

## Retraction Notice

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**History**

Expression of Concern:

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Correction:

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no

**Comment:**

This article has been retracted to straighten the academic record. In making this decision the Editorial Board follows COPE's [Retraction Guidelines](#). The aim is to promote the circulation of scientific research by offering an ideal research publication platform with due consideration of internationally accepted standards on publication ethics. The Editorial Board would like to extend its sincere apologies for any inconvenience this retraction may have caused.

The full retraction notice in PDF is preceding the original paper, which is marked "RETRACTED".

# Measuring International Presence in Japanese Online Media: Content Analysis of *Yahoo! News*

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## Abstract

Increasing access to online media leads us into a “digital era in journalism.” Japan, which is the largest newspaper circulator, is cognizant of this. Online media shapes public opinion and is indispensable to addressing social issues and policy challenges. This study analyzed international news reporting trends in Japanese online media and examined the factors that influence news coverage on *Yahoo! News*, Japan’s leading online media from November 2022 to April 2023. The findings indicated that the proportion of international news covered in online media was relatively small, approximately 10% of the total coverage on average, and an imbalance was noted in the reporting trends; that is, only a few countries, such as the United States, Russia, Ukraine, North and South Korea, were covered. Thus, no significant difference was observed in the reporting trends between traditional and online media despite the fewer limitations of the latter in terms of publishing space and broadcasting time. Furthermore, although international news coverage is the foundation for mutual understanding and public opinion formation in the international community, much of the international news coverage was related to the “home” state, Japan. Therefore, in the Japanese context, readers may be unable to gain an objective outlook on various world affairs. Moreover, the results of this study are significant in terms of not only understanding the mechanisms that create imbalances in international news coverage but also considering their improvement.

## Keywords

Online Media, *Yahoo! News*, International News Coverage, Japan

## 1. Introduction

Recent developments in digital technology have led to media diversification. With the widespread adoption of the internet, traditional media—encompassing

newspapers, radio, and TV—has been complemented by the emergence of online media. Online media offers new avenues for accessing news and has witnessed a significant rise in popularity, marking the advent of the “Digital Era in Journalism.” Therefore, online media is regarded as a major source of knowledge regarding international affairs and foreign policy (Denning, 2001). Japan, which has the largest newspaper circulation worldwide, is no exception. According to the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism’s Digital News Report 2022, the Internet (65%) is the most common source of news, exceeding traditional forms of media, such as television (56%) and newspapers (27%). Online media are rapidly becoming a medium used by younger generations. They not only rely on online media but their thought processes are also influenced by it. Considering the significant influence of online media in shaping public opinion, it is indispensable in addressing social issues and policy challenges.

However, an analysis of the characteristics of Japan’s traditional media revealed that the proportion of international news coverage is low. Countries that are geographically close and those with a significant influence on Japan were highlighted more (for instance, Ishii, 1996; Hagiwara, 2006). Thus, news may be skewed in Japan’s traditional media.

Therefore, it is necessary to explore the causes of this imbalance. Indeed, owing to globalization and technological development, people are exposed to many opportunities to understand the world through direct experiences. However, this exposure has limitations, and still depends on the type of media. Understanding how online media report international news is vital, considering its role and function.

Nonetheless, most research on international news coverage focuses on Western countries (for instance, Wu, 2007), whereas research on Japanese media focuses on traditional media (for instance, Ito, 2005). However, few studies, mostly case studies, focus on Japanese online media (for instance, Cato et al., 2021).

This study analyzes reporting trends regarding international news in Japanese online media and examines the factors that influence coverage.

## 2. Methodology

To elucidate the reporting trends and criteria influencing international news coverage, this study examines the leading online media provider in Japan. Specifically, this study focuses on *Yahoo! News* (<https://news.yahoo.co.jp>), an aggregator which the Japanese primarily engage with, to investigate international news coverage.

When mobile news application users in Japan were asked about their satisfaction levels with different applications, 83.5% answered *Yahoo! News* as being satisfactory (ICT Research & Consulting, 2021). Moreover, *Yahoo! News* is overwhelmingly used in Japan among online and offline media brands (see **Figure 1** and **Figure 2**). Therefore, it was selected as the target of this study.

*Yahoo! News* has a total of nine categories: “Main,” “National,” “International,” “Business,” “Entertainment,” “Sports,” “IT,” “Science,” and “Regional”;

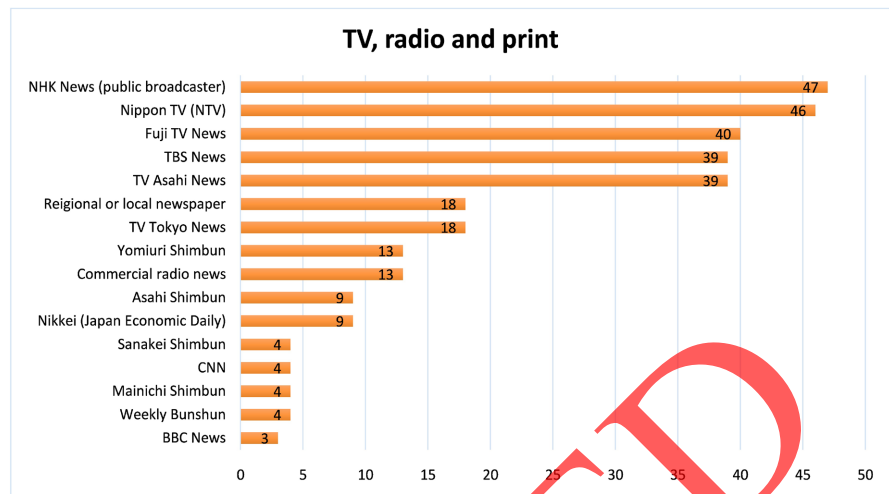


Figure 1. Offline weekly reach of Brands (% weekly usage). Source: Newman et al., 2022.

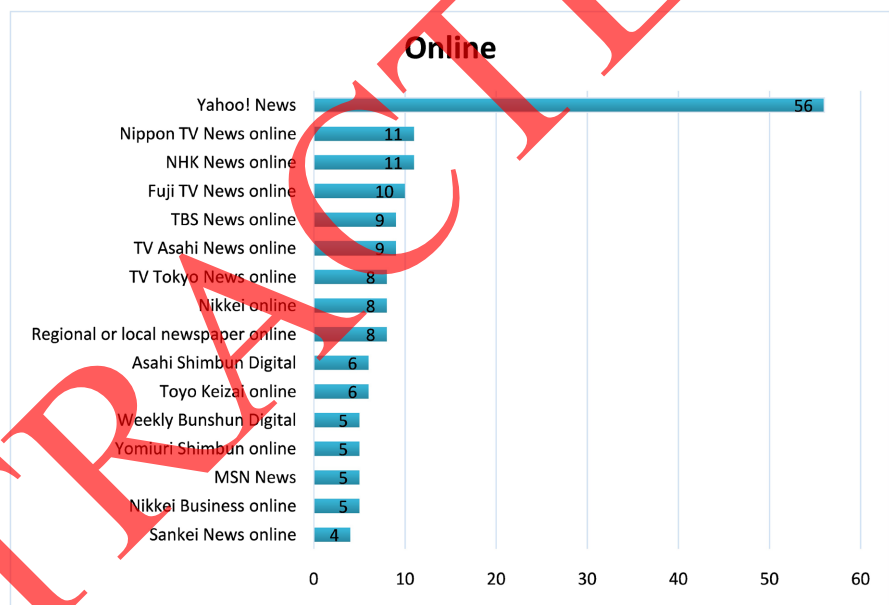


Figure 2. Online weekly reach of Brands (% weekly usage). Source: Newman et al., 2022.

however, in this study, only the news included in the “International” category were defined as international news. The analysis period was six months, from November 2022 to April 2023 because it was impossible to access and collect past articles.

First, quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyze reporting trends by country. An article count was allocated to each country, which was the main focus of this study. Second, based on the aforementioned results, the determinants of this news flow were identified by focusing on two aspects: 1) the characteristics of the country covered: prominence (Gross Domestic Product [GDP]) and deviance (conflict fatalities), and 2) the relationship with Japan: economic (trade volume), political (number of visits by politicians), cultural (number of tourists), and geographical relations (capital distance).

### 3. The International Stories and Countries That Received the Spotlight in Online Media

A total of 13,198 articles were collected during the research period, with the following breakdown: 2574 articles from November 2022, 2566 articles from December 2022, 2614 articles from January 2023, 2613 articles from February 2023, 2831 articles from March 2023, and 2622 articles from April 2023.

As **Figure 3** indicates, stories categorized as “National” and “Regional” were outstanding and highly covered. However, the proportion of “International” stories was relatively small, approximately 12.5% of the total coverage on average. This number is notably small when compared with “Entertainment” and “Sports” stories, which accounted for 14.3% and 16.3%, respectively. This shows how little international news is covered in online media.

In addition, neighboring nations, or economically and politically influential countries dominated news coverage in the countries covered. In other words, there was an imbalance in reporting trends; that is, only a few specific countries were covered. Scrutinizing the list of countries covered revealed that Asian countries (634 articles from 32 countries), European countries (544 articles 34 countries), and North American countries, including the United States and Canada (255 articles 2 countries), were frequently mentioned. However, countries in Latin America, Africa, and Oceania were unable to draw media attention. This categorization of countries is based on the United Nations Statistics Division’s (n.d.) regional classification, which includes six regions: Asia, Africa, Oceania, Europe, Northern America, and the Americas. For the Americas, it encompasses South America, Central America, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

**Figure 4** shows the top 20 countries and the UN covered during this timeframe and the number of articles. The top four countries, namely the United States (US), Russia, China, and Ukraine, accounted for more than 53% of the total number of articles, which is representative of the extremely unbalanced coverage. For instance, the US has the highest proportion of articles (16%), followed by Russia (14%), China (12%), and Ukraine (11%). Because some specific countries were highly covered, creating an unbalanced world coverage, the information gap for readers might have been reinforced.

Furthermore, although international news coverage is the foundation for mutual understanding and public opinion formation in the international community, much of it was related to the “home” state: Japan. From **Figure 5**, it can be inferred that the percentage of mentions of Japan in international news cannot be ignored. The results indicated that Japan is mentioned in 6% of the articles, making it the 5th most frequently mentioned country in international news coverage.

One may be curious why Japan was among the top countries to appear in international news about other countries. For instance, a great deal of news regarding Japanese involvement in incidents and accidents around the world was

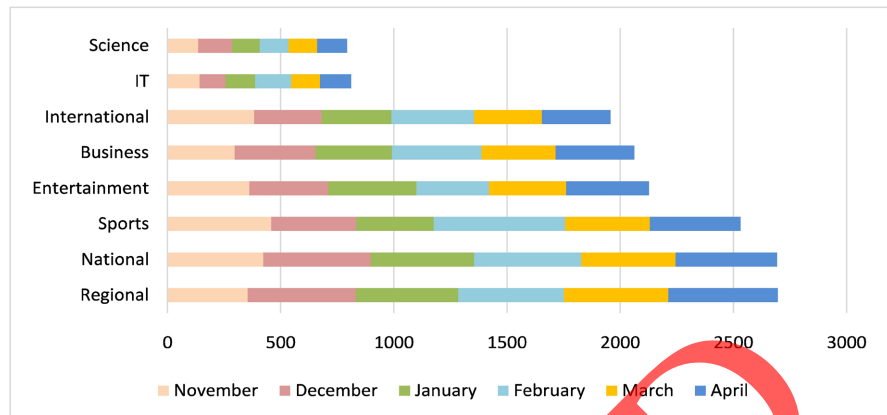


Figure 3. Number of articles on international news coverage in Yahoo! News.

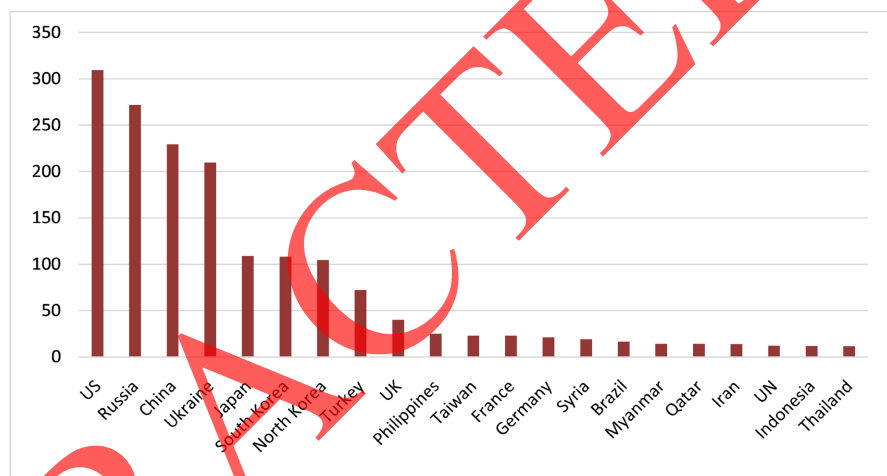


Figure 4. Top 20 nations and the UN that appeared on Yahoo! News.

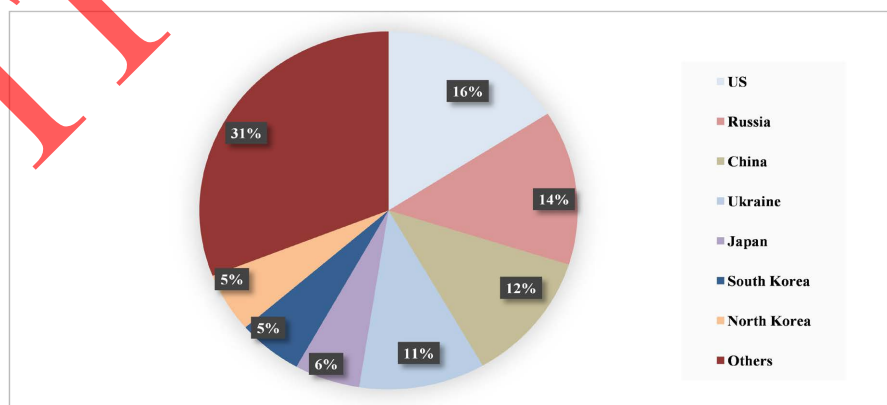


Figure 5. Percentage of mentions of countries in international news.

covered, such as the sacrifice of Japanese people in the Seoul Halloween crowd crush in November 2022, the evacuation of Japanese people from Sudan during the Sudan conflict in April 2023, and the death of Japanese citizen by gun in Paraguay. Additionally, politics, economy, and security relations with countries such as Korea and China account for a large portion of international coverage.

In other words, because international issues directly involving Japan received attention in international news, Japan was ranked among the top six countries. However, one interpretation for this phenomenon could be that the Japanese media inevitably tends to report Japan-centric information.

#### 4. What Triggers Unbalanced Coverage?

This study analyzed international news coverage in *Yahoo! News*, which has the most readers in the country. However, the question remains as to why coverage was unbalanced. In other words, what causes online news presentations? What triggers unbalanced coverage and is it similar to traditional news coverage?

Some degree of influence on international news coverage was identified by directly comparing newspaper content with the aforementioned six variables: prominence (GDP), deviance (conflict fatalities), and economic, political, cultural, and geographical relationships with Japan (trade volume, number of visits by politicians, number of expatriates, and capital distance, respectively).

Considering the top 20 nations (Figure 4), countries that are geographically close and have great political and economic relevance to Japan, negative international incidents, and countries related to the Great Powers (US, Russia, China, United Kingdom (UK), France, and Germany) or Japan were promptly covered. When Japanese online media covered international news, most coverage was related to the US, Russia, China, North/South Korea, and the UK. These countries have received increasing attention because they have close economic, political, and geographical connections with Japan.

As Figure 4 shows, some countries have relatively weak ties with Japan. This can be explained by “if it bleeds, it leads.” For instance, among the top six countries covered in this study, the media intensively covered Ukraine and Turkey because of the war and earthquake that caused tremendous fatalities. However, this does not always apply, because “whose blood bleeds” often matters. If the “blood” is somehow related to the Great Powers or Japan, the importance of coverage increases. In other words, home country connections and being part of the Great Powers are important for increasing coverage.

To conclude, when comparing newspaper content for the applicable year of this research, prominence and political ties with Japan were found to be factors influencing international news coverage. However, in the case of non-elite countries, deviance played a more significant role in determining the amount of coverage they received. Simply put, these results show that online media news showed no outstanding distinction from traditional media reporting trends, despite online media having no space restrictions. In other words, rather than increased coverage of international news by online media, no significant difference from traditional media with limited space, was observed in online media.

#### 5. Discussion and Conclusions

The number of Internet users in Japan, which was 3.03 million in 2012, will in-



crease to 97.61 million in 2023 and is expected to continue increasing. People will continue to rely on online media not only to obtain information about the world but also for vicarious experiences internationally; therefore, online media can be considered an agent of globalization. In this context, this study focused on the quantitative and qualitative aspects of online media in Japan and analyzed how *Yahoo! News*, the most commonly used online media provider in Japan, reports international news.

Traditional and online media differ in terms of the technological environment; despite the latter's fewer limitations in terms of publishing space and broadcasting time, no significant differences in reporting trends were observed in the following three aspects: sparse international news coverage, home country-centered coverage, and factors influencing international news coverage. One possible explanation for the limited increase in international news coverage by online media is their reliance on traditional media as news sources. When deciding what to cover in terms of international news, online media often consult and rely on traditional media such as newspapers and TV.

Furthermore, to determine the factors that news coverage was able to confirm, it was observed that online news repeatedly dealt with countries that are geographically close to Japan, have great political and economic relevance to Japan, or focus on international incidents (especially negative ones) that are somehow related to superpowers or to Japan.

One can question the sufficiency of this method of international news coverage. Indeed, it may be natural and reasonable to report domestic or relevant international news related to one's own country, considering the interests and needs of consumers. However, this reporting trend hinders knowledge and understanding of the global state of affairs, not only in the short term but also in the long term; it will never be beneficial to Japan. For example, in the case of the conflict in Sudan, it is important to confirm the security of the Japanese people staying there. However, as Japanese citizens were safely evacuated, coverage on Sudan has dramatically decreased. However, the need to actively focus on the fundamental cause of the conflict and the updates on the situation in Sudan are still required. Otherwise, the presence of an abundance of ethnocentric information can hinder readers in the Japanese context from attaining an objective outlook on various global issues. The media play a key role in increasing the public's interest in news and thus influence solutions to various issues. Thus, it is time for media to change to account for globalization.

Therefore, online media, which are not only relatively free from spatial restrictions but also have an increasing number of users owing to the Internet, need to observe the world from a more diversified perspective and discreet reporting by putting aside the domestic Japan-centric perspective.

### Acknowledgement

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## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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