

English Abstracts

Christoph Klimmt / Verena Pompetzki / Christopher Blake: Representation of Gender in News Texts: Effects of Gender-Related Wording and Examples on Readers' mental Representation of Women and on the Evaluation of Article Quality (Geschlechterrepräsentation in Nachrichtentexten: Der Einfluss von geschlechterbezogenen Sprachformen und Fallbeispielen auf den gedanklichen Einbezug von Frauen und die Bewertung der Beitragsqualität), pp. 5-22

In two experiments with German participants ($N = 41$ and $N = 67$), we investigated the effect formal gender representation in a newspaper article had on the way readers' thought of and included women. Gender representation was varied with regard to wording (dual-gender wording using spellings with forward slashes, e. g. "Die Beamt/inn/en" [civil servants] in comparison to the generic male "Die Beamten") and composition of examples cited (a female and a male person as examples compared to entirely male examples). Both factors showed relevant influences on readers' mental representation of women as part of the reported event. At the same time, using spellings with forward slashes resulted in extended reading time and a more negative evaluation of the article's journalistic and linguistic quality. Implications for the gender-related journalistic practice and further gender-related reception studies are discussed.

Keywords: Newspapers, information processing, gender, representation of gender, mental representation of women, examples, gender policy, media effects, situation model, experiment

Marco Dohle / Tilo Hartmann: Just a Question of Broad Reach? An Experimental Examination for Explaining the Emergence of Hostile Media Effects (Alles eine Frage hoher Reichweite? Eine experimentelle Untersuchung zur Ursache der Entstehung von Hostile-Media-Effekten), pp. 23-43

According to the hostile media effect people perceive media coverage as biased against their own opinion on an issue. This article deals with the determinants of this effect: A causal model is proposed starting with the assumption that partisans' exposure to media coverage of a conflict increases awareness of their shared identity with their in-group. Depending on the perception that the media coverage is watched by a mass audience, partisans assume a negative influence of this coverage on the audience as it seems capable of strengthening the status of the out-group. The presumed negative influence, in turn, results in a biased perception of media coverage that is in fact balanced. If information is spread to a local public however, controversial media coverage should more likely be interpreted as supportive of one's own opinion. In light of this model, an experiment was conducted with 230 students. They had to answer questions about their perception of a commentary on the topic of tuition fees. The text was presented either as a newspaper article with a large co-audience or as a text evoking the notion of a small co-audience. As expected, subjects assuming a small audience perceived the text to be more in line with their opinion whereas the hostile media effect assumed for the newspaper article did not occur. The findings are discussed against the background of other influencing factors including the perception of social distance to the co-audience.

Keywords: Hostile media effect, assimilation bias, third person effect, perceptual bias, audience perceptions, co-audience, social distance, media reception

Klaus Merten: Defining Public Relations (Zur Definition von Public Relations), pp. 44-61

As a science Public Relations remains in an immature state, which can clearly be seen in the more than 500 attempts at defining the field. Due to the fact that Public Relations is by now an accepted part of communication science, it is time to ask for a more fruitful definition of the field in light of communication theory. This definition should no longer be built as a catalogue of actions or functions to be fulfilled by Public Relations. Instead it should grasp the specific characteristics that differentiate Public Relations from advertising or journalism. Accordingly, the first step is to sum up the difficulties in building a definition of PR, by re-examining existing definitions and extracting elements that may be essential for an understanding of PR. By tackling the problem on a more abstract level, the very making of differences as a mode of differential theory (systems theory) promises to be a useful criterion. Furthermore, connections between communication and management are explored. And finally performance and performance criteria of Non-PR and PR are compared. Based on these findings, Public Relations can then be defined as the difference management between fact and fiction through communication about communication in the temporal, objective and social perspective.

Keywords: Public Relations, definition, PR as science

Andreas Schwarz: Who is Responsible for the Crisis? An Audience-Oriented Approach to Crises Public Relations (Wer hat die Krise zu verantworten? Ein rezeptionsorientierter Ansatz der Krisen-Public Relations), pp. 62-83

Communication between organisations and their stakeholders in situations of crises has barely been studied from an audience-oriented perspective in Germany. The perception of causes and responsibilities for crises and their effect on organisational reputation are of particular interest here. This is due to the fact that Public Relations have to cope strategically with those situations under time pressure and other exceptional constraints. This article draws on seminal research contributions from the US and discusses the potential of attribution theory – especially Harold H. Kelley's covariation principle – for application in crisis communication. To this end, an experimental study was conducted in order to analyse the impact three informational dimensions (consensus, distinctiveness, consistency) had on the perceived responsibility of an organisation in crisis and on stakeholder attitudes towards this organisation. Findings show that the covariation principle offers rich conceptual and empirical starting points for explaining stakeholder perceptions in crises and, as a consequence, offer additional options for developing research-based public relations strategies. Furthermore, conceptual links for this kind of attributional approach to theories and findings in other fields of audience research are discussed.

Keywords: Public Relations Crises, crises communication, causal attribution, covariation principle, reputation

Michael Meyen / Wolfgang Schweiger: „Notorious Uniformity“? A Content Analysis of the GDR Papers „Neues Deutschland“ and „Junge Welt“ (1960-1989) („Sattsam bekannte Uniformität“? Eine Inhaltsanalyse der DDR-Tageszeitungen „Neues Deutschland“ und „Junge Welt“ [1960 bis 1989]), p. 84-102

The article analyses the fundamental dilemma of exploited media, by examining the central organs of the SED (Unified Socialist Party of Germany) and the FDJ (Free German Youth): Has press in the GDR really been as monolithic as is often claimed? Was there room for journalism people liked to read and if so: when and where? In order to answer this question the article compares the papers “Neues Deutschland” and “Junge Welt” using a quantitative content analysis. The examination period covers the years from 1960 to 1989. The study differentiates the thesis of “notorious uniformity in GDR-media”. In many respects the newspaper-copies analysed reflect the picture drawn by the literature (strong politicisation, black and white coverage of both blocs, little reading incentives). However, the “Junge Welt” has been considerably more journalistic than the “Neues Deutschland”, particularly during the 1980’s and made more efforts to respond to audience demands. The findings of the content analysis also show that differences not only occur between individual newspapers but also over time – supposedly depending mainly on the pressure SED-leaders felt having to justify themselves and on their current domestic and foreign policy interests.

Keywords: media history, GDR, press, content analysis



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