

Attribute salience (Public Diplomacy)

(see also issue attributes)

AUTHOR

Sarah Marschlich

KEYWORDS

public diplomacy, attribute salience, agenda-setting, foreign publics, governmental communication, international news broadcasting

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The variable “attribute salience” is described as the characteristics of a given issue that is portrayed in media coverage or other communication channels. It is generally measured in addition to issue salience and issue valence in order to analyze media portrayals of events, actors, or public discourses. Attribute salience is often measured in order to explore how particular issues are presented (instead of which in general), thereby contributing to second-level agenda-setting effects (McCombs et al., 1997).

FIELD OF APPLICATION/THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Attribute salience is analyzed across different subfields of communication and media research, including the field of public diplomacy. In public diplomacy research, scholars measure attribute salience in the context of political communication or the representation of countries in the news media as well as on social media. Researchers embed the concept of attribute salience or issue attributes mainly in agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), analyzing it as an independent variable to derive with implications of news media coverage on audiences’ evaluations of certain issues.

REFERENCES/COMBINATION WITH OTHER METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

When it comes to analyses on attribute salience in the context of issues and its link to public perceptions, a mixed-method study design incorporating content analysis in combination with surveys is used to validate attribute salience.

EXAMPLE STUDY

Zhang et al. (2018)

INFORMATION ON ZHANG ET AL., 2018

Authors: Zhang et al.

Research question/research interest: Effects of agenda-building of Chinese state-sponsored media on news media coverage in Taiwan and Singapore during Hong Kong Protest

Object of analysis: Newspaper (several English newspapers and newswires published in China, Singapore, and Taiwan; not explicated)

Time frame of analysis: 1 May 2014 to 30 April 2015

INFORMATION ABOUT VARIABLE

Level of analysis: Article

Values:

- (1) Substantive issue attributes (frame):
 - (a) Conflict
 - (b) Cooperation
 - (c) Problem definition
 - (d) Proposed solution to the problem
 - (e) Responsibility attribution
 - (f) Human interest
 - (g) Consequences and outcomes
 - (h) Morality and motivation to take actions

- (2) Affective issue attributes (tone):
 - (a) Negative
 - (b) Neutral or mixed
 - (c) Positive



(d) N/A.

Scales: Nominal

Reliability: Cohen's kappa = 0.76

REFERENCES

- McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36(2), 176–187.
- McCombs, M. E., Llamas, J. P., Lopez-Escobar, E., & Rey, F. (1997). Candidate Images in Spanish Elections: Second-Level Agenda-Setting Effects. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 74(4), 703–717.
- Zhang, T., Khalitova, L., Myslik, B., Mohr, T. L., Kim, J. Y., & Kioussis, S. (2018). Comparing Chinese state-sponsored media's agenda-building influence on Taiwan and Singapore media during the 2014 Hong Kong Protest. *Chinese Journal of Communication*, 11(1), 66–87.