

English Abstracts

Otfried Jarren: *Mass Media as Intermediaries. The Continuing Relevance of Mass Media for Public Communication (Massenmedien als Intermediäre. Zur anhaltenden Relevanz der Massenmedien für die öffentliche Kommunikation)*, pp. 329-346

The present debate on online media cherishes the assumption that online services are likely to substitute traditional mass media. This article argues against this assumption based on theoretical concepts of the public sphere, sociological institutionalism, and organisation theory. Against this background, mass media realise and present issues that are crucial for decision-making processes in modern societies. It is emphasized that by reducing the complexity of issues on all levels of the public sphere (which grows due to horizontal and vertical social differentiation), mass media facilitate individual and collective decision-making. As social institutions, mass media enable processes of interaction at a societal level, thus making these interactions visible and binding for all members of society. In doing so, mass media act as intermediaries and are institutionalised as intersystemic organisations. Both the organisation and the performance of such intermediaries are of public interest and publicly controlled. Only if media organisations act as intermediaries and, at the same time, are recognised as such by recipients, continuous media performance that is both relevant for and acknowledged by the society at large can be expected. The article argues that the majority of online services does not live up to these requirements.

Keywords: Mass media, online media, institutions, public sphere, organisation theory, intermediaries

Bertram Scheufele / Alexander Haas: *Coverage on companies and stock markets. A time-series analysis of television, newspaper, and online coverage, and major and minor German stocks and trading volumes (Die Rolle der Unternehmensberichterstattung am Aktienmarkt. Eine Zeitreihenanalyse des Zusammenhangs zwischen der Print-, Online- und Fernsehberichterstattung sowie den Handelsvolumina und Kursen ausgewählter deutscher Aktien)*, pp. 347-367

So far the role of media in relation to stock markets has either been discussed theoretically or by surveying investors in the field of communication science. This article examines not only communication but also financial scientific considerations. Instead of dealing with media effect on individual investors (micro-level), it examines media effects at a far-reaching macro-level, i.e. which shows in measurable movements in stock price or trading volumes. A time-series design was applied, combining a content analysis of stock market coverage in selected newspapers, television broadcasts, and internet portals, and a secondary analysis of stock prices and trading volumes of major and minor German stocks. The empirical results suggest that media effects on the macro-level of trading volumes and stock prices are quite rare. Numerous benefiting factors have to coincide for such effects to occur. Furthermore, measuring these effects is a methodical challenge.

Keywords: media effects, stocks, micro-macro, multi-method design, time-series

Constanze Rossmann / Tanja Pfister: The impact of example cases and images with fear appeal on the effectiveness of health flyers about obesity (Zum Einfluss von Fallbeispielen und furchterregenden Bildern auf die Wirksamkeit von Gesundheitsflyern zum Thema Adipositas), pp. 368-391

The question of how health information should be presented in order to reach the public is one of the central problems in health communication. A common strategy relies on fear appeals even though findings regarding their health promoting effects are so far contradictory. Similarly, example cases can influence risk perception, attitudes, and behavioural intentions. Yet, little is known about the direction of influences and whether or not images with fear appeals interact with example cases. We conducted a 2x3 experiment with two post-tests. Stimulus was a health flyer about obesity, in 6 different versions (factor 1: example vs. abstract information, factor 2: positive, slightly negative, very negative image). The first post-test (n=185) inquired about intervening variables (socio-demographic data, body weight, involvement, flyer evaluation, etc.) and dependent variables (knowledge, risk perception, attitudes, behavioural intentions). 14 days later a second post-test was conducted, again measuring the dependent variables as well as the participant's behaviour during the last two weeks (n=176). The findings reveal no influence of the text version. In contrast to this, the images influenced knowledge in form of a U-function and risk perception, attitudes, and behavioural intentions – though only partly significant – in form of a reversed U-function. With regard to behaviour, the slightly and very negative images had the strongest impact. The findings were largely independent from the influence of intervening variables and the impact of the flyer remained relatively stable over the two-week examination period.

Keywords: Health communication, information brochures, obesity, examples, fear appeal, images with fear appeal

Patrick Weber: News geography: Empirical tests of a descriptive model and a news value based explanation. Examining the coverage of Eastern Europe in selected German newspapers (Nachrichtengeographie: Beschreibungsmodell und Erklärungsansatz auf dem Prüfstand. Untersuchung am Beispiel der Osteuropaberichterstattung deutscher Tageszeitungen), pp. 392-413

The aim of the study presented in the article is twofold: First, to test a descriptive model of news geography and, second, to test the explanation for the presence of countries in foreign news coverage (news flow) offered by the theory of newsworthiness. Through a content analysis of the coverage of Eastern Europe in selected German newspapers, the model of news geography can be validated. By using a cluster analysis – with presence, diversity in topics and journalistic genres as criteria – it is shown that countries can be classified as news centres, news neighbours, topical news neighbours, and news periphery. Clusters are described here according to news factors in the coverage. Building on that a new determinant of news flow is identified and its explanatory power is supported empirically.

Keywords: News geography, news flow, theory of newsworthiness, foreign news coverage, Eastern Europe, content analysis

Stefan Jarolimek: "You have reached your destination." or "Please turn around." A normative model for the evaluation of transition processes in Central- and Eastern Europe („Ziel erreicht.“ Oder: „Bitte wenden.“ Ein normatives Modell zur Bewertung der Transformationsprozesse in Mittel- und Osteuropa), pp. 414-432

The time of radical changes, revolutions und societal eruptions in Central- and Eastern Europe has long expired. The adjustment of social institutions to post-communist realities, e.g. in the form of re-regulations, rather provides evidence of the transformation process coming to an end, of consolidation, and a shift to continuous social change. Within the field of transition / transformation research developing stage models plays an important role in explaining and evaluating transition. In light of existing social scientific concepts, this article proposes a stage model of the transition process in Central- and Eastern Europe that is applicable for communication research. The model refers to the public sphere as the relevant object of analysis and defines plurality as the aim of societal transition. The fifth stage, the so-called "convalescence" stage, enriches the ex post-observation of the transition's endpoint. For evaluating the different, national consolidation processes, evaluation criteria and societal interdependencies are developed in the framework of a normative model.

Keywords: Transition, Central- and Eastern Europe, consolidation, media system, stage model, public sphere, plurality

Evelyn Bytzek: Events and their Impact on the Public Agenda (Ereignisse und ihre Wirkung auf die Themenagenda der Wählerschaft), pp. 433-451

Events are said to influence numerous political processes, e.g. election results or political reforms. The prerequisite for an impact of this magnitude however is the fact that certain events are dictating the voters' public agenda and are thereby able to exert political pressure. Whether or not this prerequisite is met, has so far merely been examined in case studies about the relationship between events and the public agenda. For this reason, the article at hand examines this relationship for the German public agenda between 1991 and 2003. On the one hand, the findings show that events do influence the public agenda and can even displace topics that citizens can relate to their own experience. On the other hand, this effect is rather short-lived.

Keywords: Agenda setting, time-series, longitudinal analysis, media agenda, political agenda, event selection