Do institutional citizen journalism outlets provide newsworthy content? Comparison of news values between PeoPo and Public Television Service in Taiwan

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Abstract

New technologies empower citizens to become involved in news production and dissemination. Prior research has shown that citizen reporters have different journalistic identities and ideologies than professional journalists. However, few studies have focused on the content covered by these institutional citizen journalism outlets. In order to understand the newsworthiness of citizen journalism, this study revisits the relationship tested by Tse and Spiezio (2021), by conducting content analysis of 400 news headlines from Taiwanese citizen media outlet *PeoPo* and local media outlet *Public Television Service* to compare the news values between them. The findings indicate that citizen media in Taiwan focus on different news values. Specifically, *PeoPo*, the biggest citizen media outlet in Taiwan, has different news selection criteria compared with the mainstream *Public Television Service*. However, citizen media has its own unique values, including more stories featuring *Common Man*, and provides more *Good News* than the mainstream media. The function of citizen media in Taiwan is seen as complementary to the mainstream media.

Keywords: News Values, Journalism, Mainstream Media, Citizen Journalism, Content Analysis, Taiwan

Word Count: 7621

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“The news is what we make of it, in more ways than one.” This is a quote from *We the Media: Grassroots Journalism by the People, for the People* (Gillmor, 2004, p. 25). It implies that news can be made by not only traditional journalists, but also ordinary people. With the rise of the Internet, citizens are able to consume news from sources other than traditional media. According to a Pew Research Center (2017) study, 67% of Americans consume news from social media platforms. It indicates that content from non-traditional media platforms influences news consumption.

Over the past decade, citizens have not only consumed news but also contributed to news collection and dissemination. A phenomenon known as citizen journalism has emerged as a result of ordinary people’s participation. Citizen journalists see themselves as activists with the primary goal of influencing mainstream media agendas and government policy (Hatcher & Haavik, 2014). Their involvement in news production shapes the traditional journalism sphere (Luo & Harrison, 2019). Citizens who contribute to news content typically are not aware of journalistic training, and their writing style differs from mainstream media writings. Articles published in citizen media outlets are often seen as lacking in validity, objectivity (Darbo & Skjerdal, 2019), and credibility (e.g., Carr et al., 2014; Chung & Nah, 2012; 2013; 2020, Swasy et al., 2015). However, recent studies on citizen journalism have paid less attention to the selection of newsworthy content of citizen journalism.

In the current study, citizen journalism is defined as newsworthy content (text and audiovisual elements) that is produced and disseminated by citizens who did not receive professional journalistic training. Citizen journalism can be divided into various forms (Canter,

2013; Nip, 2006; Wall, 2015). One of the forms is amateurs using eyewitness accounts to participate on mainstream media platforms. Another form is individuals or amateurs posting news blogs on community websites. Finally, there are full-fledged, platform-based participatory and collaborative news sites that invite participants to produce and disseminate news in an institutional and organizational form; these sites are referred to as “institutional citizen journalism” in this paper. Examples include *OhmyNews* in South Korea, *PeoPo* in Taiwan, and *Digg* in the United States. These institutional citizen journalism outlets provide platforms for citizen journalists to report in an open-source way and operate transparently under collective wisdom. They have a fundamental ideological difference from mainstream media organizations in that citizen reporters registered to write news reports on these platforms are typically amateur enthusiasts who “have little or no training or professional qualifications as journalists and report from their position as citizens, as members of communities, as activists, or as fans” (Atton, 2009, p. 265).

Tse and Spiezio (2021) conducted a content analysis comparing news values between two Hong Kong media outlets, *Stand News* and *Ming Pao*. They found that the gap in news values between citizen journalism and mainstream media has narrowed. However, whether *Stand News* should be considered an citizen journalism outlet is subject to debate, given that some of the articles it publishes are written by in-house journalists who had received professional journalism training, while others are community reporters directly contributing articles to the platform. Despite this observation, it is unclear whether institutional citizen journalism outlets cover newsworthy content similarly to mainstream media. It is necessary to revisit Tse and Spiezio’s research questions to validate their results.

To understand the newsworthiness of institutional citizen journalism articles, I adopt the Contemporary News Values model (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001; 2017) and conduct a comparative content analysis of a total of 400 news articles from Taiwanese citizen media outlet *PeoPo* and mainstream media outlet *Public Television Service*. I argue that citizen journalism is different from mainstream media in terms of newsworthiness, specifically, that citizen journalism has unique focuses of news coverage, such as more emphasis on *Common Man* (which refers to ordinary people or organizations that cannot be defined as celebrities or as powerful or influential people but who are included in the news) and *Good News*, compared to mainstream media.

Contemporary News Values

News values, defined as the essential considerations that determine the criteria for newsworthiness (Caple & Bednarek, 2016), is a concept that has received attention among journalism scholars. Galtung and Ruge (1965) were the first scholars to provide a list of factors in selection, distortion, and replication during news communication. In their content analysis of four Norwegian newspapers and three international crisis papers, they summarized seventeen news factors: Frequency, Threshold, Absolute Intensity, Intensity Increase, Unambiguity, Meaningfulness, Cultural Proximity, Relevance, Consonance, Predictability, Demand, Unexpectedness, Unpredictability, Scarcity, Continuity Composition, and References to Elite Nations. This pioneering study, which served as the methodological and theoretical foundation for news values research (e.g., Eilders, 1997, 2006; Schulz, 1982), advances our understanding of what should be considered news.

Numerous studies on news values (e.g., Caple & Bednarik, 2016; Dick, 2014; Eilders, 1997, 2006; Harcup & O'Neill, 2001, 2017) have been conducted by journalism scholars using

Galtung and Ruge's (1965) study as a theoretical and methodological backbone (Schulz, 1982).

One of the major criticisms was that the original study only included textual elements and did not examine visuals such as videos, photos, and infographics (Caple & Bednarik, 2016; Dick, 2014). This criticism has been addressed in later contemporary news values research in order to expand the scope of research on news values.

Harcup and O'Neill (2001, 2017) revisited Galtung and Ruge's (1965) study twice, arguing that the factors in Galtung and Ruge's study did not correspond to the contemporary situation. As a result, Harcup and O'Neill (2001) developed an updated list of ten contemporary values based on the content analysis of three newspapers in the United Kingdom (i.e., *The Sun*, *The Daily Mail*, and *Daily Telegraph*). These factors included Power Elite, Celebrity, Entertainment, Surprise, Bad News, Good News, Magnitude, Relevance, Follow-up, and Newspaper Agenda. With the spread of the Internet, social media has provided a platform for news articles to be reached out to a larger audience by sharing, liking, and commenting (Hermida, 2010). As a result, the contemporary news values model was revisited once more, based on their study conducted in 2001 (Harcup & O'Neill, 2017). The revisited study focused not only on traditional news articles but also on social media platforms including Facebook and Twitter to determine which articles were most widely shared. The model included five new factors, in addition to Harcup and O'Neill's (2001) contemporary news values list: *Exclusivity*, *Conflict*, *Surprise*, *Audiovisuals*, *Shareability*, and *Drama*. For example, *Conflict*, a newly introduced news value, refers to "stories concerning conflict such as controversies, arguments, splits, strikes, fights, insurrections and warfare" (Harcup & O'Neill, 2017, p. 1482). The updated list provides a comprehensive understanding of contemporary news values.

Harcup and O'Neill's (2001, 2017) content analyses focused on event importance, however other factors such as journalists' sense of professional identity and ideology also influence news dissemination. Meijer (2001) has documented that the responsibility of journalists is to "inform citizens in a way that enables them to act as citizens" (p. 13). A survey of 1200 journalists determined that event significance was less important than production routines and economic pressures (Strömbäck et al., 2012). Donsbach (2004) argued that social validation of journalists' judgments and attitudes influenced their news selection decisions.

Citizen reporters have a different identity as journalists, shapes their way of choosing which events are important to be reported as news. In a democratic society, citizen journalism is closely tied with civic behavior, which is crucial to democratic societies. On the other hand, authoritarian states consider citizen journalism a threat to the government (Wall, 2015). In a series of qualitative studies, Hatcher and Haavik (2014) found that citizen reporters see themselves as activists, and reporting issues of the community "sets the agenda for what issues the local government will talk about," even though most community newspaper agencies are not concerned with readership. These findings demonstrate that the different cultures have different media landscapes. In sum, citizen reporters' primary motivation for writing stories is to be strongly linked to the community instead of for subscription purposes, fostering a writing style different from traditional journalists who received professional journalistic training to write neutral, objective, fair, and credible reports (Deuze, 2005).

Apart from journalistic identity, news organizations have their ideologies – "meaning in the service of power" (Thompson, 1990, p. 7) – that shape their ways of writing messages. Journalists may not be consciously aware of these ideologies (Al-Rawi, 2017; Hall, 1985). Using the agenda-setting theory, Luo and Harrison (2019) found that citizens generated content

collectively to influence the traditional media and governmental policy, which then shaped the traditional journalism sphere. It is of interest to further examine the difference in news values between citizen media and mainstream media, which prior literature did not offer.

It is worth noting that it is challenging to define news, and doing so is not the main objective of this study. Judging whether an event should be news or not is never a principle that a single theoretical definition can explain. Instead, newsworthiness strongly relies on the “gut feeling” of the journalist (Schultz, 2007). Nonetheless, scholars have put enormous effort into researching newsworthiness since it provides a way for journalists to draft headlines and understand what the public should be informed about (Harcup & O’Neill, 2017). Deciding the information produced or disseminated by a particular citizen outlet should be called news, is not the central outcome of this paper. Nonetheless, this study aims to shed light on citizen journalism by conducting a comparative content analysis of citizen journalism articles and mainstream media articles in order to distinguish between how mainstream journalists and citizen journalists place importance on events they consider worthy to be published as news.

News Values of Citizen Journalism

Citizen journalism has been extensively examined and debated in journalism and media studies (e.g., Allan & Thorsen, 2009; 2014, Atton, 2009, Wall, 2015). Citizens are empowered by new technologies (Allan & Thorsen, 2009) to be involved in news consumption, production, and dissemination. Citizen journalism is often referred to as grassroots journalism, participatory journalism, or community journalism. Nevertheless, scholars have not reached a consensus on the definition of citizen journalism, and different researchers have tried to give their own definitions. For instance, Bowman and Willis (2003) defined citizen journalism as

The act of a citizen, or group of citizens, playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing, and disseminating news and information. This participation intends to provide the independent, reliable, accurate, and wide-ranging and relevant information that a democracy requires. (p. 9)

Paul (2017) defined citizen journalists as people who contribute news content to a website publicly. However, some scholars have not considered citizen journalism to be news because it is submitted by ordinary citizens (Nah & Chung, 2016), or simply beneficial information (Carpenter, 2010).

Interviews with citizen reporters from six European countries highlighted variations in terms of their journalistic training backgrounds. Some understood what makes good journalism, while others had abstract ideas of journalistic standards, resulting in different writing styles (Kus et al., 2017). Professional journalists tend not to trust writings from citizen journalists due to their lack of validation and neutrality (Darbo & Skjerdal, 2019). A large body of literature shows that there is a significant difference in credibility between articles written by citizen journalists and by mainstream media reporters (e.g., Carr et al., 2014; Chung & Nah, 2012; 2013; 2020, Swasy et al., 2015). Given that citizen journalists are perceived to be lacking in validity and credibility, as well as writing in an imbalanced manner, it is of interest to understand if their stories show different newsworthiness accounts compared with mainstream news.

The vast literature debating the credibility of citizen journalism has skewed the focus onto evaluating the truthfulness of citizen journalism. While newsworthiness is not required to assess credibility (Sikdar et al., 2013), few studies have addressed the newsworthiness of citizen journalism. This study is an attempt to fill this gap by examining not only what citizen journalists do, but the way they approach newsworthy content. Harcup (2020) shed light on extending the

study of news values to alternative news platforms, showing that alternative media has different ways of looking at what should be called news. However, as Harcup (2020) noted, such an approach is not intended to abandon current journalistic ethics. Instead, alternative media focuses on different treatments, angles, selection decisions, and thus news coverage. News values research on alternative media helped scholars to understand how alternative media choose newsworthy content to report differently from mainstream media. As Wall (2015) noted, current research on journalism has focused on mainstream media, leaving citizen journalism understudied.

There has been little research built on the model of news values in citizen media. The earliest study was by Schaud and Carpenter (2009), who conducted content analysis to analyze the news values on *The Arizona Republic's* 15 community websites. Their findings showed that proximity articles ranked higher than timeliness (events that are happened recently) and prominent articles in terms of audience clicks, given that the website aims to provide local news to local audiences. Schaud and Carpenter (2009) study solely described the reader's preference on citizen journalism website, without comparing the news values of the community websites with mainstream media.

Tse and Roberto (2021) conducted another content analysis study to address the issue, drawing on the Contemporary News Values model (Harcup & O'Neill, 2017) to compare the news values between mainstream media *Ming Pao* and citizen media *Stand News* in Hong Kong. They included a newly introduced variable called *Common Man*. The addition was important since citizen journalism may cover more stories with ordinary citizens rather than influential people. They argued that citizen journalism is considered more credible and newsworthy than mainstream media, at least in the context of the audience's concerns in Hong Kong. However, it

is questionable whether *Stand News* can be considered citizen journalism since it has a mix of writers who are professional journalists and citizens. There is no media agency calling itself citizen journalism in Hong Kong, but there are media agencies that classify themselves as citizen journalism outlets in other places, for example, *OhmyNews*, the biggest citizen journalism agency founded in early 2000s in South Korea, and *PeoPo* in Taiwan.

The current study aims to address the issue by conducting a content analysis of news values in articles produced by *Public Television Service*, the mainstream news outlet, in Taiwan, and its sub-agency, *PeoPo*, a citizen journalism outlet. Two research questions are proposed:

RQ1. What is the difference in news values between articles written by *Public Television Service* (i.e., the mainstream news outlet) and *PeoPo* (i.e., the institutional citizen news outlet)?

RQ2. Are there any exclusive news values and news content coverage that could only be found in citizen journalism news?

Research Context: Citizen Journalism in Taiwan

This research focuses on the environment of citizen journalism in Taiwan. *PeoPo*, owned by *Public Television Service*, is the largest citizen media platform in Taiwan at the moment (Tsai & Liu, 2011). Citizens need to be a member of *PeoPo* first, and then register to post articles on their website without interference, but the mother company, *Public Television Service*, reserves the right to remove any materials at any time. As of October, 2021, 162,700 citizen articles have been posted, with 11,700 citizen reporters registered on the website. *PeoPo* offers citizen journalism workshops and online training videos and selects some of the best citizen articles for the 5-minute archive summary video on a regular basis.

According to an interview with six student representatives conducted by Hsu and Juang (2019), students wrote citizen articles on *PeoPo* to fulfill academic course requirements, and thus the platform promoted student self-actualization. Chen (2014) found that participation in *PeoPo* article production facilitated citizen communication and participation in society, allowing social movements to enter the public sphere. To summarize, the *PeoPo* platform benefits citizens in numerous ways, such as by providing a platform for students to practice reporting news and facilitating citizen engagement.

Tsai and Liu (2011) conducted a comparative content analysis between *PeoPo* and *WNews* (a citizen journalism platform launched by NOWnews Network in 2008). They found that the majority of stories written by citizens were concerned with local and environmental issues. They also found that the two platforms did not feature timeliness or unexpected events, which suggests that there may be a difference in news values between mainstream and citizen media in Taiwan, in particular when timeliness and surprising news are the two major focuses for mainstream news outlets.

Method

Sample

Content analysis, a well-established method for studying recorded human communication such as books and magazines, is used in this study to examine the news values in articles produced by media outlets in Taiwan. The study retrieved a total of 400 Chinese-language articles from the respective media outlets' websites, namely <https://www.PeoPo.org/> for *PeoPo* and <https://www.pts.org.tw/> for *Public Television Service*, over a sample period ranging from January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2020. Despite the fact that *Taiwan Public Television Service* has a low share in Taiwan's TV viewing market, it is appropriate as a representative mainstream media

agency in this study because *Public Television Service* and *PeoPo* come from the same parent company, such aimed to control the prospective political bias between the two companies.

The sample for this study was collected using simple random sampling, in which a set of random numbers of articles published between January 1st, 2019, and December 31st, 2020, were generated. The total number of articles retrieved was 400, with 200 obtained from *PeoPo* and 200 from *Taiwan Public Television Service*. The total number of articles published by *PeoPo* and *Taiwan Public Television Service* during 2019 to 2020 were 6430 and 7070, respectively. Two Chinese coders were trained and coded the articles independently.

Measurement of the Variables

The following coding scheme is adopted from Tse and Spiezio (2021). The complete Chinese and English versions of the coding schemes are provided in Appendix 1, and 2 respectively.

Region

Region refers to the geographic location where the story takes place. To comprehend the geographic notions of the associated articles, 11 ordinal variables are coded, including Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, Europe, Americas excluding the USA and including North, Central and South American countries, Asia-Pacific including Australia and New Zealand, USA, Africa, Middle East including Iran, and Rest of the World (ROW), that is, all the countries that cannot be included in the other categories.

Topic

Topic refers to the dominant theme of the analyzed article. Eight ordinal variables are coded to understand the subject of the media publication, including Taiwan News, China News, Entertainment, Sports, Commentary, Economics, International, and Other.

News Values

Ten nominal variables adopted from Harcup and O'Neill (2017), Spiezio (2016), and Galtung and Ruge (1965) are used to examine the values that exist in each article: *Surprise*, *Audiovisuals*, *Timeliness*, *Entertainment*, *Follow-up*, *Good News*, *Power Elite*, *Relevance*, *Common Man*, and *Bad News*. The definitions of the 10 key News Values variables are presented in Table 1.

[Table 1 around here]

Intercoder Reliability

Intercoder reliability is “the extent to which two or more independent coders agree on the coding of the content of interest using the same coding scheme” (Lavrakas, 2008, p. 345). In content analysis, interpreting intercoder reliability is critical since it determines whether the results are objective and reliable. Intercoder reliability can be measured using four methods, including percentage agreement, Cohen’s Kappa, Krippendorff’s Alpha, and Scott’s Pi (Riffe et al., 2014). According to O’Connor and Joffe (2020), 10% to 25% of the data units are expected to be used in a multiple coding process. Hence 10% of the sample is chosen for intercoder reliability analysis in this study.

The lowest threshold of intercoder reliability for Cohen's kappa value is 0.7 (Hayes, 2005). Coders A and B were trained using the coding scheme described above, but only *AudioVisuals*, *Timeliness*, and *Follow-up* achieved satisfactory levels of intercoder reliability after the first round of training. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion and after two more rounds of training, all variables had Cohen’s kappa values of more than 0.7, suggesting satisfactory intercoder reliability. Table 2 shows the total percentage agreement reliability coefficient and Cohen’s kappa for the key news value variables.

[Table 2 around here]

Data Analysis

To determine the relationships between categories, Chi-square tests were carried out using SPSS. For example, in order to answer RQ1, we looked at the relationships between news values and media outlets, namely *PeoPo* and *Taiwan Public Television Service*. Furthermore, Chi-square tests were employed to investigate the relationships between articles, topics, and regions discussed by the two media outlets.

Results

RQ1 asks about the difference in news values between articles written by mainstream news outlets and institutional citizen news outlets. Table 3 compares *PeoPo* and *Public Television Service* in terms of regions and topics. There was a statistically significant difference ($p < .001$) between regions and media outlets. Of the 200 articles drawn from *PeoPo*, 1.0% covered Mainland China, 95.5% covered Taiwan, 1.0% covered the Americas, 1.5% covered Asia-Pacific, and 1.0% covered the rest of the world. Of the 200 articles drawn from *Public Television Service*, 1.5% covered Mainland China, 6.5% covered Hong Kong, 71.0% covered Taiwan, 6.5% covered Europe, 1.5% covered the Americas, 3.0% covered Asia-Pacific, 2.0% covered the Middle East, and 3.0% covered the rest of the world.

There was a statistically significant difference ($p < .001$) between topics and media outlets. Of the 200 articles drawn from *PeoPo*, 19.0% were Taiwan News, 0.5% were China News, 3.5% were Entertainment, 4.5% were Sports, 2.5% were Commentary, 4.0% were Economics, 1.5% were International, and 64.0% were others. Of the 200 articles drawn from *Public Television Service*, 47.5% were Taiwan News, 9.0% were China News, 1.5% were Entertainment, 1.0% were Sports, 4.5% were Commentary, 4.0% were Economics, 18.0% were International, and 14.5% were others.

[Table 3 around here]

Table 4 illustrates the totals and rankings of news values identified in *PeoPo* and *Public Television Service*. There were statistically significant associations ($p < .001$) for *Surprise*, *Entertainment*, *Follow-Up*, *Good News*, *Power Elite*, *Common Man*, and *Bad News* between the two media outlets. There were also statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) between *Timeliness* and *Relevance*. However, there was no statistically significant association between the two outlets on *Audiovisuals*.

Audiovisuals is emphasized by *PeoPo*, ranking first out of ten news values, meaning that *PeoPo* produces stories using images, videos, and infographics. The next most-utilized news values were, in order, *Common Man*, *Timeliness*, and *Relevance*, indicating that *PeoPo* prioritizes posting articles about ordinary people and current occurrences that are geographically relevant. *Entertainment*, *Power Elite*, and *Good News* came next in order. *PeoPo*, on the other hand, ranks 8th, 9th, and 10th in terms of publishing stories with *follow-up*, *surprise*, and *bad news* aspects.

Public Television Service emphasizes *audiovisuals* as well, ranking first out of ten news values, indicating that stories published contain audiovisual elements. Following that, *Timeliness*, *Common Man*, and *Follow-up* were ranked as 2nd, 3rd, and 4th, indicating that *Public Television Service* prioritizes publishing timely stories and those covering ordinary people and previously covered events. *Power Elite*, *Relevance*, and *Bad News* were ranked 5th, 6th, and 7th, respectively, indicating that stories about powerful and influential people and organizations and negative stories are a lesser but still relevant concern for *Public Television Service*. *Surprise*, *Entertainment*, and *Good News* stories are the least focused news values for *Public Television Service*, ranking 8th, 9th, and 10th.

[Table 4 around here]

Discussion

This paper compares the news values of two Taiwanese media outlets, *PeoPo* and *Public Television Service*, in order to understand the newsworthiness of citizen journalism. The findings indicate that citizen media in Taiwan do not select news stories the same way mainstream media do. The differences in news values between the two media outlets suggest that at least for what it concerns in *PeoPo*, the biggest citizen media in Taiwan, have different news selection criteria.

Consistent with the findings of Tse and Spiezio (2021), citizen media in Taiwan made extensive use of *AudioVisuals* elements, which were featured in 99.0% of the articles in both outlets. According to Tsai and Liu (2011), although *PeoPo* reporters are not professional journalists, they use cameras and smartphones to capture videos, photos, and infographics to supplement reports. Furthermore, the use of *AudioVisuals* increases the *Shareability* of articles (Dick, 2014).

The current findings revealed that articles published by citizen media in Taiwan still adhere to *Timeliness* and *Relevance* factors, contradicting Tsai and Liu's (2011) findings that most *PeoPo* and *WEnews* stories did not focus on current events. Indeed, statistically significant differences ($p < 0.5$) were found in *Timeliness* and *Relevance* when comparing the two outlets. These two News Values occupied the 3rd and 4th positions on *PeoPo*, indicating that citizen media concerns stories that occurred recently and were deemed significant by the audience.

An interesting finding was that *Good News* received more attention from Taiwanese citizens than *Bad News* for *PeoPo*. Harcup and O'Neil (2017) found that *Bad News* had the highest ranking of all news values. However, a few years later, Tse and Spiezio (2021) noted that media outlets in Hong Kong had begun to pay less attention to *Bad News*, which ranked 8th on

Stand News and 7th on *Ming Pao* in their study. In the current study, *Public Television Service* yielded a similar result, with *Bad News* (62.5%) outweighing *Good News* (18.0%). Citizen media *PeoPo* revealed a completely different picture, with *Good News* (35.0%) outweighing *Bad News* (6.0%). This implies that citizen media in Taiwan do not adhere to the “if it bleeds, it leads” principle, and that stories with negative overtones, such as those about crimes, death, injury, defeat, conflict, and loss, do not dominate the coverage of citizen media in Taiwan. Given that *Bad News* is a key element categorizing whether the content is newsworthy to be published in mainstream media platforms, majority of the articles reporting with positive overtones, implies that citizen media adopted a different angle in choosing newsworthy content.

Citizen media paid less attention to the *Power Elite* and more to stories about the *Common Man* instead. *Power Elite* refers to stories concerning powerful individuals and organizations and is expected to be significant in the news since quality press publish serious stories (Harcup & O’Neil, 2017). Tse and Spiezio (2021) added *Common Man* to the categories of news stories to refer to articles about individuals who cannot be classified as *Power Elite*. However, they still saw a higher proportion of articles about influential people than ordinary citizens. In the current study, the Taiwanese media gives more attention to ordinary people than prominent people because the *Common Man* is ranked higher than the *Power Elite* in both outlets. In particular, the *Common Man* (85.0%) occupied a much more significant proportion of news in *PeoPo* than the *Power Elite* (39.0%). It also implies that reporting on powerful individuals is a significant advantage for mainstream media since it provides stories that are considered vital to the public and not easily accessible by citizen journalists.

In terms of region, *PeoPo* focused more on local events. As shown in Table 3, 95.5% of the stories covered Taiwan, while the remaining covered Mainland China, the Americas, and the

Asia Pacific region. In contrast to the focus on international stories in *Public Television Service*, *PeoPo* has a more regional focus. Thus, the approach of making news regional-oriented makes citizen journalism unique from mainstream media. Moreover, most authors in *PeoPo* are either individual citizens or grassroots organizations (Tsai & Liu, 2011), not trained professional journalists. Citizen journalists do not have the resources or access to write stories about international events and so they write about more accessible local events that they are witnesses to.

To summarize, there are a number of discrepancies in terms of news values. The results clearly distinguish the two media outlets in terms of specific aspects. While *PeoPo* is user-generated content, it pays different attention in terms of news values than mainstream media does. *PeoPo* and *Public Television Service* become complimentary in this regard.

An observation during the coding process that explains why the newsworthiness criteria for *Stand News* in Hong Kong are similar to those of mainstream media but *PeoPo*'s are not is that *PeoPo* does not filter any content uploaded by the authors. Although *PeoPo* reserves the right to remove any posts or materials, authors are free to post whatever they want without fear of being censored (Tsai & Liu, 2011). From the institutional perspective, ordinary citizens do not necessarily contribute content because they want to disseminate news information. According to Hsu and Juang (2019), *PeoPo* also serves as a platform for student journalists studying communication for practicum purposes, with their primary motivation for assignment submissions. The discovery that many *PeoPo* contributors are students matches our observations during the coding process. Other citizen contributors include community reporters interested in writing stories and organizations who desire to promote their events.

From the professional perspective, several authors of the sample used in this study were banned by *PeoPo* for violating the *PeoPo* Citizen Journalism Platform's Code of Ethics for Users (*PeoPo*, n.d.) or for being reported for inappropriate activity by other users. Nonetheless, the stories remain on the website and are not removed. This differs from the practice of *Stand News*, where in-house professional journalists proofread articles before they are published and articles are removed if a violation is reported. For example, since the national security law was enacted, *Stand News* opinion articles have been removed (Cheng, 2021). The authors' motivation and the gatekeeper role highlight why the newsworthiness criteria are similar to those of mainstream media for *Stand News* in Hong Kong but not for *PeoPo* in Taiwan.

One of the main questions this study aimed to figure out is whether the citizen media has newsworthy publications that represent different news values from mainstream media. *PeoPo* and *Public Television Service*, despite being owned by the same company, focus on different aspects of news. *Public Television Service* takes a traditional, mainstream media approach, emphasizing eye-catching stories such as *Bad News* while also having more resources to reach the *Power Elite* and cover international stories. On the other hand, *PeoPo* has a stronger focus on the *Common Man*, because it is more oriented to the local community, and ordinary citizens may report on more regional stories that mainstream media lacked attention paid.

Several limitations in this study should be addressed in future research. First, due to an unsatisfactory intercoder reliability score after three rounds of pilot coding and difficulties in verifying the exclusiveness of the articles in citizen media articles, *Exclusivity* was not included in the coding. Future researchers should consider ways to include this variable because it sheds light on whether citizen media articles come from original sources, including interviews, letters, investigations, surveys, and polls.

Second, the position of gatekeeper in citizen media may be related to the legitimacy of citizen media. *Stand News* has in-house journalists acting as gatekeepers while *PeoPo* does not. Future study is needed to explore the relationship between gatekeepers and news values using various methodological approaches.

Third, the findings provoke thought about the dominance of *Bad News* in news headlines. The “if it bleeds, it leads” principle has guided journalists composing news reports. However, the results demonstrate that even if *Bad News* does not dominate the news values, focusing on other factors, such as the *Common Man*, also attracts the reader’s attention. Future researchers could update the list of news values as well as reflect on how the focus on newsworthiness and reporting have changed.

Despite the limitations outlined above, this study fills a gap in the literature by examining the “work” of citizen media, particularly how citizen journalists choose and identify stories (Atton, 2009) by evaluating the news values of articles from *PeoPo*, a Taiwanese citizen media platform, and *Public Television Service*, a local news organization. The findings indicate that citizen media outlets in Taiwan have adopted a different newsworthiness approach. The comparison between the two media agencies suggests that citizen media have different news selection criteria from mainstream media in Taiwan. It highlights the difference between mainstream news content and user-generated content (UGC). The findings of this study explain that one of the factors that contribute to the quality and media credibility of citizen media is the gatekeeper.

As Lacy et al. (2010) argued, the function of citizen media in Taiwan is seen as being complementary to the mainstream media. Writings from citizen journalists provide an alternative to mainstream reporting. They might provide a broader account of the world in terms of content

(Wall, 2012). This study contributes to the current literature by offering a comprehensive comparison in terms of newsworthiness. *PeoPo* has its own unique values, including more stories featuring the *Common Man*, a regional focus, and more *Good News* compared to the *Public Television Service*.

“News is a representation of the world” (Schudson, 2003, p. 33). Even though articles produced by citizen journalists are perceived to be lacking in validity, objectivity, and credibility, citizen journalists choose to amplify stories that are positive, local, and about ordinary people. This approach to newsworthiness implies a critical social interaction that is closely tied with the community and which the mainstream media does not offer.

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Tables

Table 1

Definitions of Key News Values Variables

Variable	Definition
Surprise (NV1)	Stories that contain elements of surprise and/or contrast.
AudioVisuals (NV2)	Stories that have arresting photographs, video, audio and/or which can be illustrated with infographics.
Timeliness (NV3)	When the events took place, whether just now or however recently (one week).
Entertainment (NV4)	Stories concerning sex, show business, sports, an unfolding drama, human interest, etc.
Follow-up (NV5)	Stories whose subjects were already in the news. In other words, new developments in previously covered events.
Good News (NV6)	Stories with particularly positive overtones, such as recoveries, breakthroughs, cures, wins and celebrations.
Power Elite (NV7)	Stories about powerful and influential individuals, organizations, or institutions, and stories that relate to famous people in any industry (celebrity status).
Relevance (NV8)	Stories about issues, groups or nations that are perceived as relevant to the audience for any reason (e.g., geographical proximity), or stories perceived as significant because of the number of people involved or affected and/or because of the potential impact of the events.
Common Man (NV9)	Stories about ordinary people or organizations that cannot be defined as celebrities, powerful or influential.
Bad News (NV10)	Stories with particularly negative overtones, such as crime, death, injury, defeat, conflict and loss.

Table 2

Reliability Coefficients for Key News Values Variables

Variable	Percent Agreement	Cohen's Kappa
Surprise (NV1)	97.5 %	0.787
AudioVisuals (NV2)	100 %	1
Timeliness (NV3)	87.5 %	0.721
Entertainment (NV4)	97.5 %	0.939
Follow-up (NV5)	90 %	0.713
Good News (NV6)	97.5 %	0.946
Power Elite (NV7)	95 %	0.899
Relevance (NV8)	97.5 %	0.95
Common Man (NV9)	97.5 %	0.787
Bad News (NV10)	97.5 %	0.843

Table 3

Comparison of regions and topics covered by PeoPo and Public Television Service

	<i>PeoPo</i>		<i>Public Television Service</i>		Chi Square
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	
Region					50.610*** (df = 8)
1. Mainland China	2	1.0%	3	1.5%	
2. Hong Kong	0	0.0%	13	6.5%	
3. Macau	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
4. Taiwan	191	95.5%	142	71.0%	
5. Europe	0	0.0%	13	6.5%	
6. Americas	2	1.0%	3	1.5%	
7. Asia-Pacific	3	1.5%	6	3.0%	
8. USA	0	0.0%	10	5.0%	
9. Africa	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
10. Middle East	0	0.0%	4	2.0%	
11. ROW	2	1.0%	6	3.0%	
Topics					136.161*** (df = 7)
1. Taiwan News	39	19.0%	95	47.5%	
2. China News	1	0.5%	18	9.0%	
3. Entertainment	7	3.5%	3	1.5%	
4. Sports	9	4.5%	2	1.0%	
5. Commentary	5	2.5%	9	4.5%	
6. Economics	8	4.0%	8	4.0%	
7. International	3	1.5%	36	18.0%	
8. Other	128	64.0%	29	14.5%	

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 4

Totals and ranking of News Values (NV) identified in PeoPo and Public Television Service

News Values	Frequency of News Values (NV) identified in <i>PeoPo</i>	Percentage of News Values (NV) identified in <i>PeoPo</i>	Ranking of frequency of News Values (NV) identified in <i>PeoPo</i>	Frequency of News Values (NV) identified in <i>Public Television Service</i>	Percentage of News Values (NV) identified in <i>Public Television Service</i>	Ranking of frequency of News Values(NV) identified in <i>Public Television Service</i>	Chi Square
Surprise (NV1)	14	7.0%	9 th	79	39.5%	8 th	59.192*** (<i>df</i> = 1)
AudioVisuals (NV2)	198	99.0%	1 st	198	99.0%	1 st	0 (<i>df</i> = 1)
Timeliness (NV3)	134	67.0%	3 rd	155	77.5%	2 nd	5.499* (<i>df</i> = 1)
Entertainment (NV4)	81	40.5%	5 th	48	24.0%	9 th	12.460*** (<i>df</i> = 1)
Follow-up (NV5)	50	25.0%	8 th	121	60.5%	4 th	51.493*** (<i>df</i> = 1)
Good News (NV6)	70	35.0%	7 th	36	18.0%	10 th	14.838*** (<i>df</i> = 1)
Power Elite (NV7)	78	39.0%	6 th	120	60.0%	=5 th	17.642*** (<i>df</i> = 1)
Relevance (NV8)	96	48.0%	4 th	120	60.0%	=5 th	5.797* (<i>df</i> = 1)
Common Man (NV9)	170	85.0%	2 nd	139	69.5%	3 rd	13.670*** (<i>df</i> = 1)
Bad News (NV10)	12	6.0%	10 th	105	52.5%	7 th	104.485*** (<i>df</i> = 1)

Note: **p* < .05; ** *p* < .01; *** *p* < .001.