

Framing the Palestinian Genocide on TikTok: Stancetaking and Narrative Analysis in Traditional and New Media Discourse

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Abstract

The rise of TikTok as a platform for conflict narration has redistributed narrative power away from traditional media institutions toward new media actors, raising critical questions about how geopolitical crises are framed for digital audiences. This study examines how the Palestinian genocide is portrayed on TikTok by traditional media outlet CNN in comparison to South African participant journalist Dan Corder, with particular focus on how stancetaking and narrative structure shape conflict representation in digital spaces. Drawing on Du Bois' stancetaking theory and Labov's narrative analysis model, this study employs a qualitative comparative framework to analyse TikTok videos from both outlets spanning 2024 to 2025, incorporating content produced before and after the International Court of Justice ruling on South Africa's genocide case against the State of Israel. Findings reveal that CNN foregrounded narrative abstracts and orientations, adopting predominantly neutral stances and exercising institutional control over framing. By contrast, the participant journalist emphasised complicating action, evaluation, and coda, the emotionally and morally weighted elements of narrative, through epistemic evidence and affective storytelling centred on civilian lives. Audience stancetaking diverged markedly: CNN's audience directed critique at the network's own linguistic choices, making the media outlet itself the stance object, while the new media audience exhibited justice-oriented affective stances aimed at institutional actors including the ICJ and the Israeli and South African governments. These findings illuminate broader consequences for mediatisation and journalism, as TikTok increasingly blurs the boundaries between reporting, personal testimony, and activism, decentralising narrative authority once held exclusively by mainstream media institutions.

Keywords: TikTok, Palestinian genocide, stancetaking, narrative analysis, mediatisation