Reflection of Religious Issues in the Iranian Press:
A Content Analysis of Kayhān and Iṭṭilāʿāt Newspapers in Muḥarram (1956-2006)

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Abstract

As a medium that different segments of society can access, the newspaper plays a vital role in educating and promoting the culture and values that govern society. Correspondingly, religion had an important place among the Iranian people before the Islamic Revolution of 1979. This study set out to examine the religious content of Kayhān and Iṭṭilāʿāt newspapers in the first thirteen days of Muḥarram in the years 1956, 1966, 1976, 1986, 1996, and 2006. In this study, 118 newspapers were analyzed, and 1126 religious items were extracted using the quantitative content analysis method. All items were coded for religious content, and the results were analyzed using SPSS software. Findings showed a significant difference between the Pahlavi and the Islamic Republic periods in the publication of religious content. While the use of news style increased in the first three decades after the Revolution, religious advertisements decreased in this period. Topics such as narrations, mourning observances, and praise of religious leaders have increased in the years after the revolution. The articles published during the Pahlavi era mainly had an educational and religious proselytizing function, while the newspaper content in the post-revolutionary period has been comprise of news about religious events and praise of religious leaders.

Keywords: Pahlavi, Islamic Republic, quantitative analysis, Shiite.

1. Introduction

The media is an essential and noteworthy means that can help raise awareness in society by influencing cultural, social, and political spheres. In a classic article, Harold Lasswell (1948: 37-51) identified three functions of mass media as «surveillance of the environment, correlation of parts of society through interpretation of the events reported, and transmission of cultural heritage from generation to generation». Through the transmission of cultural heritage, the media play an influential role in education by teaching and reinforcing the values and norms that are important to society.

The importance of the educational function of mass media in contemporary societies is such that some sociologists consider them as means of «parallel education» or «permanent education» (Muʿtamid Nizhād, 1992: 13-14). As Carlsson (Carlsson, 2001: 270) asserts, «mass media play an outstanding role in shaping cultural tendencies, worldviews, beliefs, and values and are a reflection of cultural currents and determine the direction of these currents». Therefore, due to the function of transmitting culture, part of education and preaching in society is the responsibility of the media. These teachings and acts of preaching vary from

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community to community, depending on the ruling system's values and norms. Religion has always played a vital role in humankind's life and has influenced human perception and action. As Hoover and Lundby (2003: 43) point out, «Religion is always the determining factor of human identity, belonging, and point of reliance».

In addition, the transformation of cultural structures and conditions, in turn, has a profound effect on the press and newspapers, It can also be acknowledged that the transformation of the press is a direct result of the performance of the needs and conditions of our time, so «the press, especially newspapers, have the opportunity to properly study, analyze and interpret social and cultural issues and events and reflect the views of general groups» (Muʻtamid Nizhād, 1992: 228-224). Meanwhile, due to the religious nature of some countries, such as Iran, the press plays a significant role in publishing and reflecting religious content, while due to the long history of the press and the absence of other mass media such as television in the past, the use of the newspapers got more and more common to send messages and communicate with people and audiences.

Although religion has been reduced to an individual and private matter in some countries, on the contrary, Iran, after the 1979 revolution, has always considered itself a religious system to establish an Islamic society and try to guide members of society. For this reason, teaching and preaching religious concepts in the context of Islamic societies is even more important because the press in its scope of duties should be able to highlight Islamic values and criticize the secular world to defend the nature of religion and, in addition, to contribute to the formation of social harmony. Therefore, the media is expected to serve religion in Islamic society.

Bahār (2014: 152) mentions that «research on media information has shown that people are most dependent on the religious press because the amount of information in the press is more than television». Moreover, the newspaper as a mass medium accessible to different segments of society has a vital role in promoting the culture and values of society. Therefore, it is a heavy burden on the press to cover critical cultural elements and cover essential and new issues in the world as a means of information. In addition, the newspaper is a better choice than the television to examine the education and promotion of religion by the media because people had less access to television and radio in the years before the Revolution than in the years after it.

The purpose of this study was to look into the general process of religious journalism in the Iranian press today. Despite the existence of newspapers such as Āyandngān, Rastākhīz, and others, the two old Iranian newspapers that have continued to be published since their inception to the data collection time were chosen to make a comparison of conditions before and after the Revolution because they provide the possibility of comparing this matter in a historical context. A detailed comparison of the contents of newspapers over a ten-year period was conducted to reflect changes in the religious genre in each decade. With this goal in mind, and based on the research method used, the data obtained could be generalized to the modern era of the press. Due to its historical and social importance for the Shiites, the month of Muḥarram has had many political functions throughout history and has led to social and political participation, social cohesion, carnival building (i.e., religious boards), and role modeling for uprisings and revolutions. The arrival of Muḥarram revives Islamic values and ideals. Besides, due to the importance of Muḥarram among the Shiites and the fact that mourning ceremonies and religious speeches are hold in it, the newspapers published in this month were selected as the study sample.

The present study aims to examine the differences and similarities of religious journalism in the press in the last five decades in a historical-comparative context, recognize the differences between *Kayhān* and *Iṭṭilāʻāt* newspapers in publishing religious content, and examine the application and subject of religious content published in the contemporary press of Iran.

2. Research background

Māhir and Kishāwarz (2017) conducted a study to examine the relationship between religion and modern media and find reasonable answers to whether media are instrumental and are used to remove religion from society or they are neutral tools that could assist in the promotion of religion. Results showed that the «live» broadcast of religious rituals on IRIB had more negative impacts than positive ones. Nonetheless, turning religious content into «media programs» within a showpiece in an artistic form could have dual and positive effects.

Muḥammadī Mihr and Bahrānī (2021) studied how the dimensions of the ‘Āshūrā movement are represented in TV. The analysis unit, items, and statistical population included all programs broadcasted from channels 1, 2, 3, 4, Āmūzish, Ufuq, Shumā, and Jām-i Jam of IRIB in the first 13 days of Muḥarram in 2019. Their results showed that more than half of the studied programs (52.4%) were about cognitive aspects, and 38.4% about the emotional aspects of the Imām Ḥusayn's movement. Almost 10% of the time included routine items (e.g., greetings, introducing program and the show guest, and ways to communicate with the program). The characteristics and abilities of the third Imām of the Shī‘a to save humankind and society and the expression of moral characteristics of his family and companions were discussed 28.3% of the time.

Bāqirī (2006) studied the press and religion. The objective of this paper was the exploration of the human's relations with God in the form of different patterns in Iranian society. The conceptual framework of the study was taken from the teachings of Imām ‘Alī (a) in *Nahj al-balāgha*. The paper's findings indicated that the direction of religious-cultural value systems had shifted from emotional-ritual to a consequential-intellectual pattern. As a result, when the religious values prevail, other values are overshadowed by them.

Muḥarram in Islam and Iran

«Muḥarram» is one of the leading religious' rites of Shiites. Muḥarram or Muḥarram al-Ḥarām is the first month of the Islamic calendar (lunar Hijri) and, according to Muslim resources, is one of the forbidden (Ḥarām) months. Before the rise of Islam and throughout the Ignorance Days, this month was called Mu'tamir, and the word Muḥarram was the name given to the Ṣafar month. Muḥarram is one of the pre-Islamic and Islamic months when war is prohibited. Of course, Shiites hold this month in high regard; they mourn for Imām Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī to keep this month alive, and they feed those who go to the mourning ceremony because Muslims believe that these deeds will benefit them after death. At the beginning of the first lunar year, the beginning of Muḥarram has special prayers and rituals stated in the book Mafātīḥ al-janān. Muḥarram is the month of mourning and grief of Shiites in the martyrdom of Imām Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī. The mourning of Imām Ḥusayn and the formation of lectures, sermons, and preaching on this rite are grounds for promoting religious issues. The significant role of such a movement in keeping alive the spirit of struggle against oppression, corruption, and in general, the dissemination of the principles of Islam is by no means undeniable for the Shiites, and history itself is an authentic witness to this position as Imām Ḥusayn said, «Verily, I consider death nothing but bliss and life with the cruel nothing but boredom». This shows the importance and status of ‘Āshūrā philosophy among Shiites.

Likewise, in an interview with Luxembourg Radio in December 5, 1978, Imām Khumaynī described the position of Muḥarram in anti-authoritarian struggles as follows:

> Muḥarram is the month in which justice has raised against oppression and falsehood, proving that truth has always overcome falsehood throughout history. This year, in the month of Muḥarram, the movement of right against wrong is

strengthened. It is hoped that the Islamic Movement of Iran will go through its final stages in this month of Muḥarram. (Ḥaqqānī, 2002: 542)

Imām Khumaynī (1989: 73) has mentioned that it has taught the generations throughout history the way of victory over the lances, a month that witnessed the downfall of big powers against the Word of Truth. Indeed, it is a month in which the Imām of the Muslims has taught us how to campaign against the oppressed in history. With the appearance of the new moon, Muḥarram, the month of heroism, courage, and sacrifice, is commenced. It is a month wherein the blood conquered the sword, a month in which the power of truth abolished the wrong forever and stamped the forehead of tyrants and the satanic governments with its stigma.

A look at the role of ʿĀshūrā and Muḥarram in the contemporary history of Iran shows that most of the anti-authoritarian and anti-colonial uprisings have been inspired by the ʿĀshūrā uprising, and Imām Ḥusayn mourning assemblies have played an essential role in motivating and organizing people in contemporary political and social movements (Ḥaqqānī, 2002: 495). The importance of ʿĀshūrā and Muḥarram for the Shiites has caused this month to have political, social, cultural functions, and as a medium, it has become a tool to instill extraordinary beliefs in the followers of this religion. Holding sermons, preaching events, and lectures on ʿĀshūrā and the necessities of Islamic life and then the reflection of these issues in the press have helped the religionization of the media and attention to the reflection of religious concepts in the Iranian media. With the victory of the Islamic Revolution and the end of the Pahlavi period, religious concepts and the need to reflect them in the media entered a new phase. After the Revolution, covering religious content (especially Muḥarram) became common in the press. This is in contrast to the pre-Revolution era when, due to the insignificance of Islam for the Pahlavi Shah, little attention was paid to it, and it was not considered a media necessity.

Media & religion

Most individuals' claim about religion is often constructed based on the media (Hjarvard, 2008; Toft, 2018). This claim demonstrates the media's importance in constructing reality and knowledge and can overshadow how we look at concepts such as religion.

In 2008, the editors of the Journal of Media and Religion identified the following three critical areas of research into religion and media:

1. The proliferation of mediated religion (media creating multiple places of worship beyond the physical walls of traditional congregations)
2. Religious audiences as interpretive communities (shared interpretations of popular media content are increasingly important in understanding religious groups)
3. Media criticism (critiquing media genres and texts) (Stout and Buddenbaum, 2008: 226)

Standard media functions of religion and mass media were also examined by De la Cruz (2009), who points out that in certain situations, religion and media even change their roles or strengthen their positions jointly via two processes: mediation and substitution. (Roncakova, 2017: 21)

In this regard, Hjarvard (2004: 208) asserts,

The media's impact on religion may be manifold and at times contradictory, but as a whole, the media as conduits, languages, and environments are responsible for the mediatization of religion. Mediatization designates the process through which core elements of social or cultural activity (for example, politics, teaching, religion, and so on) assume media form. As a consequence, the activity is, to a greater or lesser degree, performed through interaction with a medium, and the symbolic content and the structure of the social and cultural activity are

influenced by media environments and a media logic, upon which they gradually become more dependent.

Mediatization theory serves as a valid entry point into the relationship between religion and media. In one dominant account of this contested term, mediatization is a phenomenon of late 20th-century modernity. It is primarily concerned with the impact and effect of the media system (the daily press and broadcasting services) as a central social institution on other key contemporary social institutions (e.g., politics and sport). Stig Hjarvard, the leading proponent of this approach, has examined religion from this perspective and provides a framework for its discussion by the other participants in the panel on the mediatization of religion, which opens up this special themed issue. (Scannell, 2016: 3)

According to Lövheim and Hjarvard (2019: 209), the mediatization of religion theory was formulated to respond to some problems regarding applying a mediation approach in studying and assessing religious change. As argued by Hjarvard (2008, 2011), the understanding of religion as «culturally meaningful belief systems» complicates the analysis of how mediation shapes the particularities of religious beliefs, practices, and organizations as forms of meaning-making and social interaction. (Clark, 1997: 17; Lövheim, 2019: 209)

Nevertheless, by combining the media theory of Stig Hjarvard with the concepts considered by other scholars about the functions of the media, including that of Harold Lasswell, categories such as preaching and education can be considered important in changing belief and cultural (religious) systems, which in turn causes changes in the beliefs of the audience and the people.

In addition to the above, religious preaching can be considered one of the dimensions of the mediatization of religion, which causes the internalization and transmission of religious concepts and content to the audience. In fact, in religious preaching, the message centered on religion is the factor that motivates the audience and their connection with the issue of religion, which creates a vision of the dimensions of religion for them. As Bahār (2014: 168-148) points out,

> In religious preaching, the transmission of a religious message is considered, not every message… Therefore, the message derived from the teachings is necessarily religious and belongs to religious meanings… Legitimate means have been used to influence the audience and persuade them to accept the preaching religious message. Religious preaching means the gradual transmission and transmission of an idea that has a religious basis, and its worldview is derived from religion... In every religion, they try to achieve religious principles and goals to influence the thoughts of others and use legitimate and culturally appropriate methods and tools.

Mass media, whether planned for education or not, are educative. Because people are always influenced and taught by them, the media provide knowledge and shape values that, if applied directly, can develop specific attitudes and skills. When particular educational tasks are assigned to the mass media, they often fall into areas where formal education systems have been ineffective (Dādgarān, 2007). The media have an important educational role that causes countries to convey religious concepts and teach religious content. For this reason, it can be acknowledged that the reflection of religious concepts in the media and education can cause the mediatization of religion and change in belief systems.

3. Theoretical Framework

In the present study, the theory of agenda-setting and gatekeeping has been used as the theoretical framework of the research.

3.1. Gatekeeping theory

Gatekeeping theory addresses how the news messages circulating throughout society are selected and shaped (Shoemaker, 2009; Welbers, 2018). Gatekeepers are openly and secretly involved in selecting, deleting, and reshaping the message. For example, anyone involved in mass media production can play the role of a filter in turning a fact into information. This information, which is the content of the news messages of these devices, often passes through various filters (Muḥsinīyān Rād, 2012: 367). Kurt Lewin (1947: 338), who coined the term gatekeeping, argued that gatekeepers act in a complex field, in which the gatekeeper and its environment «have to be considered as one constellation of interdependent elements». Furthermore, His student, David Manning White, introduced the concept within journalism studies while analyzing the gatekeeping decisions of a small-town daily newspaper editor called Mr. Gates. White (1950) found that the editor was «highly subjective» and primarily based the selection of wire news on his personal preferences.

While individual gatekeepers' decisions are indeed important, other factors should also be taken into consideration: The gatekeeper operates within certain constraints (such routines as deadlines and the practice of the inverted pyramid style of writing) and is influenced by the organizational framework (the size and ownership of the organization), social institutions (government, advertisers), and social system (economics, politics, ideology). (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009)

3.2. Agenda setting

It acknowledges the critical role that the mainstream media (i.e., journalists, editors, and reporters) play in helping to shape and craft public agenda (McCombs, 1972). First originated by McCombs and Shaw (1972), agenda theory demonstrated that undecided voters' 1968 presidential election issue responses correlated with issues mentions in traditional mainstream media (McCombs, 1972). The media, especially news and news reports and documentaries, have the power to divert public attention to a limited set of specific issues and topics and to ignore other issues. The result is that specific issues are discussed by many people in the public sphere and outside the realm of the media, while other issues are ignored. (Mahdīzādi, 2010: 59)

4. Methodology

Although there are many methods in the social sciences, the content analysis method is still one of the most traditional methods for examining the content of mass media messages. According to Lasswell et al. (1952), content analysis operates on the view that verbal behavior is a form of human behavior, that the flow of symbols is a part of the flow of events, and that the communication process is an aspect of the historical process. Bernard Berelson (1952), an American behavioral scientist who made significant contributions in the fields of communications research, defined *content analysis* as «a research method for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication». In addition, Neuendorf (2002) believes, «Content analysis is a summarizing, quantitative analysis of messages that relies on the scientific method».

This method is divided into two parts, quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative content analysis is a research method in which text features are systematically categorized and recorded to be analyzed. «Text» in content analysis can be understood broadly, such that the method can be applied to almost any variety of textual, visual, or aural material that can be recorded and subjected to repeated readings, viewings, or hearings. Systematic observation

and quantification of patterns in texts most clearly distinguishes quantitative content analysis from other research methods that seek to describe, explain, and ultimately interpret the content of texts. (Coe, 2017: 1)

In this study, the contemporary Iranian press is the statistical population. Systematic sampling was applied to the press content published in the first two weeks of the month of Muḥarram in the years 1956, 1966, 1976, 1986, 1996, and 2006. These dates were chosen to examine 50 years of Iranian press in publishing religious news. In Shiite culture, mourning ceremonies are held in the first two weeks of Muḥarram. Besides, Kayhān and Iṭṭilāʿāt newspapers were selected as the reviewed newspapers due to the continuous publication since their establishment up until the data collection time. In this research, by referring to the archives of the National Library of Iran, the selected issues in addition to the issues of 1968 were examined, and the operational definitions of the variables were determined. Then a codebook was designed according to Krippendorf and Riffe recommendations. All 118 issues in the Iranian National Library were examined by trained coders, and 1126 items about religion were coded and analyzed using IBM SPSS 22 to answer the following research questions.

Q1: Is there any significant difference between the year of publication and the news genres?
Q2: Is there any significant difference between the year of publication and the main topics?
Q3: Is there any significant difference between the year of publication and function?

5. Results

5.1. Descriptive statistics

In order to code the religious content, first all the newspaper items were reviewed and then every item with religious content was coded based on the code. Every piece of religious content was considered an item, and its content is coded based on the variables and categories of the coding sheet specified in the following tables.

As Table 1 illustrates, a total of 118 copies of each of the two newspapers were examined, and 1126 religious items were coded. 597 (53%) items were published in the Iṭṭilāʿāt newspaper, and 529 items (47%) were published in the Kayhān newspaper. The number of religious issues in the Iṭṭilāʿāt newspaper is 6% more than the Kayhān newspaper.

Table 1. Overall Findings - Frequency Distribution 1956-2006

	Table 1	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
	Iṭṭilāʿāt	597	53.0	53.0	53.0
Valid	Kayhān	529	47.0	47.0	100.0
	Total	1126	100.0	100.0	

As Table 2 shows, the most significant number of published religious items in Iṭṭilāʿāt newspaper dates back to 1976, and the smallest number of religious items belongs to 1986. Out of 529 religious items in the Kayhān newspaper, the most significant number can be traced back to 1996 and the smallest number to 1956.

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of the Year of Publication

	Table 2	Year of publication						Total
		1956	1966	1976	1986	1996	2006	
Name	Iṭṭilāʿāt	80	85	194	53	110	75	597
	Kayhān	27	49	87	57	178	131	529
	Total	107	134	281	110	288	206	1126

Table 3 reveals that ads have been the most-used genre (58.9%) in the newspaper, with advertisements including books, compact discs, mourning gathering and speeches by the clergy, and the least-used genre is Ḥadīths and qur'ānic verses (1.3%).

Table 4 demonstrates that out of 1126 items, 661 items were religious ads, and the minor topics were related to Islamic gatherings (28), praise (26), and Qur'ān Qur'ān (18).

Table 5 depicts that a total of 67.1 percent of items focused on religious publicity, while 5.6% focused on the education function.

Mourning has been limited to grieving for religious figures, with only an emotional aspect (like poetry and literary texts).

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of the News Genre

Table 3		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
	News	124	11.0	11.0	11.0
	report	32	2.8	2.8	13.9
	interview	16	1.4	1.4	15.3
	editorial/article	183	16.3	16.3	31.5
Valid	opinion	28	2.5	2.5	34.0
	Ads	663	58.9	58.9	92.9
	Poem	65	5.8	5.8	98.7
	Ḥadīth / verses	15	1.3	1.3	100.0
	Total	1126	100.0	100.0	

Table 4. Frequency Distribution of the Main Topics

Table 4		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
	Qur'ān	18	1.6	1.6	1.6
	Praise	26	2.3	2.3	3.9
	Religious leaders	102	9.1	9.1	13.0
Valid	Mourning	188	16.7	16.7	29.7
	Religious ads	661	58.7	58.7	88.4
	Sayings	103	9.1	9.1	97.5
	Islamic gathering	28	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	1126	100.0	100.0	

Table 5. Frequency distribution of the function

Table 5		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
	Educating	63	5.6	5.6	5.6
	Religious publicity	756	67.1	67.1	72.7
Valid	Informing	115	10.2	10.2	82.9
	Mourning	111	9.9	9.9	92.8
	Preaching	81	7.2	7.2	100.0
	Total	1126	100.0	100.0	

5.2. Inferential statistics
Question 1: Is there any significant difference between the year of publication and the news genres?

Table 6 shows that at the $p=0.000$ significance level with 30 DF, chi-square (400.700) is higher than 50.89, which means that there is a significant association between the newspapers and function at 99% level of confidence.

Table 6. Relationship Between the Year of Publication and the News Genres

Genres		Year of publication						Total
		1956	1966	1976	1986	1996	2006	
News	Count	4	8	9	11	38	54	124
	% within Genre	3.2%	6.5%	7.3%	8.9%	30.6%	43.5%	100.0%
	% within a year of publication	3.7%	6.0%	3.2%	10.0%	13.2%	26.2%	11.0%
Report	Count	11	3	8	2	3	5	32
	% within Genre	34.4%	9.4%	25.0%	6.3%	9.4%	15.6%	100.0%
	% within a year of publication	10.3%	2.2%	2.8%	1.8%	1.0%	2.4%	2.8%
Interview	Count	1	3	1	0	5	6	16
	% within Genre	6.3%	18.8%	6.3%	0.0%	31.3%	37.5%	100.0%
	% within a year of publication	.9%	2.2%	.4%	0.0%	1.7%	2.9%	1.4%
editorial / article	Count	2	19	32	28	47	55	183
	% within Genre	1.1%	10.4%	17.5%	15.3%	25.7%	30.1%	100.0%
	% within a year of publication	1.9%	14.2%	11.4%	25.5%	16.3%	26.7%	16.3%
Opinion	Count	1	1	1	2	11	12	28
	% within Genre	3.6%	3.6%	3.6%	7.1%	39.3%	42.9%	100.0%
	% within a year of publication	.9%	.7%	.4%	1.8%	3.8%	5.8%	2.5%
Ads	Count	88	100	230	67	116	62	663
	% within Genre	13.3%	15.1%	34.7%	10.1%	17.5%	9.4%	100.0%
	% within a year of publication	82.2%	74.6%	81.9%	60.9%	40.3%	30.1%	58.9%
Poem / Ḥadīths	Count	0	0	0	0	68	12	80
	% within Genre	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	85.0%	15.0%	100.0%
	% within a year of publication	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	23.6%	5.8%	7.1%
Total	Count	107	134	281	110	288	206	1126
	% within Genre	9.5%	11.9%	25.0%	9.8%	25.6%	18.3%	100.0%
	% within a year of publication	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Question 2: Is there any significant difference between the year of publication and the main topics?

Table 7 demonstrates that at the p=0.000 significance level with 30 DF, chi-square value (317.439) is higher than 50.89, which means that there is a significant association between the newspapers and main topics at the 99% confidence level.

Table 7. Relationship Between the Year of Publication and Main Topics

Topics		Year of publication						Total
		1956	1966	1976	1986	1996	2006	
Qur'ān	Count	1	3	1	0	9	4	18
	% within Topic	5.6%	16.7%	5.6%	0.0%	50.0%	22.2%	100.0%
	% within a year of publication	.9%	2.2%	.4%	0.0%	3.1%	1.9%	1.6%
Praise	Count	1	2	0	10	9	4	26
	% within Topic	3.8%	7.7%	0.0%	38.5%	34.6%	15.4%	100.0%
	% within a year of publication	.9%	1.5%	0.0%	9.1%	3.1%	1.9%	2.3%
Religious leaders	Count	2	3	4	9	41	43	102
	% within Topic	2.0%	2.9%	3.9%	8.8%	40.2%	42.2%	100.0%
	% within a year of publication	1.9%	2.2%	1.4%	8.2%	14.2%	20.9%	9.1%
Mourning	Count	5	12	20	8	85	58	188
	% within Topic	2.7%	6.4%	10.6%	4.3%	45.2%	30.9%	100.0%
	% within a year of publication	4.7%	9.0%	7.1%	7.3%	29.5%	28.2%	16.7%
Religious ads	Count	89	95	228	69	116	64	661
	% within Topic	13.5%	14.4%	34.5%	10.4%	17.5%	9.7%	100.0%
	% within a year of publication	83.2%	70.9%	81.1%	62.7%	40.3%	31.1%	58.7%
Sayings	Count	0	15	20	10	26	32	103
	% within Topic	0.0%	14.6%	19.4%	9.7%	25.2%	31.1%	100.0%
	% within a year of publication	0.0%	11.2%	7.1%	9.1%	9.0%	15.5%	9.1%
Islamic gathering	Count	9	4	8	4	2	1	28
	% within Topic	32.1%	14.3%	28.6%	14.3%	7.1%	3.6%	100.0%
	% within a year of publication	8.4%	3.0%	2.8%	3.6%	.7%	.5%	2.5%
Total	Count	107	134	281	110	288	206	1126
	% within Topic	9.5%	11.9%	25.0%	9.8%	25.6%	18.3%	100.0%
	% within a year of publication	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Question 3: Is there any significant difference between the year of publication and function?

Table 8 indicates that at the p=0.000 significance level with 20 DF, the chi-square value (305.685) is higher than 37.57, which means that there is a significant association between the newspapers and the function at the 99% confidence level.

Table 8. Relationship Between the Year of Publication and Function

Function		Year of publication						Total
		1956	1966	1976	1986	1996	2006	
Educating	Count	8	20	14	12	5	4	63
	% within Function	12.7%	31.7%	22.2%	19.0%	7.9%	6.3%	100.0%
	% within a year of publication	7.5%	14.9%	5.0%	10.9%	1.7%	1.9%	5.6%
Advertising	Count	86	94	249	80	137	110	756
	% within Function	11.4%	12.4%	32.9%	10.6%	18.1%	14.6%	100.0%
	% within a year of publication	80.4%	70.1%	88.6%	72.7%	47.6%	53.4%	67.1%
Informing	Count	10	17	16	8	25	39	115
	% within Function	8.7%	14.8%	13.9%	7.0%	21.7%	33.9%	100.0%
	% within a year of publication	9.3%	12.7%	5.7%	7.3%	8.7%	18.9%	10.2%
Mourning	Count	0	0	1	3	73	34	111
	% within Function	0.0%	0.0%	.9%	2.7%	65.8%	30.6%	100.0%
	% within a year of publication	0.0%	0.0%	.4%	2.7%	25.3%	16.5%	9.9%
Preaching	Count	3	3	1	7	48	19	81
	% within Function	3.7%	3.7%	1.2%	8.6%	59.3%	23.5%	100.0%
	% within a year of publication	2.8%	2.2%	.4%	6.4%	16.7%	9.2%	7.2%
Total	Count	107	134	281	110	288	206	1126
	% within Function	9.5%	11.9%	25.0%	9.8%	25.6%	18.3%	100.0%
	% within a year of publication	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

6. Conclusion

The findings show that the highest frequency of content in terms of publication date is related to 1996, 1976, 2006, 1966, 1986, and 1956, respectively. More than half (58.9%) of the coded data is in the form of advertisements, as a result of which more than half of the content also has the function of religious preaching, which is mainly a religious book, mourning, and ads about Qur'ānic CDs, So it makes sense that most of the content is short and published on internal pages.

There is a significant relationship between the news genres and the year of publication of the newspaper. The number of religious news items has increased over the last five decades. The number of news in 1956 was six while in 2006 this figure increased to 54. By contrast, the number of religious ads and reports like Hajj and Islamic conferences has fallen. The most significant number of religious ads dates back to 1976, with 230 cases. The highest number of advertisements after the revolution is related to 1996 with 116 cases, which in 2006 has decreased by 62 cases, which is the lowest number of advertisements in five decades. Published reports have also declined over the past five decades.

The most used genres after the revolution were interviews, opinions, and articles. Also, the genres of poems and Ḥadīth have been added to newspapers since 1976. The highest frequency of these two genres is in 1996, which can be considered the mediatization of religion in new forms. In 2006, these two formats accounted for a total of five percent of newspapers. The use of news has increased in the three decades since the revolution. It is noteworthy that each of the two newspapers has published religious ads, mourning, and religious narrative more than issues like Qur'ān and Islamic gatherings.

The research findings show that religious advertisement and international Islamic gatherings were prominent subjects in the Pahlavi era. After the revolution, the main focus of religious content is on narrations (Ḥadīth), mourning, and religious leaders. In fact, in these five decades, the criteria for selecting the news have changed, which has also affected the performance of the content. Stories about the lives of Imāms and the Prophet and many advertisements for mourning ceremonies and religious books have made the primary function of educational materials and religious preaching. In 1986, the number of religious topics had significantly decreased compared to 1976.

Based on the agenda-setting and gatekeeping theory, religious topics and how they have been reflected in newspapers have changed during the five decades. The close connection between religion and politics after the revolution has made a change in the press. For instance, the publication of religious poems and Ḥadīths as a separate genre in the press made the function of informing and praising the religious leaders more prominent than before. In other words, the news values have changed because religion is an inseparable element of the country's policy.

The size of the content has changed in the last five decades; after the revolution, more long content has been published than in the Pahlavi era, and the volume of short content has decreased. The location of the content has not changed much. Most of the content is published on the inside pages, and news reports about the ʿĀshūrā are published on the front page. Photographic content has also increased in the 1996's and 2006's newspapers, with one of the reasons being religious poems that have been published mainly with photographs.

Kayhān and Iṭṭilāʿāt newspapers have been published in black and white from the 1st to the 8th of Muḥarram every year from the Pahlavi era onward, which can be considered a sign of respect to Muḥarram. Kayhān newspaper has been celebrating this month since 1956 and dedicates the subject of its editorial to this month. After the revolution, in addition to religious poems and Ḥadīths, on Thursdays, a column was dedicated to waiting and praising the Twelfth Imām of Shiites.

Mediatization has characteristics that certainly have a profound effect on the beliefs and behaviors of religious people. The media coverage of a religious article and its content and its reflection in the media lead to the formation of an image in the audience's mind, and due to the connection of people with the issue of religion in religious countries like Iran, the media's influence in people's minds is doubled.

The media also helps teach people the religious material because using the media's educational features in religious matters cannot be easily overlooked. Many teachings on religious beliefs, rules, and ethics can be presented in the media's most attractive and effective ways. Attention to religious preaching through the media and the press also leads to the mediation of religion. Preaching in Islam is not forbidden, and it is one of the most important acts of worship and religious duties, and the media will play an essential role in achieving this. This study also saw that the religious preaching dimension in newspapers is very high; religion in the press has become a mediatized issue through preaching.

At the end of the article, it should be noted that the authors of the article intended to examine a higher number of years as well as the entire thirty days of the month of Muḥarram, which was not possible due to the incompleteness of the archive of Kayhān and Iṭṭilāʿāt newspapers in the National Library of Iran. All dates of the newspapers in the month of Muḥarram before the Islamic Revolution were not available in the archive. However, the data obtained based on statistical tests can be generalized to this period.

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