

Media Diversity in German Online News

A Comparison between Public and Private News Websites

Carlo Bartsch

HSU
Hamburg

13. Juli 2021

Structure

- 1 Motivation
- 2 Public Media
- 3 Framing Diversity
- 4 Data and Measures
- 5 First Results
- 6 Next Steps

Motivation

- Germany already has one of the most expensive public media, but an increase in broadcasting fees is once again on the agenda.
- In addition to the general question of the extent to which public service broadcasting can be economically justified, this question arises in particular for online news content
- Many of the arguments that are often put forward in favor of public broadcasting (falling average costs, non-excludability, market power) can be refuted in the digital context
- The argument of greater diversity through public broadcasting therefore gains particular attention
- In terms of public value, the news section in particular is moving to the foreground

The following questions therefore arise:

How does the online news of the public broadcaster differentiate itself from private providers?

Can differences in reporting in the sense of a more diverse view be identified within the individual providers?

Public Media

- Many of the reasons given for the necessity of public broadcasting (market power, public goods, information asymmetries) can be easily disproved (Dewenter and Haucap, 2009), (Haucap et al. (2015))
- Particular importance is attached to the arguments of a public value good and respectively the external effects as well as the lack of diversity of media content

Public Value

The argument of meritocracy is very controversial, although there are studies pointing to the importance of TV programming for education (Brooks (2004)), there are contradictory studies in the empirical field on the influence of TV on voter turnout (Prat and Strömberg (2006), Gentzkow (2006))

Lack of Diversity

In this context, the argument of media bias by owners and advertisers plays a role in particular (Aigner et al. (2017), Gambaro and Puglisi (2015))

Framing Diversity

- Media diversity and pluralism are often equated with each other, but media diversity is rather a necessary condition for achieving a plural media community (Hendrickx et al. (2020))
- In terms of media diversity, a broader concept can be identified, which in turn includes variables such as source, content, and exposure diversity. (Kim and Kwak (2017))
- The following is therefore focused on the topic of content diversity or news diversity as a special category
- Furthermore, a distinction must be made between external diversity (i.e., the entire market) and internal diversity (i.e., individual outlets). This distinction applies both to content and news diversity in particular and to the generic term of media diversity. A high level of internal diversity ultimately leads to a greater external range of products and services. (Napoli (1999), Sjoavaag (2016), Hallin and Mancini (2004))
- further distinction on the last level are consumptive or merit diversity (Dewenter (2007), Kruse (1999))
- comparable to this is the concept of consumptive diversity, which distinguishes between open diversity (maximum diversity) and reflective diversity (optimal diversity) (McQuail and Van Cuilenburg (1983))

Data and Measures

Data



Textmining-Workflow, Eigene Darstellung

- 16 different news outlets containing national (12), regional (6), public (8) and private (8) outlets
- current period May 1 to June 28
- about 136000 news items

Measures

- one dimensional vs. two dimensional diversity (McDonald and Dimmick (2003), Humbrecht and Büchel (2013))
- flat or even distribution signals all categories are equally well represented
- actor and viewpoint diversity (Massina and van Aelst (2017))
- Deviation from the average value of the sample, e.g. how often is a topic or a party reported on and in what tone (Takens et al. (2010))

First Results

Next Steps

- Sentiment analysis
- Different subgroups
- Comparison of the most important topics
- Calibrate topic model