Politics & poverty: Is the new media changing the message? An analysis of framing in new media news

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Abstract
Many media researchers have turned their attention to new media, specifically how the proliferation of blogs has changed the way media influences the public agenda. Less attention has been paid to how blogs and new media are changing the way news is framed and reported. In a preliminary case study two elements of political news reporting on blogs were explored: 1) Do political blogs focus more on insider information and process news than traditional media's online news outlets? 2) What implications, if any, does this difference have on the value of the information in assisting the audience form opinions about public issues?

Blogs and the Power of the People
The proliferation of blogs has eliminated virtually all barriers to self-publication, creating a media environment where the citizen journalist is empowered to set his own agenda.

The Death of Information
Both strategy news and metacoverage bring the behind-the-scenes operations of political figures and journalists to the general public. Metacoverage is news that reports on the relationships between political public relations and journalism.

Research Questions
RQ1: What are the common narrative frames of poverty and welfare issues?
RQ2: Are the frames of poverty and welfare presented by new media outlets similar or significantly different than those offered by traditional news outlets?
RQ3: Do particular narrative frames correspond with the ideological bias of the outlet?
RQ4: Are the frames of poverty and welfare presented by new media outlets more likely to be perceived by political and social bloggers?

Blogs as Opinion Leaders
A few elite blogs have emerged as aggregators of information and analysis, enabling media commentators to extract meaningful analysis and rely on blogs to help them interpret and predict political developments (Drezner & Farrell, 2005).

Who's Blogging?
Political Blog Readers
Generally more likely to get their news from sites that reinforce their views and more likely to talk about politics with other people—disseminating their views to the broader public (Baum & Groeling, 2008).

Political Blog Writers
Predominantly well-educated, White men in their 40's with annual incomes over $40,000 a year (Tomaszewski, Proffitt, & McClung, 2005).

Authors of the blogs with the highest readership are mostly well-educated, graduated from top universities, and many hold advanced degrees. Most of these authors are professors, lawyers or journalists (Hindman, 2009).

Next Steps...
Building on this research, which suggests that blogs and new media may be changing news boundaries, the next stage of research will integrate textual analysis of news media frames with survey data of online news readers to better understand the ways in which various news sources affect knowledge and perceptions of social issues.

Conclusions
This preliminary research suggests that blogs and new media may be changing news boundaries. However, this research is limited by the fact that it is a case study, and thus, only a small snapshot of the blogosphere. More research of a broader range of outlets, as well as a larger sample of articles must be done before any generalizable conclusions can be reached.

There are a myriad of reasons a person may have particular knowledge or perceptions of an issue, having nothing to do with the news medium they most often use, but if this research is able to find a correlation between these variables, in conjunction with previous research on the agenda-setting role of blogs, it could provide a basis for further research on how blogs may be polarizing political discourse, significantly adding to both media effects and political communication theory.

Resources