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Publics, Platforms, and Public Interest: A Content Analysis of Australian YouTube News

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Abstract: Public interest journalism provides important information conditions for democratic life by offering information on public affairs, revealing the operation of power, and expanding the space for public discussion. As news organisations continue to expand onto digital platforms such as YouTube, news production needs to respond to public responsibilities while also adapting to the platform communication environment characterised by headlines, visibility, and interaction indicators. Drawing on Harrison's (2023) framework of public service journalism and its distinction between citizens, consumers and partisan publics, this study conducts an exploratory content analysis of 240 YouTube videos released by ABC News, 7NEWS, and News24 from September 14 to October 11, 2026, to examine how the news positions its audience as citizens, consumers, or partisan publics, as well as the characteristics of the news content in terms of source attribution, background explanation, diverse voices, accountability cues, and platform presentation. The study found that citizen orientation was the most common single audience positioning in the samples; ABC News and 7NEWS more frequently positioned the audience as citizens, while News24 showed more partisan positioning and emotional headlines. Identifiable sources and background explanations were common in the samples of all three institutions, but diverse voices were relatively scarce, and direct voices from ordinary citizens were particularly rare; emotional headlines often appeared simultaneously with identifiable sources. The research shows that professional news in Australia still retains observable public service characteristics on YouTube, and audience positioning, conditions for public discussion, and attention-oriented platform presentation are three distinct but interconnected dimensions.

Keywords: Public Interest, Platforms, YouTube.

1. Introduction and Theoretical Framework

Public-interest journalism informs citizens, scrutinises power and supports public judgement (Harrison, 2023; Schudson, 2008). On YouTube, professional news organisations must also compete for attention through headlines and visible engagement. Yet views and likes describe attention rather than the democratic value of news (Anter, 2024; Broersma, 2019). This study asks how established Australian news organisations address the public while adapting to the platform environment.

The analysis draws on Harrison's (2023) distinction between news addressing citizens, consumers and partisan publics. Citizen-oriented reporting foregrounds shared problems, public institutions and collective responsibility; consumer-oriented reporting foregrounds personal needs, costs and practical choices; partisan-oriented reporting frames issues through political identification and conflict. Because these orientations may coexist within a single uploaded video, the study adds mixed as an operational category rather than treating it as a fourth type proposed by Harrison. Framing theory helps explain the emphasis given to problems and responsibility (Entman, 1993), while research on platformisation and entertainment-oriented news informs the analysis of headlines (Nieborg & Poell, 2018; Postman, 1985).

Three Australian news organisations offer a useful comparison. ABC News operates within a public broadcasting mandate; 7NEWS is a commercial free-to-air news service; and News24, formerly Sky News Australia, combines rolling news with political commentary (ABC, 2026; 7NEWS, n.d.; AdNews, 2026; TV Blackbox, 2026). Their institutional settings provide context for different forms of public address. Fielding et al. (2025) examine conservative advocacy within News Corp's reporting on the 2023 Voice referendum; that earlier case provides background, not evidence about the present videos. Australian news use on social platforms also makes YouTube an important site of professional news distribution (Australian Communications and Media Authority [ACMA], 2026b).

Previous work identifies platform adaptation in journalistic practice (Al Nashmi et al., 2017; Anter, 2024), the importance of attributable evidence (Coddington & Molyneux, 2023), and the representation of different voices in public discussion (Wahl-Jorgensen et al., 2017). These features need not align: a report can name its sources while featuring few ordinary citizens, and a politically framed report may still question institutional power. This study therefore distinguishes overall audience orientation from coded features of public-service journalism—public significance, context, institutional information, identifiable sources, diverse voices and accountability—and from attention-oriented presentation.

Using 240 YouTube videos published by ABC News, 7NEWS and News24 between 14 September and 11 October 2026, the study examines four questions: (1) how videos address citizens, consumers, partisans or mixed publics; (2) how public-service characteristics appear across the sample; (3) how emotional headlines relate descriptively to sourcing and visible engagement; and (4) how these patterns differ by organisation. The central finding is that a shared platform does not produce a uniform public address: citizen orientation predominates at ABC News and 7NEWS, whereas News24 uses more partisan appeals and emotional headlines. Across the sample, identifiable sourcing is far more common than diverse voices. Audience positioning, public-service features and platform presentation are thus distinct but interconnected dimensions of professional news (Harrison, 2023).

2. Method

2.1. Sample and Unit of Analysis

This exploratory content analysis examines 240 publicly available YouTube news videos published between 14 September and 11 October 2026, with 80 uploads from each of ABC News, 7NEWS and News24. The outlets were selected to compare different institutional models on the same platform. Videos were selected through convenience sampling from the channels' public uploads and relevant search records. Each complete uploaded video—not an individual segment—served as the unit of analysis, linking its overall narrative to its headline and engagement record (Krippendorff, 2018; Neuendorf, 2017).

2.2. Coding and Comparison

The coding recorded outlet, topic, video narrative, final audience orientation, headline characteristics, source representation, public-service features and publicly visible engagement. Harrison's (2023) citizen, consumer and partisan publics supplied the interpretative categories; a video was classified as mixed when two or more orientations substantially shaped the overall narrative. Final orientations were assigned by considering the interests, responsibilities and social roles foregrounded in the full video, rather than mechanically summing indicators. Borderline cases were reviewed using the same framework.

Public-service features were coded separately as C1 public significance, C2 background explanation, C3 policy or institutional information, C4 identifiable sources, C5 diverse voices and C6 accountability cues; direct contributions from ordinary members of the public were recorded separately (Coddington & Molyneux, 2023; Harrison, 2023; Wahl-Jorgensen et al., 2017). Auxiliary CO1–CO6 indicators captured consumer appeals, including personal costs, practical consequences and entertainment or novelty, the latter informed by Postman (1985) and Reinemann et al. (2012). P1–P6 indicators captured political identity and conflict, including group boundaries (P3), evaluative language (P5) and challenges to opponents' legitimacy (P6), informed by Iyengar et al. (2012). Headlines were also coded for emotional language, personal relevance and political conflict.

2.3. Descriptive Analysis

Frequency counts, percentages, cross-tabulations and median engagement figures were used to describe the sampled videos. Comparisons included audience orientation by outlet, sources alongside diverse voices, emotional headlines alongside source attribution, and partisan orientation alongside accountability. Views and likes came from public snapshots collected on 5, 28 and 29 October 2026; they describe visible activity at different observation points, not a controlled measure of audience effects (Broersma, 2019; Neuendorf, 2017).

3. Findings

3.1. Audience Orientations Across Outlets

Among the 240 videos, 119 (49.6%) were citizen-oriented, 40 (16.7%) consumer-oriented, 26 (10.8%) partisan-oriented and 55 (22.9%) mixed-oriented. Citizen orientation was the largest single category, while mixed orientation demonstrated that several audience roles can be present within one upload. As shown in Figure 1.

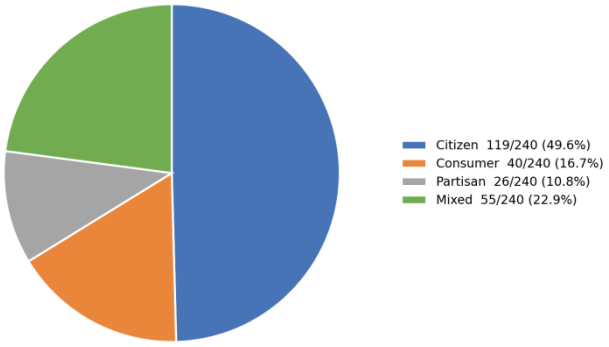


Figure 1. Audience Role Analysis Diagram

3.2. Institutional Differences

ABC News recorded 51 citizen, 11 consumer and 18 mixed videos; 7NEWS recorded 48 citizen, 16 consumer and 16 mixed videos. News24 recorded 20 citizen, 13 consumer, 26 partisan and 21 mixed videos. All 26 partisan-oriented videos came from News24. Citizen orientation represented 63.8% of ABC News, 60.0% of 7NEWS and 25.0% of News24 uploads; News24's partisan share was 32.5%. As shown in Figure 2.

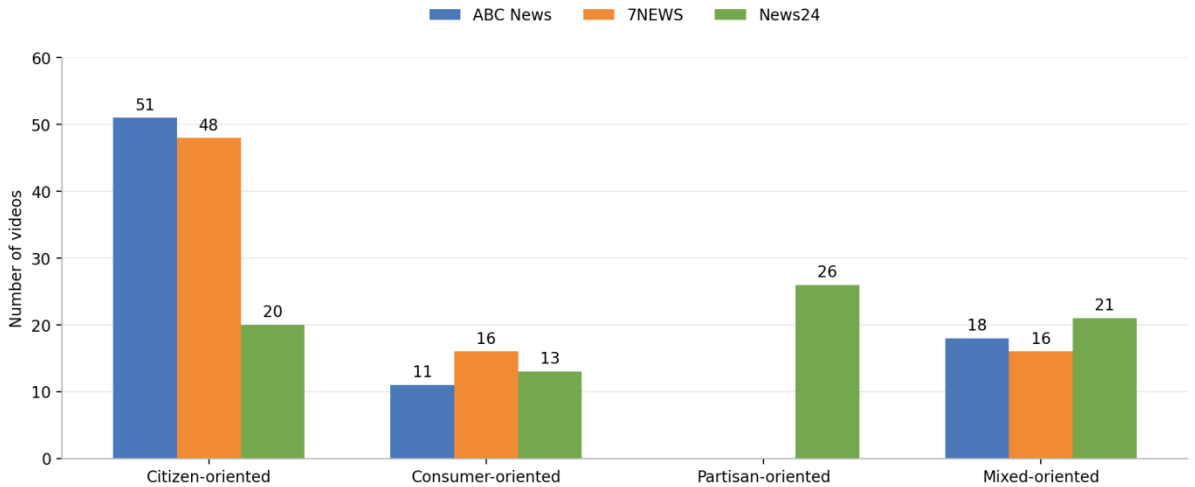


Figure 2. Video Type Distribution Chart

This comparison is notable because commercial broadcaster 7NEWS and public broadcaster ABC News both predominantly addressed viewers as citizens. News24 instead presented a more varied mix, with greater reliance on partisan

address. These are patterns in the selected uploads rather than fixed properties of the outlets (Cunningham, 2023; Harrison, 2023).

3.3. Mixed Orientation

Of 55 mixed videos, 38 combined citizen and consumer orientations, 13 combined all three and four combined citizen and partisan orientations. A 7NEWS video, "Card surcharge ban brings hidden costs for shoppers" (6bDGR1k0EkE), illustrates citizen–consumer address: it foregrounds personal charges while connecting them to payment rules, business costs and policy responsibility (Eide & Knight, 1999; Quist, 2026).

3.4. Sources, Voices and Accountability

Identifiable sources appeared in 233 videos (97.1%), background explanations in 230 (95.8%), public significance in 179 (74.6%), institutional or policy information in 154 (64.2%), diverse voices in 137 (57.1%) and accountability cues in 120 (50.0%). Only 45 videos (18.8%) featured direct contributions from ordinary members of the public. As shown in Figure 3.

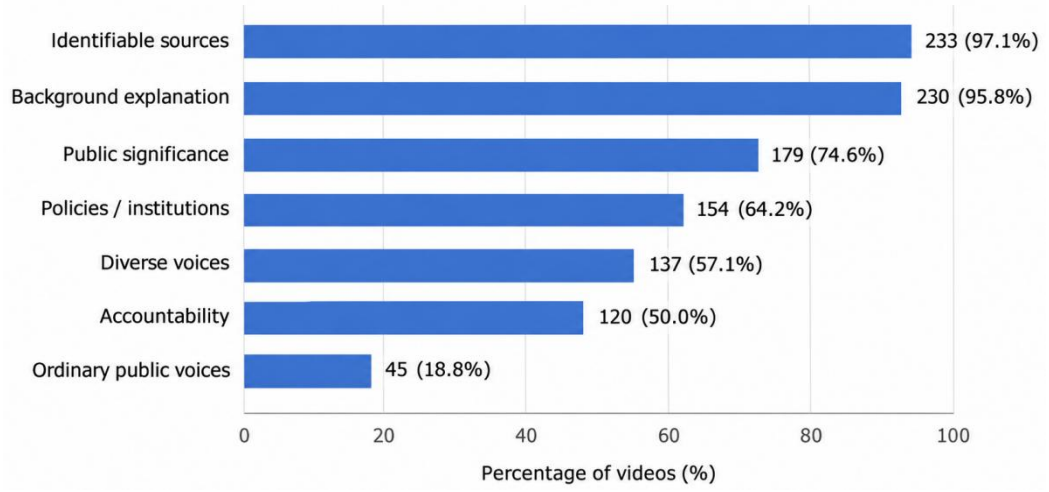


Figure 3. Statistics on the Publicity, Transparency and Accountability of News

Among the 233 videos with identifiable sources, 136 included diverse voices and 97 did not; one of the seven videos without identifiable sources contained diverse voices. Source attribution was therefore widespread, but the representation of different perspectives and direct public voices was less common. The categories capture different facets of public-service journalism (Coddington & Molyneux, 2023; Wahl-Jorgensen et al., 2017).

3.5. Headlines and Visible Engagement

Emotional or sensational headlines appeared in 107 videos (44.6%): 19 ABC News uploads (23.8%), 23 from 7NEWS (28.8%) and 65 from News24 (81.3%). Political conflict or identity appeared in 57 titles—five at ABC News, seven at 7NEWS and 45 at News24. Of the 107 videos with emotional headlines, 101 (94.4%) had identifiable sources, compared with 132 of the 133 videos without such headlines (99.2%). As shown in Figure 4.

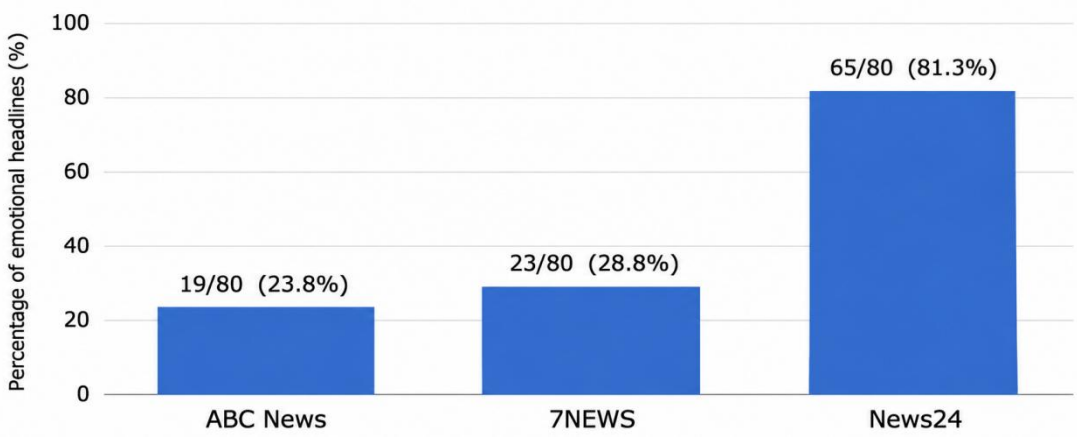


Figure 4. The proportion of emotional or sensational headlines

Across the sample, median views were 15,985 and median likes 109. The emotional-title group had median views of 16,070 and likes of 149; the other group had 15,772 and 83. Total views were highest for 7NEWS (3,282,794), followed by ABC News (2,776,200) and News24 (2,711,040), while total likes were highest for News24 (41,326), followed by 7NEWS (13,683) and ABC News (13,595). These descriptive differences illustrate that reach and visible reactions capture distinct aspects of platform attention.

4. Discussion

4.1. The Role of Citizens in the Platform Environment Remains Visible

The most significant finding of this study is that professional news organisations in Australia continue to

organise news on YouTube in a citizen-centric manner. Among the 240 sample videos, 119 are mainly targeted at audiences who need to understand public affairs, forming the most prominent single audience positioning. As a result, professional news organisations consistently present a clear citizen-oriented approach on YouTube: news invites viewers to understand public issues through policies, systems, public risks, and shared responsibilities (Harrison, 2023; Schudson, 2008).

The citizen orientation varies substantially among different organisations. The proportions in the ABC News and 7NEWS samples are 63.8% and 60.0% respectively, while News24 is 25.0%. This distribution indicates that the same platform accommodates different news expression traditions; each organisation brings its institutional mission, programme format, and content themes into YouTube, thereby forming different audience relationships (Anter, 2024; Cunningham, 2023).

The prominence of citizen-oriented reporting in both ABC News and 7NEWS is particularly significant because the two organisations operate under different institutional models. This pattern indicates that citizen-oriented journalism is not confined to public broadcasting but can also be central to commercial news coverage. The citizen orientation of ABC News also reflects its public broadcasting mission. ABC's statutory function emphasises public information and social cultural responsibility, and its sample works also focus more on reporting on public issues (ABC, 2026). 7NEWS, as a commercial news organisation, also follows a citizen-oriented approach. This comparison shows that a citizen orientation can exist in different ownership and operating structures, and public-service journalism deserves to be understood through specific works rather than just relying on institutional labels (Eide & Knight, 1999; Harrison, 2023).

Further comparison of public positioning and news content indicators can provide a deeper explanation of the specific connotation of citizen orientation. Public positioning depicts to whom the news is addressed, while background explanations, source attribution, diverse voices, and accountability record the resources provided by the news for public understanding. Through these two layers of analysis, the study not only indicates that the citizen role remains prominent on the platform but also further reveals the different ways in which news fulfils public responsibilities (Harrison, 2023).

4.2. There are Significant Differences Between Source Visibility and Public Expression

The second core finding is that source attribution and background explanations are very common in the samples, while the appearance of diverse voices and direct voices from ordinary citizens is relatively low. 97.1% of the videos have identifiable sources, 95.8% provide background explanations, 57.1% present diverse voices, and 18.8% include direct voices from ordinary citizens. This distribution shows that professional news on YouTube consistently provides traceable information sources, while the opportunity for public expression is another more differentiated public service dimension.

This difference has clear democratic significance. Identifiable information sources help the public identify the institutions, data, or testimonies on which the reports rely; diverse voices make the connections between public issues and different experiences and interests visible. Coddington and Molyneux (2023) emphasise the importance of evidence attribution, and Wahl-Jorgensen et al. (2017) remind researchers to consider the relationship between formal multi-party speech and substantive diversity. Observing these two separately allows one to see that the public value of platform news has both relatively stable professional practices and still developing participation conditions.

Among the 233 videos with identifiable sources, 97 present a relatively concentrated expression structure. They provide information through government documents, scientific data, or authoritative figures, but the degree of presentation of various social experiences is low. From this, it can be seen that clearly indicating where the information comes from and involving different groups in the interpretation of the issue are two separate but effective tasks in journalistic practice. For the reporting of policy distribution and social disputes, the actual expressions of the affected groups have particularly high public value (Entman, 1993; Harrison, 2023).

The proportion of the general public directly expressing themselves is 18.8%, and this distinction is further specified. News can be explained by institutions, experts, or journalists regarding public issues, or it can expand the discussion scope through the personal experiences of the affected parties. The research by Wahl-Jorgensen et al. (2017) on the structure of news voices suggests that observing who is speaking in the report and in what capacity they are speaking helps understand the openness of public discussions.

4.3. The Mixed Nature of Audience Positioning Reflects the Connection Between Personal Life and Public Policy

The 55 mixed-oriented videos reflect the complexity of the relationship between news audiences. Among them, 38 mainly combine citizen and consumer cues. Personal life is closely linked to public affairs in these works: electricity bills, payment fees, housing burdens, and life risks are all related to the actual choices of individuals and also involve the roles of the government, the market, and regulatory systems (Boczkowski & Mitchelstein, 2013; Eide & Knight, 1999). This intersection constitutes an important path for platforms' news to connect daily experiences with public issues.

The 7NEWS video on the surcharge for swiping cards illustrates that this mixed nature can be presented in specific news as two parallel issues: what individual expenses are to be borne and why the existing policies or market arrangements generate such expenses. Both appear in the same narrative, making the video simultaneously oriented towards the actual situation of consumers and the citizens' understanding of institutional responsibilities. This case allows Harrison (2023) to transform the public types from abstract classifications into an analysis of the focus of news narratives.

Mixed orientation also reflects the characteristics of YouTube news upload forms. Some works combine personal experience with public institutions in a single report, while others present multiple public issues through consecutive news segments. The study records these combinations based on complete uploaded videos, showing that the platform's published works can carry multiple levels of public positioning. Further detailed reading of news segments also provides a research direction for comparing different narrative structures (Krippendorff, 2018).

Within the consumer-oriented videos, there are also distinguishable textual expressions: Among the 40 consumer-

oriented videos, 21 had entertainment or novelty (CO6) as their only positive consumer-related supporting indicator. This pattern illustrates why overall audience orientation must be distinguished from the specific presentation features used to attract attention. Entertainment or novelty may shape how a story appeals to viewers, while its broader consumer orientation follows from the interests and needs foregrounded across the narrative (Harrison, 2023; Postman, 1985). This result also reveals a distinction in classification judgement: CO6 records the way of attracting attention, while the final category of consumer-oriented depends on the comprehensive judgement of the main audience demands of the entire video. Therefore, the interpretation of these works should separately examine the entertainment presentation, personal needs, and actual choices. Postman's (1985) study of the entertainment logic and Reinemann et al.'s (2012) discussion of soft news provide theoretical language for analysing this cross-phenomenon.

4.4. Partisan Positioning and Public Accountability Can Coexist in the Same Report

Among the 26 partisan-oriented videos in the News24 sample, 22 simultaneously present accountability cues. This indicates that politically distinct reporting can also question government decisions, responsibility entities, and public power. The intersection of public positioning and accountability cues reveals the coexistence relationship of political identity narratives and supervision power requirements in the same news (Harrison, 2023). A News24 report concerning a bill introduced by the Albanese government (video ID: 5gMxH4DDz_Y) in the original code was judged as partisan-oriented: the record shows that policy information and evaluative political language co-occurred, while political opposition organisations dominated the main narrative direction. This case further illustrates that "having a public issue" and "targeting which public" are two different levels of judgement.

This coexistence also brings deeper normative issues: accountability is either centred around verifiable actions and responsibilities, or mainly serves to divide political groups into opposing identities? Entman (1993)'s framework theory helps to understand that the same public event can be organised meaning through different attribution of responsibility and evaluation methods. In the sample, P3 (group-boundary cues) appeared in 23 videos, P5 (evaluative political language) in 40 videos, and P6 (challenges to political opponents' legitimacy) in 24 videos. All 24 videos coded positively for P6 came from News24; 21 were classified as partisan-oriented and three as mixed-oriented.

P3, P5, and P6 are used to describe how news highlights political internal and external groups, evaluative language and political legitimacy issues; C6 records whether the report raises public responsibility from another dimension. Comparing these clues in the same video, one can observe when political reporting focuses on institutional behaviour and when it further places political group identities at the centre of the narrative. This distinction illustrates how Harrison's (2023) framework can be used alongside independently coded accountability indicators to examine partisan positioning and public responsibility (Iyengar et al., 2012).

The study on emotional polarisation further highlights the importance of group identity in political narratives. Iyengar et al. (2012) explain emotional polarisation from the perspective of political group attitudes, Esau et al. (2025) and Aleksevych et al. (2025) study political divisive expressions on Australian media and social platforms. Combining these literatures, the coexistence of evaluative language, political identity clues, and public accountability in the News24 sample demonstrates how professional news can construct a politically polarised public with a clear stance through text construction.

The overlap between partisan positioning and accountability also sharpens the interpretation of the citizen–partisan distinction. The finding that 22 of 26 partisan-oriented videos contained accountability cues does not mean that these reports approached accountability in the same way as citizen-oriented coverage. A demand for explanation may be organised around evidence of a decision, an institution's responsibility or an evaluative contrast between political camps. These alternatives can be present together, but they invite different forms of audience judgement. The coded indicators therefore help identify the presence of scrutiny, while the dominant public orientation indicates how that scrutiny is framed for viewers. This is consistent with Entman's (1993) emphasis on the selection of causes and responsibility in framing. It also provides a concrete reason to analyse partisan appeals as a mode of public address rather than assuming that political evaluation either guarantees or eliminates the public value of a report (Harrison, 2023; Iyengar et al., 2012).

4.5. The Logic of Platform Attention and Professional Norms Operate in Parallel and Are Influenced by Institutional Background

The differences in emotional titles among the three institutions are another prominent finding of this study on platformed news. 81.3% of the sample videos in News24 used emotional or sensational titles, while ABC News and 7NEWS were 23.8% and 28.8% respectively. Such a significant difference in the same platform environment indicates that title presentation has characteristics of both institution and programme form; platform distribution, media identity, and news themes jointly constitute an observable expression context (Anter, 2024; Nieborg & Poell, 2018).

This title difference can be understood in the context of Australian media institutions. ABC's public broadcasting mission, 7NEWS's commercial mass news structure, and News24's programme composition that combines breaking news and political commentary provide organizational backgrounds for different title strategies (ABC, 2026; AdNews, 2026; 7NEWS, n.d.). Fielding et al. (2025)'s research on conservative media initiatives further suggests that political evaluation and issue positions may also be related to the expression style of specific commentary programmes.

Of the 107 videos with emotional headlines, 101 (94.4%) contained identifiable sources, indicating that attention-oriented packaging and the attribution of the news's basic source often occur simultaneously in the sample. The title highlights crises, conflicts or emotions, while the content continues to provide information attribution through institutional names, documents, testimonies, etc. This coexistence indicates that the expression strategies and professional information practices of YouTube news can operate concurrently in the same work (Anter, 2024; Coddington & Molyneux, 2023).

View and like counts provide additional measures of visible attention on the platform. The median number of likes for the emotional title group is 149, while for the other title groups it is 83, reflecting the descriptive differences between the two title categories in the snapshot collection. Combining content and title indicators, these numbers enable the study to simultaneously observe how news packages public affairs, how it provides public explanations, and how the work gains visible responses on the platform (Broersma, 2019; Tandoc, 2014).

4.6. Theoretical and Empirical Contributions

The theoretical contribution of this study is to connect Harrison's (2023) public positioning framework with news evidence, speaking opportunities, accountability cues, and platform presentation. Citizens, consumers, and partisan publics illustrate how news sets the relationship with the audience; public service indicators present the content conditions provided by news for understanding common issues; titles and interactions record the expression and visible responses on the platform. Placing these levels in the same set of works enables a more specific explanation of how YouTube news simultaneously serves public affairs and adapts to the platform environment (Coddington & Molyneux, 2023; Harrison, 2023).

The empirical contribution of the study is to reveal the specific differences among different institutional news organisations on the same platform. ABC News and 7NEWS have a more prominent citizen orientation, while News24 presents more partisan orientation and emotional titles; source attribution and background explanations are widely visible, while the proportion of diverse voices and direct public expressions from ordinary citizens is lower. These findings enable the discussion of public-service journalism to move from a single quality judgement to a multi-dimensional comparison of audience positioning, news speaking structure, and platform expression methods (Anter, 2024; Cunningham, 2023; Griffen-Foley, 2024).

At the interpretive level, these results are best understood as the narrative and content patterns in 240 encoded videos. Each channel selects the same number of works, codes them manually according to a unified complete uploaded video unit, and can directly compare the distribution of classifications and features. The specific differences in the time of video release and interaction records constitute an important background when reading views and likes (Krippendorff, 2018; Neuendorf, 2017).

The study also raises two concepts worthy of further development. First, consumer-related works contain practical life information and entertainment/novelty expressions, and their narrative focus deserves further subdivision; second, the presentation of citizen orientation and public importance indicators presents different combinations, indicating that the overall audience positioning and specific public service characteristics require hierarchical distinction. With more detailed case analysis, these types can be further explained how they form in news narratives (Krippendorff, 2018; Reinemann et al., 2012).

Following the patterns revealed by this study, subsequent research can continue to compare audience positioning in different topics and programme types, analyse the roles of affected parties in news, and combine audience research to examine how the public understands these reports. Such research will expand the content presented in this article, which is about "how news reaches the public", into a deeper understanding of "how the public interprets and responds to news" (Harrison, 2023; Tandoc, 2014).

A further empirical contribution lies in the difference between what a headline makes salient and what a video offers as evidence. In the sample, 101 of the 107 videos with emotional headlines contained identifiable sources. This finding makes the coexistence of attention-oriented presentation and attribution observable rather than merely theoretical. A headline can emphasise conflict or urgency to establish an initial interpretive frame, while the body of the report continues to name institutions, documents or participants. The two observations should not be collapsed into a single judgement of professionalism. At the same time, the prominence of attributable sourcing says relatively little by itself about the range of voices or the distribution of opportunities to speak. The study therefore contributes an integrated but differentiated account of public-service characteristics: audience positioning locates the role imagined for the viewer, source and voice indicators specify forms of information and representation, and headline and engagement data describe aspects of platform-facing presentation (Anter, 2024; Entman, 1993; Harrison, 2023).

5. Conclusion

This study analysed 240 YouTube news videos published by ABC News, 7NEWS and News24 through Harrison's (2023) distinction between citizens, consumers and partisan publics, with mixed orientation used as an additional operational category. Citizen orientation was the largest single category (119/240, 49.6%), followed by mixed orientation (55/240, 22.9%), consumer orientation (40/240, 16.7%) and partisan orientation (26/240, 10.8%). The institutional comparison is especially revealing: citizen-oriented videos accounted for 51 of 80 uploads from ABC News (63.8%) and 48 of 80 from 7NEWS (60.0%), despite their different public and commercial broadcasting models. News24 displayed a different balance, with 26 of 80 videos (32.5%) coded as partisan-oriented and 20 (25.0%) as citizen-oriented. The same platform therefore accommodated markedly different editorial ways of addressing the public.

The distribution of mixed and consumer orientations further clarifies how these public roles overlap. Of the 55 mixed-oriented videos, 38 combined citizen and consumer appeals, 13 incorporated all three orientations, and four combined citizen and partisan appeals. Everyday questions about prices, payments or personal risks can therefore become starting points for examining regulation and public responsibility. Consumer-oriented videos likewise show that immediate usefulness and entertainment or novelty may shape how reports appeal to viewers. These patterns give Harrison's (2023) categories greater analytical specificity: they describe the dominant role offered to an audience, while the mixed category captures news that addresses several roles within a single upload (Eide & Knight, 1999; Reinemann et al., 2012).

The distinctions between audience orientations also emerge in the public-service characteristics recorded across the videos. Identifiable sources appeared in 233 of 240 videos (97.1%), whereas diverse voices appeared in 137 (57.1%) and direct contributions from ordinary people in 45 (18.8%). Providing attributable evidence and making space for different social experiences are related but separate contributions to public discussion (Coddington & Molyneux,

2023; Harrison, 2023; Wahl-Jorgensen et al., 2017). At the same time, 101 of the 107 videos with emotional headlines retained identifiable sources, and 22 of the 26 partisan-oriented videos contained accountability cues. Political positioning or attention-oriented presentation can thus coexist with recognisable professional practices, even though their framing and purposes may differ (Anter, 2024; Entman, 1993).

The study's central contribution is to show how audience positioning, public-service characteristics and platform presentation can be analysed as distinct but interconnected dimensions of Australian YouTube news. The comparison also highlights an important institutional insight: commercial reporting can address viewers primarily as citizens, while political commentary can combine partisan appeals with scrutiny of power. Evaluating the public role of platform news therefore requires attention both to whom a report addresses and to how it attributes evidence, represents voices and frames responsibility (Harrison, 2023).

The findings of this study also need to be understood in conjunction with the research design. The study employed convenience sampling, analysing 240 videos released by three Australian news organisations within a specific four-week period. Therefore, the research results mainly reflect the content characteristics of this sample. Manual coding was conducted using complete uploaded videos as the analysis unit, which could comprehensively examine the overall narrative of the news and its platform presentation, while some judgements about audience positioning involved interpretation and were not independently assessed through an intercoder reliability test. At the same time, views and likes were derived from public records at different time points, so they were mainly used to describe the visible interaction in the sample rather than to determine the impact of specific news expressions on audience behaviour. These research conditions also provide a direction for further development of subsequent studies: In the future, the sample size can be expanded, multiple coders can be introduced, and more detailed audio-visual analysis and audience research can be combined to deeply examine how the positioning of the public in news content is linked to actual news understanding and public participation (Krippendorff, 2018; Neuendorf, 2017).

Overall, the findings demonstrate that professional news organisations maintain varied relationships with publics on YouTube. Citizen, consumer, partisan and mixed orientations are not simply labels for topics; they describe different ways of inviting viewers to interpret public affairs, everyday needs and political conflict. Examining those orientations alongside sourcing, diverse voices and accountability provides a more detailed understanding of how public-service journalism is practised within a shared digital platform.

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