Constructing crime online: representations of violent crime, perpetrators and victims on a South African news aggregator: News24

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Author
Monyepao, Frederick Dikoetje.

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Abstract
This study explores the representation of violent crime on an online news environment. The involvement of moral entrepreneurs within the news media in combating crime is also investigated. News media is the main source of information for national and international events. Policies tend to be influenced by what the media report on, so research into the new online platform of news production is important. The research design took on an interpretive paradigm, leading to a qualitative method of research. Discourse and linguistic analysis was used for the interpretation of the data collected from an online news aggregator News24. The data was in the form of online news articles. The literature showed that the commercial motives of news agencies outweigh the information providing services thereof. Profit is guaranteed by focusing on heinous crimes that are sensationalised. Results show the interplay between moral entrepreneurs and news media as unexplored in South Africa, hence the lack of inclusion criminal justice system agencies in news articles except when the journalist is furthering commercial agendas. Victims and perpetrators were clearly stereotyped, more so perpetrators who were portrayed as inherently evil and seeking to only do harm to moral members of society. Law enforcement and the media can coexist while serving two similar yet different tasks. It is recommended that law enforcement agencies help bridge the gap by being more open to the media. Communication needs to be established between law enforcement agents and news agents in order to have a positive influence on crime policies and combat crime more effectively.

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