



Media Hype and The True Coverage of Episodes in Human endurance – A Content analysis of a Vernacular News Channel

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Abstract

Insights on the 'power' of the media Violence, sexual promiscuity, and sexism towards women are often blamed on the media. Products and services are promoted via various media outlets. Stock market crashes, product sales declines, high-ranking officials' resignations, and even the removal of presidents have all been linked to stories that appeared in the world's most influential media outlets.

Keywords: mass media, violence, advertising, discrimination, news

DOI Number: 10.48047/nq.2019.17.06.2442 **NeuroQuantology 2019;17(06):180-187**

Introduction:

Since no later than the beginning of the twentieth century, when Max Weber recommended utilising mass media to measure the "cultural thermometer" of a community sociological attention has been focused on the phenomenon of mass media. Analysis of Media Content: A Primer Content analysis is a well-established method of study, within which media content analysis is a branch. For example, Riffe and Freitag (1997) as well as Yale and Gilly (1988) "reported that within the field of communications research, the analysis of content was the fastest-growing method over the last a decade or so" (Neuendorf, 2002, p.1), and

eISSN1303-5150

Neuendorf (2002) calls content analysis "the primary msg-centred methodology" (p.9). According to research by Riffe and Freitag (1997), the frequency of content analyses appearing in JMC has increased. The percentage of papers published quarterly climbed from 6.3% in 1971 through 34.8% in 1995, approximately sixfold. By the mid-1980s, 84% of master's level research techniques courses in media in the United States incorporated content analysis (Fowler, as quoted in Neuendorf, 2002, p. 27). There is a wide variety of 'texts' that may be analysed using content analysis, from clinical & social research transcripts of conversations and debates to the



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narrative & form of films, TV shows, and newspapers and magazines.

The 'Power' of Media on Populations

Violence, sexual promiscuity, and sexism towards women are often blamed on the media. Products and services are promoted via various media outlets. Stock market crashes, product sales declines, high-ranking officials' resignations, and even the removal of presidents have all been linked to stories that appeared in the world's most influential media outlets. Macnamara (2003) provides a review of the previous 50 years' worth of research on the influence of the media.

Beginning with Max Weber in the early 20th century, sociologists have taken an interest in what is broadcast in the mass media as a way to gauge the "cultural temperature" of a given society (Hansen, Cottle, Negrine, & Newbold, 1998, p. 92).

Media content analysis – An Overview

Media analysis of content is a subfield of content analysis, which itself is a tried-and-true research strategy. According to Neuendorf (2002), content analysis is "the primary message-centred methodology" (p. 9), and he references other works like Riffe and Freitag (1997) as well as Yale and Gilly (1988) that "reported that in the discipline of mass communication research, material analysis has become the most rapidly evolving technique over the last twenty years or so" (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 1). According to research by Riffe and Freitag (1997), the journal *Journalism & Mass Communication* has an increasing amount of content assessments. The percentage of papers published quarterly climbed from 6.3% in 1971 to 34.8% in 1995, or almost six times as much. By the

mid-1980s, 84% of master's level research techniques programmes in journalism in the United States included content analysis, according to data compiled by Fowler (as referenced in Neuendorf, 2002).

Whether it's the narrative and structure of a film or TV show, or the opinion and commercial content of a newspaper or magazine, content analysis may be used to a wide variety of 'texts' in the social and medical sciences.

It wasn't until television's widespread adoption in the 1950s that media content analysis took off as a study approach in the fields of mass communication and the social sciences. Examining how these issues are shown in cinema and television has been a key focus of media content analysis.

"... analysis of content operates on the notion that verbal conduct is a form of individual behaviour, that the movement of symbols is an aspect of the travel of Asia Pacific Communications Journal, 6(1), 1-34. 2 incidents, and that the act of communication is a facet of the historical process," Lasswell, Lerner, and Pool (1952) wrote. Content evaluation is a method that seeks to describe what is stated on a certain topic at a certain location and time as objectively, precisely, and generally as possible (p. 34). Probably the most famous definition of media content analysis is "Who says which through which medium to whom with what effect" by Lasswell, published in 1948 (as referenced in Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

Defining Content Analysis as a Technique

By defining content analysis as a "research technique that provides an objective,

systematic, and quantitative assessment of the manifest subject matter of communication," Berelson (1952) gave a frequently cited example of the early emphasis on quantitative analysis. Although this definition is still often used, it has been criticised for a number of shortcomings. In their seminal work, *The Cultural Construction of Reality* (1966), Berger and Luckman challenge the use of the term "objective" to describe the outcomes of social research, arguing that not even the most rigorous scientific methodologies can guarantee unbiased findings. They argue that it is impossible to conduct an impartial examination of media materials because of the many possible interpretations of its meaning. Some have also pointed out that both evident and latent information may be evaluated, hence the term has been criticised for being too narrow. However, early content analysis was mainly panned for overemphasising quantitative aspects and operating under the idea that such indicators reliably predicted widespread societal influence.

1. For the sake of drawing conclusions, "content analysis" refers to "any research technique for methodically and objectively detecting particular features within text." Adapted from (Stone, Dunphy, Smith, & Ogilvie, 1996; Holsti is credited there)
2. In today's world, "content analysis" is defined as "a method of study that uses a set of methods to make reliable inferences from text" by Weber (1990).
3. According to Berger (1991), "content analysis... is a method of study that is

based on quantifying the amount of anything" (violence, unfavourable depictions of women, or anything else).

4. Researcher, professor (at Cleveland City University) and author Kimberley Neuendorf (2002) is a leading figure in the field of media content analysis. When asked to define "content analysis," she says, "Content analysis is a summarising, quantitative examination of messages which relies on a scientific method... and isn't restricted as to the types of factors that may be evaluated or the context whereby the messages were created or delivered." Neuendorf emphasises the importance of using scientific methods, such as "attention to impartiality-intersubjectivity, a priori layout, validity, reliability, generalisability, replication, and the theory testing," in media content analysis. Neuendorf thinks that rhetorical or narrative or discourse analysis, structuralism or semiotic analysis, interpretive or critical analysis are more suited to describing and categorising qualitative study of texts. She does concede, though, that "with just a small adjustment, many can be suitable for use in analysis of content as well." Neuendorf retains a restrictive definition of content analysis, but in *The Content Analysis Handbook* she explores a "integrative" model of analysis of content and adds that a variety of approaches may be employed for text analysis.

Berelson (1952) suggested five main purposes of content analysis as follows:

- a) Identifying the core elements of a message's subject matter;
- b) Identifying the structural features of a message's content;
- c) Inferring things about content creators;
- d) for content consumers to draw their own conclusions;
- e) That the impact of material may be anticipated.

Neuendorf (2002) argues that using content analysis in other research methods, such as audience studies, is necessary for drawing conclusions about producers' intentions and viewers' interpretations. Although it cannot provide conclusive proof, Neuendorf agrees with Carney that media content analysis may be helpful for "facilitating" inference. Neuendorf also notes that content analysis can be predictive and has other niche applications.

While psychometrics pertains specifically to the interpretation of patient interviews and statements through the lens of medicine and psychoanalysis, the other three methods are applicable to a wide variety of contexts.

When it comes to describing mediated discourses and, more importantly, generating inferences or predictions about the expected impacts of these transmitted discourses, the credibility of media analysis of content relies on the technique applied.

Quantitative Versus Qualitative Content Analysis

Media content is defined by many factors, such as the medium, methods of production, messages, sources stated or referred to, as well as context, and according to Shoemaker and Reese (1996),

the goal of content analysis is "to enforce some sort of request on these occurrences in order to understand their meaning." They go on to say, "Part of this sorting process consists of choosing out the essential qualities that we believe are significant and to which we wish to pay attention. Different theoretical and methodical strategies are used by researchers while examining the same topic. Topics, problems, number of mentions,'messages' identified by keywords in context (KWIC), rotation (audience reach), and frequency are only some of the data that may be gathered by quantitative content analysis of media. Media form is also important to include in quantitative content analysis (for example, visual media like television utilise more complex semiotic structures than printed text, and are therefore often considered to have more effect).

According to Neuendorf (2002), "what's important is that in every content analysis conducted, the material as well as the characteristics need to be considered." The content aspects are typically conveyed via the form qualities. Shoemaker and Reese's classification of content analysis into humanistic and behaviourism traditions contradicts Neuendorf's claim that media content analysis can only be conducted via quantitative methods. They write that although quantitative or numerical methodologies are often used in behavioural content analysis, this is not always the case. Similarly, qualitative research methods are more suited to humanities-based content analysis. As Shoemaker and Reese point out, however,

"reducing a lot of text to numeric data... fails to offer an exhaustive overview of meaning and situational codes, since writings may contain numerous different kinds of emphasis beyond sheer repetition."

Studies that argue for studying both overt and covert material to derive meaning from texts often combine qualitative and quantitative approaches to message analysis. The issue [with the quantitative nature of analysis] is the degree to which the quantitative indicators are perceived as intensity of meaning, social effect and the like," write Newbold et al. (2002), a group of media scholars. Since there is no one-to-one correlation between media articles and their effects, it would be overly simplistic to make policy judgements based on the results of a statistical content analysis alone (p. 80). Quantitative characteristics, such as the amount and duration of media messages, cannot be directly equated with influence. Neither is it reasonable to think that these numerical criteria are the exclusive or even primary ones that determine the influence of the media.

In his seminal text on social research methodology, Neuman (1997) discusses the quantitative-qualitative divide in content analysis, noting that while "in content evaluation, a researcher uses goal and systematic recording and counting procedures to come up with a quantitative description of the symbolic meaning in a text," there are also "qualitative or interpretive versions of content analysis." Neuman says, "Most positivist scholars do not highly appreciate qualitative content analysis. Nonetheless, it has been

favoured by feminist scholars and others who take a more critical and interpretive stance.

Analysing Prevalent Practices

It is important to pay attention to both quantitative and qualitative methods, since Newbold et al. (2002) point out that quantitative content analysis "has not been unable to capture the setting in which a media text is meaningful" (p. 84). The characteristics that supporters for qualitative text analysis highlight as having a significant impact on audience perception and potential effects are:

Influencing factors in how people see the media (such as the perceived reliability of a report in a specialised scientific or medical magazine vs a story on the same topic in the general press);

Consider the setting (the timing of a health item produced or aired during an epidemic of a disease will affect how it is received);

It's important to keep in mind that the 'readings' of media material will be influenced by demographic factors such as the age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, and socioeconomic status of the target audience.

Recognising that media messages are polysemic (i.e. accessible to numerous diverse meanings to various readers), qualitative content analysis investigates how the text relates to its probable audience meaning. It considers not just the text itself but also the reader, the medium, and the situation.

Researchers' readings' and interpretations of media materials are crucial to the success of qualitative content analysis. Some scholars have criticised qualitative

content analysis for its limited sample sizes and lack of scientific rigour because of the time and effort required to conduct such analyses.

In conclusion, the results of a quantitative content analysis that is conducted in accordance with the scientific approach may be trusted. Scientifically reliable qualitative material analysis is quite challenging. However, the ultimate purpose of studying media material is qualitative examination of texts to grasp their underlying meanings and possible interpretations by consumers. Therefore, it seems that a hybrid strategy is best.

While Neuendorf makes clear boundaries between text, content, and discourse analysis, most media academics in the field of mass media and communication studies do not. Researchers and academics in the field of media often use terms like "quantitative content analysis" and "qualitative content analysis," and most see the two fields as supplementary and part of an ongoing process of analysing papers to try to determine their likely implications to and effect on audiences (Newbold et al., 2002; Gauntlett, 2002; Curran, 2002).

Media Analysis as a Powerful Communication Channels

Media analysis of content has many practical applications and may be very beneficial for businesses, nonprofits, government agencies, and political parties, especially those that get a lot of press. Organisations that have received just little coverage might easily evaluate the media attention they've received via simple observation. However, mere observation cannot give accurate

knowledge of expected results and impacts when global firms and major organisations get a multitude of mentions in mass media, typically in a number of nations and in several languages. Because of these two key functions, content analysis of media is finding growing commercial use.

Although media impacts theory is a difficult and ever-evolving area of study, several studies have shown the media's enormous influence and effects upon public consciousness, attitudes, and even actions like voting and purchasing. Brands, reputations, corporate images, and the outcomes of communication and marketing efforts are all factors that CEOs, marketers, advertisers, and public relations pros know may be influenced by the mass media. Advertising via the mainstream media is effective because of the widespread reach it provides. Readers, viewers, and listeners are influenced not just by commercials, but also by editorial content. However, editorial content and structure are more fluid than those of commercials. It might be damaging, in the sense that it draws attention to rivals or concerns that the company must address. Also, the reach of the media is expanding over the world. Share prices, brand recognition, and reputation may all be affected by news reports from other places. Therefore, it is becoming more vital for organisations engaged in public communication to comprehend the editorial content of the mass media.

Conclusion

The media is one of the biggest databases in existence. Mass media not only shape

public opinion, but also reflect existing attitudes and beliefs through reporting on the actions and words of other individuals, groups, and institutions. The media also serves as a watchdog on government and as a driver of public discourse by reporting on topics and trends, sometimes 'breaking' news. (For more reading on the influence of the media, see Macnamara, 2003.) There are four key purposes and uses for media content analysis in these two fields: formative (strategic thinking) research and evaluation.

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