

May 11 Propaganda, Public Relations and Advertising: Lies, Lies and More Lies?

Introduction to the Political Economy of Media
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What is journalism?

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=88Midc38AUU>

Examples from authoritarian media systems

Ukraine RT coverage

<http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=ztFrXbhrYA4>

China train accident

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q9Ap0aRUx8E>

Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model

- Radical critique of how the media operate, how in democratic societies what gets into the media is regularly limited
- Filters: ownership, advertising, sources, flak, anti-communism

What is PR?

Edward Bernays, otherwise known as 'The Godfather of Public Relations', was a pioneer in the field of propaganda and PR.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Q-3qwEDyPM>

With propaganda, especially around the World Wars, came negative connotations of 'brainwashing' and 'manipulation' techniques, hence the need for an alternative. That alternative being public relations.

http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/powers_of_persuasion_intro.html

PR influences behaviour in an attempt to achieve certain objectives.

Jürgen Habermas

The theory of communicative action

Habermas distinguishes two models of communication:

Communicative

&

Strategic

Communicative

The communicative model strives towards achieving the mutual understanding of actors involved in the process of communication.

Relies heavily on:

- Sincerity
- Mutual trust
- Honesty

One may relate this to 'good' or 'honest' journalism.

Strategic

The strategic mode is one in which the actor intends to gain an advantage in the situation without the other becoming aware of the said intentions

These gains could include:

Financial gain

Influence (political etc)

Image or reputation integrity

This could possibly be related to public relations (PR)

Zvi Reich (2010) MEASURING THE IMPACT OF PR ON PUBLISHED NEWS IN INCREASINGLY FRAGMENTED NEWS ENVIRONMENTS , Journalism Studies, 11:6, 799-816.

The extent to which the news media rely on public relations materials has attracted considerable research attention (cf. Curtin and Rhodenbaugh, 2001; Lewis et al., 2008; Reich, 2009). Studies have attempted to establish a bottom line for PR-originated input, ranging between 25 and 80 percent of news content according to the literature (Cameron et al., 1997). These theoretically and practically worthwhile research efforts proceed in four principal directions, to be discussed in detail below: (1) exposing PR use of the media to access and impact public opinion; (2) delineating the borderline between two “converging” and interdependent occupations, journalism and PR, that collaborate and compete over the social role of public news supplier; (3) redefining news believability, as different sources may be ascribed different levels of perceived credibility; and (4) raising questions of political equality, as PR’s advantageous position indirectly blocks access to nonprofessional sources.

Nick Davies on PR and journalism:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93615UWeXaC>

Advertising as a Funding Model

- Advertising – an important source of income for media; other sources also exist: subscriptions, paywalls, sponsoring etc.
- For print media the decline in advertising revenue has been very significant, two main factors: emergence of online media and economic crisis
- biggest growth in advertising can be traced back to 19th century United States and historical explorations suggest that it was actually severely resisted

Advertising – cont.

- Advertisers are interested in buying particular audiences and require data not only about the size of an audience but also about its composition and consumption habits. Advertising and marketing agencies have used a range of methods for measuring audiences – including diaries, audimeters (for radio and television), people meters (developed for television), surveys, focus groups, interviews – and companies are seeking improved methods for measuring audiences particularly online.

Advertising – cont.

- impact of advertising on the diversity of contents produced, it reduces the supply of minority interest programmes = if an audience is not sizeable enough to be sold to an advertiser, it is unlikely to have media contents produced for it. In the case of ethnic minority media this funding model fails due to small audience size. Or even if the audience is sizeable enough, it may not be the most desirable one for advertisers (i.e. an audience with lower incomes).

Advertising – cont.

The quality of journalism that is funded from advertising income has also been questioned. Some argue that the pressures on media to make increasingly more profits result in a shift to market journalism. “Advertisers do not pay for high-level quality journalism, but for the requested ‘quality’ of the sector of society to be reached. Market journalism, however, provides for a different construction of reality in the media and for a substantially different media reality. Its first and foremost objective is not to inform but to satisfy the targeted sector of society.” (Meier and Trappel 1998: 57, original emphasis)