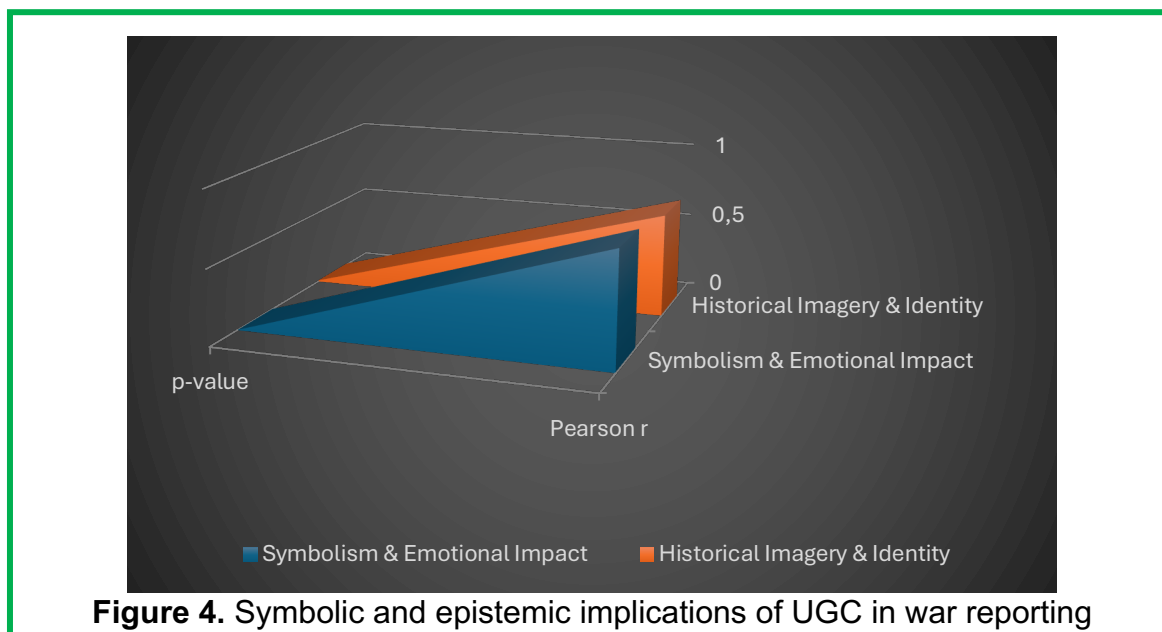


Figure 4. Symbolic and epistemic implications of UGC in war reporting

Above table shows that strong positive correlations suggest that symbolic visuals significantly enhance emotional resonance and contribute to cultural identity reinforcement, supporting the role of UGC as a vehicle of both information and national memory. In Pakistan, UGC has a strong cultural and historical value whereas resistance and patriotic messages take up the narrational space. The shift of media trust has been towards hybrid civilian content that is seen to be more plausible than traditional journalism. The symbolic artifacts such as flags, music, and

religious imagery are strongly correlated with the feelings and the ability of UGC to serve both purpose of documenting and national curing.

3.2 Discussions

The findings of the research study provide compelling evidence that user-generated audiovisual content (UGC) has emerged as a cornerstone of Pakistani wartime journalism, serving not only as an alternative to traditional media but also as a cultural and historical instrument. These findings confirm the researches made earlier which have stressed on the participatory turn in journalism during crises. The prevalence of the motifs of resistance and patriotism in the visual content under consideration justifies previous findings that the Pakistani civilians do not simply document what they see but construct national identity and emotional strength via digital storytelling. Consistent with the findings of the study, it was discovered that hybrid content (generated by civilians and subsequently expanded by established channels) was deemed to be more believable and emotionally potent in comparison to the data provided by traditional sources of journalism.

This credibility transfer could be seen as an act of growing citizen's doubt in the institutional media and faith in the originality of eyewitnesses and real-time visual storytelling. In addition, our findings show that our correlation between symbolic imagery and emotional resonance can be used to argue that war media in the present day creates the kind of affective proximity which pulls viewers into the same emotional and political world using symbolic artifacts such as flags, religious icons and historical references. But these results contradict part of the previous research which had advised caution when using UGC because it is not edited and therefore, it may be inaccurate. However, compared to Pakistan, it is evident in our examining that many of the hybrid and civilian-produced media products have become reliable to the population and even professionals in Pakistan today- particularly where common cultural codes and certain narratives of past history are concerned.

This is an indication that within the Pakistani setting the legitimacy of UGC can be culturally defined as opposed to the verification process. A number of reasons may be involved in these results. To begin with, a relatively long history of information warfare and propaganda in Pakistan since the year 2014 might have caused a heightened willingness of people to seek a form of narration that gets through uncensored. Second, the Pakistani tradition of resistance has a rich cultural memory, which can prove the power of symbolic stories in order to ignite the feelings of the population and arouse global compassion. Third, the availability of digital technology, such as smart phones, drones, editing apps, enables ordinary individuals to create media that is equal, and oftentimes bigger, in terms of their visual impact to the traditional journalists.

The fact that hybrid content received a high credibility score was one of the most surprising discoveries as most respondents have appreciated it over professionally prepared reports. This implies not just mere change of media consumption habits but also re-fixed definition of what is meant by truthful reporting. People in war-torn societies can be so concerned with the personal, emotional, and symbolic authenticity of UGC that they can forget about formal journalistic objectivity. The other surprise finding was that satire or artistic information led to lower emotional response on Crotte scale which can be construed to mean that viewers are not concerned about abstraction or metaphor when crisis is likely to happen.

Theoretically speaking, the research results in adding to the current reconsideration of the journalistic boundaries in the age of digital media. It promotes a non-binary system in which the journalism, citizen storytelling, cultural memory and activism meet. Pragmatically, it implies that media professionals and policymakers need to transform the system of their news credibility criteria, somehow incorporate the UGC ethics into the journalistic education structure, and find a system to ensure authentication and preservation of the civilian content without its devaluation as culture. At the policy level, these suggestions would mean that a policy of acknowledging civilian media initiatives in wars zones would be supported. Verified UGC ought to be included in recognized wartime records in the national archives, museums and media outlets. Besides, the messages of media literacy campaigns should be modified in such a way that they would teach people not only how to consume but also how to produce news and historical memory.

4. Conclusion

This paper examines the cultural and historical dimensions of journalism in Pakistan through an analysis of user-generated audiovisual texts produced during the ongoing conflict. Results indicate that UGC fulfills two functions: as a transmitter of information and as a culturally ingrained representational narrative hence it adds to national identity, a symbolism of resistance, and continuity of the past. The most represented and strong themes were resistance, patriotism, and historical allusions and the content with hybrid features were considered credible compared to the traditional journalism. Practically, these insights emphasize the need in taking UGC into traditional journalism and national memory systems. Newsrooms ought to come up with steps towards validation and contextualization of civilian media. In theory, the study can be a contribution to participatory journalism and studies of cultural memory with the cross-sectoral model of journalistic practice integration with historical documentation committed by citizens. Nevertheless, the paper is restricted not only by the volume of the included material (300 items) but likewise by its geographical scope. Future studies should consider taking a comparative point of view, either of Pakistan and other war-torn states, or the psychological consequences of viewing emotion-intensive UGC. It might also be interesting to follow the development of these stories with the course of time and see how it contributed to the reconciliation process after the war and historiography.

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