

The Use of Social Media Sarcasm as a Response to Media-Coverage of Iran's Unprecedented Attack on Israel

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Abstract : On April 15, 2024, Iran announced its unprecedented military attack by sending waves of more than 300 drones and ballistic missiles toward Israel. The Attack lasted approximately five hours and was a widely covered, distributed, and followed media event. Iran's military action against Israel was a long-awaited action across the Middle East since the early days of the October 7th war on Gaza and after a long history of verbal threats. While people in many Arab countries stayed up past midnight in anticipation of watching the disastrous results of this unprecedented attack, voices on traditional and social media alike started to question the timed public announcement of the attack, which gave Israel at least a two-hour notice to prepare its defenses. When live news coverage started showing that nearly all the drones and missiles were intercepted by Israel - with help from the U.S. and other countries - and no deaths were reported, the social media response to this media event turned toward sarcasm, mockery, irony, and humor. Social media users posted sarcastic pictures, jokes, and comments mocking the Iranian offensive. This research examines this unique media event and the sarcastic response it generated on social media. The study aims to investigate the causes leading to media sarcasm in militarized political conflict, the social function of such generated sarcasm, and the role of social media as a platform for consuming frustration, dissatisfaction, and outrage passively through various media products. The study compares the serious traditional media coverage of the event with the humorous social media response among Arab countries. The research uses an eclectic theoretical approach using framing theory as a paradigm for understanding and investigating communication social functionalism theory in media studies to examine sarcasm. Social functionalism theory is a sociological perspective that views society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. In the context of media and sarcasm, this theory would suggest that sarcasm serves specific functions within society, such as reinforcing social norms, providing a means for social critique, or functioning as a safety valve for expressing social tension.; and a qualitative analysis of specific examples including responses of SM commentators to such manifestations of political criticism. The preliminary findings of this study point to a heightened dramatization of the televised event and a widespread belief that this attack was a staged show incongruent with Iran's official enmity and death threats toward Israel. The social media sarcasm reinforces Arab's view of Iran and Israel as mutual threats. This belief stems from the complex dynamics, historical context, and regional conflict surrounding these three nations: Iran, Israel, and Arabs.

Keywords : social functionalism, social media sarcasm, Television news framing, live militarized conflict coverage, iran, israel, communication theory

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