

Disclosure of own interest (Media policy/ Meta journalism)

AUTHOR

Stefano Pedrazzi

KEYWORDS

self-coverage, transparency, journalism standards

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The variable “disclosure of own interests” records whether media, when reporting on media-economic (e.g. takeovers, mergers) or media policy issues affecting their own company or the publishing company to which they are affiliated, create transparency with regard to ownership or potentially affected own interests (Müller & Donsbach, 2006). Media companies could strategically use their privileged access to the public to propagate a certain view of a topic and thus pursue their own interests. So far studies do not reveal a uniform picture that indicates the pursuit of self-interests through reduced transparency (Beck, 2001; Kemner, Scherer, & Weinacht, 2008; Müller & Donsbach, 2006).

FIELD OF APPLICATION/THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The variable serves as an indicator of compliance with journalistic standards. By creating transparency with regard to their relationship to the reported subject, media companies provide recipients with the opportunity to identify potential conflicts of interests.

EXAMPLE STUDIES

Beck (2001); Müller & Donsbach (2006); Pedrazzi (2020)

INFORMATION ON BECK, 2001

Research interest: In the context of a merger in the media sector, Beck (2001) examines the influence of publishers’ economic interests on media

self-coverage and communication strategies that are used to address self-reference.

Object of analysis: Purposive sample of articles about the merger of AOL and Time Warner in eight German and two US national daily and weekly newspapers either involved or not involved in the merger (Beck, 2001).

Time frame of analysis: January 1, 2000 to February 28, 2000

INFORMATION ABOUT VARIABLE

Level of analysis: article

Coding logic/instructions: It is coded whether the article includes an explicit reference that the media company publishing the article belongs to a publisher involved in the transaction. In addition to information on ownership, Beck (2001, p. 413) mentions other aspects that can be subject to disclosure: These include the name and function of the author, if e.g. owners publish contributions; a reference to the dependency of an author (e.g. as an employee of a company); or the labeling as a non-editorial contribution (e.g. „in own cause“).

Codebook not available

INFORMATION ON MÜLLER & DONSBACH, 2006

Research interest: In the context of a takeover in the media sector, Müller and Donsbach (2006) examine the influence of publishers’ economic interests on media self-coverage and communication strategies that are used to address self-reference.

Object of analysis: All articles dealing with the takeover of the Berliner Verlag by the Verlagsgruppe Georg von Holtzbrinck that were published in thirteen German regional and national daily newspapers with different ownership.

Time frame of analysis: June 26, 2002 to Novem-



<https://doi.org/10.34778/2zd>

© 2021, the authors. This work is licensed under the “Creative Commons Attribution – NonCommercial – NoDerivatives 4.0 International” license (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

ber 15, 2003 (Müller & Donsbach, 2006)

INFORMATION ABOUT VARIABLE

Level of analysis: article

Coding logic/instructions: It is coded whether the article includes an explicit reference that the media company publishing the article belongs to a publisher involved in the transaction (Müller & Donsbach, 2006).

Values: see Table 1

Table 1.

| Müller & Donsbach, 2006 (Binary level) |
|--|
| No disclosure |
| Disclosure |

Intercoder reliability: Intercoder reliability coefficient of .79 across content categories at article level (6 coders), not specified for individual category

Codebook not available

INFORMATION ON PEDRAZZI (2020)

Research interest: Pedrazzi (2020) investigates Swiss media coverage of media policy, public service in general and the Swiss public service organization SRG SSR in the context of the referendum on the revision of the Federal Act on Radio and Television (RTVA) in 2015 and the No-Billag initiative in 2018.

Object of analysis: Representative samples of articles covering each the revision of the RTVA and the No-Billag initiative in twelve regional and national Swiss German print and online publications with different ownership.

Time frame of analysis: January 1, 2010 to March 4, 2018 (Pedrazzi, 2020)

INFORMATION ABOUT VARIABLE

Level of analysis: article

Coding logic/instructions: It is coded whether and to what extent the author of a contribution is transparent with regard to the publisher's, the medium's or personal interests (e.g. as a publisher/owner, but also as an employee). More precisely, whether one's own involvement, interests

and possible consequences with regard to the content and outcome of the vote are explicitly disclosed.

Values: see Table 2

Codebook of Pedrazzi (2020) available at (last accessed on 09.12.2020): <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4312912>

REFERENCES

- Beck, K. (2001). Medienberichterstattung über Medienkonzentration. *Publizistik*, 46(4), 403-424. doi: 10.1007/s11616-001-0121-3
- Kemner, B., Scherer, H., & Weinacht, S. (2008). Unter der Tarnkappe. *Publizistik*, 53(1), 65-84. doi: 10.1007/s11616-008-0006-9
- Müller, D., & Donsbach, W. (2006). Unabhängigkeit von wirtschaftlichen Interessen als Qualitätsindikator im Journalismus. In S. Weischenberg, W. Loosen, & M. Beuthner (Eds.), *Medien-Qualitäten: Öffentliche Kommunikation zwischen ökonomischem Kalkül und Sozialverantwortung* (pp. 129-147). Konstanz: UVK.
- Pedrazzi, S. (2020). *Codebuch zur Studie «Eigeninteressen in der Berichterstattung über medienpolitische Vorlagen und den Service public in der Schweiz»*. Zenodo. doi: 10.5281/zenodo.4312912

Table 2.

| Pedrazzi, 2020 (Ordinal level) | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| No disclosure | Own interests are not explicitly revealed. |
| Low disclosure | Transparency with regard to involvement of a company, including company affiliation and/or name and function of the author (i.e. in case of owners publishing a contribution) and/or labeling of a contribution as non-editorial (i.e. „in own cause“), however without details addressing potential consequences |
| High disclosure | Transparency with regard to self-interests of a company, including details of direct potential consequences for the own organization (e.g. financial, market position, regulative, influential, etc.) or indirectly as a competitor of organizations that are being covered |