

English Abstracts

Anna Sophie Kümpel: All Casual, Mobile, and Aimless? A Multi-Method Study of Young Adults' News Definitions and Everyday Use and Consumption of News (Nebenbei, mobil und ohne Ziel? Eine Mehrmethodenstudie zu Nachrichtennutzung und -verständnis von jungen Erwachsenen), pp. 11–31

Particularly among young adults, the use and consumption of news and information has changed in the past years. The reliance on smartphones and the popularity of social media in this age group suggests that the use of news is increasingly shaped by situational and social contexts, depending on more or less 'accidental' encounters with individual news stories. However, we still know little about whether and to what extent there is a connection between how users experience news in current information environments, and the importance news have in their everyday lives. In particular, we do not know whether and to what extent (new) consumption practices challenge users' basic understanding of what constitutes news. We thus examine how young adults understand and define 'news (use)' today and investigate when, where, and how they inform themselves about current events. Addressing our research questions, we employed a ten-day diary study (realized via WhatsApp) and conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews with 47 student participants aged 18 to 24. The results suggest a minor importance of news in the everyday life of young adults, even among well-educated ones. Moreover, the study demonstrates how difficult it seems to define 'news (use)', highlighting the disparity between a normative demand for 'good' news and one's actual consumption patterns.

Key words: news use, social media, mobile media, young adults, multi-method study, media diary, qualitative interviews

Maria Löblich / Carlotta Nietzke: The German Press and Google: A Discourse Analysis (Die deutsche Presse und Google. Eine Diskursanalyse), pp. 32–49

With the spread of Internet intermediaries, newspaper publishers have lost some ground with regard to their social and economic influence, but also in terms of public discourse. Hence, we assume that newspaper publishers might intend to influence knowledge orders regarding the position of intermediaries. Unlike the publishing houses, Internet intermediaries do not have similarly privileged access to traditional news production, to a still central tool to influence the knowledge order. Taking Google in Germany as a case study, we examine how the press discourse has constructed Google. We also investigate if the rules of this discourse can be found in Google's texts. Drawing on Michel Foucault, we analyse texts from four major German newspapers, and we look at Google's activities over the past 20 years. The results suggest that the press have focused on Google's power, thus constructing a negative image of the company. Google's statements followed the rules of this press discourse while constructing a divergent self-portrayal.

Key words: publishing houses, intermediaries, Google, discourse theory, qualitative analysis

Monika Taddicken / Nina Wicke / Katharina Willems: Comprehensible and Competent? A Real-Time Analysis of how Experts are Perceived and Evaluated in Science Communication (Verständlich und kompetent? Eine Echtzeitanalyse der Wahrnehmung und Beurteilung von Expert*innen in der Wissenschaftskommunikation), p. 50–72

Dialogue-oriented debates between experts aim to introduce scientific facts into social discourse, encouraging expert-layperson communication and helping the public form opinions. Audience expectations are one factor impacting on whether or not this is achieved. Drawing on the Theory of Subjective Quality Assessment (Wolling, 2004, 2009), we employed a real-time response (RTR) measurement and a pre-post survey (n=65) to investigate the following questions during an expert debate: what did the recipients expect of the experts? How did recipients evaluate the comprehensibility and competence of the experts? And, what linguistic and content-based factors influenced this evaluation? Our results suggest that recipients expected the experts to be comprehensible, professional, and credible. The more these expectations were fulfilled, the more the debate was positively evaluated by the recipients. Similarly, the RTR measurement showed that recipients evaluated experts' comprehensibility and competence in a predominantly positive way. In particular, experts' use of short sentences, structured content, and the way they drew connections to the everyday lives of recipients were highlighted, as well as the fact that scientific jargon was largely avoided. However, recipients' knowledge level prior to the expert debate did not seem to noticeably influence their perceptions.

Key words: science communication, scientific experts, expectations, comprehensibility, competence, real-time response measurement, theory of subjective quality assessment

Josephine B. Schmitt / Danilo Harles / Diana Rieger: On the Topics, Motives, and Mainstreaming in Right-Wing Extremist Online Memes (Themen, Motive und Mainstreaming in rechtsextremen Online-Memes), pp. 73–93

Memes (e.g., image macros) play an important role in the digital media, and they are also part of the right-wing extremist online communication. This study draws on a content analysis of memes that have been reported to a reporting facility for online hate speech by various Internet users. Analysing the memes, we aimed at answering our research questions, namely to what extent do the memes show elements of right-wing extremist ideologies; which thematic clusters can the memes be assigned to; and to what extend do they include mainstreaming strategies. Our results suggest that memes show central elements of right-wing extremist ideologies such as references to (historical) National Socialism, Antisemitism, and Racism. Memes can also be clustered along recurrent visual motives and certain displayed enemy stereotypes. Moreover, humour can be identified as an important mainstreaming strategy.

Key words: Memes, right-wing extremism, mainstreaming, content analysis

Kay Hinz / Sebastian Sünkler / Dirk Lewandowski: On the Self-Portrayal and Positioning of Candidates during the 2017 German Federal Election Campaign in Google's Infoboxes (Selbstdarstellung und Positionierung von Kandidatinnen und Kandidaten zur Bundestagswahl 2017 in Google-Infoboxen), pp. 94–112

If you were running a Google search on one of the candidates for the German Federal Election 2017, you would be likely to encounter a novelty. An info box presenting basic information appeared for the first time, next to the regular search results. Candidates could fill these info boxes with content regarding their political positions. This new communication channel was, indeed, highly relevant to the way candidates were perceived by members of the public, as Google is often one of the first sources of online information. We examine what characteristics impact on whether or not candidates use the info boxes, how the content from individual candidates differs from that of the party they belong to, and how content differs between candidates of different parties. Drawing on ideas of normalisation and equalisation, we employed an explorative approach by conducting resonance and content analyses. An automated screen scraping was used to capture content from the info boxes. The tool was used by 478 candidates. Results show that the normalisation hypothesis can be applied to both the candidates and the parties. Indeed, the more established make a greater effort to be visible on the Internet. With regard to content, there are differences in the internal pluralism of parties and in the setting of content priorities in election campaigns.

Key words: search engines, Google, online-campaigning, political communication, normalization hypothesis, equalization hypothesis, professionalization

Ursula Alexandra Ohliger / Catharina Vögele: Media Poll Reporting as an Objective Source of Information or as a Means of Political Instrumentalisation? How State Parliament Correspondents Perceive the Importance and the Effects of Media Poll Reporting (Objektive Informationsquelle oder Mittel zur politischen Instrumentalisierung? Wie Landtagskorrespondenten die Bedeutung und Effekte der medialen Umfrageberichterstattung wahrnehmen), pp. 113–141

Election polls have become an integral part of political reporting, particularly during election campaigns. Content and reception analyses show an increase in the reporting of election polls and a growing reception of opinion polls by voters. Nevertheless, we see controversial debates about the effects of polls on voting behaviour, the possible instrumentalisation of polls by political actors, and the way journalists handle survey data. So far, however, this phenomenon has only been investigated on a national political level, although opinion polls play also an increasingly important role at the federal level. A quantitative online survey of state parliament correspondents (n=292) of all German state parliaments shows that their perception is ambivalent. Election polls are evaluated as an important and helpful component of political reporting; however, state parliament correspondents also fear negative effects of poll reporting on voting behaviour and the possible instrumentalisation of political actors. The data also reveal a contradiction in journalistic perception with regard to the disclosure of methodological information. Even though the majority of the surveyed journalists consider it important to report on the margin of error and the uncertainty in survey reporting, only a minority of journalists states to actually mention this aspect.

Key words: political opinion research, polls, political communication, journalism research, quantitative survey