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?

A content analysis of articles on four blogs hosted by POLITICO.com and articles from the New York Times online edition, found that during the time frame studied, the POLITICO blogs carried significantly more insider news than The New York Times, both in raw number of articles and as a percentage of total articles. Based on traditional models of media agenda-setting, as the public becomes more exposed to and more dependent on political blogs for their news, they may become more aware and concerned with process news, insider information and scandals, while becoming less informed and less equipped to make judgments about candidates and legislation. This breakdown of news barriers by new media outlets needs to be further explored to understand how new media may impact political discourse and communication.

Blogs and the Power of the People

Building on research, this 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.

The Unique Role of Blogs in Agenda-Setting Theory

Why Politico?

Blog 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). "News coverage in the blogosphere and the attitudes of blog consumers may increasingly influence, and as a consequence, ultimately reflect opinion among the broader citizenry” (Baum and Groeling, 2008).

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). Tend to be more politically active and more likely to seek political knowledge than none blog readers (Eveland & Dyko, 2007).

Political Blog Writers
Predominantly well-educated, White men in their 40's with annual incomes over $40,000 a year (Tomaszek, Proffitt, & McCung, 2009). 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).

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